



THE DISPATCH

The Journal of PhillyNMRA

March 2023



September 1940. Mr. T.J. Long, president of the Tri-County Farmers Co-op Market in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania, at his work in a railroad tower near Du Bois. Medium format acetate negative by Jack Delano (shorpy.com)



THE DISPATCH

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

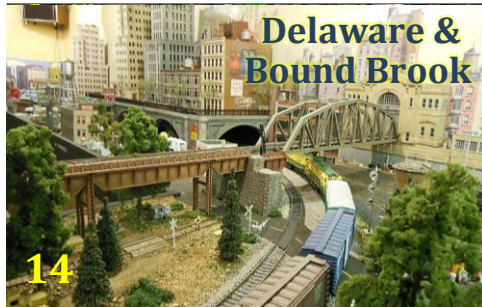


March 2023

PhillyNMRA.org

Volume 30, No. 2

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THE DISPATCH

Submissions: *THE DISPATCH* 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.

Next Issue: May 2023. Due out approximately May 15th.
Deadline for submissions: May 1st.

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From the Super's Desk

Greetings!
Well, it's election time again. Each year you have the opportunity to vote for the board of directors. Each term is two years. This year there are four positions open. Any division member in good standing is able to run. If you are interested in placing your name for consideration please contact any member of the election committee: Charles Long, Joe Walters, and Mike Dettinger.

Serving on the board of directors is an honor and a way to give back to the division and the model railroad community. You can make a difference by sharing your talents. Also remember that we have many committees to handle different functions in order to keep the division operat-

ing smoothly. If a board position seems too daunting or time consuming, you can also consider volunteering in another capacity.

This election cycle, as with last year, we will be using the online Election Buddy system as well as sending out paper ballots. The use of paper ballots insure that all members have access to the information and are able to vote. Please take the time and exercise your right to vote.

I was pleasantly surprised by the turnout at our January meet with our friends from Jersey. Also, at our February meet in Allentown we had a large turnout of division members. I am grateful to all those that drove the distances to attend these meets.

I hope to see you at the April 15th meet in Newtown Square. Welcome to spring!

Joe



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to our March print edition of *The Dispatcher*. In this issue you'll find information on our upcoming April meet to be held in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania

In addition to our regular columns, we are featuring two beautiful layouts—one established, the other we've just discovered.

Well, it has finally happened. I have exhausted my pile of articles and am now, once again, asking readers to contribute.

As I continue to emphasize, you need not be a writer. As editor, my job is to fix the grammar, spelling, and punctuation. All you need is to cobble together your information written in the best way you can express it, along with photos, diagrams, or whatever supporting documentation you might have, and forward it to me.

It need not be a lengthy article. "Tips and tricks"-type contributions

are equally appreciated. Or product reviews.

Photos need not be professionally taken. Over the years I have included my own photos in *The Dispatcher* taken with cheap, point-and-shoot, digital cameras—and today's cell phones usually equal or exceed the quality of those cameras.

Model railroading is so multifaceted that there should be no end to the number of things one could write about. They need not be focused on a finished layout. I would welcome any articles on aspects such as benchwork, skirting, fascia, outlets and lighting, backdrops, workarounds to obstacles—and the list could go on and on.

And, as I've often mentioned, you get AP volunteer or author credit for every contribution, no matter how large or small. Your contributions not only help me to provide a better publication, but help other modelers and railfans, as well.

Howard

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Bear, DE 19701
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howard@phillynmra.org

Next Stop: Newtown Square

On Saturday, April 15, 2023, the Philadelphia Division returns to St. Alban's Church in Newtown Square for its upcoming meet. The address is 3625 Chapel Road (at PA-252), Newtown Square, PA 19073. Maps and directions can be found on page 7. Doors open at 8:30AM with the morning's events to begin at 9:00.



Photo taken in the 1950s looking east, showing the Newtown Square yards, freight station (right,) and passenger station (center). The location was on the west side of PA-252 just north of the church at the power lines.

Clinic #1: Illinois Terminal Railroad: Past, Present, and Modeling by Adam Eyring



Division member Adam Eyring, a native of Chicago and follower of Illinois and Pennsylvania railroads, has been getting into traction modeling as a member of the East Penn Traction Club. He recently spent a lot of time getting to know the Illinois Terminal Railroad while finding suitable prototypes to model in HO. He will talk about its history, including what remains today, as well as how you can model it with traction and non-traction.

Clinic #2: Automating Collection Management and Operating Sessions with Train DB Plus by Alan Silverblatt

This clinic will introduce "Train DB Plus," a software package that lets you track your collection of rolling stock and automate other model railroad-related tasks. The software is simple and easy to use "right out of the box," but still allows a great deal of customization to fit your particular needs.

With it you can track your rolling stock (and any other items you want), organize your books and magazine articles

(and search them by title or key word), record and retrieve other potentially useful information, build consists and automatically generate switch lists for operating sessions, generate reports, and import or export data to and from Excel, CSV, or PSV files. The clinic will cover how to download and install the software, as well as an overview of all its features.

Division member Alan Silverblatt is a transplant from Pittsburgh, a former attorney and later IT tech, and an N-scale modeler—and is a regular attendee of our meets and other NMRA events.

The AP committee has officially begun judging models at our meets. If you would like a model judged, please contact Earl Paine or Joe Walters in advance.

All attendees are encouraged to bring a model in any level of progress to the meet for our display table and show and tell, if desired. As usual we'll hold our 50/50 raffle, draw for door prizes, and have coffee, donuts, and Philly soft pretzels.

Just a note: We can always use help in setting up and tearing down the chairs, tables, and equipment at each meet. We welcome members to arrive early or stay a few minutes after to help out, and are happy to award AP credit toward your Volunteer certificate. Just make sure to mention it to Joe Walters or Earl Paine

The afternoon features layout open houses including the StARR club in the basement of the church. There's also the collection of railroad equipment and the relocated PRR Newtown Square freight station building at nearby Drexel Lodge Park. Looks to be an enjoyable and interesting meet. Hope you can make it!



Call for Nominations


Well, it's that time again. Every spring, the Philadelphia Division holds its annual election for board of directors. There are seven total board positions, four (4)




of which are open for election or re-election this year. The term is for two (2) years. The board then elects officers from among the directors. This is your opportunity to take an active role in the operation and direction of the division. Board members are expected to



attend board meetings (every two months online via Zoom) and all meets—or at least aim to. If interested, please supply a bio and photo to the editor, Howard Kaplan, and contact a member of the nominating committee: Charles Long, Joe Walters, or Mike Dettinger.

If elected office is too big a step, consider volunteering to chair or work on a committee. Any participation counts as credit toward your AP Volunteer certificate. 

Division Member Receives Worldwide Recognition

Congratulations go out to Philadelphia Division member Ron Hoess whose model railroad appeared in the 2023 edition of Kalmbach's *Model Railroad Planning*. Ron recently presented a clinic on his HO-scale layout depicting the PRR's Chestnut Hill and Stifftown branches in the 1950s. 

April Meet Maps and Directions

St. Alban's Church
3625 Chapel Rd
Newtown Square, PA 19073

From North

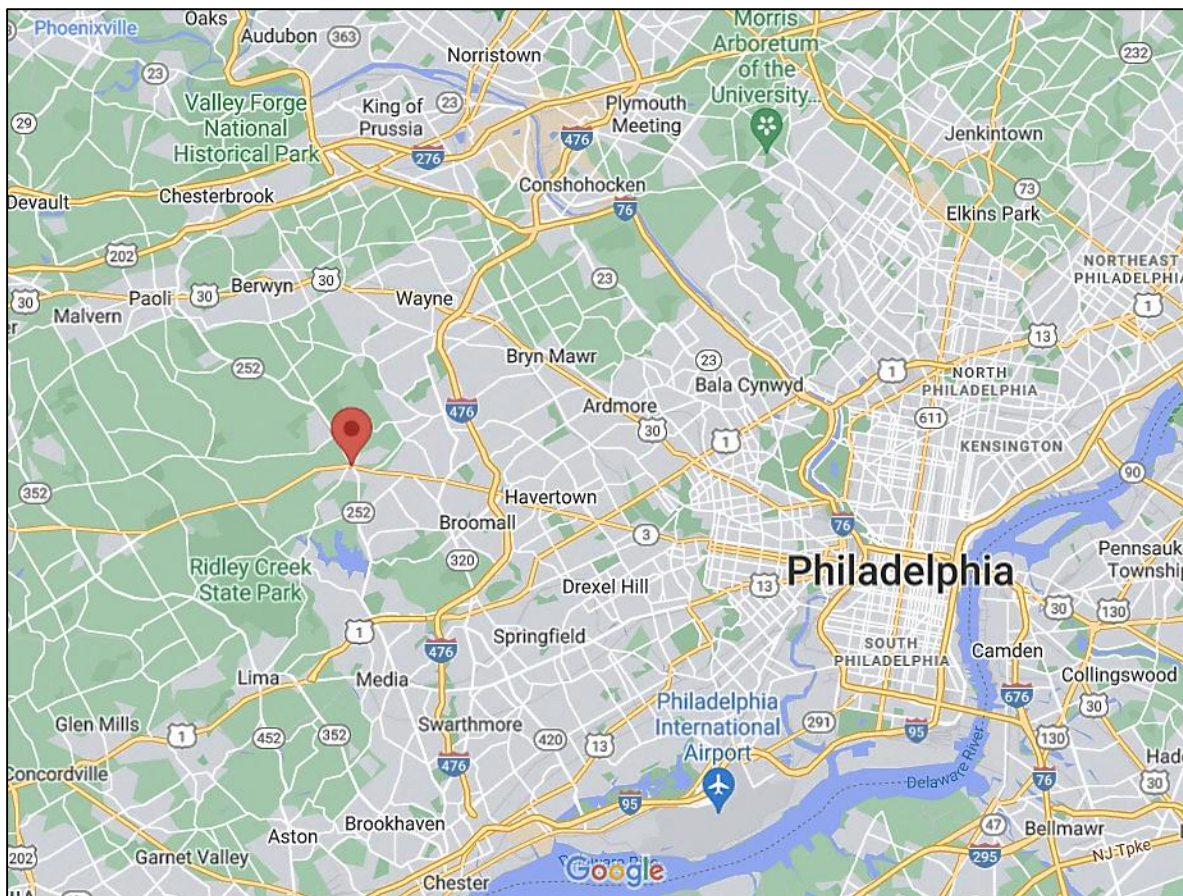
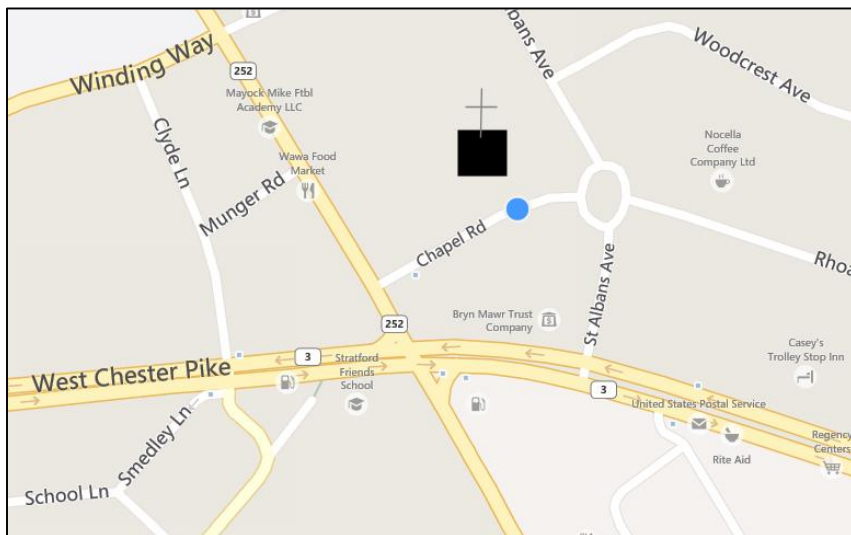
I-476 South to Exit 9 (Broomall - PA-3 west)
Turn right at end of ramp.

From South

I-476 North to Exit 9 (Broomall - PA-3 west)
Turn left at end of ramp.

From Exit 9

1. West on PA-3 (West Chester Pk) 3.3 mi
 2. Turn right onto PA-252 north 210 ft
 3. Take the 1st right onto Chapel Rd.
- Destination will be on the left



Planning Ahead – Division Meets & Other Upcoming Events

April 15, 2023 Philadelphia Division Meet St. Alban's Church 3625 Chapel Rd. Newtown Square, PA 19073	June 10, 2023 Philadelphia Division Meet/Picnic Alverthorpe Park Jenkintown Road & Forrest Avenue Jenkintown, PA 19046	August 20–26, 2023 NMRA Convention “Texas Express” Gaylord Texan 1501 Gaylord Trail Grapevine, TX 76051
September 2023 Philadelphia Division Meet TBA	October 19-22, 2023 MER Convention “Round the Curve to Altoona” Altoona Grand Hotel 1 Sheraton Drive Altoona, PA 16601	November 2023 Philadelphia Division Meet Brandywine Town Center 4050 Brandywine Parkway Wilmington, DE

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

January Meet Report *by Charles Long, Clerk*

Photos by Rob Hinkle



On Saturday, February 18th, 2023, the Philadelphia Division met jointly with the Susquehanna Division in Allentown, Pennsylvania at the Bridgeworks Enterprise Center, a repurposed Mack Truck building.

The Philadelphia Division was well represented with twenty-eight members signed in, along with members from the host Susquehanna Division and a few from the New Jersey Division.

MER Local Convention Committee General Chairman Jerry Lauchle, MMR gave a presentation about the upcoming October 2023 “Round the Curve to Altoona” Mid-Eastern Region Convention to be hosted by the Susquehanna Division.

Rob Hinkle, assistant superintendent of the Philadelphia Division, made the first clinic presentation titled, “Researching and Designing a Hershey-Inspired Reading Layout.”

The second clinic was by Scott Unger of the Susquehanna Division describing how the Lehigh Valley Barbers Quarry Branch was “almost” resurrected to serve a former manufacturer in the building complex where we were meeting.

Kevin Feeney of the Philadelphia Division set up a sales table

in an adjacent room. Also in that room, Earl Paine, AP coordinator of our division, arranged for Achievement Program judging. Earl and the AP committee plan to continue doing judging at future meet provided he is contacted in advance.



After lunch, attendees were able to visit two home layouts in Allentown: Dave Deal’s freelance, S-scale, 1980s-era North Carolina short line, and Scott Unger’s large, HO-scale, CSX-era railroad, currently under construction, depicting the B&O’s segment of the former Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh in western Pennsylvania. Attendees were also able to visit the club layout of Coopersburg Area Society of Model Engineers.



A tale of two supers: Newly elected Susquehanna Superintendent Alan Mende and Philly Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR pose for the camera



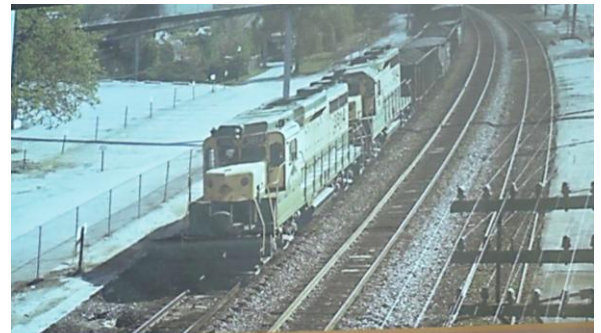
The AP Judging Committee assesses a model (not the mug) of Division Director Jeff Witt. L to R: Mark Wallace, Steve Hamilton, Earl Paine, Chip Stevens, and standing, Joe Walters, MMR



Treasurer Kevin Feeney (center in red vest) offers his wares for sale on the swap tables



Clinics Director Mike Dettinger (L) introduces Philly's clinician, Assistant Super Rob Hinkle



*Researching and Designing a Reading Company Layout
PRESENTED BY
ROB HINKLE
FEBRUARY 18TH 2023*

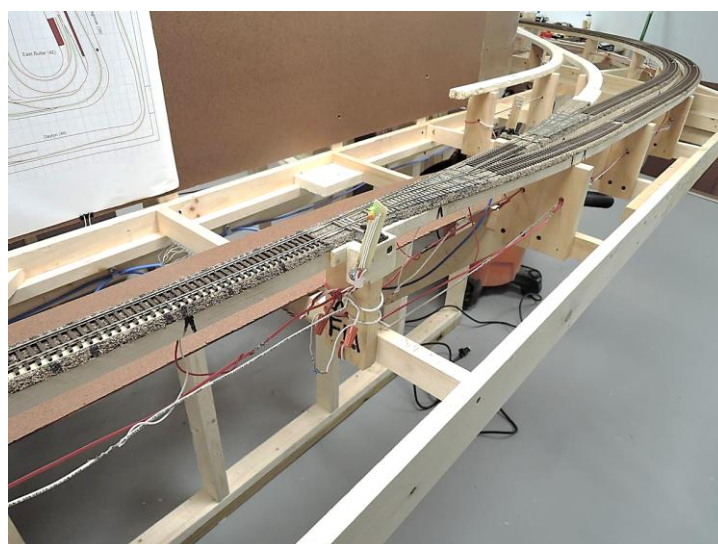
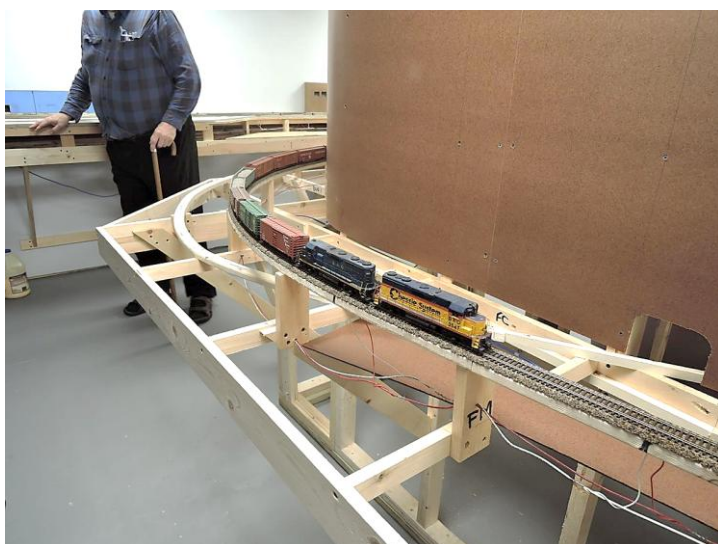
The title slide from Rob's clinic

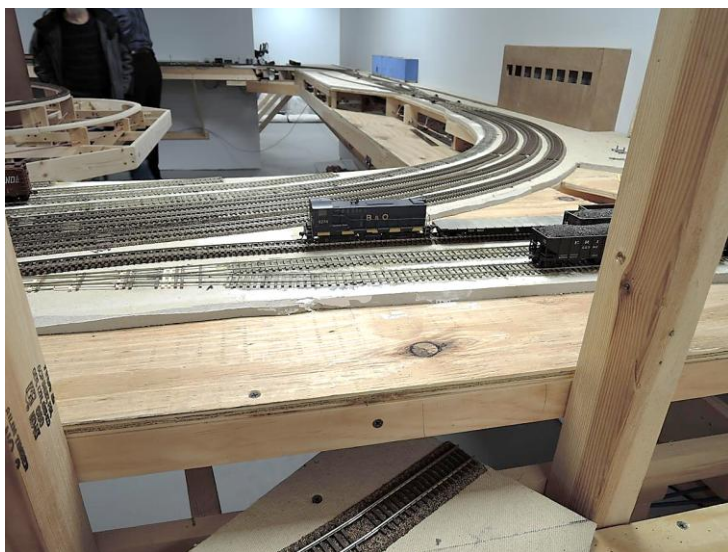
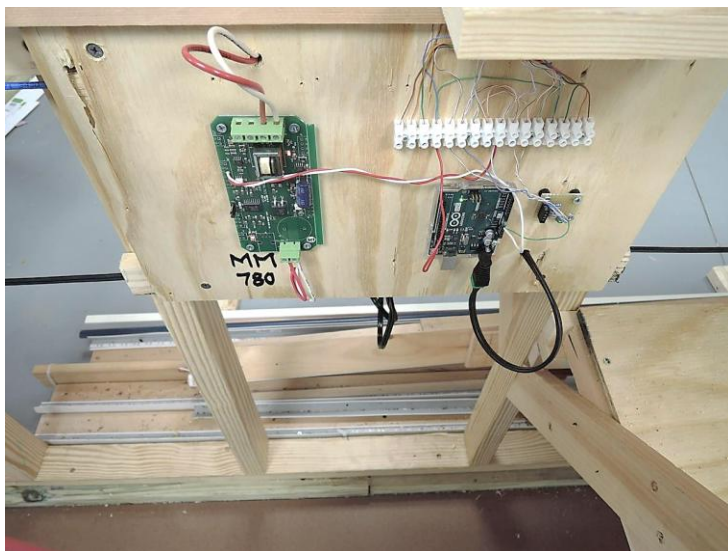
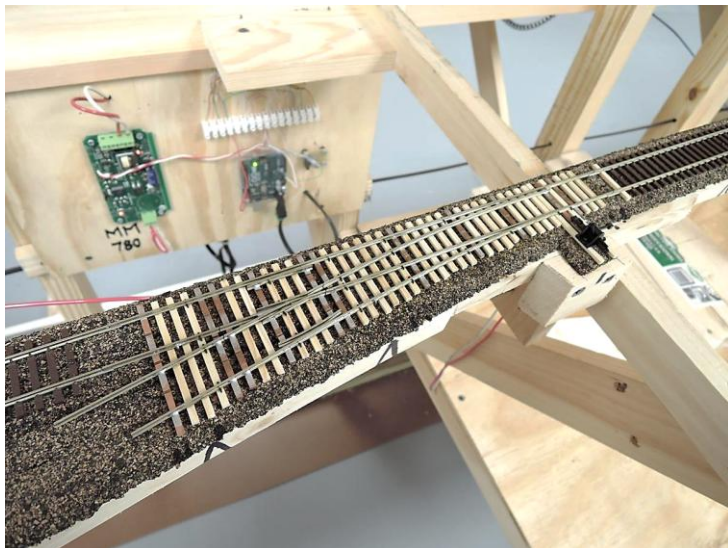


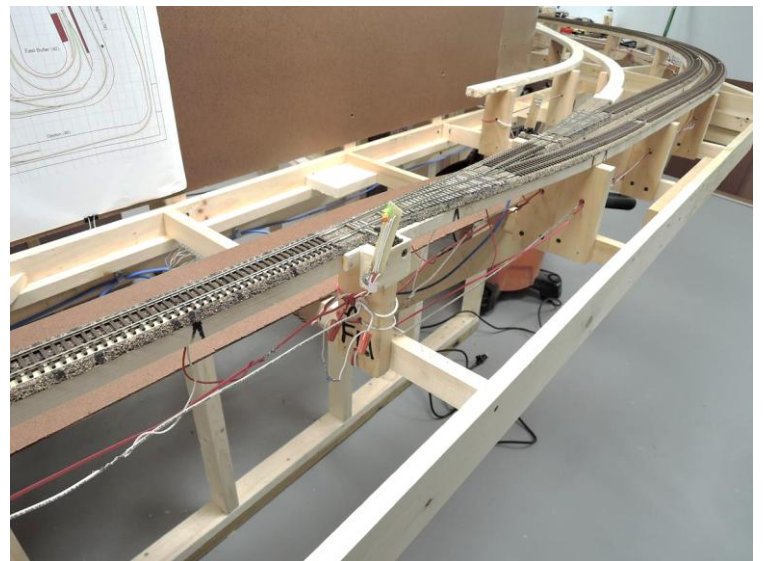
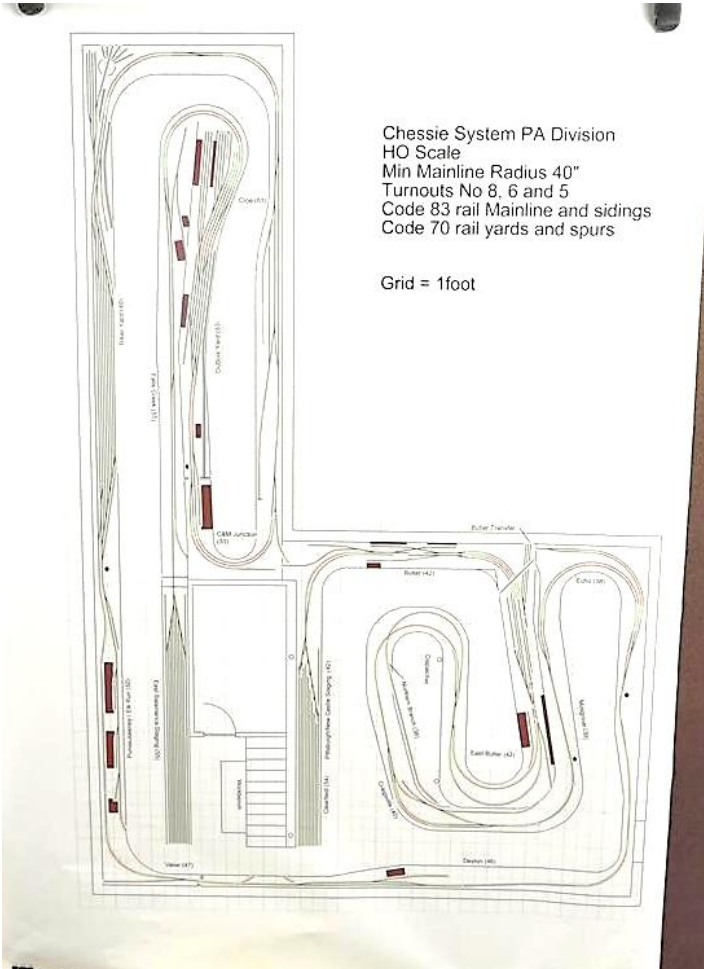
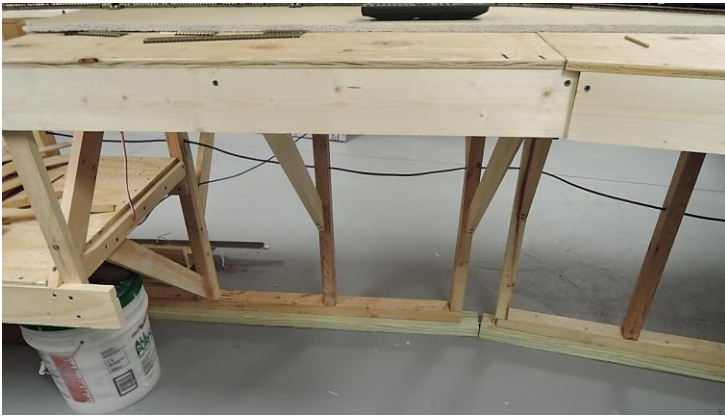
Attendees await the start of Scott Unger's clinic

Scott Unger (Susquehanna Division) (HO)

*CSX-themed layout under construction.
Trackage mostly hand laid, turnouts
using Fast Tracks.*







Dave Deal (Susquehanna Division) (S)

1980s-era North Carolina short line, hand-laid track and turnouts





Division Organization

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (elected)

OFFICERS

Superintendent – Joe Walters, MMR (2024)
Assistant Superintendent – Rob Hinkle (2023)
Clerk – Charles Long (2024)
Treasurer – Kevin Feeney (2023)

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Mike Dettinger – Clinics (2024)
Chip Stevens – Publicity (2023)
Jeff Witt – Venues (2023)



AUXILLIARY 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, Kevin Feeney
Refreshments – Bill Fagan, Joe Walters, Kevin Feeney
Door Prizes – Mike Dettinger, Kevin Feeney
Clinic Video – Chip Stevens, Rob Hinkle
Certificates/Awards/Printed Materials – Earl Paine, Howard Kaplan
Publicity – Chip Stevens

MEMBERSHIP

Member Outreach – Chip Stevens
Membership Records – Charles Long

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM - Earl Paine, Joe Walters MMR, Bill Fagan, Chip Stevens, Steve Hamilton, Mark Wallace

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

Please let us know of any hobby shops that would be interested in advertising or offering discounts to NMRA members.

Ron Albert's Delaware & Bound Brook Railroad

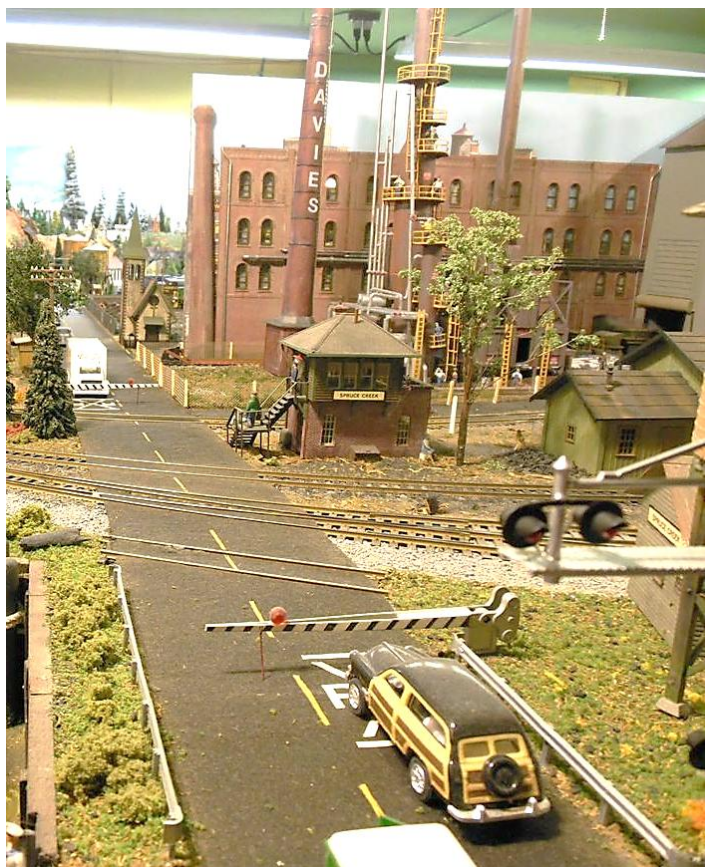
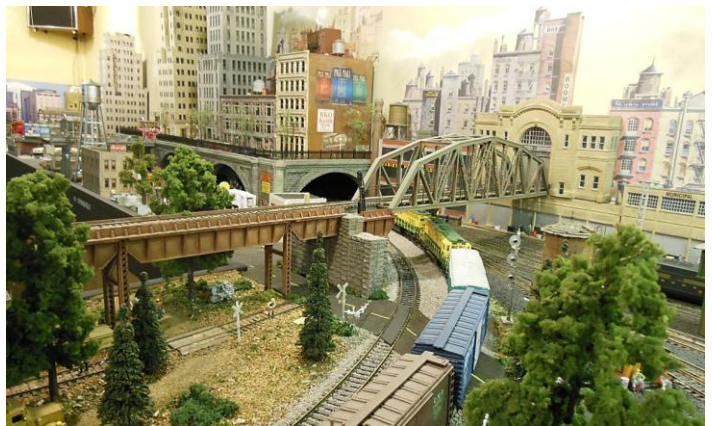
Photos by Howard Kaplan

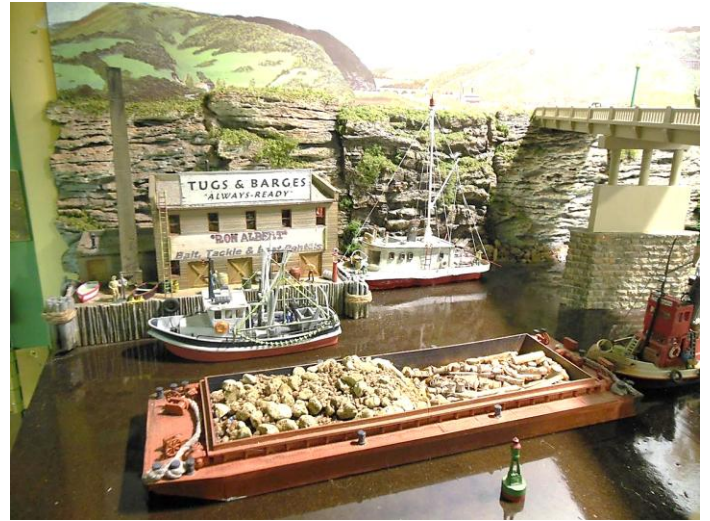
I recently visited Ron Albert to take new photos of his layout. I had seen the layout in the '90s when it was, in Ron's words, "finished." But as we all know in the model railroading world, no layout is ever finished. And true to form, once Ron gained some extra space, that modeling bug kicked in and he started expanding. The result is a beautifully crafted and detailed, larger layout.

We'll list some basic specs and then add some final comments:

- **Theme:** Reading and PRR
- **Size:** 16 x 25 feet
- **Track plan/control:** Separate loops, each controlled with a Variac (variable transformer).
- **Benchwork:** Open grid
- **Roadbed:** Cork and Homasote (which he'll never use again)
- **Track:** Mostly Atlas code 100 nickel silver flex, with some Peco and Model Power. Ron uses track nails with a jig to keep the nail from hitting the tie.
- **Turnouts:** Peco and Shinohara code 100. #6 and 8 straight and #8 curved. Electrically isolated.
- **Ballast:** Woodland Scenics. Ron recommends only gluing ballast to the outer sides of the track, unless you never intend to remove it.
- **Turnout control:** Choke cables
- **Scenery:** Sculptamold over cardboard webbing. Hydrocal for snow—it won't turn yellow.
- **Backdrop:** 1/8" Masonite x 1-foot lengths
- **Structures:** Fine scale wood kits, Walthers, Campbell, DPM. Turntable is Warner, Coal chute is scratch built.
- **Locos:** Reading locos are cast brass, MU cars are NJ International.
- **Layout lighting:** LED 60W soft white
- **Room lighting:** Fluorescent shop lights

Ron never drew up a track plan—the layout just kind of grew spontaneously. His only regret was that he did not include Horseshoe Curve—and he would, if he ever rebuilt the layout. Could that happen? 🚂






Several years back, Division Videographer and Layout Chair Bill Fagan took "cab ride" videos of Ron's layout. These can be viewed on Bill's YouTube channel and on the Philadelphia Division website at phillynmra.org

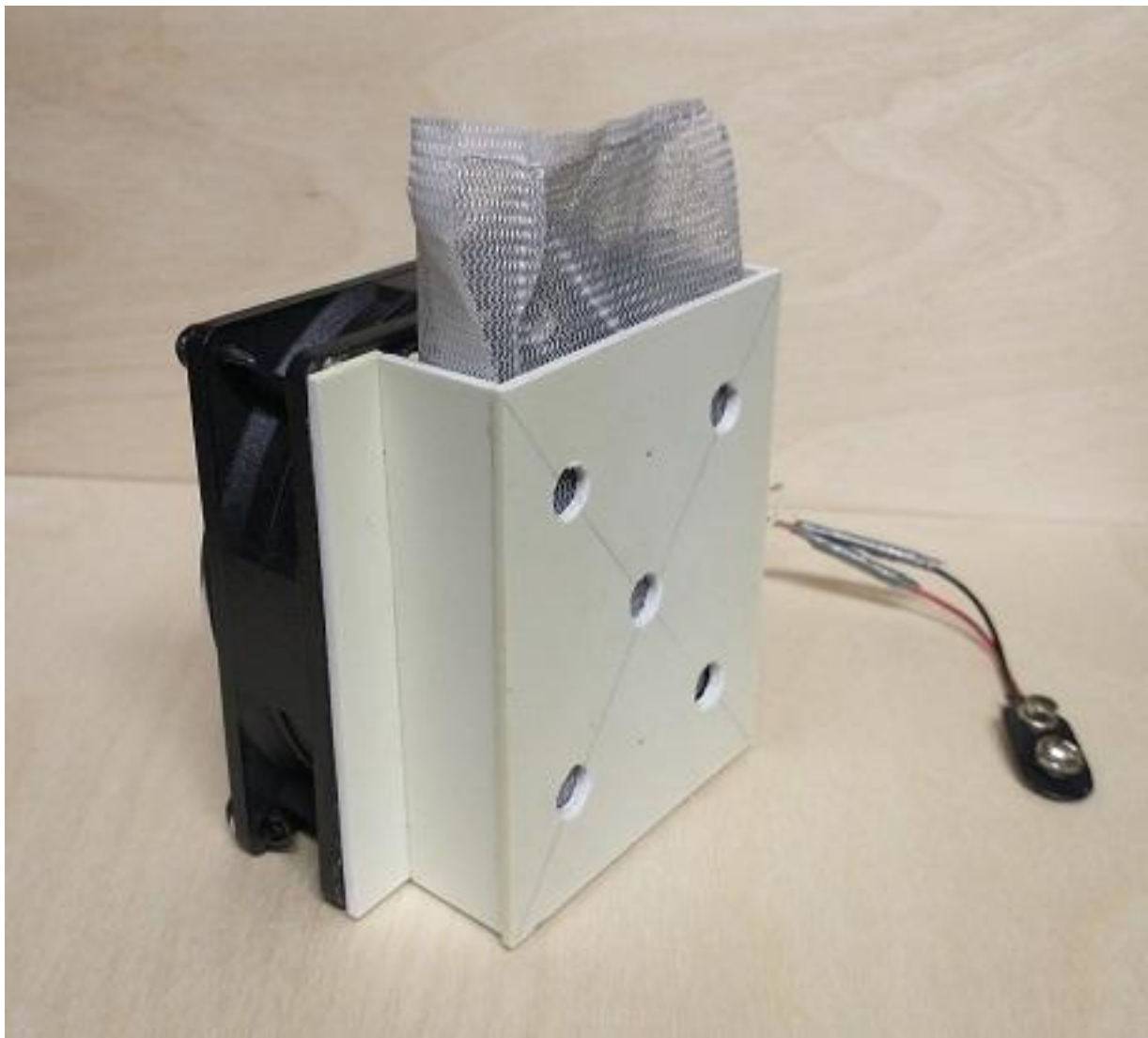
Fume Remover Upgrade

Computer soldering fan revisited

By Adam Eyring

In the August 2021 issue of *The Dispatcher*, I showed how I took an old computer fan and hooked up a 9V battery to create a fume remover/dissipator for all that soldering we might be doing, and in particular, model traction systems in my case. Since I work in a small basement space with poor ventilation, I upgraded the fan to use a charcoal filter based on designs I saw online using fish filters.

I got a charcoal filter like what my fish use (Aquaclear activated carbon for 20-gallon tanks), and built a styrene enclosure on the exhaust side of the fan. Depending on the presence of a grid on the exhaust side of the fan, the enclosure may have to be modified to prevent fan blades from touching the filter. It passed the sniff test by blocking solder odors from getting through—to the best of my being able to smell it. One thing I noticed is that the battery-powered fan draw does not seem to be as strong as if it were in a computer, so after testing airflows with a burning incense stick, my fan needs to be about 2” behind the solder work for best results. 





Bill Fagan:

The Video Vigilante



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. 183 layouts with 775 videos and 2748 followers on YouTube with 1.5 million views.

Welcome to a special edition of Video Vigilante: Model railroads that aren't here anymore because of moving, death, or other circumstances

Rob Arthur: <https://youtu.be/LEYQYDXHebk>

Don Bell: <https://youtu.be/ErG50fCicso>

Jonathan Black: <https://youtu.be/AYeLBPnzyfE>

Dennis Blank: <https://youtu.be/wsovOU8V4II>

Chris Boscoe : <https://youtu.be/OK5UMhK1YJ0>:

Dave Bruestle: <https://youtu.be/Z8krKXnJdcE>

Bob Detrich: <https://youtu.be/y4VTd19zLPQ>

Ted Fort: <https://youtu.be/iz2WomaBEXs>

Gatsme MRRC: <https://youtu.be/0EQP-cxoUts>

Mert Gertner: <https://youtu.be/jSUr-9XepxU>

Ed Gotwals: <https://youtu.be/wNOXkQNleEo>

Bob Gross: <https://youtu.be/EMq0sAuvvv4>

Hal Godwin: https://youtu.be/agaG4h_FeXY

Jim Hart: <https://youtu.be/eu78d4Q6pHE>

Don Henkensiefken: <https://youtu.be/ruY-oBcrG2s>

Chuck Higdon: <https://youtu.be/lsK8jrwZTa8>

Ken Honer: <https://youtu.be/psYs9SID3zI>

Bob Jans: <https://youtu.be/vStaPkeUmT8>

Mark Kessler: <https://youtu.be/wc0bQsuUOw0>

Steve Kibort: <https://youtu.be/lVwu5JbJMLE>

Arnold Kimmons: <https://youtu.be/lVwu5JbJMLE>

Logan MRRC: <https://youtu.be/OuXx69ZvIk>

Bob Martin: <https://youtu.be/-rM1Bi3c97M>

Pat McTeigue: <https://youtu.be/-lfR8zPkwkc>

Dave Messer: <https://youtu.be/hDI0dASnm0o>

Ron Patzer: <https://youtu.be/-8YucjKVaaW>

Jerry Powell: <https://youtu.be/e3nGzLhYYa0>

Mike Rabbitt: <https://youtu.be/jG-7TITCoe8>

John Rahenkamp: <https://youtu.be/CzNyRI5HQL8>

Mike Sabia: <https://youtu.be/gS3vNWLJcAY>

Tom Sanders: https://youtu.be/majFBX_-8M0

Alden Smith: <https://youtu.be/UeWQktdM1eM>

Steve Staffieri: <https://youtu.be/G9DM6ShvBKg>

Bob Striessel: <https://youtu.be/Thw82-OPMtU>

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



Spotlight on Todd Moser

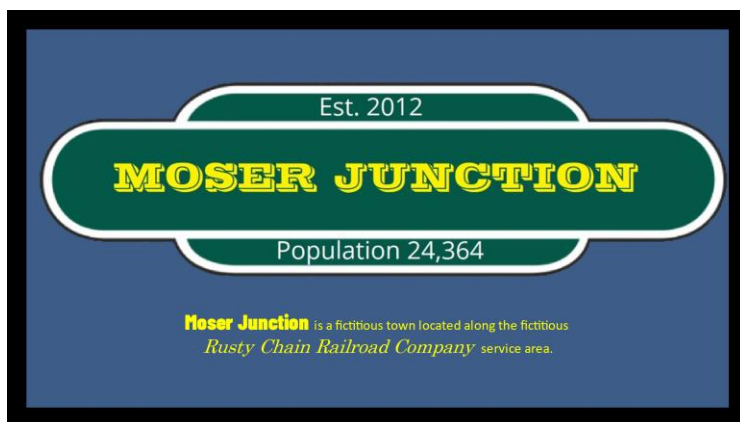
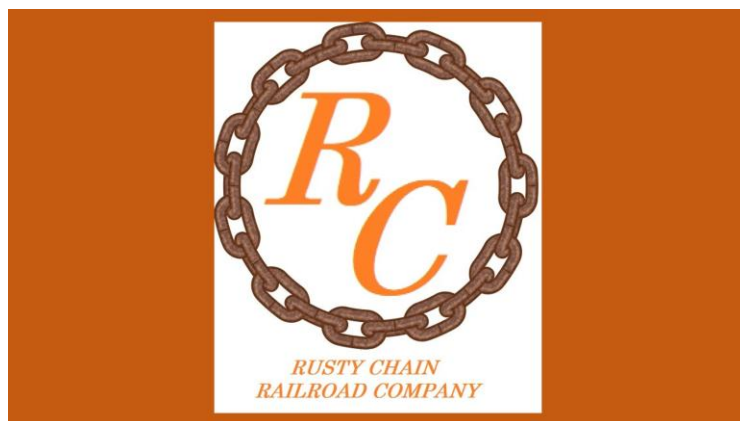
Recently, I was invited to visit the showing of Todd Moser's basement layout, called the Moser Junction. Todd lives in Oley, PA, between Boyertown and Reading in Berks County.

Wow! What a great layout! Todd has been working on this masterpiece for ten years. The scale is HO. There are many well-

done structures. The scenery is top notch. Todd and his wife were very welcoming and I was thrilled to have been invited.

So sit back and have a cup 'o' joe with me as we enjoy the photos.

Joe















ON THE (RAIL) ROAD WITH KEVIN FEENEY

CONVENTIONS – SHOWS – TRAVEL

Wisconsin - November 11–15, 2022

This trip, like most, was planned around a train show—Trainfest in Milwaukee—and also included time with our daughter Erin who lives in Wisconsin. I booked connecting flights back in July as is my normal practice, but AA changed us to nonstop flights. I had to call in September to have the reservation changed back to connections.

We had to leave early on Friday 11/11, catching the 5:55AM SEPTA train from Jenkintown. We were in PHL just less than an hour later, only to see the longest TSA line we have ever seen. It went from the entrance to B, down the concourse that crosses the road and SEPTA tracks, and then all the way back to the parking garage. I had Carol join the line while I went downstairs to check the bags. A half hour later we were at the gate. No upgrades as I was #7 and Carol was further down the list that had 31 names. We also volunteered for a bump, but didn't get that either. We did not have our normal seats on an A321 for this flight because of the rebooking. Carol was in the middle seat in the exit row while I booked a window seat in the row in front of her. However, my window seat had NO window. Guess I should have checked Seat Guru, but will know for the next time. We left PHL at 9AM, full and a few minutes early. Once in the air, there was turbulence for the whole 2.5-hour (678-mile) flight so there was no inflight service.

In O'Hare, we had lunch in the food court in Terminal 2 between H&K and then walked to our CRJ flight in G. We had to go down to the lower level. Shortly after we sat down, the gate agent called my name, and I was upgraded for the short 67-mile/1-hour flight. We left ORD early and then arrived in Milwaukee (MKE) at 1:57PM, early as well. Again, there was no inflight service, but this time due to the short flight. We collected our bags and walked outside to take a MCTS bus to downtown. After some confusion on my part, we got on the Green Line bus that dropped us a block from our Kimpton hotel. With Medicare cards, the bus fare was \$1.10 each.

The Kimpton Hotel was located in Milwaukee's revital-



ized, historic 3rd Ward. After checking in, Carol needed a nap while I went out to check out the neighborhood, even though I was underdressed for the 38° temperature. My daughter Erin, who is a student at Fox Valley Technical College, lives about 130 miles away in Clintonville, Wisconsin. She drove down with her BFF (Jason) to join us for dinner and to stay the night. We ate

at Saffron, an upscale Indian restaurant just two blocks away. It was okay, albeit expensive, but that at least got me 1290 needed loyalty points towards AA's current reward scheme.

On Saturday, 11/12, I was up early and walked back to the bus stop to catch the #18 bus to Trainfest which is held at the Wisconsin State Fairgrounds in West Allis. I caught an earlier bus than planned, again for \$1.10. When I arrived at 7:55AM, the gate to the fairgrounds was still locked. I went into a McDonalds across the street to have breakfast and charge my phone. The parking lot in front of the Expo Center did not have many cars in it, so I took my time.

Trainfest is a well-established train show that was started by the Wisconsin Southeastern (WISE) Division of the NMRA back in 1971. It grew over the years and claims to be "America's largest operating model railroad show." Attendance over the two days has typically been around 20,000. I had been to three prior shows, most recently in 2017. There was no show in 2020 or 2021. Earlier this year, the local NMRA Division licensed the show to Kalmbach who in turned partnered with TrainShow.com to actually run the show. It was widely promoted this year on social media and through emails from Kalmbach. Advance sale tickets for Saturday were available online for \$16 with a coupon code. There were also two-day tickets available and reduced-price ones for Sunday. The Expo Center was built in 2002 and is the state's largest exhibit hall with over 200,000 square feet.

At 8:45AM, I walked over and the gate was open. Another attendee remarked there were not a lot of cars, but we were both stunned when we walked in to find a long



Compared to prior years, I noted the following negative changes. There was no special area for the railroad historical societies, though some were grouped together. In the last few years, the show featured one railroad with a large historical display devoted to that line (SOO in 2017)—not this year. There were dealers selling boxes of junk like you see at swap meets. I had NOT seen this class of dealers there before. Trying to buy food was a disaster. There were extremely long lines at all the concession stands that seemed to be short on staff, and surprisingly were card only. I gave up after 15 minutes in one line and survived by eating leftover Halloween candy available at some booths. I spent very little, buying only a few parts plus a \$5 box with four new Athearn HO airplanes.



One positive change was the livestream of the show from Trains.com. This was hosted by actor Michael Gross and Gerry Leone of NMRA and Kalmbach fame. There were also a bunch of clinics held in upstairs meeting rooms. I watched part of restoration of ATSF 5704 into a red/white/blue bicentennial paint scheme and a product overview from Kadee. After walking the hard concrete floor for several hours, my right knee was hurting so I went upstairs to attend a 3PM clinic on 3D printing. The presenter was a no show, so I found a nice chair to sit in and watched the 3PM livestream for almost an hour till Carol called to say they were there to pick me up. Clearly there was pent up demand resulting in the HUGE crowds. Attendance was well over 20,000.

I had offered to host Erin and Jason for an early dinner, but they wanted to get home. They dropped us at a Crown Plaza hotel near MKE. We walked across the street to have dinner at the Branded Steer. Nice dinner and to my surprise it was in the IHG dining rewards program so I got more points. On Sunday, 11/13, I took an early shuttle from the hotel to MKE to pick up a rental car. I expected to be back quickly but that did not happen. Instead, there was a long line of folks at the Avis counter with only one agent. Most of the folks were dressed like this or

wearing Dallas Cowboys garb as there was an NFL game in Green Bay that day. This game would have other implications to this trip as well

It was almost 9AM by the time I was back at the hotel. This messed up our plans to have breakfast and then attend mass at a basilica in Milwaukee. We checked out and headed to a restaurant in nearby Cudahy that was in the AA dining program. They served a huge amount of food for very little, but the experience was marred by their charging to use a credit card. Effectively the server paid the 3.5% fee as I reduced my tip by that. We finished at 10:10AM and while eating saw there was a 10:30AM mass just two miles away. However, leaving the restaurant we stopped in the bakery next door that had a sign saying



“Hot Ham,” which is apparently a Milwaukee thing and only on Sundays. We got to the church’s address using GPS, but did not see a church. Turns out it was inside of what had been a Catholic school and is now senior citizen housing. Sadly, with fewer folks attending mass, Sacred Heart was one of three Southside parishes with a shared parish office and just one priest. As is common in the Midwest, there is fellowship after mass, and we both had pieces of pumpkin pie.

We were on our way by 11:15AM and headed to South Side Trains. It was said to be Milwaukee’s “premier model train dealer,” but it did not have the HO parts I need for a building I am working on. I did buy an older, open-box Suydam kit just for the parts. Once on the highway, we headed north to Appleton. Erin’s college is there and she has a room in a house nearby where she stays several days a week. We picked her up in Appleton and headed to the Hearthstone Historic House Museum that was nearby. This was an historic, 19th-century house built by Henry J. Rogers, a local industrialist and entrepreneur. On September 30, 1882, it was electrified using the Edison DC system. While a handful of other buildings had been electrified by then, this was first building in the US that was powered by a hydroelectric station, located on the Fox River behind the house. More amazingly, five generations of folks have lived there, and the house still has its original woodwork and some of the 19th century furnishings. Inside there are several of these original light switches whose design mimicked a water faucet. From this came the expression still used today, “turn on the lights.”

Leaving the museum after 3PM, we headed to an early dinner. Erin had already looked up places in the AA dining scheme, three of which were sport bars. Instead, we headed to Stuc’s Pizza, the best rated pizza place in town. The thin crust pizza would have been better if I had NOT asked for it to be cooked well done. We drove Erin home and saw where she stays during the week. The house is owned by a 60-ish woman who works long shifts as a respiratory therapist, so Erin is often there alone. We left and headed to our motel for the night, but had to drive over 20 miles south to Oshkosh. Because of the Packers game that day in Green Bay (32 miles away) the motels in Appleton were either sold out or ridiculously priced. The Quality Inn was nice, better than other similar places we have stayed at.

Monday, 11/14, I was up early. While having breakfast, I tried to print out our boarding passes for our return flights on Tuesday. I was able to print mine, but somehow Carol had disappeared from the record. Logging into her account I saw why. Strangely, she had been upgraded on both flights: MKE-CLT and CLT-PHL. Why strange? Well, she has Platinum status with AA and I am Platinum Pro, a higher level. Leaving the motel, we drove by the adjacent airport, which is the site of the annual EAA AirVenture Fly-In that for a short time makes the field (OSH) the busiest in the nation. Heading to Appleton, we stopped at a Festival Food store. Back in 2021, we had stopped at the same store and I was able to purchase sauerkraut in a squeeze bottle. I have never seen it anywhere else. I eat ‘kraut but Carol does not, and it is wasteful to open a big can of it just for me. Lately I only see big cans in grocery stores. No squeeze bottles this time, but I was able to buy several single-use packets

We met Erin at her college after her class ended. Jason left on a business trip to Iowa and left his car there. Carol drove that car back to where Erin stays while Erin drove her own 25-year-old Honda Civic. Driving behind her, I noticed one of her taillights was out and told her. We filled up for \$3.25 at a Shell station and headed to Madison, the state capital and about 105 miles to the southwest. The route there was rural with many farms growing corn and some dairy operations. Enroute, we stopped for lunch at a Culver’s. They started in Wisconsin and are much better than other fast-food chains.

We had two reasons for going to Madison. First was to visit their state capitol. Visiting state capitols is one of the bucket lists we are working through. We have been in many state capitals, but only started to actually visit the *capitols* a



few years ago. The Wisconsin Capitol was built in 1917 and is spectacular, probably the most ornate of the ones we have been to so far (ID, MT, KS, NM, OK, AR, MS). We just made the 2PM tour and were able to later walk outside of the dome's rotunda. The Wisconsin Capitol is located between two lakes and at the center of downtown Madison. The major streets radiate out from the four sides of the Capitol. Second, we headed to Madison Hobby Store on the city's west side. Enroute, we passed through the UW's main campus and by the former Milwaukee Road train station.

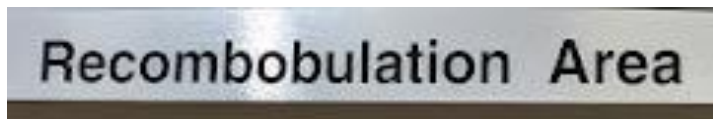


I had seen an advertisement for the hobby store's "Trainfest Sale" online and also was still looking for the parts that I needed. No luck on the parts, but I did buy two HO vehicles on sale for me, plus one for friend Eric. We headed to the highway that is a belt around Madison that eventually connected with I-94 back to Milwaukee (about 80 miles east).

When close to Milwaukee, we stopped at a Menards. This is a Wisconsin-based chain somewhat like Home Depot and Lowe's, but also sells some food items, clothing, HBA and a few toys. I wanted to see if they had their seasonal display of model train buildings out, and to buy a few other things. This was a very old location, much smaller than their current stores with only a few train buildings. We got a few things including jam and candy and took advantage of their final 11% rebate of the year on our purchase. We had trouble finding a place to eat as most restaurants seemed to be closed on Monday night. So, that night was a repeat of Saturday night; we stayed at the Crown Plaza near the airport again and ate at the Branded Steer. I got someone else's food order, but it was close to what I ordered so just ate it. Back in the hotel, we packed up the stuff I got at Trainfest and our other purchases and were asleep early.

Tuesday, 11/15 we were up early yet again, this time at 5AM. Carol did not like this. We left the hotel by 5:40PM and stopped at Speedway to buy some breakfast food and snacks for the flights. MKE was just a short distance away and it was starting to snow. I dropped off Carol with our two suitcases so she could check them in. I circled the airport and came

back to the Avis car return which opened at 6AM. I was the 2nd one to return and was quickly checked in. For the 2 days, the car cost \$193 and because it was a hybrid Honda Prius that got 52 MPG, we only spent about \$25 on gas even though we drove 391 miles. I was in the terminal at 6:05AM and found Carol. She got to go through a priority lane at TSA, but I was right behind her in the regular lane. Once through TSA, I saw this sign with a word I have never seen before. Our gate was at the end of the D concourse where AA was boarding flights to ORD, DFW, and PHL in addition to our flight to CLT. There were lots of folks waiting for these four flights. I tried to get on the nonstop flight to PHL, but the gate agent said, "I need to keep my routing." Eventually we boarded yet another full flight. I was #5 on the upgrade list and we had volunteered to be bumped for naught. I settled into my normal seat (11F) on an A321 while Carol was in the first row in first class. She was eventually served a screwdriver so she could have her daily dose of OJ.



While we were boarding it continued to snow. After we left the gate, the A321 stopped next to another AA plane, a 737-800 enroute to DFW (#2621) that was being de-iced. I assumed we would be de-iced next. It had been lightly snow-



ing for at least the last 1.5 hrs. Both planes had sat outside overnight in near freezing temperatures. I was stunned when our plane pulled away and headed to take off without being de-iced. From my window seat, I could clearly see that the top of the engine and the top of the right wing were covered with snow. I have lived and worked in upstate New York, New England, and currently Philadelphia, and do not EVER recall taking off in a snowstorm without being de-iced. I expressed my concern to the flight attendant who was sitting facing me. She asked, "Do you want me to call the pilot." I said, "Yes." The pilot then made an announcement saying the de-icing was not necessary. Later as we were landing in CLT, the same flight attendant said the captain would like to talk with me after we landed.

Exiting the plane, I introduced myself to the captain who invited me into the cockpit. He pointed to some instrumentation and said that de-icing was not necessary and that he was "following company procedures." I then asked if that meant the captain of the B737 was NOT following company procedures? He told me that that was a different plane that he was not trained on." I was ready to accept his explanation till he said the following, "The snow was getting worse and if we went back (to be de-iced) we would have been delayed." Excuse me! I thought that SAFETY comes first. I hope I never fly with that pilot again.

When we landed at CLT and PHL, I went up to every AA pilot I saw asking if they were a 737 pilot, but did not find one. I wanted to know if there were different de-icing procedures for that plane. One senior pilot asked me why and seemed concerned when I told him what happened. Another younger pilot seemed to mock me asking if I had a 737-type

rating. On the following day, I reported the pilot to AA for his unsafe action.

I did well with the all-important points and miles from this trip. For AA, I earned 2,493 loyalty points/award miles for the flights and 1,843 miles toward Million Miles status. We previously earned 683 loyalty points and 1,388 awards miles (2x) when we bought the tickets back in July. The three meals at places participating in AA Dining Rewards got us 1,812 loyalty points/award miles. For the IHG One Rewards program, I did even better. The stay at the Kimpton (2 rooms) yielded about 18,000 points from the actual stay and use of the Chase IHG credit card. Similarly, the two nights at the Crown Plaza earned about 8,100 IHG points. Regrettably, the two rooms at the Kimpton were considered an overlapping stay, otherwise I would have had four nights on this trip, which under IHG's current promotion would have earned me a 10K-point bonus. Not a problem as a booked stay in December will qualify as the 4th night. The two dinners at the Branded Steer earned another 850 IHG points. The one-night stay at the Quality Inn earned 2,013 Choice points.



From PA to CT by train - 13 of them!



On Dec. 21, 2022, I needed to travel from my home in Abington, PA (near Philly) to my daughter's house near New London, CT for the Christmas holiday. My wife had driven there a few days before with the presents so there was no need for me to drive up in another car. Of course, my first thought was to go by train, but the Amtrak fare from PHL to NLC was over \$100. In fact, it was \$167 when I looked the day before I traveled. So instead, I decided to turn the trip into a rail adventure riding multiple rail/transit lines to get there.

Early that morning, I drove to the SEPTA Station in Jenkintown, PA where I am able to park for free. This station receives very frequent service as it is a stop on three (Doylestown, Warminster, and West Trenton) on SEPTA's Regional Rail Lines. Historically, Jenkintown was a stop on the Reading's Crusader and Wall Street trains between Philly and Jersey City. While I waited for my train, an inbound semi-express train on the West Trenton line passed through Jenkintown without stopping. It had a Siemens ACS-64 locomotive pulling several Comet cars made by Bombardier back in 1987. My first train of the day (#6495) came a few minutes later at 7:28AM with a consist of several Silverliner IV electric MUs that were made by GE in the mid-1970s.

I could have stayed on the train into Center City, but instead exited three stops later at Fern Rock, which is the connection to SEPTA's Broad Street Line (BSL). This is a heavy-rail subway that first opened in 1928; it runs beneath Broad Street for some 12.5 miles. Much of the BSL has four tracks for express and local service. The BSL is standard gauge (4 feet, 8.5 inches) while SEPTA's other subway line, the Market-Frankford line, has a gauge of 5 feet, 2.5 inches, a variant of the PA trolley gauge. At Fern Rock, the BSL comes to the surface and runs through a balloon track with a station that provides the connection to the Regional Rail, before returning underground and stopping at the Olney Transportation Center. Fern Rock sees large number of passengers when one of Philly's sports team is playing at home as the baseball and football stadiums and the hockey/basketball arena are all located adjacent to the NRG (formerly Pattison Avenue) Station, which is the last one on the BSL in South Philadelphia.

I boarded the next subway train (my 2nd train of the day) to leave, which was an express to Walnut Street in Center City. I exited at Olney and then boarded the next express (my 3rd train) that ran down the Ridge Spur to 8th & Market. The Ridge Spur was built in the



1930s are part of an intended Center City



loop that was never completed. The spur terminates in a single-track, stub-end station connected to the repurposed Lit Brothers Department Store. From there, subway riders can transfer to the

Market-Frankford line and also to the PATCO line to South Jersey.



PATCO was cobbled together from the former Bridge Line that ran from 15th/16th & Locust in Center City to Broadway in Camden NJ and from former PRSL (Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Lines) trackage from Camden to Lindenwold, NJ. As a teenager, I rode PATCO shortly after service began in January of 1969. At that time, it was the most automated transit line in the country. I had to wait a bit to board my 4th train of the day at 8:25AM. Leaving 8th & Market, the line went past the long-closed Franklin Square Station that is being rebuilt and then crossed the Delaware River via the Benjamin Franklin Bridge that was built in 1926 to provide six vehicle lanes and two streetcar tracks on its main deck, as well as a pair of rapid transit tracks on the outside that became the standard gauge Bridge Line in 1936. My car (#1024) was one of the 120 legacy

cars rebuilt by Alstom in the 2010s. PATCO's legacy fleet included 75 cars built by Budd in 1968 and a later group of 46 almost identical cars built by Vickers Canada under license from Budd.

I exited at Broadway in Camden just a few minutes later and came up into the NJT's Walter Rand Transportation Center. Up and out through the turnstiles, I exited the building and walked across the street to the adjacent station for NJT's River Line. This line opened in 2004 using former PRSL and Conrail (nee-PC, PRR, Camden & Amboy) trackage. For equipment, the River Line uses Swiss-made, articulated, diesel-powered MUs. I brought my senior fare ticket for 75 cents and boarded the 8:36AM train (my 5th) to the Trenton Transportation Center that was carded for 59 minutes. Shortly after leaving downtown Camden, the River Line passes by Conrail's Pavonia Yard, the major rail yard in South Jersey. It is connected to the national rail network via the Delair Bridge that dates back to 1896. We stopped at the Pennsauken Transit Center that opened in 2013 and provides a connection to NJT's Atlantic City Line which also uses the Delair Bridge to get to 30th Street Station in Philly.

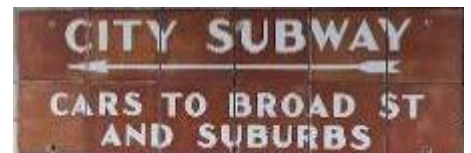


Most of the River Line runs on a private ROW except for some street running in Burlington, NJ. Past there, the line passes by historic Roebling, NJ, once a company town with a steel mill that made wire rope used on the Golden Gate and other suspension bridges. In Bordentown, there was a historic wye, with the former Camden & Amboy line continuing to the right and diagonally across central NJ. Now that line ends in Yardville, NJ. The River Line uses the former left leg of the wye and soon passes through a swampy area that once was the start of the Delaware and Raritan Canal. Once in Trenton, the River Line passes by factory buildings used by the Roebling Company, a minor league baseball stadium, an arena and a large state prison. As the line approaches the Northeast Corridor, it ran where once PRR's "Nelly Bly" train between NYC and Atlantic City left the Pennsy's main line.

The River Line terminates in a two-track, stub-end station across the street from the Trenton Transportation Center. Originally, the River Line was supposed to continue to a large complex of state office buildings a few blocks away, but that was dropped due to cost concerns. I arrived at 9:35AM and once inside the TTC, immediately headed to the bathroom as none of my first five trains had one. I was able to pick up an assortment of NJT timetables and bought tickets for my next two rides on NJT. I headed down to the platform for Track 1 only to see Amtrak train #172 stop. This is the train I would have ridden if I had decided to travel via Amtrak. It had left 30th Street at 9:10AM and would run up the NEC to New London arriving at 1:34PM.



My next train (the 6th) was NJT #3834 at 9:51AM. This was a semi-express to NYP (Penn Station) that skipped Jersey Avenue, Linden, and the two stops in Elizabeth. The train pulled in with a consist of Arrow III electric MUs that were built by GE in the late 1970s. I was surprised by the number of folks boarding there and at the Hamilton stop, and soon the car was completely full. After the stop at Newark airport (EWR), the aisle was packed with even more folks with suitcases making it very difficult for me to get to the door to exit at Newark Penn Station at 10:56AM. I could have stayed on the train to NYP but that would have reduced the number of trains I would ride. Instead, I headed downstairs to NJT's Newark Light Rail line, which includes the former Newark Subway Line (there were still signs for that) and a second line that opened in 2006. That line runs along the Passaic River and terminates at NJT's Broad Street Station, which was built by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western in 1903.



I headed to Track 2 for the 11:06AM train (my 7th) to the Broad Street Station. It climbed up to street level stopping at the NJ Performing Arts Center and a minor league baseball stadium before arriving at Broad Street at 11:15AM. As I walked up a long set of steps, I could see some historical displays on the walls of the restored building, but I did not have time to stop as my next train (the 8th) was scheduled to leave at 11:19AM. This was a Morris & Essex line train (#418) that had started on the Gladstone Branch at 9:55AM. Originally, the M&E trains all ran to Hoboken. However, in 1996 a connection was added to the NEC allowing for Midtown Direct service to NYP. My train stopped briefly at the Secaucus Junction Station on the NEC, but the doors did not open. It arrived in Hoboken at 11:38AM. The Hoboken Terminal was originally built by the DL&W and today serves nine NJT lines, one Metro-North line, PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson), the NY Waterway ferries to Manhattan, several bus lines and the Bergen-Hudson Light Rail line. I stopped to take a picture of the lower Manhattan skyline that included the 1776-foot-tall Freedom tower.



I had not been in Hoboken in several years. Its 18 tracks were full of trains that were laying over till the afternoon rush hour. I briefly walked into the main hall, before following the signs down to PATH that operates



two lines from Hoboken. One line travels south to Journal Square in Jersey City, where it connects with the PATH line between Newark Penn and the World Trade Center. The other line, which I would take for take for my 9th train, ran under the Hudson River to 33rd street in Midtown. Because of its heritage as the Hudson & Manhattan Railroad owned by the PRR, despite being owned since 1964 by the NY Port Authority, PATH is legally a commuter railroad subject to FRA rules and regulations. This means its operators must be federally

licensed locomotive engineers and its cars must have grab irons by the doors. It is believed that being subject to the FRA, makes PATH much more expensive to operate than similar transit systems.

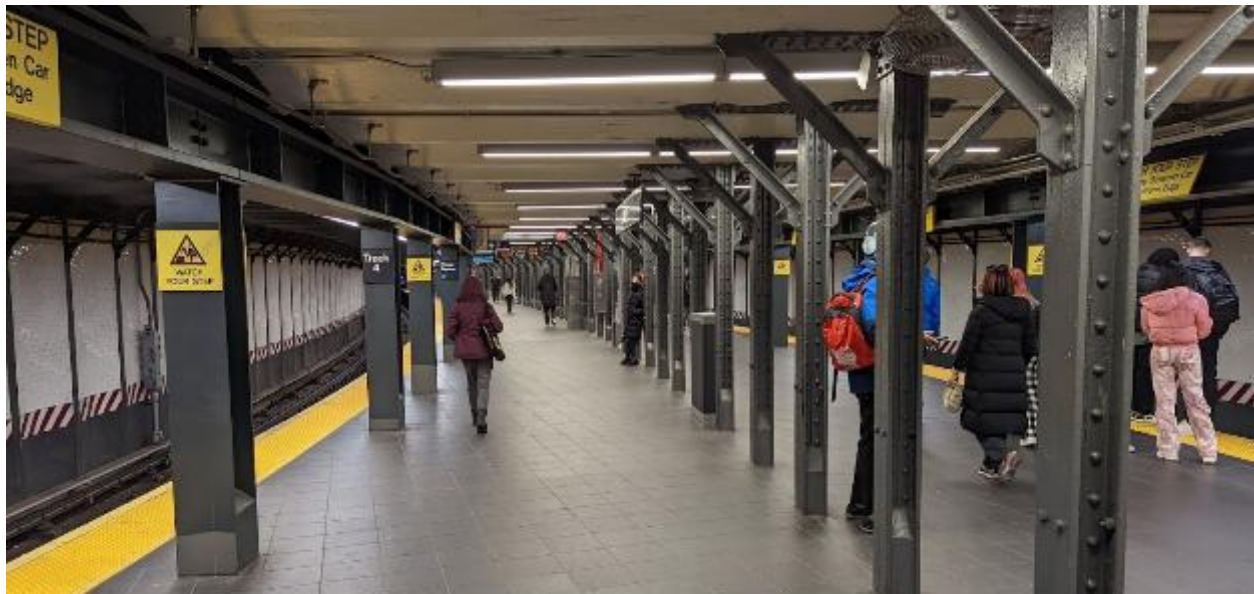
I paid my single ride fare. PATH accepts the MTA's METRO Card but also has its own Smartlink card. I walked to the platform and boarded a waiting train (my 9th) to 33rd street. The train consist was the current PA5 model that was built by Kawasaki in Yonkers, NY and Lincoln, Nebraska.



These cars have a smaller loading gauge due to the restricted size of the original H&M tunnels. Beginning in 2005, PATH began a massive program to replace its entire legacy fleet of cars that dated back to 1964. The current fleet of PA5 cars totals 422 cars and all of its legacy cars were retired by 2011. My train left at 11:58AM and headed south and then east under the Hudson River, before running north through several stations in Manhattan to a stud-end station at 33rd Street at 12:13PM. I had been there before, so I knew to just follow the signs for the BDFNQR subways. I brought a single ride MTA ticket and headed to the Uptown & Queens trains. On the platform, I boarded the last car of a Q train (my 10th) and exited a few minutes in Times Square.



I followed the signs to the Shuttle line to GCT (Grand Central). This was first time I have been on this line since the rebuilding of the station there from three tracks to two was completed in 2021. The original shuttle



tracks were once part of the city's first subway line that ran north from City Hall. I boarded a waiting train (my 11th) and was surprised to see that most of the seats in the car had been removed to allow for more standees. A few short minutes later, I was under GCT and was surprised to see that station had also been rebuilt as part of the construction of a new 93-story skyscraper called One Vanderbilt. I was able to exit the subway through the new building coming out at the main level of GCT on the Vanderbilt Avenue side.

I headed to the classic, brass information booth in the center of the main hall only to find that Metro-North no longer issues paper timetables. However, I was able to get one for CT Rail's Shore Line East. I bought my ticket for the train to New Haven (my 12th); this cost \$11.70 even for an off-peak, senior fare making



it the most expensive fare of the day by a substantial margin. I walked over to the NYCTA Transit Museum in GCT expecting to see the annual Christmas train layout, but instead there was a model of the East Side Access project. The new LIRR service to GCT was supposed to start in December 2022, but now has been delayed till February 2023. This long-delayed project was originally scheduled to be completed back in 2009.



On Track 17 I boarded the 1:04PM Metro-North train (my 12th) that runs for 74 miles to New Haven. The consist was M8 cars, which have a 110v plug by each row of seats, so I was able to recharge my phone. The train ran express to Stamford, where I lived and worked for my years, arriving at 1:55PM. From there the ride was quite familiar. From 2013-2018, I often commuted by train from Westport to New Haven where I taught at SCSU (Southern Connecticut State University). This day some 15 stops later, I arrived in New Haven at 3:05PM, a few minutes early.

I walked down, over, and up into the station so I could buy my ticket for the SLE (Shore Line East). It was also time for another bathroom stop and to buy something to drink. Back to Track 8, I boarded the 3:24PM (#1632) for my 13th and last ride of the day. From its start in 1990, the SLE used an assortment of heritage passenger cars and used diesel locomotives. However, earlier in 2022, the SLE switched to using M8 electric MUs. The M8 are normally dual powered using AC catenary in CT (where 3rd rail has been illegal since 1906) and switching to DC 3rd rail near Woodlawn Junction in NY. However, because of clearance issues, the 3rd rail shoes had to be removed from the M8s operating on the SLE, restricting their usage.

The ride along the shore is quite scenic. We made a lengthy stop at Old Saybrook



Time	Train	No.	To	Status	Track
3:16p	Acela	2167	Washington, DC	On Time	14
3:18p	New Haven Line	1573	Grand Central Terminal	On Time	14
3:20p	Harford Line	448	Harford	On Time	14
3:22p	Shore Line East	1632	New London	On Time	14
3:24p	New Haven Line	1575	Grand Central Terminal	On Time	14
3:26p	N.E. Regional	1174	Boston South Station	On Time	14
3:28p	Stamford Line	474	Springfield	On Time	14
3:30p	Acela	2169	Washington, DC	On Time	14
3:32p	New Haven Line	1577	Grand Central Terminal	On Time	14
3:34p	N.E. Regional	137	Washington, DC	On Time	14
3:36p	Acela	2164	Boston South Sta.	On Time	14
3:38p	Vermont	55	Washington DC	On Time	14
3:40p	New Haven Line	1579	Grand Central Terminal	On Time	14

Train Time and CT Rail eTix users: Please activate your tickets before boarding.
New Haven Union Station
Wednesday December 21, 2022

before crossing the Connecticut River on a bridge that was first built in 1907 and is scheduled to be replaced with work supposedly beginning in 2023. My train arrived in New London at 4:30PM on schedule. There are a mix of high-level and low-level platforms there with the SLE trains stopping at the high-level platform a bit past the station. Things are a bit complicated in that the New London station is built on a curve. Historically, the current station was built in 1887 as a union station for the Central Vermont Railway and the NYNH&H (New Haven) Railroad. Today, the station serves as a transportation center for southeast Connecticut. Besides Amtrak and SLE, it is served by two local bus lines (SEAT & 9 Town Transit) plus Greyhound. Just across the tracks are the docks for ferry service across Long Island sound and to Block and Fishers Islands



Recapping the day, this fun trip took nine hours. My train/transit fares totaled \$32.15. I rode for free on SEPTA with my senior card and was able to obtain senior fares on Metro-North, NJT, and SLE. I had to pay for full-fare single ride tickets on PATH and the MTA. Even though I have a senior card for PATCO, I had to pay the full fare (albeit just \$1.40) between 8th & Market and Broadway Camden because it was rush hour. I returned from CT to PA on Monday, December 26th on Amtrak train #149. Instead of paying \$200 for the return ticket, I cashed in 6,106 points from Amtrak's Guest Reward Program. I was back in Philly's 30th Street station around 6:40PM and then took a 7:30PM SEPTA train to Jenkintown.



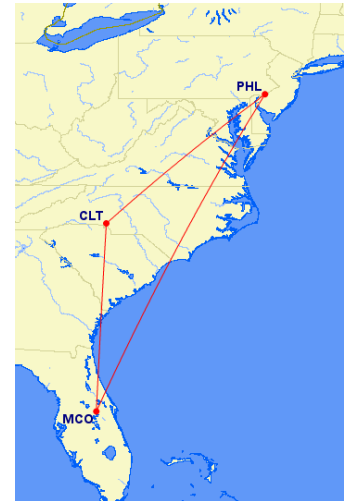
Our first trip of 2023 - January 5-12, 2023

This was what has become an annual trip for us that of course included a train show plus visits to family and a friend in Florida.

The train show was a RPM meet. RPM stands for Railroad Prototype Modelers. These



are folks who build extremely accurate models down to the nth degree of detail. They do not scratch build, but generally start with an existing model and upgrade it. However, with advances in 3D printing things are starting to change. Now one can easily print an entire HO freight car or building. Prototype Rails was perhaps the one of the first, large-scale, standalone RPM meets. There were 225 attendees this year.



We booked our flights back in November. There is a smaller airport in Melbourne, FL that is closer to Cocoa Beach, but fares and flight access is better through the Orlando airport (MCO) that is only about 50 miles away. On Thursday, we flew from PHL to CLT on AA847. The fare with the connection was less and we had a relatively short connection. Besides, we did not need to get there until 6PM. There was a 24-minute delay and I don't recall why. As we were boarding, we passed this device. It wasn't being used for our flight, but at the next gate it was used to photograph all passengers on a flight to the Dominican Republic. The gate agent there said the pictures would be shared with TSA and ICE. Why? What law allows this? We took off at 11:02AM a bit late, but still landed in Charlotte five minutes earlier because of the padding built into the schedule. At first, it seemed the connecting flight would only be a few gates apart but we ended up having to change concourses there.



I took this picture as we walked through the B concourse. Everyone knows I am into trains



and also planes so I look out for unusual planes, special paint schemes, etc. Several years ago, AA painted several of its 900+ planes into heritage liveries reflecting the various airlines that became part of AA. Over the years, I have seen several of them including: AA Astro Jet, TWA, Piedmont, US Air, and PSA. To be honest, I don't recall AirCal as I never flew on it; AA bought it in 1987. This Boeing 737-800 (N915NN) has been wearing this paint scheme since November 2015. It was nice to see the moving walkway in CLT between the B and C con-

courses has finally been fixed. It has sat broken for weeks supposedly awaiting parts.

Oh, forgot to mention that both of us were upgraded. No doubt this was due to my achieving Executive Platinum Status on the AA for the first time. This is the 2nd highest level. There is a secret algorithm that AA uses to determine whom get upgraded if there are available seats in the front of the plane. It is generally believed that it is based on status level, price of the ticket, and frequency of travel. And with my new status, any upgrade applies to Carol, as well, assuming she is in the same reservation and two seats are available.

Next, we were on AA2789 that left a bit late at 2:02PM and but still arrived MCO 10 minutes early at 3:20PM. We were upgraded again, but I only had one TnT (Tito 'n' Tonic) to drink. I bring my own lemon packs from Wawa to add to the drink as the flight attendants seldom have lemon or limes. I saw something recently about a new Terminal C at MCO but we arrived in B. At MCO, you take a people mover from remote satellite terminals to the main building. Shopping for the best car rental, put us with Budget. However, the experience was not great. There was total confusion trying to select our car. They were out of cars so we had to wait. However, there were lots of SUVs available. When the crowd waiting

for cars started to get rowdy, a Budget employee yelled out take anything. (Travel tip: We always book an economy car and almost always end up in something bigger. One time we were offered a full-size pick-up truck, but passed). This was after we found a Kia Soul by itself in a far row. By now, it was 4:15PM so we really needed to get moving.

I hate tolls and there are now lots of them in Florida. There is no state income tax there so other things are done to raise revenue. I knew how to get around them in Orlando proper, but the most direct route to the east is FL-528, the Beachline Expressway. When we got the car, the agent at the counter tried to sell us on the \$11-a-day package that includes the tolls. Turned out the car had a Sunpass transponder, but if not wanted it would fold into a box. We paid two cash tolls totaling \$2.75, but it would only cost \$1.81 had we brought our EZ device with us. EZ pass, which I have had since 1995, is now finally accepted in Florida. Driving on route 528, we could see the new rail line that Brightline is constructing. This line will go from MCO to West Palm and be higher-speed (110/125 MPH) as opposed to high-speed (200+MPH) rail. Somewhere the check engine light came on (and stayed on for the rest of the trip), but the car still drove okay.

Once in Cocoa Beach, we looked for a quick place to eat and ended up at a Waffle House that appeared like it was closed—just one car in the parking lot. I saw an employee inside and she waved us in. Turns out there were just two employees on duty, the server and the cook. I never would have imagined private dining at WH! The RPM meet is at an oceanfront Hilton that was just a few blocks away. We have stayed here several times before. I passed on their email that offered us an ocean view room for only \$34 more. The event rate was \$149+ tax (but no resort fee!), which is a bargain in season. They eliminated the free breakfast for Hilton Honors members like me, but instead gave us a \$30 a day food credit.

The RPM meet has clinics and model displays. It also has manufacturer and swap tables in the hotel's biggest event room. I contacted the RPM folks and asked how much the tables cost, and they were said free since I was attending and staying in the hotel. They just asked that we donate a door prize, which we did. So I packed up three extra suitcases with various railroad paper items from an estate I am selling plus some of my extra items. (FYI, I do not pay to check a bag. With my new AA status, I can now check three bags while Carol can check two.) The meet started at 6PM.



Carol helped me unpack everything, most of which was already priced. She would man our table (above) during the three-day meet. She brought a cross-stitch blanket to work on while doing this. I attended the clinics and came back to help her during the breaks.





On Friday AM, we headed down to the restaurant for breakfast. I had the buffet and Carol ordered from the menu. The bill with tax and tip came to \$52. So much for the \$30 credit! But Carol got a yuge serving of French toast and took half back to the room.

I attended a mix of clinics over the three days on specific modeling techniques, historical train service and one from Brightline's PR director. She said the line is almost complete and service will begin sometime later this year from Miami to MCO in about 3.5 hours. You can't drive it that fast! One attendee asked, "So next year when I come to the RPM, I will be able to board your train at MCO and take the train to Cocoa?" Her answer was that he would be able to board the train, but the first stop would be in West Palm some 135 miles to the south. Because of disputes with landowners and counties along the planned right of way, no immediate stations are in the initial rollout. She expects them to be added eventually. Also, the Brightline service is supposed to be extended from MCO to the Tampa area by running down the middle of I-4. The new track from West Palm to Cocoa was added to the Florida East Coast's existing right of way. The new line from there to MCO is being built on land leased from the local toll authority.

Friday night we had a very nice dinner at the Florida Fresh Grill, which is #1 of 97 restaurants in Cocoa Beach per Trip Advisor. Yes, a bit pricey, but we have eaten there before and they served the best lobster bisque we have ever had. Saturday breakfast for me was food bought at the Publix next to the Florida Fresh Grill, while Carol had her leftover French toast. We had lunch at the outside tiki bar that cost \$15 more than our daily food credit. For dinner Saturday night, we ate at the Pig N Whistle, a British pub that was in the AA Dining Rewards scheme. The meet ended late on Saturday afternoon, but folks return to the sales room after dinner to pick up their display models and to wait for the door prize drawings. I won nothing, but we kept our table open and sold a few more things. Sales totaled \$138. We packed up and noticed that a wheel came off one of the suitcases. Most of our suitcases are the result of going to a distant train show and buying too much stuff, followed by a trip to a local thrift store to buy a used suitcase. I brought very little at this show except a 1937 NYO&W timetable that cost me \$10 and sold for \$32 on eBay once home. FYI, this small Class I railroad in central NY and eastern PA just closed up and went out of business in March 1957.

My Sunday breakfast was finally free! I had the buffet alone and the bill with tax and tip came to \$29, while Carol finished the food from Publix. We attended the 10:15AM mass at Church of our Saviour, and then headed south. I stopped to look at the new Brightline track in Cocoa, but there was not a train in sight. We dropped off a Christmas card for a Liggan cousin that we usually see on our trips there, but our schedules this year just did not mesh up. We saw a sign for Renninger's Flea Market in Melbourne and it reminded me about the place.



The same company has several flea markets in PA; the one in Kutztown, PA has a quarterly train show that I usually attend. This flea market was very different than the ones in PA. It was mostly Hispanic and Asian vendors selling all kinds of supposedly new items. For Carol, it was a potty stop and chance to get something to drink. She did buy a nice costume jewelry ring for \$10. We continued south on I-95. Our original plan was to stop and see another Liggan cousin near Jupiter and then someone I used to work with at Gartner who lives near Ft. Lauderdale, but neither visit worked out.

Following the GPS directions, we cut almost straight across Florida, starting near Ft. Pierce. Once a few miles inland from the Atlantic coast, everything was very rural and mostly agricultural. Eventually, we came to the area above Lake Okeechobee where sugar cane is grown. Readers may

recall our trip there back in April 2022 to chase a special steam train. This time we actually saw the Lake, which is completely surrounded by a high berm/dyke. We saw a sign for a park/boat landing so we drove up and over the berm to this view.



After I started the car, I noticed it was running very rough. When I started to accelerate, it bucked and no matter what I did, it barely went 50 mph. I told Carol to direct us to the Ft. Myers Airport (RSW), figuring to return the car. As we drove there, the bucking got worse, but settled down once I got going, albeit less than 50 mph. Eventually, we came to I-75, the highway that runs down Florida's west coast, near Ft. Myers. I stopped at a gas station to fill up the rental car for the return and when I started the car and drove up the ramp to I-75, the car behaved normally. Carol asked what we were going to do. I said to forget the airport.

We headed south on I-75 towards Marco Island where we had made arrangements to stay the night with yet another Liggan cousin (have over 30 of them), John McGlinchey and his wife, LuAnn. We stopped at Michelbob's Championship Ribs there to get a takeout dinner for four to eat in their very nice waterfront condo. These were babyback ribs imported from Denmark and were very good. I passed on their Party Pak-N that came with 35 full racks of ribs, 12 whole chickens, 27 pounds of pulled pork, gallons of sides and more for \$1251 that feeds 75-90 folks. FYI, the best ribs I have ever had come from this restaurant in Ghent, Belgium. I have eaten there twice

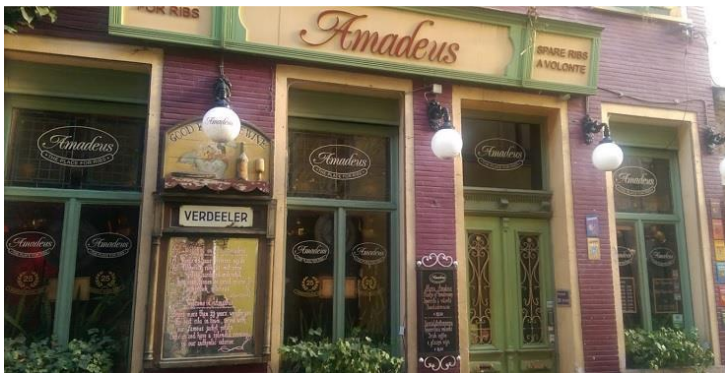


and once at a related place in Brussels with a different name.

It was good to catch up with John and LuAnn and hear what they went through with Hurricane Ian last fall. We saw them last in April 2022. The McGlinchey family has a weekly Sunday night zoom call at 7:30PM and we somewhat participated in the call. I had not seen some of John's siblings in many years. I liked this idea of the zoom call and will suggest doing the same with my family and siblings.

After a nice breakfast with them, we headed north to Ft. Myers Beach to see the destruction from Hurricane Ian

first hand. We had been swimming in FMB last April and Carol had been there last summer when she took our granddaughter Emmet to Florida for the first time.





We stopped for a late lunch at Cristof's on McGregor in Ft. Myers. We had a nice lunch there with relatives last April. Eventually, we got to my sister Kathy's place in Punta Gorda, where we have been several times since she moved there two years ago from Jacksonville. We changed into our bathing suits and immediately headed to the heated pool in her development. For dinner, we took Kathy to a new Culver's next to a Wawa that opened in 2019. These are two of my favorite food places and boy do I wish there were Culver'ses in PA and other eastern states.



We spent the next three days there not doing anything special. We returned to the pool each day. I made a shopping trip to the local Publix for dinner food as Kathy does not cook. I once got her a towel that said, "The only reason I have a kitchen is because it came with the house." We made the rounds of several thrift stores so I could buy a replacement suitcase. On Thursday morning when I started the rental car, the power steering stopped working. I called the Budget office at the Punta Gorda airport, which is only served by Allegiant, and they said to return the car. I planned to do this after we ate at John Ski's House of Breakfast and Lunch in Punta Gorda. The owner is a transplant from Michigan and the place is

full of Detroit sports memorabilia. We had been there before, but I forgot how big the servings are. If you ever go there for breakfast do NOT order more than one pancake as they are the size of a dinner plate and almost an inch thick. I took my 2nd one with me and had it for lunch later that day. Magically, the power steering worked just fine when I started the car, so we just headed north to our next stop near Sarasota.

In the last few years, I have reconnected with Larry Steuber who was a good friend during college at the University of Rochester. Larry is retired; he and his wife rented a condo in Lakewood Ranch for the winter months. We had a nice two-hour visit with them and hope to see them again at their home when we visit the DC area this spring. We had hoped to also visit with a friend from high school who also lives there, but he had a medical procedure that day. Leaving there we drove to MCO, which was about 120 miles away, though we had to go a bit out of our way in Orlando to avoid the toll on

the expressway to the airport. We used the opportunity to fill up the rental car. Our flight to PHL was not till 7:20PM, but nevertheless we returned the rental car at 4:15PM to avoid another day's charge. I wish I could tell you how many miles we drove, but we never got the receipt they said they would email me. In fact, we have never been charged for the rental at all. I will gladly give up the points I would have earned to avoid the \$338 cost.

We had AA2929 back to PHL, which was a recent addition to the schedule. Originally, we had an earlier return flight but it changed. Since we usually book several months in advance, we often see schedule/equipment changes. We were upgraded for the third time on this trip. At my prior status level, Platinum Pro, I used to be upgraded about 40% of the time. On this trip, we were 3 for 3—score! We took off at 7:28PM and landed at 9:22PM, which was 22 minutes early. We picked up our four checked bags and made the 10:10PM SEPTA train, but had to change in Center City to one at 10:50PM that went to Jenkintown. We arrived there about 11:10PM and were home by 11:30PM.

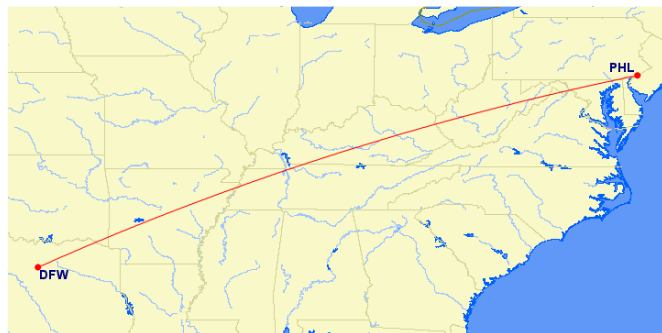
Recapping the points and miles: For the three flights, I flew 1,776 miles that count towards AA's Million Mile status and earned 3,080 loyalty points/award miles. Under AA current reward scheme, I earn LPs and award miles based on the net airfare (that excluding taxes and fees) times a multiplier plus then a bonus. Since I now have Executive Platinum status, the combined multiple and bonus is 11x. For the three nights at the Cocoa Beach Hilton, I earned 17,825 points that included 6,275 points from two current promotions. I ONLY have 134,798 Hilton points as I do not stay there that often. I did have a problem with the hotel's bill. Many hotels no longer give you a copy of your bill at checkout, saying it will be emailed. The Hilton did that, but I did not look at the bill till I was home and saw I was charged \$12 a day for parking. Parking was supposed to be free for the RPM event. I emailed two times plus called and left a message. On 1/25/23, I looked at the credit card statement online and did not see a credit. I called again but this time got a live person who quickly gave me a \$38 credit for the three days that included a parking tax.

We're off to Kansas on Wednesday, February 1 to try a trip that was booked for the same time last year and was cancelled due to winter weather. This year's trip was booked back on October 27, 2022. On January 29th, I received an email saying we were upgraded on one leg of the flights so I went online to see the whole reservation. There AA had posted a travel alert related to freezing rain forecasted for DFW on this coming Wednesday and Thursday. We were booked to fly PHL-DFW-ICT (Wichita). I made a change, so now we're flying there via ORD (Chicago). The weather at ORD should be fine, just cold.

Our annual trip to Texas - January 18-21, 2023

Back in 2020 and early 2021, virtually all the train shows up north were cancelled. Suffering from severe train show withdrawal syndrome, I found there would be a large train show in Plano, TX over MLK weekend in 2021. Carol and I flew down for that and extended our trip to also include visits to Waco and Midland. Last January, we flew down for the Plano show and extended the trip to include a visit to Lubbock.

For 2023, the trip again included the train show and added visits to three presidential libraries and the Texas Capitol. Carol is working off two bucket lists for these locations. In 2022, we visited the Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton presidential libraries.



Last November, we visited the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison and the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul. On Friday January 13th, we saw the Pennsylvania Capitol in Harrisburg, which is something to be seen.

We booked a nonstop flight to DFW that is 1302 miles from PHL on Wednesday January 18th. The flight down was on a 787-8. It is unusual to have a wide body plane like this on a domestic flight. But at 8:40AM, the plane was full and was no doubt being positioned for

an international flight from DFW. With our status, we were seated in what are normally premium economy seats on international flights. We left a few minutes early at 8:34AM and arrived a bit early at 11:24AM. After collecting our checked bag, we took the bus to the combined rental car center, south of the terminals. Rental car rates continued to be high so I am continually shopping for the best rate. This has become more difficult of late as the rental car companies are now offering prepaid rates. We ended up with Alamo, which cost \$238 for the four days; the rental car was in Carol's name as she needs the points to keep her platinum status with AA. As it was, we booked the flights month ago with Carol flying with AA reward miles.



After leaving DFW, we stopped for lunch and then headed the SMU Campus in Dallas which hosts the George W. Bush Presential Center. Bush was the 43rd president; he had no direct tie to SMU, having gone to Yale as an undergrad and to Harvard Business School for grad school. He is the first and only president to date that earned the MBA degree.

There are 15 official presidential libraries/centers; each looks at the early life and the career of the respective president. This Bush one opened in 2013 and has a museum, a library, and a 15-acre public park. It also houses the Bush Institute which offers special programs, speakers, and "summits." The permanent exhibit area is not that large and we easily covered it in two hours. It

starts with the contested 2000 election and quickly moved on to 9/11. I had forgotten that 9/11 happened so early in 43rd's presidency. The next major event covered was the invasion in Iraq. The financial collapse of 2007-2008 was also covered. There is a replica of the Oval Office and some of Camp David. I was appalled to learn that "43" awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Dr. Fauci back in 2008. In the gift shop, Carol got her presidential library guidebook stamped. I had brought a copy secretly last year at the Nixon library and gave it to her at Christmas. We left a 4:45PM and headed to Waco about 100 miles to the south on I-35. We had been here before back in 2021. We drove here for dinner as there really wasn't any place to eat by our Holiday Inn Express hotel in West, about 15 miles north of Waco.



We ate at Pivovar, a new Czech-inspired place that is a hotel, brewery, bakery, beer garden, and beer spa. It is next to the Magnolia Market, a huge shopping/restaurant/entertainment complex created by Joanna & Chip Gaines of HGTV's Fixer Upper TV series. Magnolia Market was closed, which was fine as we had been there back in 2021. I had the Czexan Schnitzel that was YUGE! Carol was not hungry and just had a soup. We stopped to buy some food at H-E-B, a very different Texas-based grocery chain before driving back to West.

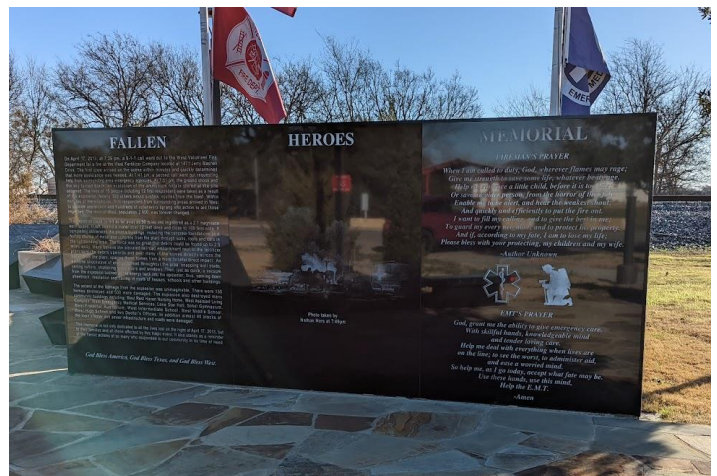


I had a reason for staying in West vs. Waco. On April 17, 2003, there was a small fire at a local fertilizer company that the local volunteer fire company was trying to put out. Unfortunately, a massive exposition followed, registering 2.1 on the Richter scale and was felt over 140 miles away, killing 12 first responders and 3 employees. The blast left a yuge crater and destroyed a large part of West including 100+ homes, schools, and businesses. I recalled this and wanted to see

the site, figuring it was near the train tracks. Instead we found the former M-K-T train station.



I went into a convenience station and asked the two young employees, and neither knew where the site was. They told us to ask two older men in the store, and they gave directions to the site and a nearby memorial. We found the blast site and there was no sign or anything, but the memorial park was very well done.

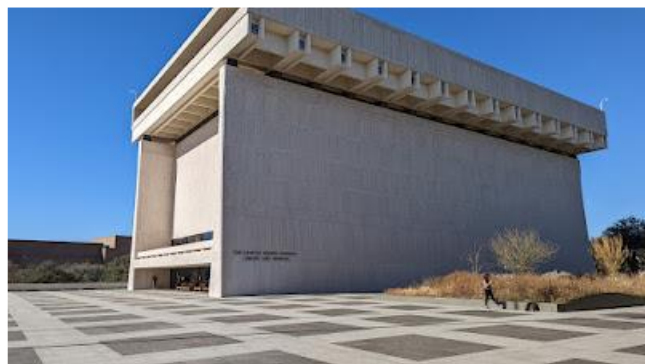


Back in town, we headed to the Czech Stop. Central Texas was settled by Czech and Moravian immigrants beginning in the mid-1800s. There were an amazing amount of kolaches, donuts, and other pastries for sale. We brought some and

had them later for lunch. I thought this sign on the gas pumps was a bit odd.



Leaving West, we got on I-35 and headed to Austin, which was about 120 miles to the south. Once there we headed to the Texas State Capitol, which is set in a 22-acre park complex in the downtown. There were lots of police walking around and some had machine guns as the legislature was in session. The building was built in 1885 with convict labor and financed with a questionable scheme that transferred three million acres in the Panhandle to the contractor. We went on a guided tour that covered both parts of the legislature. The inside of the original capitol was impressive. Note the wording on the light fixtures. After a 1983 fire, the building was restored and in 1993 a four-story, underground capitol extension was completed to the north which doubled the square footage and provided much needed office space for the legislators.



that was less than two miles away. It is adjacent to Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, a graduate school that is part of University of Texas-Austin. The ten-story library/museum building is free standing and opened in 1971. It is smaller than some of the other presidential libraries we have visited, no doubt reflecting LBJ's shorter time in office (11/63–1/69).

It was also somewhat hokey as it included several displays of 1960s products, technology, and pop culture. There was a sizable display about the JFK assassination. On the top floor was a 7/8 scale replica of the oval office. In the lobby was the limo he used AFTER leaving office. We were done in less than two hours. Carol got another stamp in her guidebook. From the plaza, there was a nice view of the Capitol and the University of Texas Tower, which was the site of a mass shooting back in 1966. We left for College Station, about 105 miles to the east on state highways.



When we arrived it was dinner time so we headed to the Stampede College Station, which is in the AA Dining Reward scheme. It was listed as a steakhouse, but turned out to be a large country western show bar that had recently opened. I was still able to have a nice ribeye. As we were finishing our meal, a comic came out onto the stage and told some jokes. Turns out it was a

comedy night. There were two more comics whose acts included a lot of dick jokes. We were the oldest folks in the sizable crowd (NOT—maybe 12 people) and were made part of one guy's bit.



We stayed at the Aggie Boutique Hotel. College Station is home to Texas A&M, aka the Aggies. The hotel was a former Wyndham Hotel that was being re-branded as a IHG (Holiday Inn) property. I planned to pay with IHG points as we only have 1.8 million of them, but went with the \$67 rate including tax vs. 24,500 points. The hotel is work in progress. Look what we had for breakfast.

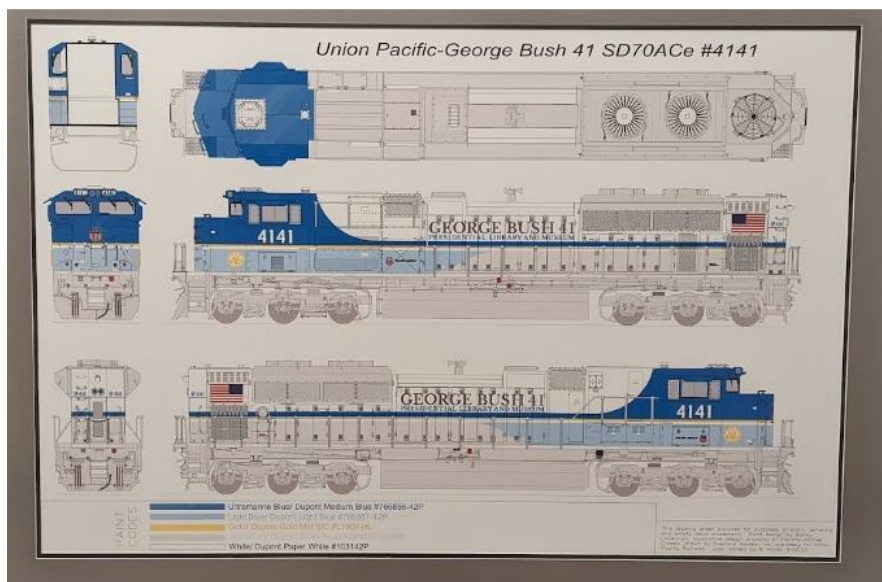
After leaving the hotel, we drove around and through the Texas A&M campus that was YUGE. The main campus is some 5,500-acres plus there is an adjacent 350-acre research park. Supposedly, A&M is the only land, sea, and space grant university in the country with over 73,000 students across the main and several satellite campuses. It is also a senior military college with thousands of student participating in its Corps of Cadets. Most of the students live off campus in high-rise and sprawling low-rise rental properties, many of which come with resort like features. We stopped and talked with two female students near the Catholic Center. We tried to talk with one of the cadets who was in uniform, but he would not stop enroute to class.

On the campus is the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum which opened in 1997. Upon arriving, I was immediately disappointed to see that the former UP-4141 locomotive is under wraps. This SD70ACe locomotive, built by EMD in 2005 and painted in a livery that mimicked that of Air Force One, was given the # 4141 to honor the 41st

STAMPEDE
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JANUARY 19TH
HEADLINER: JERRY WAYNE
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president. After years of regular freight service on the Union Pacific, 4141 pulled the funeral train that brought H.W. to his final resting place here on December 6, 2018. UP donated the locomotive, which ironically was dedicated in College Station back in 2005 service, in late 2019. It was moved to the Bush Center in 2020 and has sat all covered up ever since awaiting the construction of new display center that will feature the locomotive and one of the decommissioned Marine One helicopters. Supposedly, the display center will be completed by the June 2024. Inside there was a faux miniature representation of 4141, but also a framed print of the real engine. The gift shop offered an HO model, as well.

We started our tour with a video before entering the permanent exhibit, which had the most detailed personal and career history we have seen so far of any presidential library. I never knew he came from such an upper-class background. I knew his Wall Street father had been a Senator from CT. Members of both his father's and mother's families had attended Yale as he did after WWII. I saw H.W. once in CT on the Merritt Parkway when he was VP. He was in a limo taking him from the White Plains airport (HPN) to visit his mother Dorothy (Walker) Bush who lived in Greenwich, CT till she died in November 1992.

H.W. was one of the youngest pilots in the Navy during WWII. He entered flight training immediately after graduating from Phillips Academy in 1942 when he was just 18. There was an extensive exhibit on his activities during the war. Hanging from the ceiling was a restored Grumman TBF Avenger bomber, like the one he flew from the USS San Jacinto, making 128 carrier landings. The USS San Jacinto was funded by folks from Texas and named for a famous battle during



the Texas War of Independence. Perhaps being on this ship made him relate to Texas, where he moved his family after graduating Yale in 1948. FYI, W was born in New Haven while his father attended Yale, where he played first base on the baseball team. There was a picture of him in his baseball uniform with Babe Ruth.

The displays took us through his early dealings in the oil business out in West Texas and a political career that started as being elected a US House rep from Houston in 1966. Additional displays covered when he became the UN ambassador, head of the RNC, head of the US Liaison Office in China, head of the CIA, VP under Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) and eventually president, albeit for just one term (1989-1993). A series of pictures showed him sky diving for his 80th and 90th birthday and on several other occasions. Leaving the permanent exhibit, we could see his cigarette speed boat from his summer house in Maine. The Bush Center has a long history of rotating exhibits and the current one is Mandela: The Official Exhibition.



We headed for an early dinner at a nearby Rudy's, a Texas-based chain serving real Texas BBQ. We have eaten at this chain before. We had ribs and smoked turkey. Regretably, they were not serving their famous smoked prime rib.



We headed north to Plano, about 200 miles to the north. We had 50 miles on state highways before getting on I-45 that allowed me to catch my only train of the trip near Jewell, TX.



At 7:30PM, we stopped in Corsicana to change drivers and have ice cream at a Braum's. This is an OK-based dairy chain that we have been to before. Corsicana is home of the famous Collin Street Bakery that is known for their fruitcakes. Unfortunately, the store by I-45 was closed at that time.



Our hotel for the night was a Holiday Inn Express in Plano. We had stayed there before in 2021. We slept in a bit as the Plano Train Show did not start until 10AM. Carol dropped me off at 9:45AM and went to see Southfork Ranch of the Dallas TV show fame. The way the Plano show is run is unique. The promoter of this two-day, twice-a-year show is the North Texas Council of Railroad Clubs that includes 21 model railroad clubs of various scales, two local NMRA Divisions, and the local NRHS Chapter. A real focus of the show are modular layouts of which this year there were over 18.



There were scores of dealers. At prior shows, I have found the best bargains are at the tables of the member clubs and this year was no exception. I filled half of a large suitcase with my bargain purchases. The NMRA was prominently featured with a large booth in the main room. This year's annual NMRA convention, the Texas Express, will be held in near-by Grapevine, Texas August 20-26, 2023. I plan to attend. The show had clinics and at one I learned how to paint sandpaper strips to look like concrete, gravel, and asphalt roads. I never thought of this, but have long used sandpaper as roofing materials on my HO scale buildings. A number of club layouts were open during the weekend. I was able to see the excellent layout of the Texas Northern Model Railroad Club on the way back to DFW.



We stopped for dinner at Vito's Pizza and Grill in Irving and then to DFW to return the rental car. For the trip, we drove 658 miles. Gas prices were \$3 a gallon +/- 10 cents. Our return flight was scheduled for 7PM, but left a few minutes late at 7:07PM. The plane was full, but I was upgraded to business class and surprisingly served dinner. Luckily, the chicken entrée was small and we only had a pizza at Vito's. As I don't follow professional sports, I did not even know that the Eagles were in a playoff game that evening. It seemed that half the plane was watching the game on their phones/tablets and all I kept hearing was ooohs and aaahs as the game progressed. FYI, the Eagles beat the Giants 38-7 and will play the SF 49ers on Sunday, January 29th.

We landed at 11:03PM right on schedule, but there was a long delay till someone came to move the jetway to the A321 plane. The pilot said I guess they're watching the game. Once in the terminal, I headed to baggage claim and told Carol to head to the train station. It took a while till my bag was on the belt and then I had to run to make the 11:40PM train. As it

turned out, Carol was at the bottom of escaltor yelling me to hurry up and had the conductor holding the train for me. I made it which was a good thing because this was the last train of the day that went to Jenkintown from PHL. A later train at 12:10AM would have meant a possible connection or an expensive Uber ride from Center City. We got to Jenkintown about 12:35AM and were home 15 mintues later.

Recaping the points/miles etc., I earned 4,092 Loyalty Points{LPs}/Award Miles for the two flights that covered 2,604 miles. Carol earned zip since she flew using her existing Award Miles. I am now up to 960,035 miles vs. the Million needed to make that special status. I should make that in 2023. A a result of many trips in 2022, extensive spending, several one-time things, and taking advantage of every scheme available, I reached the Executive Platinum status in early January 2023 on AA for the first and probably the last time! This is good through February 29, 2024. Executive Platinum is the 2nd highest level, only exceeded by the coveted Concierge Key, AA's invitation-only, most elite status level with NO published criteria on how to earn it. For IHG, I earned 1,660 points for the stay in College Station. I covered for the stays in West and Plano with 28,000 points but still got 500 points from each property as my welcome bonus.

The emphasis of spending on this trip and since New Year's has been to make sure that Carol maintains her Platinum-level status for March 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024. Carol got 200 LPs from Alamo and hundreds more from the dines at Pivovar, Stampede, and Vito's. As this is written on January 24th, she still needs about 2,000 more LPs beyond planned trips in February and anticipated spending on her Citi AAdvanatge card through her February 18th billing date to make it.

My next trip is on Thursday January 26th with friend Eric to the Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show in West Springfield, Massachusetts. This is the largest train show in the country, filling over 400,000 square feet in four buildings at the Big E Fairgrounds. The next trip for Carol and me is to Wichita, KS on Wednesday February 1st. Wichita is the last city I need for my list of the 100 largest cities in the USA. We tried to make a similar trip last year, but our flights were cancelled due to a large midwest snowstorm. While there, we'll visit the Kansas Aviation Museum and drive to Abilene to visit the Eisenhower Presidential Library. I will also attend "The Best Train Show in Kansas" on Saturday, February 4th. I know it is the best because that is the name of the show, sponsored by the local NMRA division. Later in February, we'll make our annual trip to near Asheville, NC for a family visit and of course a train show on Friday February 24th.



View from atop the vacant Reading Viaduct at around 10th and Spring Garden Streets. Photo from 2009 courtesy of why.org.

New Jersey Division 50th Anniversary Car

**Tangent Scale Models Bethlehem 70-Ton
Riveted Drop-End Gondola in HO Scale
All cars are ready-to-run.**

**We have produced the car in two numbers to
commemorate our 50th anniversary:**

1968 & 2018

**The car has reporting marks NJDX, black with
white lettering and data for the 1950s.**

The cost is \$35.00 each

OR

a set of both numbers for \$65.00.

To have them shipped USPS Priority: \$9 for 1 car, \$10.75 for 2 cars

**The cars are available now. Checks should
be made payable to “NJ Division”**

They are selling fast so don’t be left out!

(Photo/artwork on next page)

Website: <https://njdivnmra.org> for questions

Name_____

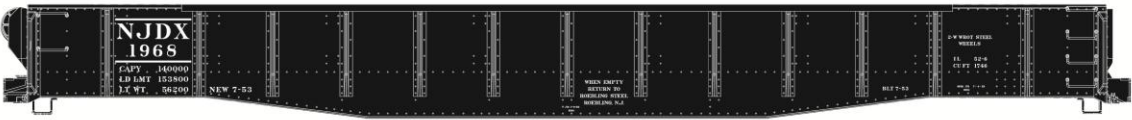
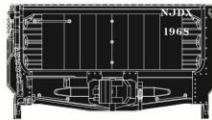
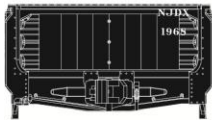
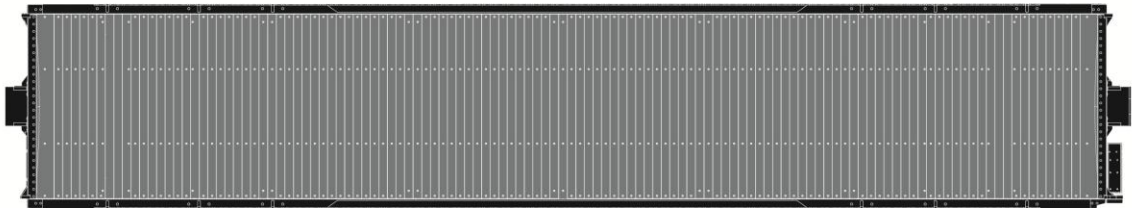
Address_____

City, State and Zip code_____

Telephone_____Email_____

See Tangent website for more info support@tangentscalemodels.com

Return this form to NJ Division, P.O. Box 276, Crosswicks, NJ 08515



Introducing the NMRA Interchange!

We are really pleased to announce the launch of the NMRA Interchange. The Interchange will provide an online space for our members to collaborate, learn, exchange ideas and information, and much more! Born from the wish of members of the NMRAx team to connect members from across the globe without the need for any formality, as well as Marketing's desire to move away from the website forums, and driven by the National Team's wish to unburden Regions and Divisions from the costs associated with hybrid/online meetings, we happily present the NMRA Interchange.

It is estimated that if each NMRA Region and Division had to self-fund online meeting software it would cost the organization over \$25,000 per year. This is money that we would much prefer go towards growing the hobby in your local areas instead.

The NMRA Interchange will connect you with members from across the NMRA using voice and text chat. The Hangout rooms are available for video conversations anytime without the need to pre-schedule. Each Region and Division also has its own space where only local members can see what is posted. It is a great place to promote local events, meetings, train shows, and even op sessions.

Each SIG (Special Interest Group, as listed on nmra.org) has its own place to announce events and answer questions from NMRA members. In addition, we have created a place where you can have your own channel for your layout or share your model railroading journey. Events will be promoted at the very top of the menu, and we will be running training sessions for Division members who organize meetings so that we can show you how to create and promote events.

The onboarding process is necessary to ensure the NMRA Interchange remains only for NMRA members. Without a membership number and completion of the onboarding process, your access to the NMRA Interchange will be limited. If you struggle with the onboarding process there is a channel called “#i-need-help” where the Interchange Team will assist you. As with the Digital Magazine you must use your membership number and a clearance code will be sent to the same email address registered with the NMRA.org website in order to complete the onboarding process.

The NMRA Interchange uses the Discord platform, which is available through a web browser like Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome. You can also download the Discord desktop application or the Discord mobile app for your smartphone and/or tablet. The software works on iOS, MacOS, Windows, Linux, and Android you can

download the Discord application from here:
<https://discord.com/download>

Joining the Interchange

Register for Discord and find the NMRA Interchange

- 1) Go to <https://www.nmra.org/nmra-interchange> to log in as a member.
 - a) If you are not registered with NMRA.org yet, you can register with your email address on file in the NMRA membership system.
- 2) Read through the page and then follow the link invite link: it will look something like this - <https://discord.gg/Sxxxxxx>
- 3) You will then be taken to Discord where you will be prompted to sign into Discord if you already have an account or prompted to register.
 - a) You can find instructions for creating an account or logging into Discord here.

NMRA Interchange Onboarding

You will now be in the NMRA Interchange Server “Lobby” where you now need to complete the onboarding process.

- 1) Type /onboard into the message box at the bottom of the screen. When the command with the NMRA logo appears, click on this and then enter your membership number. Do not forget to add the 00 or 0A at the end if displayed on your membership card, including the space.
- 2) When you have entered your membership number, press the Enter key and you will see the Interchange Bot reply to your message with the email address you are registered with at NMRA.org. Only you can see this message.
- 3) Go to your email mailbox and you should have received an email from the NMRA with a single-use code that you will need to enter into the Interchange to complete the onboarding process. (Remember to check your spam folder, too.)
- 4) Return to the NMRA Interchange and enter /clearance click on the interchange bot as you did during step 1 and enter the code from your email after input. (Make sure you don't add any spaces.) Then press Enter again and the Interchange Bot will tell you it is working and confirm that your onboarding has been successful. If the Bot tells you

onboarding has failed please repeat the /onboard membership number step.

You will know when the onboarding process has been completed when many more channels appear in your menu, as well as a channel just for your local division in your region.

Discord has produced a handy guide to help you get started with the NMRA Interchange:

<https://support.discord.com/hc/en-us/articles/360045138571-Beginner-s-Guide-to-Discord>

However, should you have difficulties or if you think the Bot has placed you in the wrong Division please use the “#i-need-help” channel for support from the NMRA Interchange Team.

Finally, we would like to thank the months of efforts by our team and our NMRA Interchange testers from the James River, Central Indiana, and Twin Cities Divisions. However, a special thank you goes out to Speed Muller, Jordan Kramer, Michelle Kempema, Aaron Stinson, Frank Trocchia, and Brad Anderson. Without them, we wouldn't be able to add this fantastic benefit to our members and local organizations.

Sincerely,

Gordy Robinson
NMRA President
president@nmra.org

Susquehanna Division

Mini-Con, Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania, Saturday, April 8, 2023

NMRA, MER South Mountain Division and Mainline Hobby Supply hosts its 9th annual Mini-Con at the Blue Ridge Fire Hall, 13063 Monterey Ln., Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214.

Come enjoy from 9 AM to 3PM, this one-day free event one block north of Main Line Hobby Supply, consisting of prototype and modeling presentations, formal and informal clinics, modular displays, interaction with our fellow hobbyists and beginners plus a 10% discount at Mainline Hobby Supply.

This no admission charge, wheelchair accessible, educational event is open to the public for promotion of the hobby of Model Railroading.

Cincinnati Division, MCR

We'd like to make all NMRA members aware of a new, Limited Edition, HO scale freight car that Cincinnati Division 7, Mid-Central Region is now offering for sale/purchase. It is a N&W HC-46 ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper in a unique repaint scheme with patched-out data; available in 3 different road numbers.

The following link provides details about it as well as pricing, shipping and ordering information.

<https://www.cincy-div7.org/projects.html>

The 26th National Model Trolley Meet

Sponsored by the

EAST PENN TRACTION CLUB

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (www.eastpenn.org)

MAY 19, 20 & 21, 2023

Meet Contest Theme: "Cars of the St. Louis Car Company"



Electroliner articulated trainset delivered in 1941 by St. Louis Car Co. with advanced features such as air conditioning and electric induction cooking in the tavern lounge. Photo from collection of Terrell Colson

- ☞ *Manufacturer and Dealer Tables*
- ☞ *Awards for Modules & Displays*
- ☞ *Operating Layouts (All Scales)*
- ☞ *Pop-up Clinics*
- ☞ *Model Contests*
- ☞ *Door Prizes*

To be held at the
Allentown Fairgrounds
Agri-Plex Charles Hall
17th & Chew Streets
Allentown, PA 18104

Free Parking on Site

www.allentownfairpa.org

Registration \$23 in advance, \$25 at the door.

See the back for more information.

Visit www.eastpenn.org for the latest meet info
or to Register Online!



26th National Model Trolley Meet

SPONSORED BY THE EAST PENN TRACTION CLUB

LOCATION: *Allentown Fairgrounds, Agri-Plex Charles Hall
17th & Chew Streets, Allentown, PA 18104*

ACTIVITIES:

THURSDAY May 18, 2023: 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.

Setup of module layouts, and displays.

FRIDAY May 19, 2023: 8:00 A.M. to 10:30 A.M.

Setup of Layouts, Exhibits and Dealer Tables

MEET OPENS: 11:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.

(Note: All layouts, displays and dealer tables may not be available at this time)

SATURDAY May 20, 2023: 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 A.M.

Setup of Layouts, Exhibits and Dealer Tables

MEET OPENS: 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.

(Some dealers may close at 5:00 P.M.)

Features: *Operating Module Layouts, Video Presentations, Dealer Tables, Static Displays,
Silent Auction Table, etc.*

Contests:

*Best of Show Richard Wagner Memorial Award with emphasis on the Meet Theme of St.
Louis Car Co. built cars (Judged).*

Popular Model Contest.

Awards for Outstanding Operating Modules & Displays.

(See Contest info at www.eastpenn.org/contest)

Clinics:

Pop-up clinics around the hall. Look for the blue light.

Hall Must be Vacated by Midnight

SUNDAY May 21, 2023:

Self-Guided Home Layout Tours, Friends of Philadelphia Trolleys Fantrip.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Because of uncertainty about demand in the immediate post-COVID world, we are not reserving a block of rooms in any one hotel. We encourage attendees to make their own arrangements and check availability of such matters as on-site transportation to and from the Meet. We leave it to you to decide what other amenities you want in your lodging: breakfast, pool, bar, etc. and we suggest utilizing facilities to the immediate west of the Fairgrounds in the west end of Allentown.

Listed below are some of the lodging facilities in the area:

In the Dorneyville area there are the Four Points by Sheraton at 3712 Hamilton Blvd, 18103 (610) 437-9100 and the Holiday Inn Express & Suites at 3620 Hamilton Blvd, 18103 (610) 437 9255.

Near Rt. 22 & I-78 are the Holiday Inn Express & Suites at 5630 Tilghman St, 18104 (610) 530-5545 and Motel 6 at 681 Blue Barn Rd, 18104 (610) 841-3838.

Near Routes 22 & 309 is the ParkView Inn & Conference Center at 1151 Bulldog Dr, 18104 (610) 395-3731.

In the Breinigsville-Folgelsville area there are the Hilton Garden Inn at 230 Sycamore Rd, 18031 (610) 398-6686, the Comfort Inn at 7625 Imperial Way 18106 (610) 391-0344, the Delta Hotels by Marriott at 7736 Adrienne Dr, 18031 (610) 391-1000 and several others.

Driving Directions: *See the Allentown Fairgrounds web site
www.allentownfairpa.org
Free Parking on Site*



26th National Model Trolley Meet

2023 EAST PENN MEET REGISTRATION FORM

Complete this half and mail with payment to:

Charles Long - Registrar

227 Locust Rd

Ft Washington, PA 19034-1425

Or Register and Pay On-Line at www.eastpenn.org/meet.html

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____
EMAIL _____

REGISTRATION: _____ persons at \$23 each (\$25 after May 15th) Total \$ _____

NOTE: Spouse and children under 18 are admitted free with a registered adult.

No animals except working guide dogs permitted at the meet or hotels.

PLEASE PRINT NAME(S) OF ADDITIONAL REGISTRANTS, SPOUSES & CHILDREN
BELOW:

COMMERCIAL DISPLAYS & SALES TABLES: (2.5' x 8')

NOTE: All commercial personnel must be registered.

POWER will be available to all table rows, bring an extension cord.

_____ TABLES at \$40 each Total: \$ _____

TOTAL (Check or money order payable to **EAST PENN TRACTION CLUB**) \$ _____

LAYOUTS & NON_COMMERCIAL DISPLAYS:

WILL YOU BE BRINGING ANY LAYOUTS, MODULES, OR DISPLAYS? ____ YES ____ NO

NOTE: Layouts and displays will be located in an area separate from the commercial tables.

Please include a sketch of any modules, layouts, or special displays you plan to bring.

FLOOR SPACE REQUIRED: _____

NEED POWER? ____ YES ____ NO

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

Important Dealer Note: It is requested that dealers, displays and layouts arrive on Thursday afternoon or Friday morning (layouts should also be set-up on Thursday) and be ready for business/operation no later than noon on Friday and to leave no earlier than 5:00 P.M. on Saturday.

Check out the East Penn Home Page on the Internet for the latest meet information!

www.eastpenn.org



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Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NMRA.org/>

Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nmrargroup/>

YouTube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGMModelRailroading>

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

<http://www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGMModelRailroading>

Upcoming NMRA Conventions



2023 Texas Express

2023

2023 Texas Express

<https://www.nmra.org/conventions/2023-texas-express>

Upcoming MER Conventions



MER 2023 - Round the Curve to Altoona
-October 19-22, 2023

Division Apparel



Polo



Polo with pocket



Cap



Short Sleeve Button-Down



Long Sleeve Button-Down

Our new apparel source is Daylight Sales. Website: <https://www.daylightsales.net/> You can do a search for “PhillyNMRA” to find our items, or [click here](#) for the direct link. Email: daylightsales@gmail.com Phone: (888) 557-9899.

We continue to offer the Port Authority polo, with or without pocket, and the short- and long-sleeve button down shirts. As before, you can have your name added. A new offering is a matching cap. Unfortunately patches are no longer available as our emblem is now being directly embroidered onto the items.

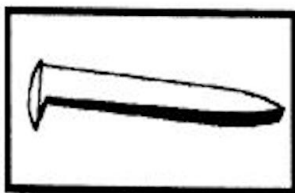
Manufacturer’s descriptions and specs:

POLO

POLO W/POCKET

LONG SLEEVE BUTTON DOWN

SHORT SLEEVE BUTTON DOWN



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD APPLICATION FORM

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

Member's Name: _____ NMRA#: _____ EXP: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State/Prov: _____ Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

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.

Witness: _____ Print Name: _____ NMRA #: _____

Regional AP Chair: _____ Region: _____

Improve your modeling with a few sheets of paper.

That's just what happens when you join the National Model Railroad Association and take part in the Achievement Program.

No, it's not a bunch of contests. It's modelers helping modelers become better modelers, to get the most out of their hobby. It's a way to hone your skills and become the modeler you've always wanted to be.

And it's just one of many benefits of NMRA membership.

It's never too late to start improving your modeling skills. And your hobby.



We make it more fun.
www.nmra.org

