



THE DISPATCHER

The Journal of PhillyNMRA

October 2021



*Unidentified photo courtesy of
railroadworkersunited.org*



THE DISPATCHER

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Mid-Eastern Region
National Model Railroad Association



October 2021

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Volume 28, No. 5

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THE DISPATCHER

Submissions: *THE DISPATCHER* welcomes any model railroad- or railroad-related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc. The editors reserve the right to, when necessary, paraphrase portions of the text in order to fit the space available.

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor/Publisher

Howard Kaplan
P. O. Box 55
Newtown Square, PA 19073
267-586-3797

howard@phillynmra.org

Contributing Editors

Mark Wallace, Earl Paine, Bill Fagan,
Kevin Feeney, Joe Walters MMR,
Chip Stevens

Contributing Authors

Paul Welsh
Rick Melcher

Proofreader: Gail Kaplan

November Division Meet Back in Wilmington

On Saturday, November 13, 2021 the Philadelphia Division will be meeting back at the Brandywine Town Center Community Center after a year's hiatus. The exact address is 4050 Brandywine Parkway, Wilmington, Delaware 19803. Doors open at 8:30am with the program starting at 9:00am. Maps and directions on page 7.

The program will consist of two clinics. First up will be newly-elected Division Director **Jeffrey Witt**. His clinic, *"The Case for Building Turnouts and Hand-laid Track,"* discusses the "ins and outs" of building turnouts using Fast Tracks jigs and tools. Jeff will break down the costs, time, and tools, and provide tips and tricks from his own experience building 31 turnouts for his pike, as well as tips for tangent track. AP Civil Engineering certificate requirements will also be addressed. Jeff will be providing a live demonstration through the meet and as part of the Show & Tell.



Given sufficient interest, the board is considering the possibility of a Fast Tracks jig loaner program similar to those instituted by other divisions.

Jeff a talented modeler, examples of whose work was demonstrated during the Show and Tell segments over the past year's online meets. He has presented several comprehensive clinics regarding the photography, articles, and layout of renown modeler John Allen, and is the webmaster of the John Allen enthusiast group known as the Gorre & Daphetid Reminiscence Project.

Next on the docket will be Division Director and Clinics Chair **Mike Dettinger** with yet another of his unique clinics titled *"This Rail Joiner Changed Model Railroad-ing."* Kato Part #24-185 enabled a Model Railroad Revolution. Is it for HO scale track? Yes. Is it for N Scale

track? Yes. This clinic will:

- Examine the world of model railroading before the advent of the 24-185, including the earliest attempts to obtain the functionality that the 24-185 provides.
- Explore the functionality of the 24-185
- Introduce the revolutionary model railroading concept that the 24-185 enabled.

Sure, this description is vague, but would you show up if I told you that we would be talking about a rail joiner for an hour? As the late Paul Harvey would say, come to the meet to hear "the rest of the story."

Mike is what you might call a "fringe" modeler...or "a little of this and a little of that." If it's odd or obscure, he'll model it and put a decoder in it and/or animate it. He has authored numerous articles on his projects, most recently a log cabin made from toothpicks. His latest preoccupation is with N-scale T-TRAK modules, having recently presented a clinic on a Japanese powered N-scale railcar with cab-view camera mounted inside. He also recently discussed everything you'd want to know about modeling corn.



As usual we'll have coffee, donuts, and Philly soft pretzels. Other activities include the white elephant table, door prizes, 50/50 raffle, and a model display table. Members are encouraged to bring projects in any stage of completion to display and discuss if desired.

The afternoon features several excellent layouts for your viewing pleasure courtesy of the November Open House event. You won't want to miss it. Hope you can make it!

Division Apparel Returning

Due to unexpected changes we've had to look elsewhere for our apparel. It appears that we will be working out arrangements with a new service where members will be able to purchase items directly online. The advantage is that in addition to shirts, we will be able to expand our line to include hats and other items. Details to follow.



← On Saturday, August 21, Kevin Feeny (taking the photo), Mike Dettinger (L), and Joe Walters MMR (R) manned the division table at the Greenberg show in Oaks. Mike had set up a small T-TRAK layout display. Kevin handed out fliers for our upcoming events including the 12/4 train show. Mike and Rob Hinkle manned the table the next day.



Directions to the November Meet

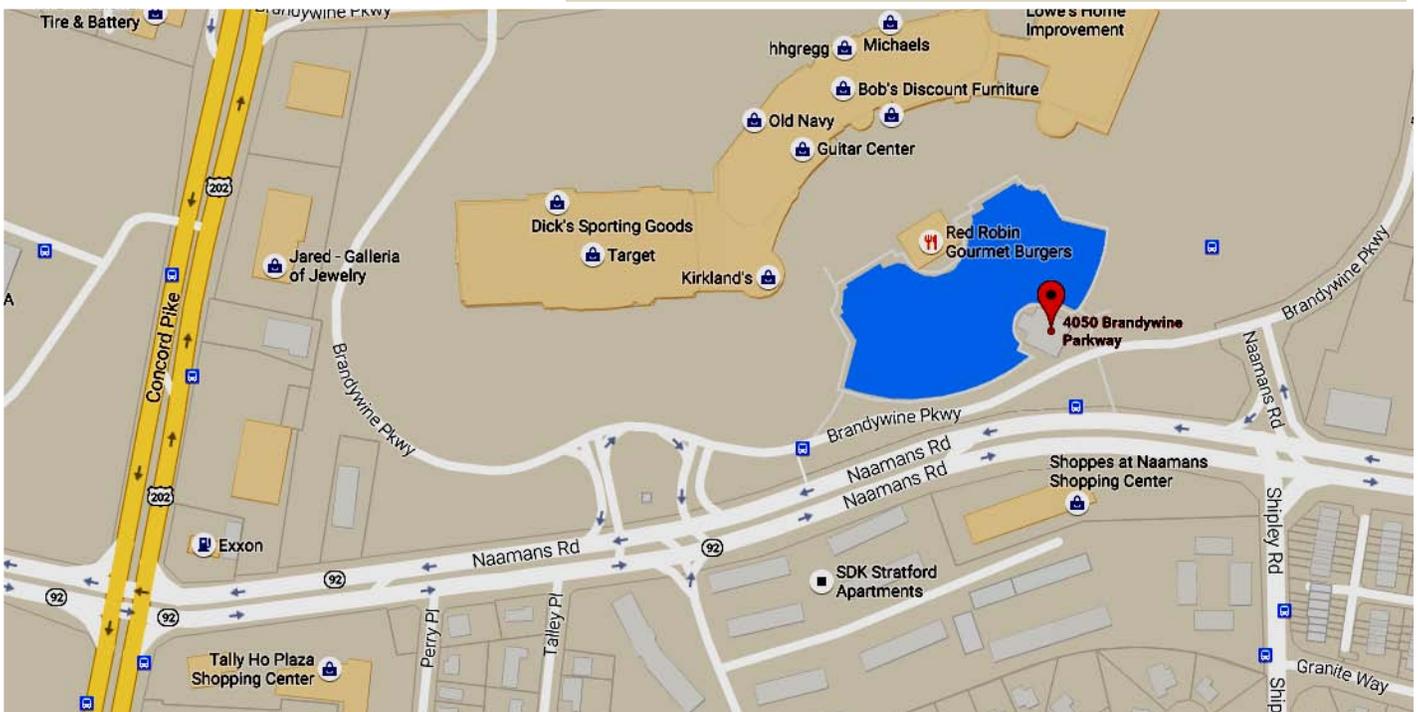
The **Brandywine Town Center** is a large shopping complex located on an “ell”-shaped piece of property near the intersection of the Concord Pike (U.S. 202) and Naamans Road (Del 92). You may remember this as the former site of a race track. One leg of the “ell” joins the Concord Pike. The other leg joins Naamans Road. The complex includes the Regal Cinema, Lowe’s, Michael’s Arts & Crafts, Target, and many other stores. The main structure is surrounded by a maze-like parking lot which, in turn, is surrounded by a road which circles the perimeter.

The Center’s **Community Building** (our meet location) is a separate structure with a prominent central atrium. It is located next to a large decorative fountain, on the south side of the complex near the Naamans Road entrance.

From Concord Pike (U.S. 202) going south – a fraction of a mile south of the PA/DE state line, turn left into the Brandywine Town Center (the marker is the sign for Lowe’s and Target, among others). Follow the perimeter road in either direction until you see the Community Building (near the decorative fountain).

From I-95 going south – at the state line, there is a three-way split – I-95, I-295, and Naamans Road (Del 92). Stay to the extreme right, and take the exit to Naamans Road. At the top of the ramp, turn right (west) on to Naamans Road. After a little over four miles, turn right into the Brandywine Town Center (it is opposite Shipley Road, which comes in from the left only). Turn right on to the perimeter road, and then left into the parking lot near the Community Building (which is near the decorative fountain).

The address is 4050 Brandywine Parkway, Wilmington, DE 19803



Planning Ahead – Division Meets & Other Upcoming Events

<p>November 13, 2021 Philadelphia Division Meet Brandywine Town Center 4050 Brandywine Parkway Wilmington, DE 19803</p>	<p>December 4, 2021 Philadelphia Division Train Show Knights of Columbus Hall 235 Limekiln Pike (PA-152) Glenside, PA 19038</p>	<p>February 19, 2022 Philadelphia Division Meet TBD</p>
<p>March 24–27, 2022 RPM–Valley Forge Desmond Hotel Malvern 1 Liberty Boulevard Malvern, PA 19355</p>	<p>April 9, 2022 Philadelphia Division Meet TBD</p>	<p>June 2022 Philadelphia Division Meet TBD</p>

Check <http://www.phillynmra.org/regional-timetable> for links to these and other upcoming events.



From the Super's Desk

This month I'd like to say a word about clinics. To me, clinics are the backbone of our division meets. At each meet we always present at least two. Clinics provide knowledge to the viewer and make us all better modelers. Over the years we have seen many great clinics. At our November meet in Wilmington, Jeff Witt will be presenting on Fast Tracks. This is a skill that all can master. It can be useful in attaining your Civil Engineering AP award, as well.

ship, is what kind of clinic would you like to see? Are you interested in DCC, scratch building, cars or structures, or any other topic? Please drop me a line or send your idea to Mike Dettinger. Mike handles all clinics for the division. If you would like to present a clinic, also let us know. We very much appreciate your participation and contribution. Presenting a clinic gives you hours for the author AP certificate, which is another bonus. If you enjoy watching clinics online, right now is the golden age of online viewing.

I hope to see you all at the meet.

Joe

My question to you, the member



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to our fall edition of *The Dispatcher*. In this issue we present an ingenious DIY project you'll wonder how you ever did without. And we continue where we left off with our showcase of the Ann's Choice retirement village model railroad club.

engaged in a project—for example, a model, working on your layout, or any railfanning past or present—might I encourage you to write about it and submit the article to *The Dispatcher*, especially as I have officially reached the bottom of my stack of submissions and desperately need articles. I have noticed some divisions include columns on current-day or old-time railroad news. If anyone would care to attempt something like that, I would be very appreciative. And remember that whatever you end up writing, as soon as your article is accepted you will receive AP Author credit.

Howard

And if you happened to miss the last meet, Assistant Super Rob Hinkle will fill you in with all the details in his comprehensive meet recap along with the excellent photos he took.

Incidentally, if you happen to be

June Meet Report

by Rob Hinkle, Assistant Superintendent



After a very long break due to COVID-19 the Philadelphia Division was finally able to host an in-person meet at a new location, the Knights of Columbus Hall in Glenside, PA. Doors were opened at 8:30am and division members and some visitors from our neighboring divisions soon arrived.

The meeting was called to order just after 9am by Assistant Superintendent Rob Hinkle who welcomed everyone back after the long break between our meets, gave some brief announcements

such as the upcoming December train show that will be held in the same location, and then turned the program over to Mike Dettinger, our clinics chairman. The clinic that was presented was by new division member Steve Wysowski with his thoughts on "Operations: Looking at Running Trains in a Prototypical Fashion." Steve covered details on both the model

DIVISION OFFICIALS

Superintendent/AP Committee Chair

Joe Walters, MMR

840 N Gwynn Ct.

Bear, DE 19701

302-521-5884

josephfwaters@yahoo.com

Assistant Superintendent/Ops/

Rob Hinkle

Social Media

1755 Slayton Dr.

Blue Bell, PA 19422

610-279-2394

robhink@comcast.net

Clerk / Membership

Vacant

Treasurer/Item Donations

Kevin Feeney

1447 Wheatsheaf Ln.

Abington, PA 19001

203-246-1675

ic4277@yahoo.com

Directors at Large:

Clinics Chair/Door Prizes

Mike Dettinger

972-795-1348

detting@comcast.net

Publicity

Chip Stevens

774-823-2681

ReadingChip@yahoo.com

Venues

Jeff Witt

267-261-3229

jlwitt@yahoo.com

Achievement Program Coordinator

Earl Paine

4325 Wendy Way

Schwenksville, PA 19473

610-831-9466

earlpaine@verizon.net

Layouts / Video - Bill Fagan

215-675-4098

bfagan777@hotmail.com

Webmaster - Howard Kaplan

267-586-3797

howard@phillynmra.org

layout that we operate as well as the full size trains that he worked on back in Connecticut and locally with the Colebrookdale Railroad. Steve also shared some details of operating on division member Steve Salotti's layout and showed how the concepts he covered were dealt with. We apologize for the technical issues we were having with the displaying of Steve's clinic.



The next clinic was given by Mike Dettinger as an updated version of his figures clinic that he had presented in the past. The clinic included a lot of information on how to use figures, where to find and make figures and other technical thoughts on what looks right for your modeling efforts. The newest part of Mike's clinic dealt with 3D printing and the opportunities it opens up for specialized figures.

Next, after our 50/50 and door prize drawings we held our Show & Tell of some of Steve Richardson's impressive 3D-printed details as well as Glyn Thomas's book on steam locomotives from India in HO Scale. Next we had some brief announcements of various upcoming division and other railroad-related events before breaking for the afternoon layout tours.



Steve Wysowski presents his clinic

Charlie Long's traction layout had been scheduled to be open, but due to storm damage to his house he had to cancel, and we hope that he will be able to show off his layout again in the future. Ted McLean and Norma Toll both presented impressive layouts for the members, and we thank them again for being open.

As a reminder, our next meet will be Saturday, November 13th in Wilmington, Delaware at the Brandywine Town Center and we hope to see you there. And don't forget about the division's December 4th train show being held at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Glenside. 



↑ Director Chip Stevens (right) receives his AP Volunteer certificate from AP Coordinator Earl Paine

**Photos by
Rob Hinkle**



↑ Clinics Chair Mike Dettinger with his presentation

(Norma Toll (left) receives her → layout open house certificate from Layout Chair Bill Fagan





Clerk Mark Wallace (left) and Layout Chair Bill Fagan man the front table with Director Chip Stevens in the background



Clinician Steve Wysowski (left) receives his appreciation certificate from Clinics Chair Mike Dettinger

Photos by Rob Hinkle



Members hang out and talk model railroading



Ever the do-it-yourselfer, Clinics Chair Mike Dettinger presents himself with his appreciation certificate

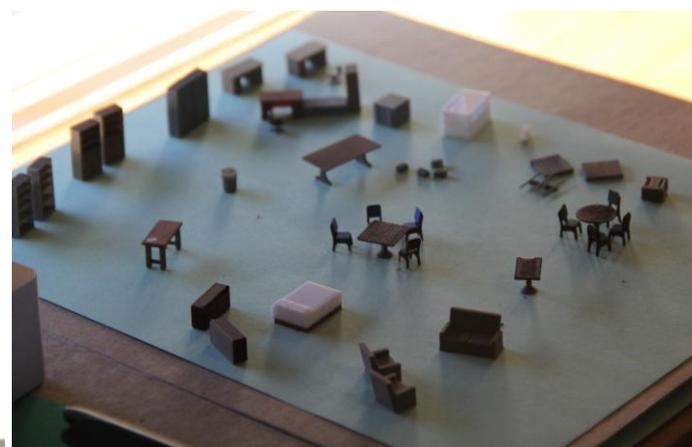


Attendees peruse the White Elephant table

Show & Tell



Above, right, below: Steve Richardson describes and discusses his impressive display of 3D-printed objects. See his excellent article in the August issue of The Dispatcher where he relates his foray into the world of 3D printing.



More handiwork by Steve Richardson



Former Philly (and now NJ Div) member Glyn Thomas, MMR discusses the book he wrote titled [Indian Steam Locomotives in HO Scale](https://www.diandsaulbooks.co.uk/indian-steam-locomotives-in-ho-scale-by-glyn-thomas-7747-p.asp). A description of the book and info on purchasing can be found at <https://www.diandsaulbooks.co.uk/indian-steam-locomotives-in-ho-scale-by-glyn-thomas-7747-p.asp>

Finger Actuated Axle Grabber

by Paul Welsh

The siding for Scofield Mine #1 comes off a 5% grade on a branch line main track that the cars and loco are sitting on in Figure 1. The conductor needs to leave the train on the main track in order to reach into the siding and pull the loads but if he simply uncouples the cars they will run away causing untold mayhem!

In situations like this a Pink Pearl “hand brake” can often be placed at the end of a train to keep it from moving. However, in this particular case the end of the train is unreachable and it would be too heavy for a Pink Pearl to hold back, anyway. So a finger actuated axle grabber was installed to hold the train as shown in the figure.

The yellow wire pin shown in Figure 2 is raised behind a car axle by lifting the yellow lever. After uncoupling, the pressure of the axle holds it in position and, since the pin is at an angle slightly less than vertical, there is a downward force on the axle that keeps it from jumping over the pin. The pin is centered on the road crossing, camouflaging the slot for the pin and providing an indication of the pin location for the operator.

When the loco returns and pulls the cars to

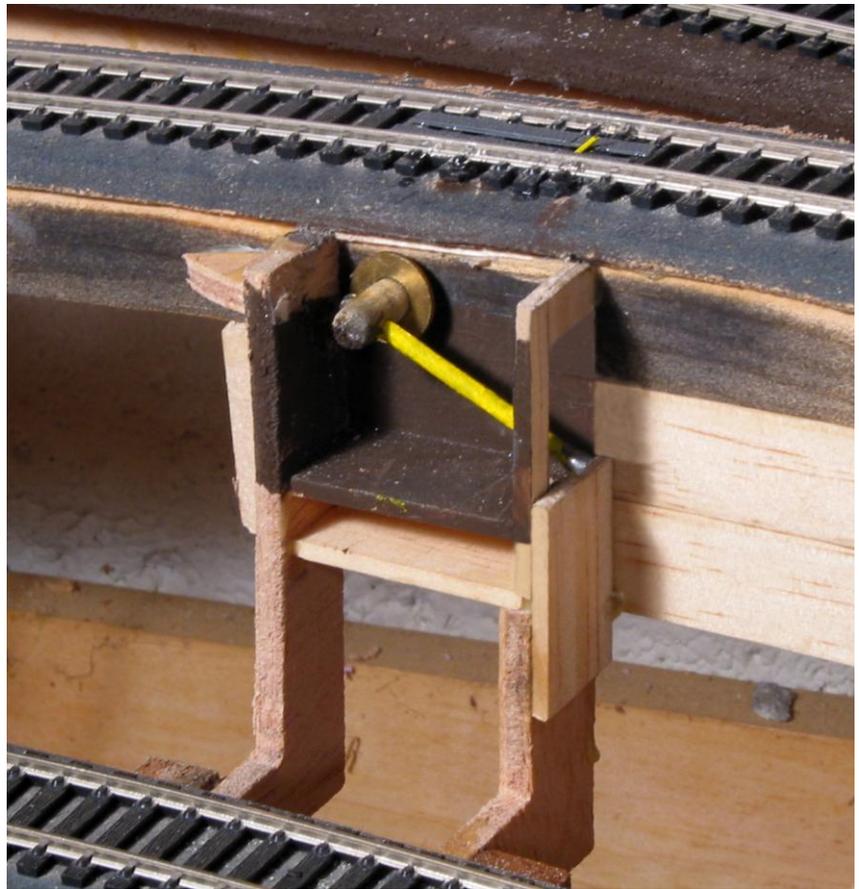


Figure 2 - Axle grabber mechanism

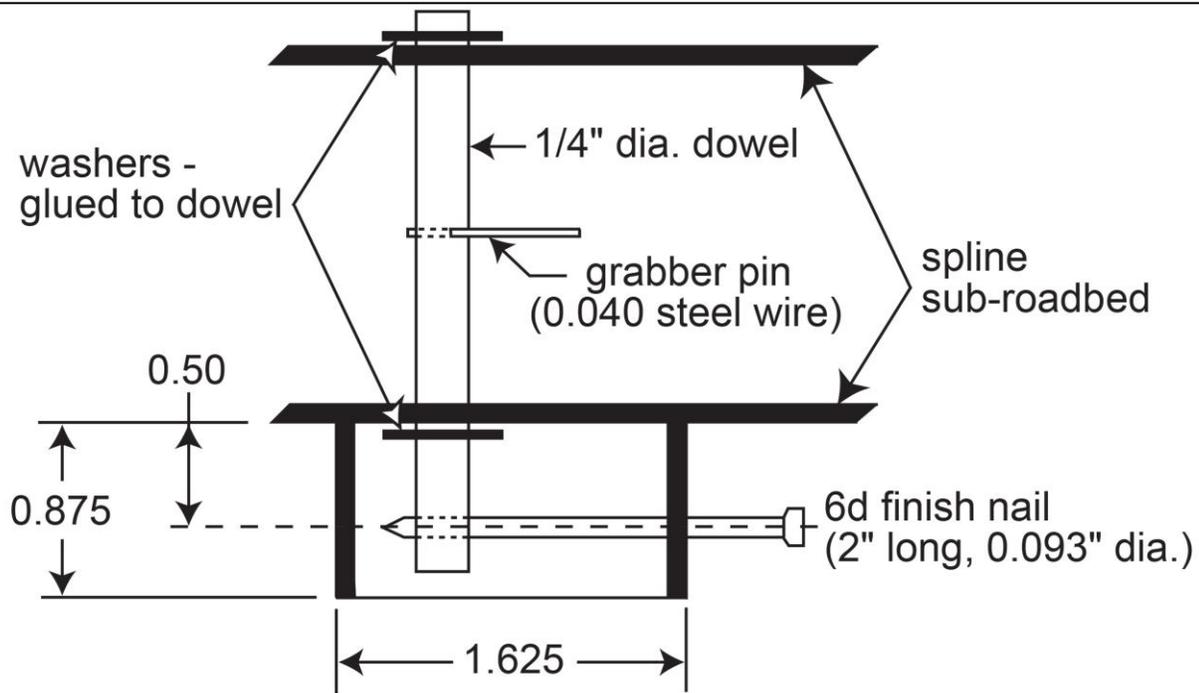


Figure 1 - Finger Port. The loco has just uncoupled from the train and the cars are held by the axle grabber. The loco will reach into the track behind them and pull the loads from the mine.

the right, the pressure is removed and the weight of the yellow lever pulls the pin down out of the way.

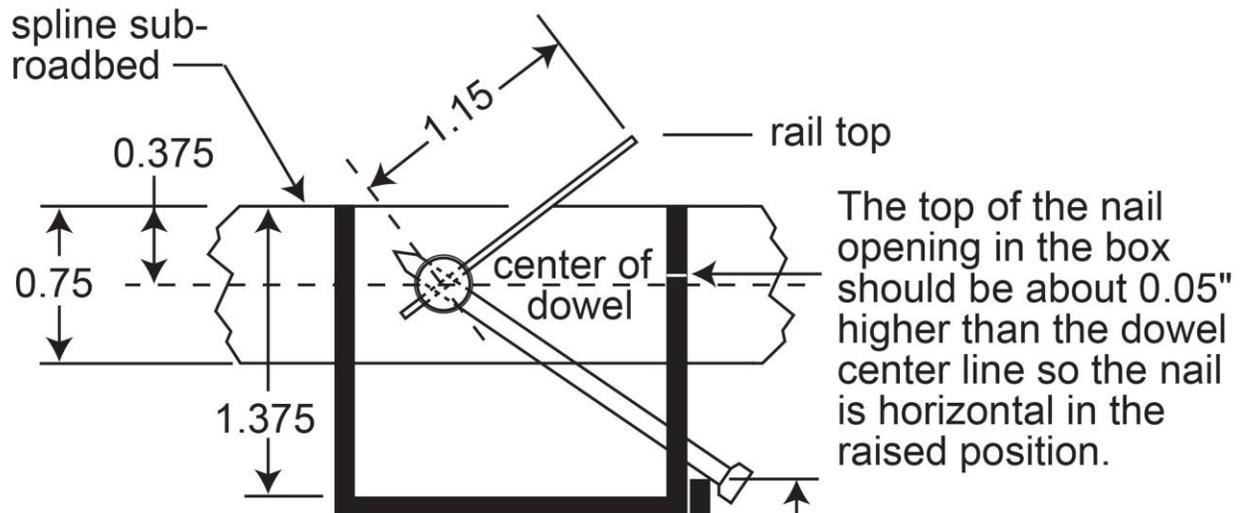
In the figures, the roadbed is 0.235” thick luan plywood and the track is code 100. Dimensions will need to be adjusted for other sizes. 📌





TOP VIEW

The grabber pin is in the raised position (nail horizontal). Roadbed and track (not shown) rest on the top of the splines.



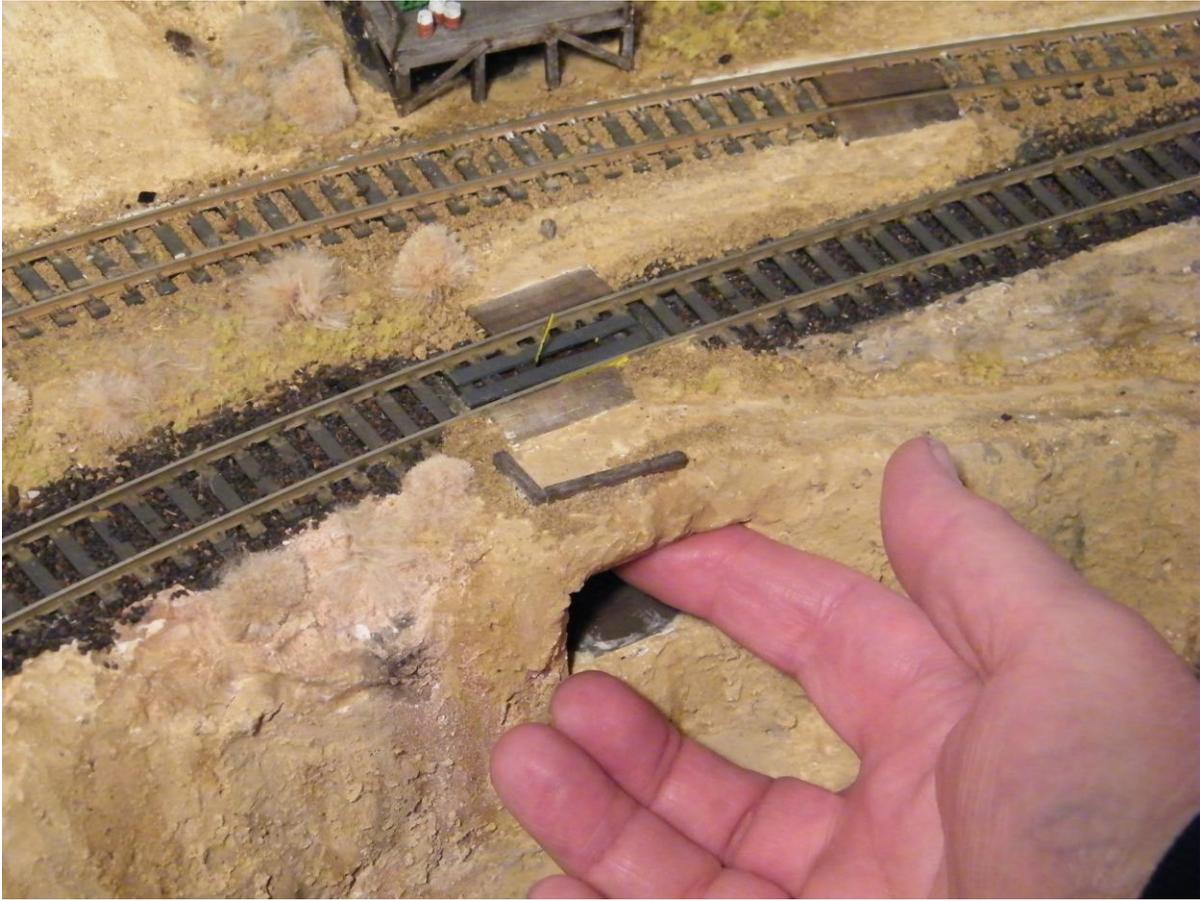
The top of the nail opening in the box should be about 0.05" higher than the dowel center line so the nail is horizontal in the raised position.

The angle between the nail and the grabber pin must be slightly less than 90 degrees. The angle in the drawing is about 75 deg.

The height of the stop-block should be adjusted so the grabber pin sits at the level of the rail top, or below.

SIDE VIEW

The grabber pin is in the lowered position.



Division Organization

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (elected)

OFFICERS

Superintendent – Joe Walters, MMR (2022)
Assistant Superintendent – Rob Hinkle (2023)
Clerk – Vacant
Treasurer – Kevin Feeney (2023)

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Mike Dettinger – Clinics (2022)
Chip Stevens – Publicity (2023)
Jeff Witt – Venues (2023)



AUXILIARY OFFICIALS (appointed)

AP Coordinator – Earl Paine
AP Committee Chair – Joe Walters, MMR
Newsletter Editor/Webmaster – Howard Kaplan

COMMITTEES/DUTIES

EVENTS

Clinics – Mike Dettinger
Layouts – Bill Fagan
Venues – Jeff Witt, Bill Fagan, Howard Kaplan
Refreshments – Bill Fagan, Joe Walters MMR
Door Prizes – Mike Dettinger
Clinic Video – Chip Stevens, Rob Hinkle
Certificates/Awards/Printed Materials – Earl Paine, Howard Kaplan
Publicity – Chip Stevens

MEMBERSHIP

Member Outreach – Joe Walters MMR, Chip Stevens
Membership Records – Vacant

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM - Earl Paine, Joe Walters MMR, Bill Fagan

OPS – Rob Hinkle

ITEM DONATIONS – Kevin Feeney

MEDIA

Social Media – Rob Hinkle
Webmaster – Howard Kaplan
Newsletter – Howard Kaplan, Earl Paine, Bill Fagan, Joe Walters MMR, Kevin Feeney, Chip Stevens
Layout Video – Bill Fagan
Photography – Rob Hinkle, Howard Kaplan, Bill Fagan, Rob Ischinger, Mark Wallace

DIVISION APPAREL – Howard Kaplan

Hobby Shops

Be sure to patronize the following hobby shops that are now offering discounts on model railroading purchases to NMRA members:

Henning's Trains

128 South Line Steet
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-362-2442

henningstrains.com

10% in addition to already discounted prices

THREE BIG BENEFITS OF NMRA MEMBERSHIP:

15% OFF **25% OFF** **45% OFF**

Those are the discounts that manufacturers and hobby shops in our Partnership Program are giving us right now. Partners like Micro-Mark®, Model Rectifier Corporation®, Badger Airbrush®, Unreal Details®, Hot Wire Foam Factory®, Logic Rail™ Technologies. And over 30 more companies. It's savings that can actually pay for your membership!

And are you taking advantage of our other big benefits? Like 150+ national convention clinic videos. Or over 15 hours of "how-to" videos produced by the biggest names in model railroading videos. Or our directory of model railroad layouts all over the world that you can visit. The list goes on and on.

If you haven't visited www.nmra.org lately, you're missing out on some really great stuff. Starting with a boatload of discounts!



We make it more fun.

THE NEW NMRA MODEL RAILROAD DIRECTORY
IS NOW **ONLINE** and **READY TO USE!**

Now whether you're at home or traveling, you can contact other NMRA members for a layout tour, to talk trains, or even to join in an op session! There are maps, descriptions, photos, videos, and more. And it's only available to NMRA members.

Visit www.nmra.org, log in as a member, and click on "Model RR Directory" to see layouts in your area or to list your own layout (as long as it's an operating home or garden railroad).
Join in the fun!



We make it more fun!









Bill Fagan: *The Video Vigilante*



Photos are snapshots from videos by Bill Fagan

Below are examples of some impressive layouts that I've visited. I've videoed layouts in California, Idaho, Maryland, Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. 174 layouts with 753 videos and 2575 followers on YouTube with 1.344 million views.

Mike Junod's Mayfair Electric →

The Mayfair Electric is a mythical trolley line in O scale. It does not attempt to model any specific prototype but rather uses familiar names from Mike's childhood in Northeast Philadelphia. Pacific Electric was a famous trolley and interurban network in Southern California and he simply substituted the name of his neighborhood, "Mayfair" in place of "Pacific." Roughly 24x26. All track is hand laid. Modular construction, working overhead wire, automatic carstop, occupancy detection, very much a work in progress. Expansion is planned to go around the walls of the basement including through the steps.

Video here: <https://youtu.be/jFS8GpeBGws>



← Bob Rule

HO Scale railroad, Digitrak controlled. Eastside yard to the Industrial Shifting area. Highly scenicked. Video Here:

https://youtu.be/SQ_yiRa9LX8

Pat McTeigue's Reading Railroad →

HO Scale railroad from Reading to Allentown with stops in between. Op session require about 10 operators. About 75% scenery completed. Digitrak controlled.

Video Here: https://youtu.be/eSCNy0Ve_k8



← **PJ Mattson, MMR's Raccoon Valley Railroad**

HO scale railroad depicting the area from the flat lands of South Jersey to the mountains of North Jersey with a Horseshoe Curve thrown in for fun. Also the Deer Mountain Branch.

Video here: <https://youtu.be/yVtISNlaMMo>



You can see these videos and other layouts on the Philly Division website: phillynmra.org—just click on Cab Ride Layout Videos. If you want to see future videos send me your email address and I'll put you on the distribution list. Do you want your railroad or a friend's railroad videoed? Email me at wfaqan@comcast.net. More to follow in the next issue of **The Dispatcher**.

Enjoy,

Bill

Model Railroading in a Retirement Village:

Ann's Choice & Elsewhere Model Railroad Club, Part 2

by Rick Melcher

Photos by Howard Williams

- **Layouts:** There are four permanent layouts—one in each of the three clubhouses and one outdoor layout. Also an O-gauge trolley layout under construction. In addition, we build a large holiday layout this time of the year.
- **Scale:** Two of the three clubhouse layouts are HO, one clubhouse has S, the outdoor layout is G (1:22.5), and the holiday layout and trolley layout are O/3-rail.
- **Construction:** All the indoor layouts are on plywood and are flat—no levels. However the holiday layout has an upper deck using 027 Lionel track while the lower level has traditional O track.
- **History:** From the information I've been able to gather, the club started with three members around November 2003. One member had a small N-scale layout in his apartment and it grew from there as it was mounted above an O-gauge layout built in the original Village Clubhouse. In 2005, another of the three members was able to get a portion of a large O-gauge layout started in that same location and he donated the layout to the club. Then in subsequent years, an additional, large HO layout was constructed in the Liberty Clubhouse, but the room was needed and the space it occupied was lost, so a smaller layout was constructed near the stairs. Some S-gauge rolling stock was donated and that layout was constructed in the Keystone Clubhouse. The space in the Liberty Clubhouse was almost lost and taken over by others so an O-gauge trolley layout was set up in the space to keep others from claiming the real estate! At one point there was also an O-gauge layout in what is called the Rose Garden building, which is for a higher level of medical care. I believe that layout is no longer present.
- **Thinking behind them:** From the answers I received I inferred that there had not been much planning or thinking involved, but rather the intention to just create some animated displays which us older residents would enjoy watching and recalling the memories of our youth.
- **Structures:** Most of the layouts have plastic buildings, but the outdoor layout has mainly scratch-built, wooden structures. 🗑️

Editor's Note:

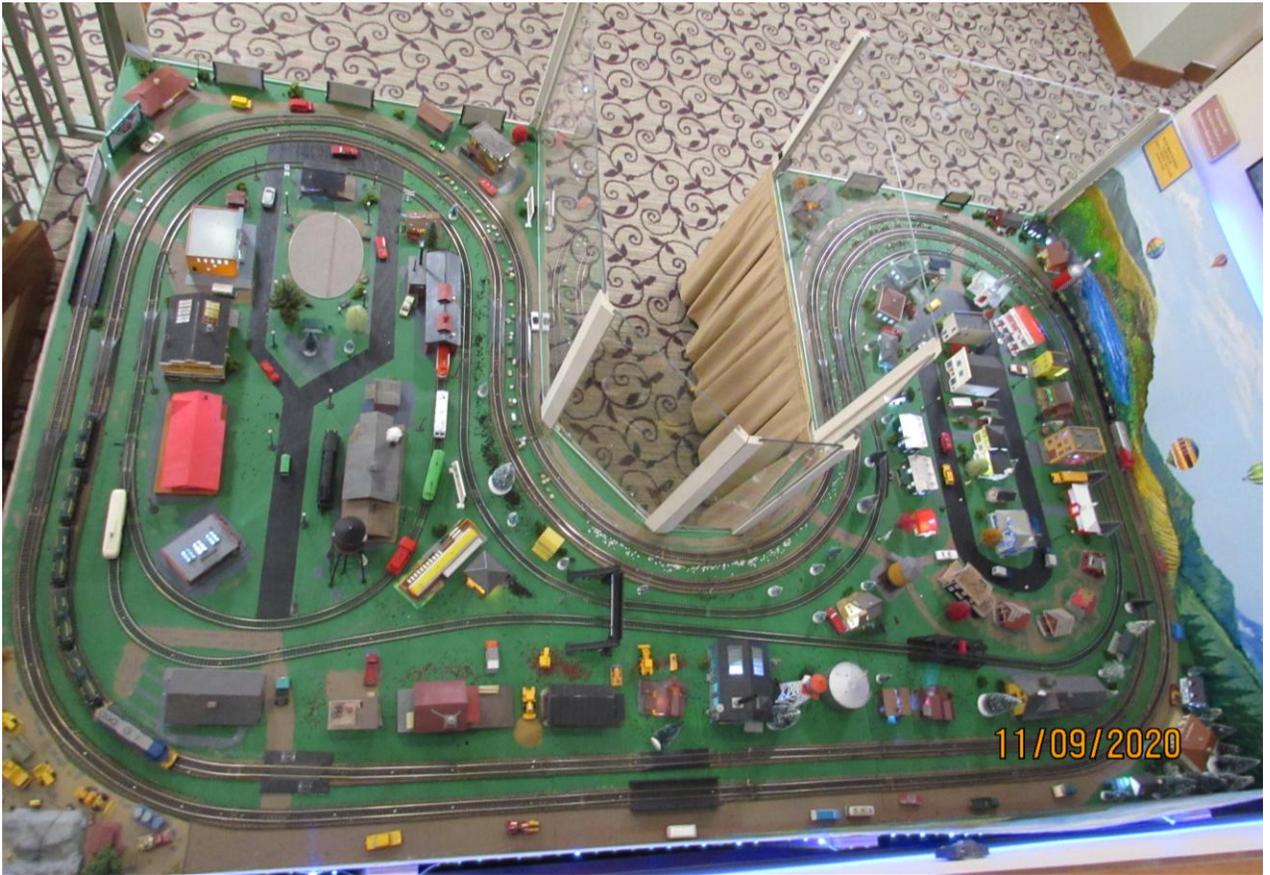
Earlier this year member Rick Melcher approached the division and other modelers with a checklist on maintenance and repair of the rolling stock of the model railroad club of Ann's Choice, the retirement village to which he and his wife had moved. My intention was to first provide a background of the model railroad club before delving into his document. I began last December presenting their layouts of the past. I had prepared part two for the March issue, but before it could be published, a fire destroyed my computer and that issue along with it.

So now we'll pick up where we left off with part two of the series which shows photos of the village's current layouts. Since so much time has passed since the introduction to the series, I am reprinting Rick's outline of the thoughts behind and execution of the layouts.

HO Layout

Backdrop by Ann's Choice Art Club



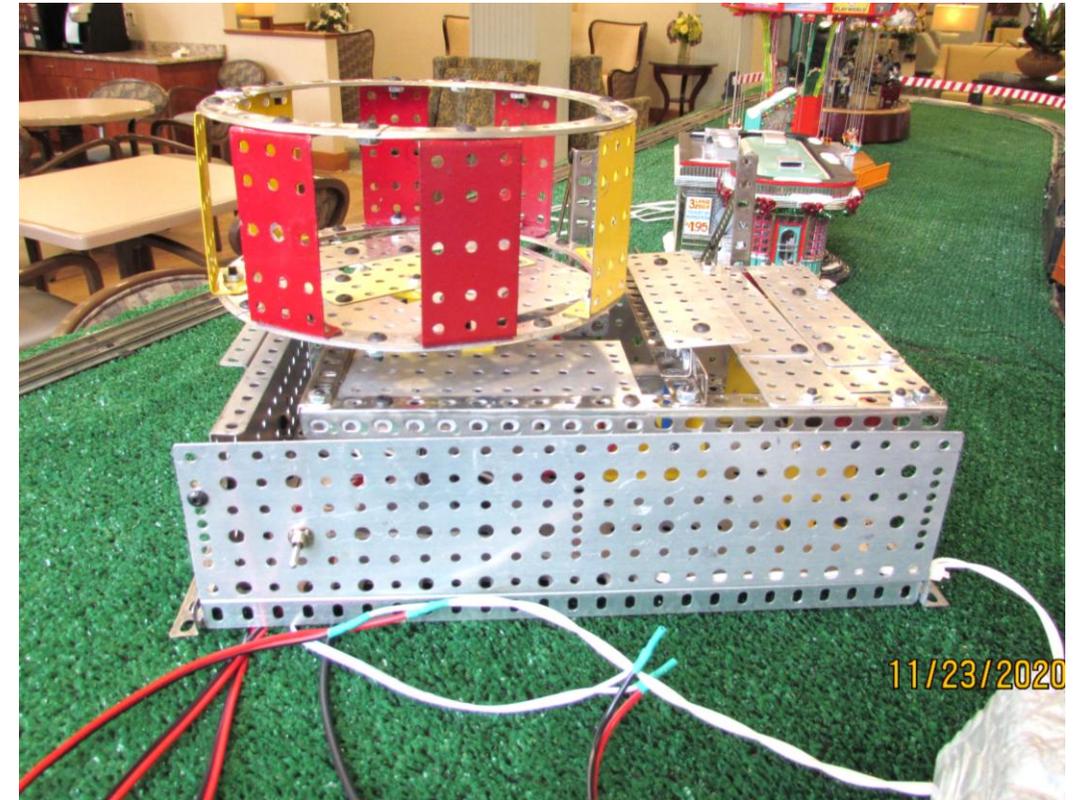


HO layout modified with snow for Christmas



O 3-rail layout





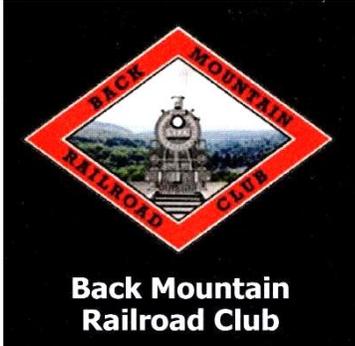




ON THE (RAIL) ROAD WITH KEVIN FEENEY

CONVENTIONS – SHOWS – TRAVEL

Wyoming Valley Road Trip



On Sunday June 13th, 2021 I rode north with Eric Dervinis to the Wilkes Barre area. Our first stop was in Dallas, PA, northwest of Wilkes Barre, home of the Back Mountain RR Club. The town was once served by the LV's Bowman's Creek Branch. As seems to be common these days, the club was hosting an outdoor train show in the parking lot of their club house that is located in a former silk/parachute factory.

The show was mediocre—a handful of sellers with either Lionel or overpriced HO stuff. Neither one of us bought anything! Inside was somewhat better. The club has several layouts: N, HO, S, and O 3-rail. The HO layout is modular and depicts several local scenes. The O layout features a spectacular model of the Tunhannock Creek Viaduct. As we were leaving, I purchased one of the club's \$5 raffle ticket for a drawing later that day. I asked the seller what happens if I win as I don't live around there. He said, "don't worry, you won't win," and he was right.



Heading back down towards the Susquehanna River, we stopped at Dave's Train Corner in Edwardsville, (<https://www.davetraincorner.com>). This is a well-stocked hobby store with some used stuff—said to be the largest in the Wyoming Valley. However, it is only open on weekend as Dave, its friendly owner, also works a day job. In



talking with Dave, Eric found out he has thousands of DL&W documents rescued from its Scranton shops before Steamtown moved in. Eric will call him when he is next in the area. The store is next to what was once part of the DL&W's Bloomsburg Branch (now a trail) and I was surprised when Eric told me that the building that houses Dave's and several other businesses was once the DL&W's freight car shop. Across the street in a long empty lot was once a DL&W roundhouse.



Leaving the store, we drove through Kingston and Eric pointed out where the Bloom ran, the location of several long-gone coal breakers and houses where his relatives once lived. In Plymouth, we stopped along the edge of the Susquehanna and walked up the dike. This whole area was wiped out in 1972 from Hurricane Agnes. We parked on Main Street and crossed the street to Rob's Train Galore. This was something to be seen but unfortunately, I didn't take any pictures. It would have been very hard to as the store is FULL floor to almost the ceiling with boxes and trays of old trains and used toys. Eric had found this store on a prior visit to relatives in the area. We squeezed through the aisles to the HO stuff where I found 4 nice HO cars for \$10 plus two Hotwheel trucks for \$2 more.

Crossing the Susquehanna, we drove around Wilkes Barre. The last time I was here was in the summer of 1969 when I visited Kings College. I decided against going there back then because the area was just too isolated and hard to get to. Where once there were major tracks, yards, etc. from CNJ, PRR and the LV, very little is left. NS runs thru Wilkes Barre between Scranton and Northumberland on a former CR/PC/PRR line. Reading & Northern passes through enroute to its yard in Pittston. R.J. Corman is now the designated operator for the Lehigh & Susquehanna for local freight traffic. One company still rail served is the Lion Brewery, one of the oldest breweries still in operation in PA, which we drove by on way home.

We stopped at the ex-CNJ station that is being renovated.



It is next to the massive, former Stegmaier Brewery, which has been repurposed.



We drove back stopping for dinner in Leighton once the location of the LV major's yard in this area.



Texas, New Mexico, and a bit of Arizona (7/21-26/2021)

This trip had several objectives. We were looking to travel to places that: 1) we had not been to before, 2) we had not been in a while, 3) have RRs and RR related things for me, and 4) have things that Carol wants to see. For the last decade or so, I have been working my way through a list of the 100 largest cities in the US. They range from NYC down to Richmond, VA with population of 230K. Earlier this year, I was able to go to several suburban cities in the DFW metroplex. Last month, we went to Lexington, KY for the first time, which was my 94th city. My largest missing city was El Paso, which, with a population of close to 700K, is the US's 22nd largest city. Across the Rio Grande River in Mexico is Ciudad Juárez with an estimated population is at least 1.5 million people.

So, we flew to El Paso (ELP) on AA on Wednesday 7/21 via DFW. Some El Paso trivia...it is farther from El Paso to Texarkana than it is from Texarkana to Chicago. The ELP airport is located a bit to the east of the downtown and next to Fort Bliss, the largest garrisoned US Army base in the country. The base has over 1700+ sq. miles in Texas and NM, making it bigger than Rhode Island with 1214 sq. miles. With rental cars prices being absurd these days, we just took the local bus for 60 cents (for two) to the downtown where we booked a free night at Indigo, a new funky hotel brand in the IHG family. The hotel building had been an older hotel that was redone. The bus dropped us off about three blocks to the west. It was an easy walk through the downtown area, which had several nice older buildings but almost no folks. Checking in we were given a room on the 10th floor and were rewarded with this view (photo on right). After a quick swim in the hotel's outdoor pool on the 5th floor, we walked around more of the downtown and had dinner.



On Thursday AM, I took the bus back to ELP and got our rental car saving a day's rental or \$65. On the way back to the hotel, I stopped at the former T&P freight house that we could see from the hotel room and the adjacent

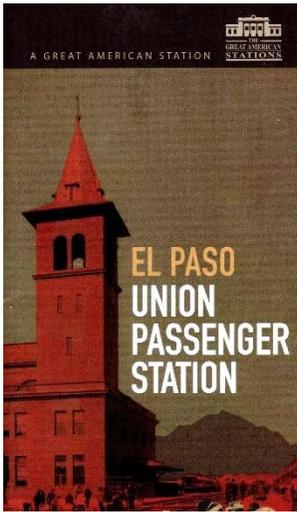


bigly UPRR yard of SP and T&P heritage. Our hotel was on the revived El Paso trolley line but we did not see any cars running there or anywhere else downtown on either day. We checked out of the Indigo and headed for the Mexican border, stopping on a shopping street by the pedestrian crossing. We could have actually walked across the border there with our passports and returned with NO covid tests but it was not worth the time and risk. We drove along the border on the US side and yes, there is a wall, actually several of them, with barbed

wire, etc. We saw border patrol vehicles driving next to the Rio Grande itself. We came across this well-preserved ATSF building next to the BNSF yard downtown.

Next, we headed over to El Paso's large *Union Station*, which was designed by Daniel Burnham and built in 1906. The size of the building was befitting El Paso's position then as the transportation hub for southwest Texas and southern New Mexico. We walked through the building and I picked up a nice brochure there that gave the history of the station, which had a large Harvey House Restaurant that operated until 1948. Originally there were seven railroads involved: ATSF, SP, T&P, El Paso & Southwestern, El Paso & Northeastern, and two Mexican railroads, the North Western and the Mexican Central. A map in the brochure shows the RI herald but it did not actually serve El Paso. When the station opened there were 22 trains a day, but now just Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* (Nos. 1 and 2) stops here 3 times a week in the afternoon, albeit on different days. I was surprised to learn that passenger service to Mexico lasted until 2000.





As we drove west by the wall, it was easy to see that living across the border was much different than in the US. We stopped at the local AAA office to get paper maps as much of our trip would be through desert areas with limited or no phone service. We headed north on US-54 that passed through Fort Bliss, home of the 1st Armored Division. The highway paralleled train tracks and from looking at the page I brought with me from the 1958 *Handy Railroad Atlas*, quickly determined this was once the



route of the *Golden State*, a passenger train that ran between Chicago and Los Angeles on the RI and SP. The SP ran to Tucumcari, New Mexico where it connected with the western end of the Rock Island's main line. At the NM border, I took a picture of UP 7850 (GE ES44AC) seemingly just sitting there. Interestingly, this line is still described as the *Golden State Route* on a 2019 NMDOT railroad map. We ended up paralleling the tracks for some 190 miles to Corona, NM but only saw one freight train.

As mentioned at the start, we wanted to go to places where we have never been before. One such place for me has long been the Trinity Site, where the first A-bomb was tested in July 1945. My hopes for that visit were quickly dashed beforehand when I found out that the site (in the middle of the White Sands Missile Test Range) is only open two weekends a year in April and October. However, we were able visit the nearby White Sands National Monument, which did have some exhibits related to the nuclear test. The white sands are actually gypsum, the same material used to make dry wall or sheetrock. I bought a book there on the Trinity Site that answered many of the questions I had about the blast. We saw this SP railroad relic in Alamogordo, which is near where most pistachios are grown in New Mexico.



Much of the day's drive was through desert but it was surprisingly green. Turns out it's due to summer thunderstorms; July is the monsoon season there when the area gets most of its annual rainfall. Turning northwest at Corona, we headed to I-40. We stopped for dinner at the Old Mill Restaurant in Estancia, NM. This was just by chance but as often happens to me there was a railroad connection. The rear wall of the place was, in fact, a former 1920s



reefer, yet there were no tracks in sight. After a nice and very reasonably priced dinner, we headed north and I soon saw telltale remnants of a former railroad right-of-way. Research when home found this to be the New Mexico Central, which once ran from Torrance to Santa Fe. The line was leased by the ATSF and the part near Estancia was abandoned in 1938. Once on I-40, we headed west to Albuquerque (think I can finally spell it now). We stayed for

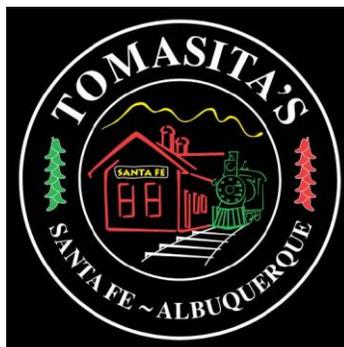
three nights at a Holiday Inn near the ALB airport.

On Friday, we were headed to Santa Fe but separately. Carol dropped me off at the Albuquerque Train Station. This ex-ATSF station is now an intermodal facility with local buses, Greyhound (one of their busses was leaving and the front of bus said New York—that would be some ride!), Amtrak (*Southwest Chief Nos. 3 and 4*), and my particular interest that day—the local Rail Runner Express commuter service. This service started back in 2006 when NM purchased track in the area from BNSF. Over time with new construction, the Rail Runner Express now runs on NMRX track for some 97 miles from Belden, NM (33 miles south of Albuquerque) north to Santa Fe with a total of 15 stations. The line uses MPI MP36PH-3C locomotives and the ubiquitous bilevel coaches and cab cars from Bombardier. The locomotives are painted in a stylized Road Runner paint schemes and the car doors go beep beep as they are closing. The line is operated by Herzog, which runs the trains with the engine facing south. From March 2020 to March 2021, the line was shut down entirely because of COVID. Full operations only resumed on May 24th.



At the station, I looked for a TVM but saw none. I asked a woman wearing a uniform where to buy my ticket and to my surprise, she said from her. The line has 6 fare zones; the regular one-way fare end to end is \$10, but a day pass is only a dollar more. Some fares are slightly less if purchased online. My five-zone, one-way, senior fare was just \$4 on a credit card. The 9:30AM train started in Albuquerque. There is earlier AM service from Belden that ends in Albuquerque. I boarded the train and was pleased to find a timetable and other printed items. Passing through the downtown area, I saw several siding and loading docks that once had rail service. A bit further north, there were still some rail-served industries. I was surprised by the number of folks boarding at each stop. However, given the parking issues in Santa Fe, taking the train there makes sense especially since the train fare includes free connecting bus service.

Once north of suburban Albuquerque, the line runs through some agricultural and desert areas. We stopped at Kowa Pueblo where I could see traditional stone ovens behind the dwellings. Eventually the line ends up in median of I-25. It ran that way until looping off to connect with the Santa Fe Southern (SFS) line into NM's state capital. I had given Carol the address of the Santa Fe Depot (the final stop), a map, directions, and the arrival time (11:16AM). However, when the train stopped at the South Capitol Station at 11:10AM, I was surprised to see her standing on the platform. Had I been seated on the other side of the train I never would have seen her. I ran off the train just as the door were closing beep beep. Our first stop after the visitor's center was at the State Capitol, which was only built in 1966. This makes it the newest in the country and perhaps the only one without a dome. Visiting state capitols has been new thing for us; we have been to ones in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Mississippi in the last three years. The rest of the day was spent visiting the tourist sites there—the oldest catholic church and house in the US from the 1600s, the cathedral, and of course some shopping. We went to an overlook, which was the site of a mid-19th century adobe fort (mostly gone), and had a nice view of the city



a mid-19th century adobe fort (mostly gone), and had a nice view of the city

Dinner was here. This restaurant is known for classic northern New Mexican cuisine (think red and green chili peppers). It is located next to the ex-Santa Fe Depot, which is the last stop for the Rail Run-

ner line. In fact, a train arrived as we were looking for a place to park. We had actually eaten here back in the 1990s on our last visit to Santa Fe during a ski vacation in nearby Taos. The building was once a union station for two narrow gauge lines. The D&RG narrow gauge line that ran south from Colorado was known as the Chili Line. The food was served quickly; it was reasonably priced and we brought home enough for lunch the next day.

After dinner we could have jumped on I-25 south and been in Albuquerque about an hour later. Instead, we went north on I-25 for a short distance and then drove south to Lamy, NM. This was the ATSF stop for Santa Fe, via a connecting train. That service ended when Amtrak came into being. When we were there in the 1990s, the tracks were operated by SFS, which was then owned by actor Michael Gross of Family Ties fame. SFS had a mixed train between Lamy and Santa Fe. Lamy is still an Amtrak stop for the *Southwest Chief* and is the northern limit of the track owned by NMRX. It is also the site of a defunct railroad museum although it appeared that something is being planned for the SFS under new ownership as several cars were recently painted in an interesting paint scheme like this one on an ex-CNJ combine.



We spent Saturday in Albuquerque. We returned to the downtown and then drove a few block south to what was once the largest locomotive shop on the ATSF. This is a yuge complex of abandoned building from the early 20th



century. Once the ATSF was dieselized, the need for this facility was greatly reduced. Locomotive servicing was moved to other locations and the facility last maintained MOW equipment in the 1980s. It also housed the ATSF's historic locomotive collection until it was donated to California State Railroad Museum in 1986. The complex is now owned by the city, which is trying to redevelop it (more on that later).



Carol has long wanted to go on a hot air balloon ride (I'll stick with things with wings or rotors) and Albuquerque is the center for hot air ballooning in the US. So we headed to the balloon museum. However, she had seen a listing in a guidebook for Santa Fe Locomotive #2926 saying it was open that day. It was on the way to the balloon museum so we stopped. Something was going on, but entry to the place was blocked off. I asked someone who said they were closed to the public that day. I walked closer to try and get a picture when someone said to come on in. I quickly learned what was going on. #2926, a 4-8-4 Northern, was among the last steam engines purchased by the ATSF. It was built by Baldwin in 1944 and was in operation till 1953. It was later donated to the City of Albuquerque where it sat in a park for years until it had to be moved for construction of I-25. The engine was rescued by a local group, which has spent the last two decades working on it. What I saw that day was the engine being steamed up for the first time in decades. On Sunday, July 25th the engine moved under its own power for the first time in many years. Sadly, as of now, it has no place to run. This event was widely reported in the rail fan press. We spent the rest of the day in Old Town and went to mass in an early 18th century church.



Sunday was our last day in Albuquerque. We headed to The Yards Market, located in and in front of the former



blacksmith shop of the former ATSF shop complex mentioned previously. This is a Sunday only, farmers and local

craft market open from May to October. We got there before it opened and easily found a place to park. When we left about 45 minutes later the place was packed and folks were parking outside and walking in. (Note that there is a similarly named, albeit smaller, place in Santa Fe called The Railyard.) Leaving The Yards, we followed the tracks hoping to see some trains and were



rewarded with this engine: ex-ATSF #636 GE C44-9W (Dash 9-44CW) in the classic, albeit faded, warbonnet

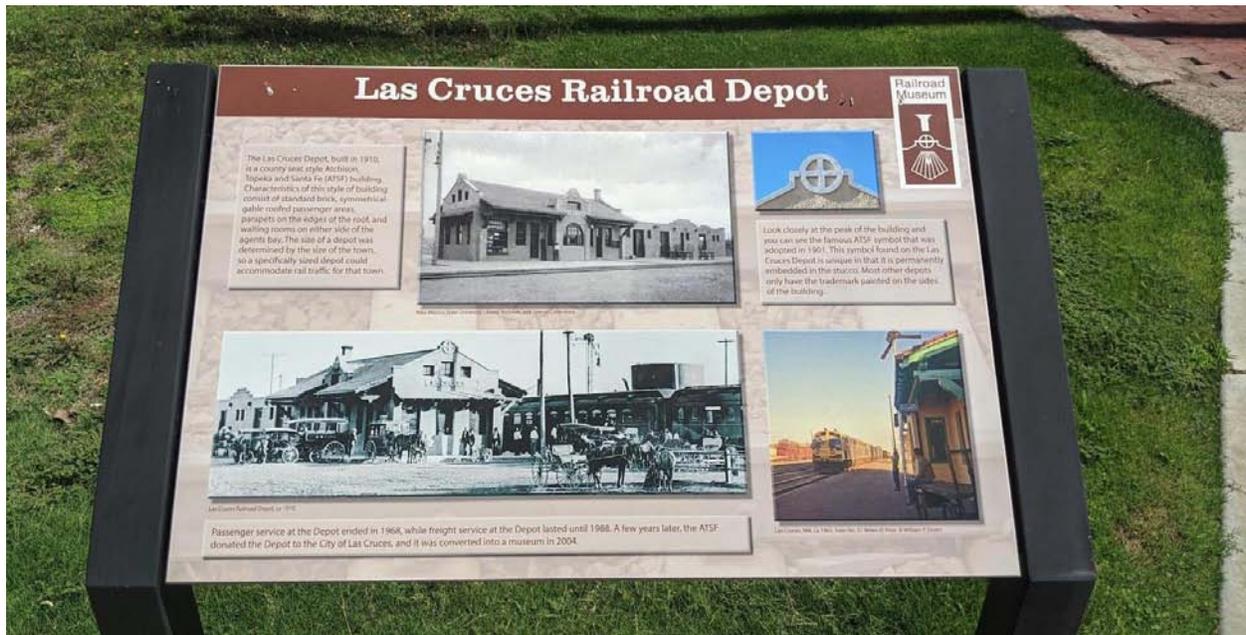


paint scheme. Getting on I-25, we drove south following the Rio Grande River and the BNSF line towards El Paso. After about three hours, we stopped for lunch in Las Cruces, NM at a local hamburger chain noted for their green chili cheeseburger that we didn't try.



Also in Las Cruces is a well-preserved ex-ATSF depot and small railroad museum which unfortunately was closed that day.





Back on the highway, we were in ELP about an hour later. We returned the rental car and checked our bags for the flights back. Since I will do just about anything for more miles, we flew west to Phoenix and were upgraded to first class. We arrived there early at 5:55PM MST (AZ does not do Daylight Saving Time).



Arriving in Phoenix's Sky Harbor airport (PHX) I had plans. Our overnight flight to PHL was not scheduled to depart until 10:59PM so I had enough time to make a special trip to Gilbert, AZ, one of my five missing cities. Gilbert is a suburban city southwest of Phoenix. I have been to Phoenix several times and beforehand had studied a map concluding I had never been to Gilbert. From PHX, I walked to the Sky Train people mover that connects with the Valley Metro light rail. I brought a \$2 senior ticket and took the next train to the eastern end of the line in Mesa. There, I connected with the #136 bus (no fare collection) that ran down to Gilbert. I got off at this sign, which was the last stop. I



asked the driver when he was heading back and he said 11 minutes. This gave me enough time to get something to eat at a nearby McD. On the bus/train again, I reversed myself back to PHX clearing TSA by 9:30PM at which point our plane was delayed until 11:30PM.

It was another full flight to PHL. We were on the upgrade list but flew home in an exit row. We arrived in PHL around 7AM and made the 7:40AM SEPTA train to Jenkintown and were in our house by 9AM. We both ended up sleeping most of the day.

Now, just four more cities to go: Fresno and Bakersfield, CA, Wichita, KS and Lubbock, TX!



St. Louis RPM (7/30-31/2021)

event was the 14th annual and set a record with over 700 folks in attendance. Clearly there was pent up demand. In talking with several attendees, this was the first major model railroad event they have attend in over a year.

I have been to this meet several times. It is held at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville, Illinois, about 12 miles east of the Gateway Arch. Several things make this meet unique and very useful to me as an IC modeler. Each year there is a special theme for the clinics, which this year was coal. The meet attracts a large number of historical societies. This year there were 19: ACL/SAL, CB&Q, CofG, C&EI, C&NW, GN, GM&O, IT, L&N, MILW, MP, NKP NYC, PRR, IRM, R&LHS, SR, TRRA & WAB. I belong to the GM&O, IT, and TRRA historical societies. Oddly missing was the ICHS. Personally, I was a member of that group for many years but quit when its leadership decided the world ended on 8/10/1972, the date the IC merged with GM&O forming ICG. Asking around, I heard the ICHS is now defunct and a visit to their website when home pretty much confirms that. Most of the display models were of midwest roads and more than a few from the IC/ICG and my other roads.

I travelled here on the cheap. I booked the trip with AA miles. (I only have 2 million!) I was able to take the BiState light rail from STL airport into Illinois from where I took a bus to Collinsville and then a second bus to the convention center at a total cost of \$7. I arrived in time for the 1PM clinic on 7/30. I alternated attending the clinics and walking the large show floor. There were the typical vendors you expect for a RPM meet, a few modular layouts plus all of the historical societies were selling their specialized items. Also added this year were several booths with modelers demonstrating a particular technique.



I ate dinner nearby restaurant after which I heard the keystone speaker who is the GM of the Indiana Rail Road. This is a 250-mile line that was spun off from ICG in 1986 and has expanded service in several ways including intermodal. The line is wholly-owned by CSX but separately managed. I stayed at the adjacent Hilton Doubletree hotel with points. This is where many of the attendees and vendors also stayed. The hotel bar furnished hors d'oeuvres in the evening.

Saturday 7/31 was more of the same—alternating clinics and visits to the show floor. Things wound down by 4:30PM for a bigly door prize drawing. I won a Bowser CN freight car. After that I got a ride back to St. Louis with my friend Andy Sisk of the GM&O HS. We drove by Metro East Industries that rebuilds heritage railroad cars. I treated Andy to dinner in an Italian restaurant in the basement of what was once the railroad YMCA next to Union Station. He took me down their new loop trolley line, which unfortunately is no longer operating. I stayed over at an airport hotel and flew back to PHL early on Sunday AM with a free upgrade even though I was flying with miles. 🐱





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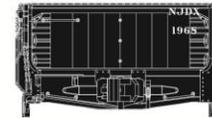
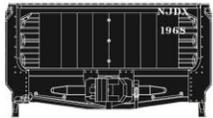
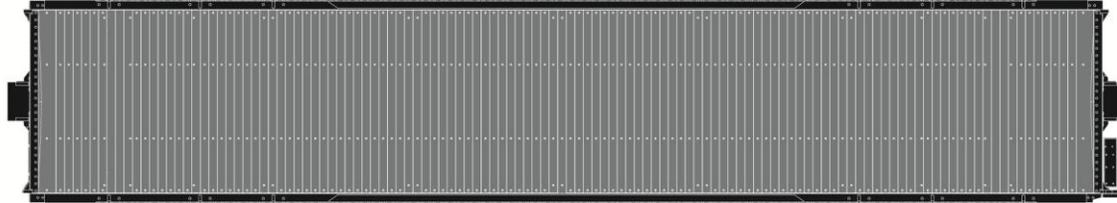
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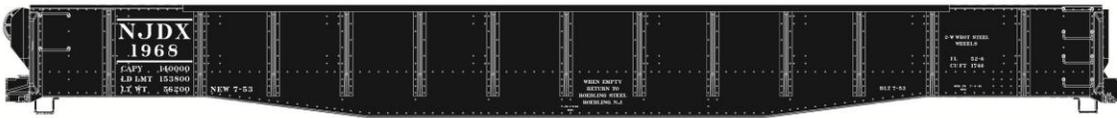
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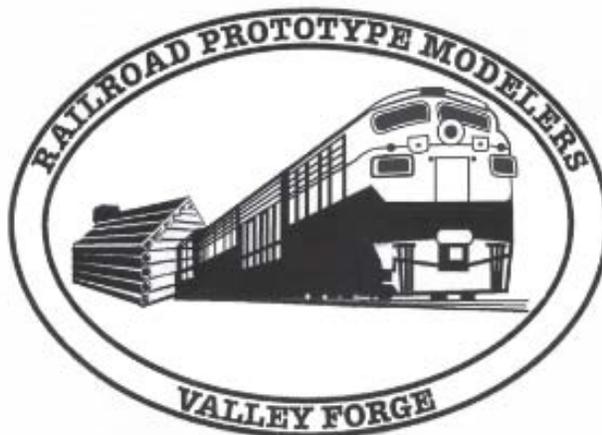
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If you missed out on any of our previous events, all of the videos are saved on the NMRA YouTube channel:

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Upcoming NMRA Conventions



[Gateway 2022, St. Louis, MO](#)

2022

[Gateway 2022](#)



[2023 Texas Express](#)

2023

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Upcoming MER Conventions

2022 Convention – “Carolina Special Look South in 2022”

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We are in the process of redesigning our line of division apparel. Information will be posted on the website and appear in future editions of *The Dispatcher* as it becomes available.



Short Sleeve Button-Down Work Shirt
(name can be added)*



Long Sleeve Button-Down Work Shirt
(name can be added)*

* Name and patch positions reversed for shirts with pocket

For more information check out these websites and search for the appropriate model number:

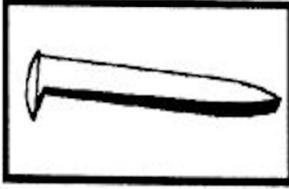
Port Authority - www.portauthority.com

Polos: K500, K500P (pocket), K500LS (long sleeve), K500LSP (long sleeve w/pocket)

Button Down: S508 (short sleeve), S608 (long sleeve)

Gildan - www.gildan.com

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PLEASE COMPLETE THIS APPLICATION FORM AND SEND TO YOUR REGIONAL OR DIVISIONAL AP CHAIR

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Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____

The Golden Spike Award will be awarded to any NMRA member who has completed the Qualifications Checklist, obtained the necessary signatures and who does not hold MMR status. It will be administered by the regional and divisional AP Chairs. AP regulations and definitions apply for scratch building and super detailing. To qualify for the award the member must complete the following checklist, obtain the signature of the divisional AP Chair or another NMRA member designated by the divisional Chair. The divisional Chair will submit the signed form to the regional AP Chair who will issue the Golden Spike Award certificate.

QUALIFICATIONS CHECKLIST:

1. Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars):

Display six units of rolling stock either scratch built, craftsman kits or super-detailed commercial kits.

2. Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

Construct a minimum of eight square feet of layout including scenery.

Construct five structures either scratch built, craftsman kits or super detailed commercial kits. If a module has less than five structures, additional structures separate from the scene may be presented.

3. Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

Three types of track required (e.g. turnout, crossing, crossover, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial track may be used.

All installed track must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (e.g. double track main, single track main with sidings, and block or command control).

Provide one additional electrical feature such as power operated turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc.

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