



THE DISPATCH

The Journal of PhillyNMRA

October 2023



BNSF's Network Operations Center (NOC) in Fort Worth, Texas. Photo courtesy of <https://www.bnsf.com/news-media/railtalk/service/noc-never-sleeps.html>. More in Kevin Feeney's "On the Road: Texas Express—NMRA 2023."



THE DISPATCH

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Mid-Eastern Region
National Model Railroad Association



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THE DISPATCH

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

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From the Super's Desk

As I sit here writing this, I am looking forward to heading to Altoona, Pennsylvania, the location of this year's Mid-Eastern Regional convention. It will be a great time to renew old friendships and maybe make some new ones. As usual, the convention will offer many excellent clinics and layout tours. If you are into operations there are open model railroads for just that purpose. If you are new to this location, a tour of the Horseshoe Curve will be taking place. In addition, there will be other prototype tours being held in and around Altoona. If you've never attended a regional convention, you ought to give thought to attending one.

November 11, 2023 will be our last division meet of the year. This

will be held jointly with the New Jersey Division at the Brandywine Town Center Community Center off of Naamans Road in north Wilmington, DE. This will be the last time we meet at this location as the building is to be razed to make room for a strip shopping center. I would like to thank member Earl Hackett for his efforts in securing this building year after year.

To finish out 2023, we will be holding our third annual train show at the Cannstatters Volksfest-Verein in Northeast Philadelphia on Saturday, December 9th. We are looking for help for this event. If you can, we would welcome your support. Just reach out to one of the board members.

Stay safe and I hope to see you all soon.

Joe



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to our October edition of *The Dispatcher*. As usual, we start out with our information on the upcoming meet, this time a joint venture with the New Jersey Division. This will be our last meet at the Brandywine Town Center as it is slated for demolition to make room for more retail. If anyone knows of another location in northern Delaware which would serve our needs, please contact a board member.

Our feature articles in this edition should be a treat for all. Member Steve Koffel has contributed a comprehensive overview of model railroad podcasts you can find online. Not only do these presentations offer invaluable advice on every aspect of modeling on a regular basis, but it's also a great way to unwind when you've reached an impass on your layout and need some extra inspiration.

As if that weren't enough, Rob Hinkle takes us on his tour of the famous Franklin & South Manchester layout of George Sellios in Massachusetts. While Rob has included the usual sweeping vistas to which we've become accustomed, this is a chance to see specific details you've probably never noticed.

As is frequently the case, I am running short of feature articles. I would once again ask readers to consider writing something for *The Dispatcher*. It need not be elaborate and you need not be an experienced writer—all you need is passion for any subject on model or prototype railroading—and often that can end up being your own layout, but certainly can include any trips or railfanning.

How about your experience at this past week's MER convention? And don't forget, you'll receive credit toward the Achievement Program. I truly look forward to seeing some fresh faces appearing on our pages.

Howard

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November Meet Returns to Wilmington

On Saturday, November 11, 2023, the Philadelphia Division will host the New Jersey Division in a joint meet back at the Brandywine Town Center Community Center at 4050 Brandywine Parkway, Wilmington, Delaware 19803. This will be the last time we meet at this venue as it will be demolished next year. Maps and directions are on page 5. The doors open at 8:30am with the program set to begin at 9. Incidentally, if anyone knows of another meeting place in the Wilmington area, we would appreciate it if you could contact a board member.

Our first clinic will be presented by Jersey member Dave Albertson titled, “Outdoor Railroads: Rolling Stock and Live Steam—Lessons Learned.” In addition to his



very fine indoor HO layout depicting the New York & Long Branch, Dave has an interesting outdoor layout in his backyard. He will discuss his experiences with this live steam large scale railroad and the lessons learned should you want to explore this aspect of model railroad-ing.

Our second clinic will be presented by Philly Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR titled, “Scratch Building a Sand Tower.” A locomotive’s movement depends on the friction between its wheels and the steel rail. When rails are wet or slick, friction can decrease to the point where the wheels slip or spin like an automobile on an icy road. To increase friction, each locomotive carries a quantity of sand.



On steam locomotives, sand is carried in a dome on top of the boiler. The heat of the boiler keeps the sand dry. Diesels have one or more sandboxes located inside the body of the locomotive. Engineers deploy an air pressure valve to drop sand onto the rail ahead of the wheels.

Most railroads employ a sand tower to provide dry sand for their locomotives. There are many different types and configurations. Most towers have a drying house since the sand can only serve its purpose when it is dry.

Joe will discuss how he scratch built the sand tower. The prototype is located on the Canadian National Railroad at the North Fond-du-Lac Yard in Wisconsin. The uniqueness of this tower is that the railroad repurposed a fifty-ton, two-bay hopper car to construct it. Joe used styrene and polystyrene to fabricate the model. The model also uses a center-cab locomotive which receives sand from the tower. The scene also includes a mechanical department block truck. This truck services diesel locomotives.



Joe has built many models—often earning awards in contests—and has presented many clinics at both regional and division meets.

All attendees are encouraged to bring a model to the meet to display and discuss, if you like, during our Show and Tell session.

In addition, the Achievement Program Committee is now judging models at the meets. If you wish to have a model judged, please inform either Earl Paine or Joe Walters in advance of the meet.

As usual we’ll hold our 50/50 raffle, draw for door prizes, and have coffee, donuts, and Philly soft pretzels.

The afternoon features some excellent model railroads for visitation. Hope you can make it!

Help Needed at December Show

This year we will need extra man (or woman) power at our December 9th show at the Cannstatter Volksfest-Verein. Anyone willing to help out is asked to contact Kevin Feeney or any board member. Contact information is on page 2. This qualifies for AP Volunteer credit.

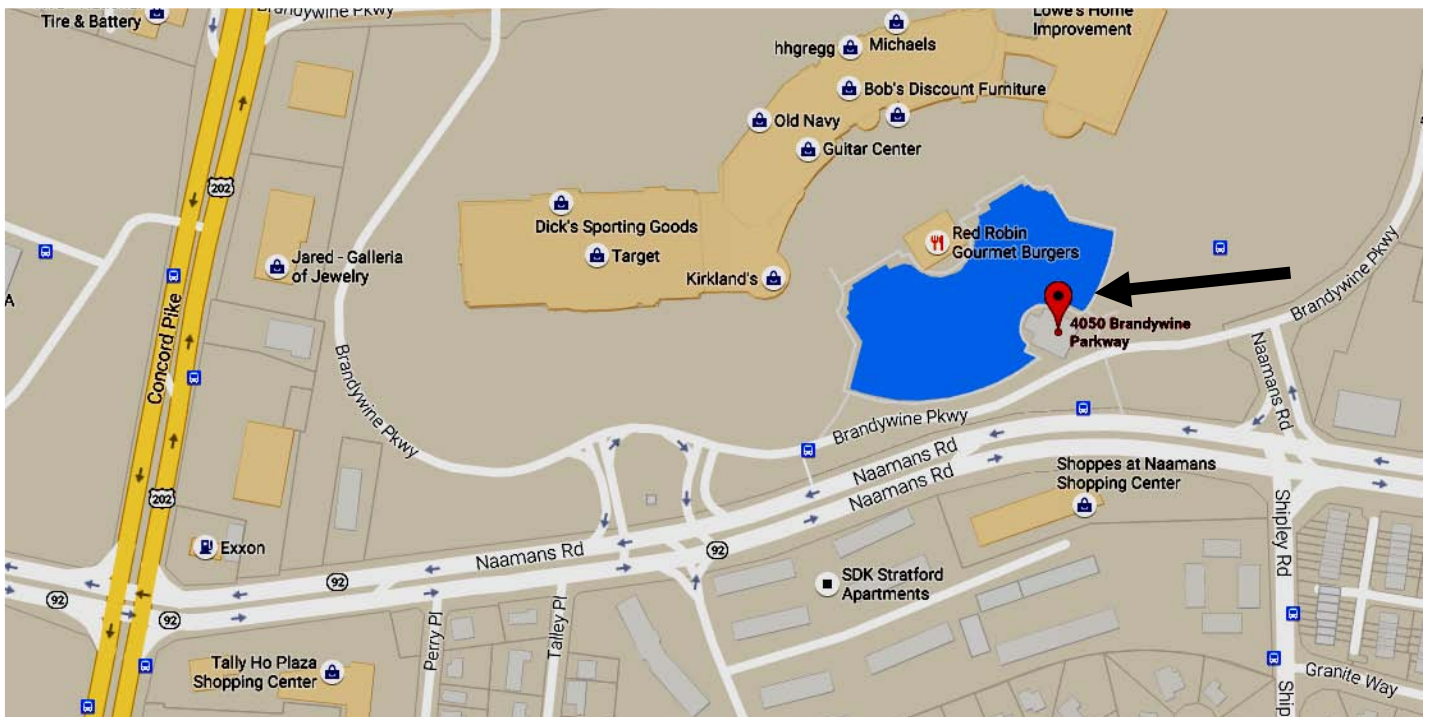
Maps and Directions to the November Meet

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

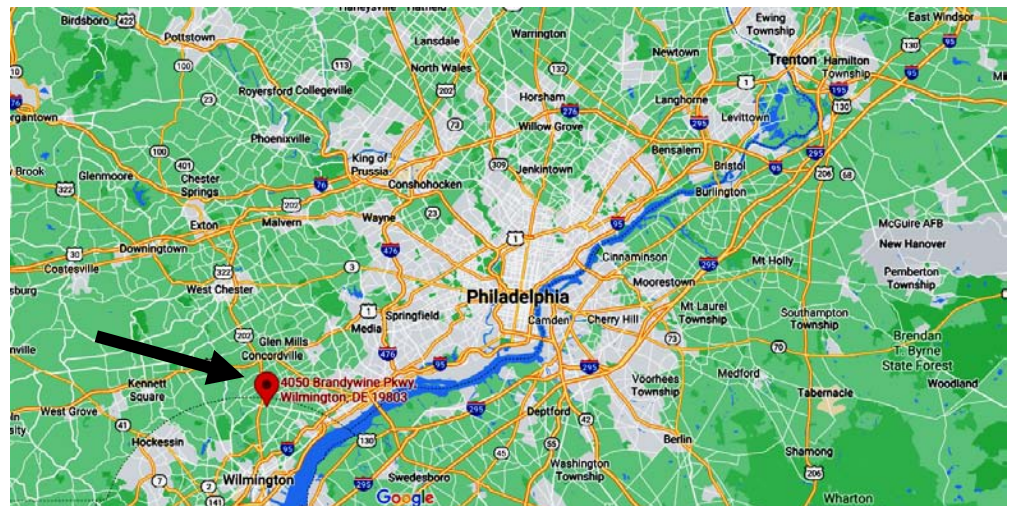
The Center’s **Community Building** (our meet location) is a separate structure with a prominent central atrium. It is located next to a large decorative fountain, on the south side of the complex near the Naamans Road entrance.

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

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



**Brandywine Town Center
Community Center
4050 Brandywine Parkway
Wilmington, DE 19803**



Steve Salotti now MMR #741

The Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA recently held its 2023 convention in Altoona, PA. At the banquet on Saturday night, Steven Salotti of the Philadelphia Division was awarded his Master Model Railroader, making him #741. Steve has been a long-time member of the division and the NMRA and has served as assistant superintendent, clerk,

and newsletter editor. During that time he built an impressive model railroad, his New York, Susquehanna, and Western, and along the way earned all the certificates needed to become an MMR. We all heartily congratulate him on his accomplishments.



Steve Salotti (right) receiving his Master Model Railroader from NMRA President Gordy Robinson. On the sidelines watching the presentation are MER AP Manager Kurt Thompson, MMR (far left) and MER President Scott Unger. (Kevin Feeney photo)



Philly Division's MER Contest Winners

The Philadelphia Division is proud of its first-place award winners at the MER Convention.

Photos by Steve Wysowski



Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR won first place in the non-revenue category



Philly Director Mike Dettinger won for his T-TRAK module



Accompanied by his wife, Steve Salotti holds up his first-place award in the caboose category as well as his MMR plaque.



All three Philadelphia Division first-place contest winners



Hello everyone! Our four-man AP judging team has been very busy since the last Philly Division meet. We continue to widen the scope of potential Philly Division modelers who are well along toward AP Certificates, but don't yet know that they are. If think you are one of them, and possibly unsure of your status on any of the certificates, please don't hesitate to contact one of our team to set up an evaluation. That's what we do.

By the time of the release of this issue of *The Dispatcher*, long-time member Steve Salotti will have been awarded his MMR at the Altoona MER Convention. Steve has a long record of service to the division and we welcome him as our newest MMR.

In addition, both board member Steve Wysowski, and member Stephen Richardson have earned (soon to be awarded) Scenery certificates and have multiple other applications on the way. Congrats to both of them. Keep up the good work!

Our "video vigilante," Bill Fagan, has recently joined the judging team as a "judge-in-training" and will continue to gain judging experience as he visits layouts with us. The more the merrier, so if you are interested in AP judging, let one of us know so we can begin to expose you the the scoring process. An article will appear in a future issue of *The Dispatcher* in which we will describe in more detail the process of using the NMRA approved matrices to fairly judge for any certificates.

We also welcome any member to bring along any models for AP evaluation at any of our meets. Please notify Earl Paine or Joe Walters (in advance of a meet) if you want a model or models evaluated so that we can be prepared.

Some more good news! There are approximately 12-15 more AP certificate submissions (from seven different members) that we are expecting in the near future.

Our goal is to be the largest "line item" in the division budget for the purchase of AP frames (a good thing)!

Contact any of us with questions.



Planning Ahead – Division Meets & Other Upcoming Events

November 11, 2023

Philadelphia/NJ Division Joint Meet
Brandywine Town Center
4050 Brandywine Parkway
Wilmington, DE 19803

December 9, 2023

Philly Division/GATSME Train Show
Cannstatter Volksfest-Verein
9130 Academy Road
Philadelphia, PA 19114

January 13–14, 2024

Philadelphia Division Table
Greenberg's Train & Toy Show
Greater Philadelphia Expo Center
Oaks, PA 19456

February 17, 2024

Philadelphia Division Meet
Southampton Community Center
913 Willow Street
Southampton, PA 18966

March 22–24, 2024

RPM–Valley Forge
Desmond Hotel Malvern
1 Liberty Boulevard
Malvern, PA 19355

April 20, 2024

Philadelphia Division Meet
Trinity Reformed Church
532 East Main Street
Collegeville, PA 19426

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

September Meet Report by Charles Long, Clerk

Photos by Rob Hinkle



On Saturday, September 9th the Philadelphia Division met at the College Settlement Day Camp in Horsham, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The college settlement dates back to the 19th century when colleges in Philadelphia set up settlements in the "country" for immigrants. Today the camp which occupies this settlement serves underprivileged children.

Twenty-nine division members were signed in along with two additional guests for a total of 31.

Superintendent Joe Walters welcomed everyone, introduced the current officers, and thanked Chip Stevens for

his board service. Chip has served for several years as our publicity and member outreach chairs as well as operating the video camera recording our meets. Joe also recognized the passing of John Greene, owner of Bethlehem Car Works, best known for their Reading passenger cars.

The first clinic presentation was by member Eric Hansmann and titled "Prototype Inspiration for Manageable-Sized Layouts." This excellent clinic delved into the many ways of incorporating prototype modeling in limited layout space. Through the use of various examples, he discussed considerations for operations, modeling the most important prototype features, and communicating a sense of time and space.



After a break for coffee and doughnuts during which 50/50 raffle tickets were sold, a second clinic was presented by Steve Wysowski titled "Bashing a Self-Propelled Steam Doodlebug." Steve walked us through the steps of building a narrow-gauge, steam-powered doodlebug showing how, through the use of many commercially available parts, it is possible to create a nearly prototypical steam doodlebug.

A door prize drawing was held with some particularly nice items generously donated by Superintendent Joe Walters.

Many thanks to member Steve Hamilton for facilitating the acquisition of the venue, to our clinicians, Eric Hansmann and Steve Wysowski, and to all the members who attended and helped with the setup and takedown. It was a very enjoyable morning.

After the meet, attendees visited two very impressive layouts: Bill Fagan's Reading Pacific N-scale railroad and Charles Long's HO-scale Philadelphia Transportation Company traction layout. We thank Bill and Charlie for their hospitality. 🚂

WE WELCOME OUR NEW PHILLY DIVISION MEMBERS

James Fry, E. Greenville, PA
James Rose, Jenkintown, PA



Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR greets the attendees



Clinician Eric Hansmann receives his appreciation certificate from Superintendent Joe Walters



Attendees peruse the swap tables



AP Coordinator Earl Paine (C) struggles to congratulate our two newest Golden Spike recipients, Steve Wysowski (left) and Stephen Richardson (right)



Steve Wysowski again (left), this time receiving his clinician certificate



Check-in at the front table



Impressive door prizes—generously donated by Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR



Chip Stevens (left) recognized for distinguished service on the board of directors



Clerk Charles Long (left) receives an appreciation certificate for opening his layout to the attendees



Finally...the super arrives with the donuts...or at least what's left



Members of the AP Committee discuss business



The super and Steve Hamilton discuss the facility



A familiar sight: the super raiding the donuts. "Yo, Joe! Leave one for me!" pleads Bill Fagan.



Another swap table

Model Showcase

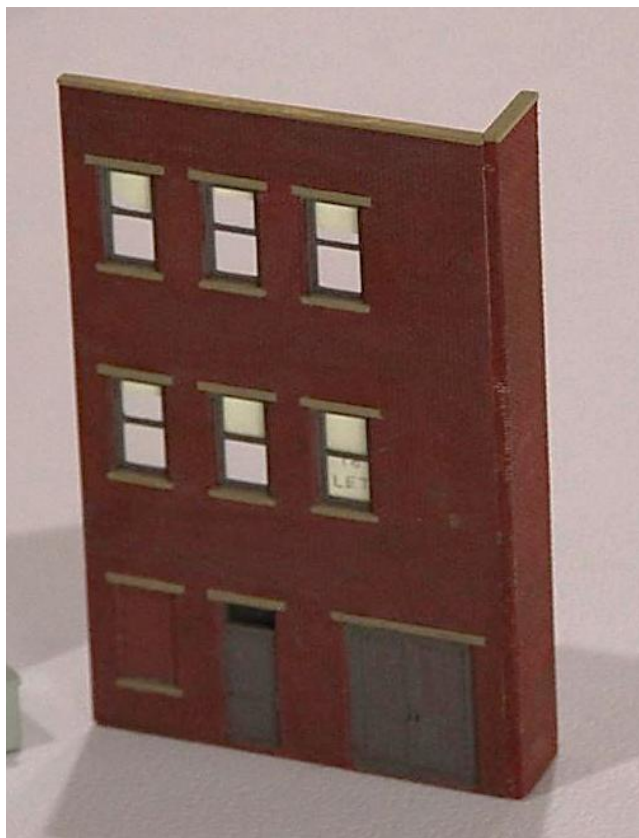


*Steve Wysowski's
Steam Doodlebug*

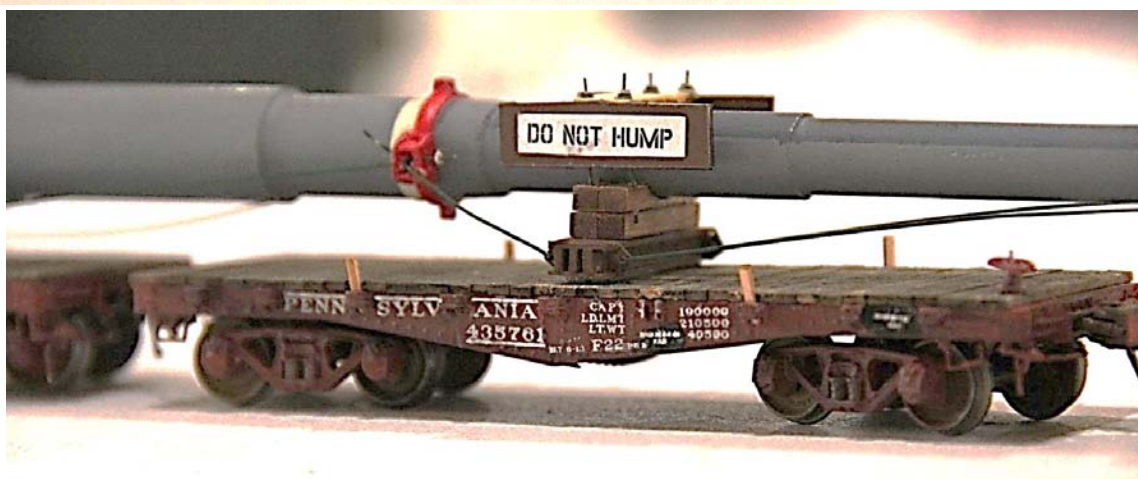
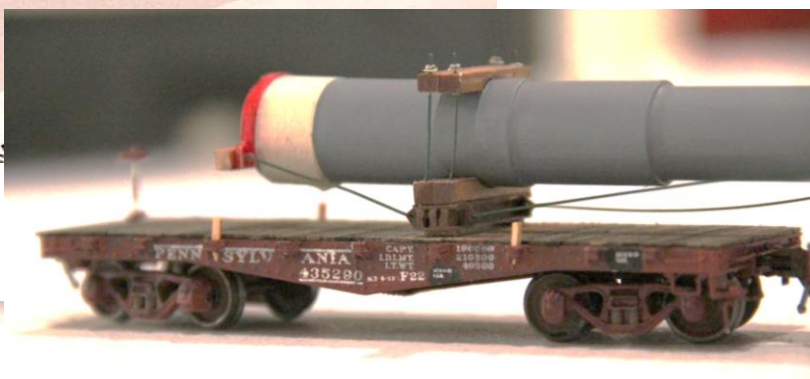
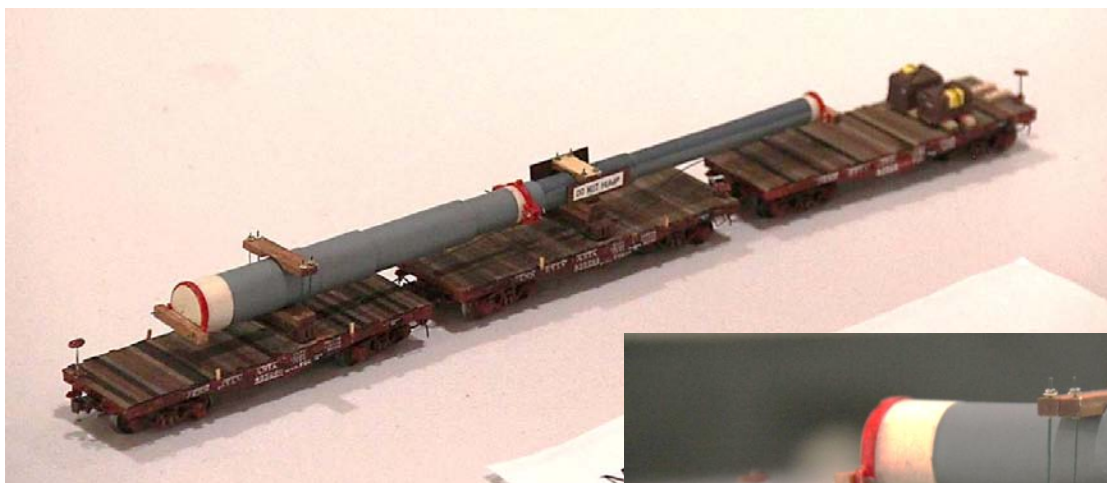
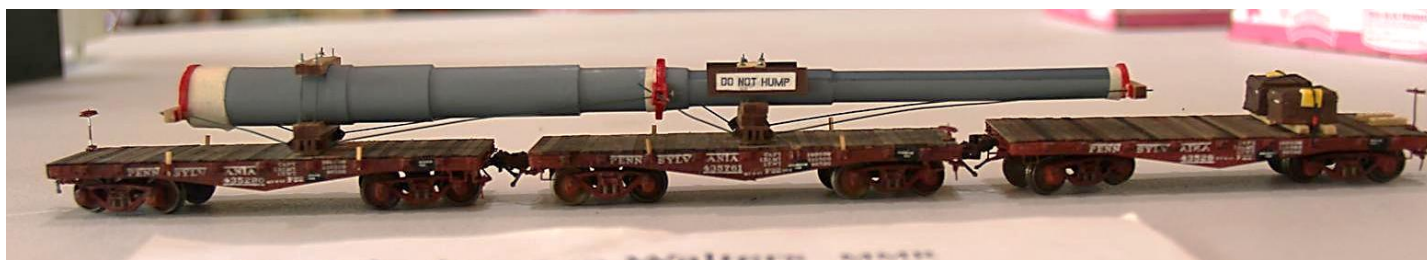




Flats from Eric Hansmann's clinic



Joe Walters, MMR's Battleship Gun Car

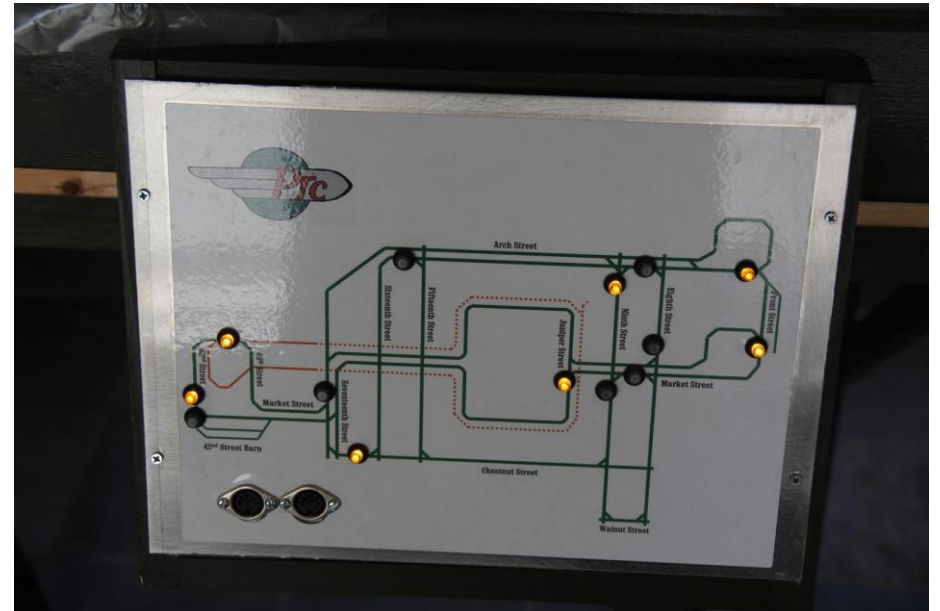


Layout Tours

Photos by Rob Hinkle

Charles Long's PTC (Philadelphia Transportation Co.) (HO)







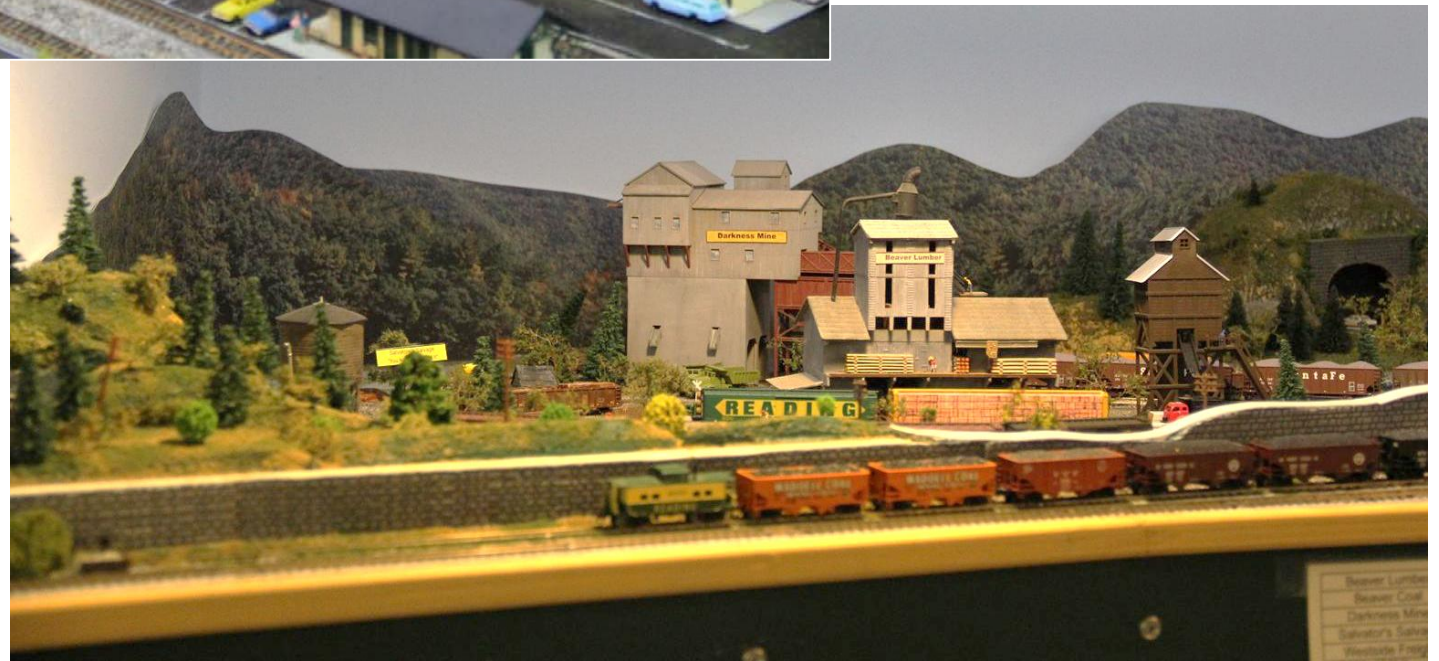
Bill Fagan's Reading Pacific (N)







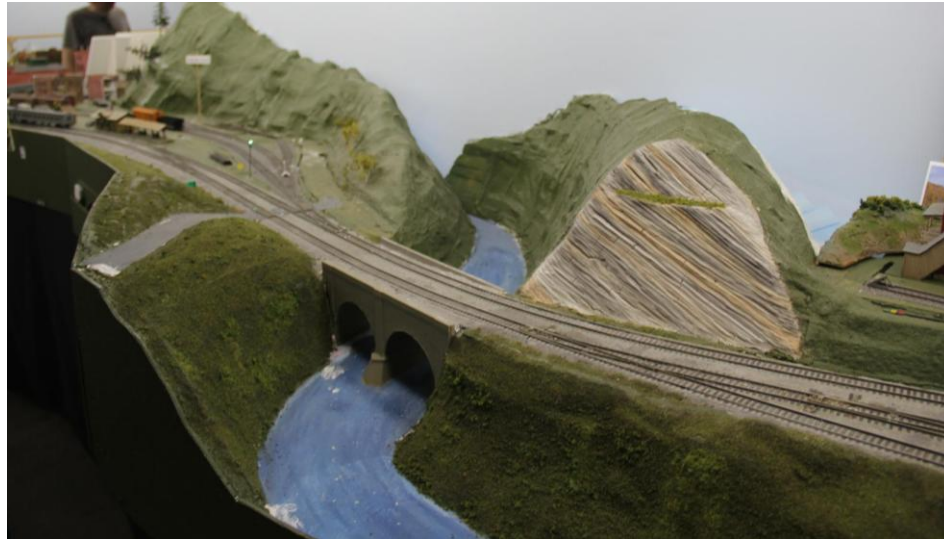
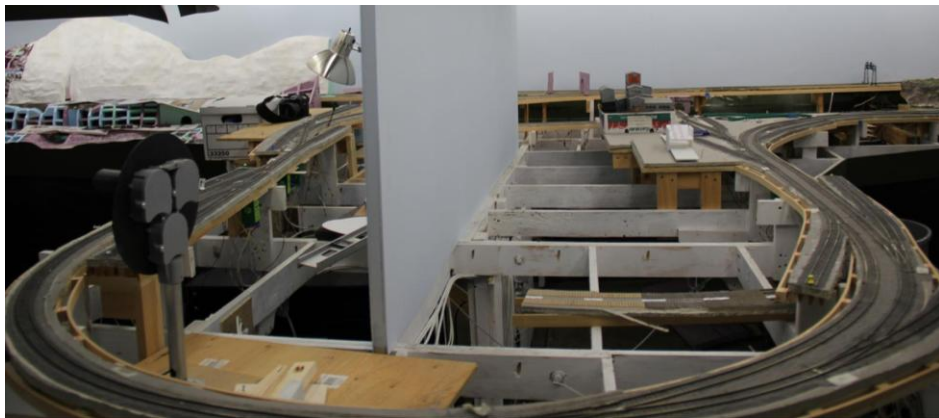




Rockledge Model Railroad Museum/GATSME (HO)











Are You Listening to Podcasts Yet?

by Stephen Koffel

How do you occupy your mind when modeling? I often listen to music, or might put on a TV show, sports game, or YouTube video in the background while getting into a rhythm. But recently, I've been tuning into podcasts, specifically model railroad related ones, while soldering feeders, ballasting track, or hunting down detail parts that always disappear into the insatiable void below my workbench.

Podcasting is a relatively new medium of entertainment that has its roots in the early 2000s. The term "podcasting" is derived from the combination of "iPod," Apple's popular portable media player, and "broadcasting." Podcasting began to gain popularity in 2004 when Apple added support for podcasts to its iTunes software. This allowed users to easily find and download podcasts directly to their iPods. As more people started creating and listening to podcasts, the medium began to diversify with shows covering a wide range of topics ranging from news and politics to comedy and entertainment, and finally to miniature trains.

Model railroaders became aware of podcasting sometime in the late 2000s, and a new avenue of education and entertainment for the hobby was born. Though some have come and gone, there are at least a dozen regularly-updated model railroading podcasts in 2023, and new ones pop up often. There are far too few hours available to consume all of the content out there, but it's never too late to start.

The following is a "podcast primer" of sorts, giving an overview of the style and content of several popular model railroading podcasts.

Around the Layout

Around the Layout is a weekly podcast that aims to capture the stories of regular model railroading enthusiasts. Each episode, podcast host Ray Arnott is joined by a guest to discuss their interest in model railroading in a casual one-on-one, interview-style discussion. Typical discussions include what got them started in the hobby, challenges, accomplishments, and ultimately what motivates and excites them. Originating as a bi-monthly offering, the podcast has found great success and has moved to a weekly schedule.



Host Ray Arnott is the owner of the P&W and NECR Interchange, an HO-scale switching layout which he built with his mentor Michael DeBoise. He is also active in the Tri-State Railroaders operating group based in New England. Inspired by the casual conversations at operating sessions, group functions, and pandemic-era virtual gatherings, Ray started the "Around the Layout" as a forum for model railroaders of all levels to share their story. You can visit [aroundthelayout.com/podcasts](https://www.aroundthelayout.com/podcasts) to learn more and start listening. A good spot to start: Joe Mammay & The Lamoille Valley Railroad (April 12, 2022) Ray Arnott and the P&W & NECR Interchange Model Railroad (April 1, 2023)

<https://www.aroundthelayout.com/>

Second Section Podcast

The Second Section show is a bi-monthly video podcast dedicated to all things model railroading. Hosts Andy Dorsch and Mike Ostertag present themselves as two "regular guys" sharing their techniques, tips, and stories about railroading. Most episodes feature live interviews with guests that underscore the show's topic, which can range from prototype design and layout planning to weathering techniques and layout operations. Andy Dorsch is a lifelong model railroader who is currently building a freelance HO-scale layout, and Mike Ostertag is a 1:1 scale engineer on Canadian National and one of those elusive "S-scale" modelers you keep hearing about.





The Second Section podcast is live-streamed every other Tuesday evening on YouTube. Viewers can participate via live chat monitored by the hosts and submit questions which are read on air. Though the show is primarily a video podcast, and many of the segments feature visual presentations, an audio version of the video podcast is made available several days after the live show for fans that prefer listening along while driving, gardening, or individually spiking two scale miles of hand-laid track.

Popular segments include

"Shortline of the Show" where Mike shares prototype photos and information about shortline railroads that would translate to a model railroad in any available limited space, and "#notsponsored" where the hosts review product announcements, new releases, and novel hobby products that enhance their modeling enjoyment.

The podcast debuted at the tail end of 2021, and has amassed a loyal following of live viewers. You can visit secondsectionpodcast.com to find links to video and audio versions of this podcast.

A good spot to start:

The State of Model Railroading (April 29, 2023)

Burnout in Model Railroading (Jun 11, 2022)

<https://secondsectionpodcast.com/>

A Modelers Life

Hosted by Lionel Strang and a ragtag bunch of the finest folks the hobby has to offer, the A Modelers Life podcast sets out to document the goings-on of the model railroad hobby through long-form interviews with almost anyone who has anything to do with the industry. A Modelers Life could be considered one of the "elder statesmen" in the model railroading podcast game, active since the fall of 2014.

Lionel Strang is a familiar name to many model railroaders. In addition to building notoriety as a monthly columnist and contributing editor at *Model Railroader* magazine, Lionel is also the architect of the Allegheny & Lackawanna Southern Railroad, which graced the pages of *MR* many times throughout the 1990s. Bruce Wilson, Strang's level-headed co-host on the show, is a life member of the NMRA and is active in the Operations Special Interest Group (OpSIG).

To balance out almost a decade of fascinating guest interviews and great modeling knowledge shared on the podcast, there is a menagerie of hockey discussions, strong opinions about hot dog toppings, musical references to Tilsonburg, Ontario, and general antics in the pursuit of never taking themselves too seriously. You can check out this quirky podcast at [amodelerslife.com](https://www.amodelerslife.com).

A good spot to start:

Tony Koester (Multiple Episodes, October-Nov 2021)

Danny Harmon (Jan 16, 2023)

<https://www.amodelerslife.com/>



There are only so many free hours in the week, but if you still manage to find the time and need even more model railroad podcasting, here are some other shows you might consider checking out:

Crew Call with Mike Rose

Mike Rose has been in the podcast game for over a decade. On Crew Call, he discusses model railroading topics with modelers and industry players. Episodes released monthly.

<https://themodelrailroadpodcast.com/>

The Crossing Gate

Group discussion of model railroading topics with a focus on operations. Produced by members of the Twin Cities Division of the NMRA. Episodes released monthly.

<https://tcdnmra.org/podcast/>

Model Rail Radio

A live, call-in radio show hosted by Tom Barbet and others. First broadcast way back in 2009, the show has retained its unique format. Episodes released monthly.

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

TSG Multimedia Podcast (Video Podcast)

Discussion of modeling, railfanning, preservation, and documenting history from video producer John Abatecola. Occasional guest interviews. Episodes released monthly.

<https://tsgmultimedia.com/tsg-multimedia-podcast/>

What's Neat This Week (Video Podcast)

Video podcast hosted by photographer Ken Patterson and a panel of regular hosts display their modeling projects, review manufacturer announcements and releases, and interview vendors and hobbyists. Episodes released weekly on YouTube.

<https://whatsneat.com/>

Wiley's Bench Time

“Detail-oriented” podcast from host Brett Wiley focused on ideas and techniques for fine-scale modeling and craftsman kit-building. Episodes released twice monthly.

<https://hoscalecustoms.com/>

Haven't taken the podcast plunge yet? Podcasts are typically available to stream or download from the show website, and also available through smartphone applications like Apple/Google Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, and Audible. Many shows also upload their audio podcasts to YouTube.



About the author...

Stephen Koffel is a recovering N-scale model railroader with plans to build an HO scale layout as soon as his “fixer upper” stops falling apart. When he’s not at Lowe’s for the fourth time this week, you can find him on the trail with friends, yelling at sports on the TV, or spending time at home with his wife and two children.

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- Assistant Superintendent – Rob Hinkle (2025)
- Clerk – Charles Long (2024)
- Treasurer – Kevin Feeney (2025)

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- Steve Wysowski – Member Outreach (2025)
- Jeff Witt – Venues (2025)



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- AP Committee Chair – Joe Walters, MMR
- Newsletter Editor/Webmaster – Howard Kaplan

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- Layouts – Bill Fagan
- Venues – Jeff Witt, Kevin Feeney, Steve Hamilton, Steve Wysowski
- 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

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- Member Outreach – Steve Wysowski
- 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

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- Webmaster – Howard Kaplan
- Newsletter – Howard Kaplan, Earl Paine, Bill Fagan, Joe Walters MMR, Kevin Feeney
- Layout Video – Bill Fagan
- Photography – Rob Hinkle, Howard Kaplan, Bill Fagan,

DIVISION APPAREL – Howard Kaplan

Division Financial Statement

by Kevin Feeney, Treasurer

PHILLY DIV NMRA			
INCOME STATEMENT [CASH BASIS]			
12 MONTHS ENDED 07/31/23			
REVENUE	SHOW NET	373.74	SHOW @CVV 12/22
	DONATIONS	111.03	
	INTEREST	5.21	[CHECKING ONLY]
	50/50 + MISC	200.39	
	REGION REBATE	0.00	NOTHING RECEIVED
	TOTAL	\$ 690.37	
EXPENSES	MEETINGS	-1,221.78	
	DIVISION EXP	-600.38	
	EQUIPMENT	0.00	
	PRINT/POSTAGE	-587.25	
	TOTAL	\$ (2,409.41)	
	NET [LOSS]	\$ (1,719.04)	
BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES AS OF		7/31/2023	
	CHECKING	\$ 9,354.29	
	BUSINESS SAVINGS	\$ 7,213.43	
	CD DUE 9/16/2023	\$ 8,110.80	
	TOTAL	\$ 24,678.52	

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.



Bill Fagan:

The Video Vigilante



Photos are snapshots from videos/slideshows by Bill Fagan

Below are examples of some impressive layouts that I've visited. I've videoed layouts in California, Idaho, Maryland, Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. 187 layouts with 806 videos and 2810 followers on YouTube with 1.5 million views.

↓ Reading Company Technical Historical Society RR

The Reading Company Technical and Historical Society is an organization dedicated to the preservation of the Reading Railroad. The modular group includes members interested in preserving the Reading through modeling. The HO scale layout consists of modules, mostly four or six feet in length, that highlight scenes once found along the Reading Railroad. Features include bridges, tunnels, rail yards, engine facilities, industries, agriculture, parks and recreation, and passenger operations.

Being of modular design, the layout is flexible and can be assembled in lengths from 60 to 160 feet. The width is fixed at 4 feet and the height is three feet. The day this video was taken the layout was 160 feet in length—their largest ever. The layout is DCC controlled and consists of a double track mainline with operating signals. These videos were taken during “Reading Days” at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania on July 3, 2023 and used with the permission of the RCTHS. You can view this railroad at https://youtu.be/ofuUiWPuK80?si=9sPRIEEYmqV_wBT1



↓ Steve Wysowski's A&B RR

The A&B (Ansonia & Birmingham) is an HO_{n3} railroad situated around 1913. 25 years in the making. Area modeled is Derby Jct. and Birmingham. Quite a few buildings are scratch built along with a few cars. Controlled is Digitrak. You can view Steve's railroad at:

<https://youtu.be/2DwixafujW0?si=PQaUJb3j4gOQLipW>



Columbia Historical Preservation Society RR →

The Columbia Historic Preservation Society is located in Columbia, PA in Lancaster County. Their HO model railroad covers 1000 square feet. The modeled Columbia area is prototypical, based on what actually existed between 1920 and 1940. It covers approximately 200 square feet of the layout, and is home to a large round-house facility, a major yard, and coal and diesel facilities, as well as two railroad stations (PRR and Reading). See video here: https://youtu.be/qvL6Er1UG1o?si=mda61n3QQ_B-Y0Yq



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 wfagan@comcast.net. More to follow in the next issue of **The Dispatcher**.

Enjoy,

Bill

A Visit to the Franklin & South Manchester 1/27/2023

by Rob Hinkle

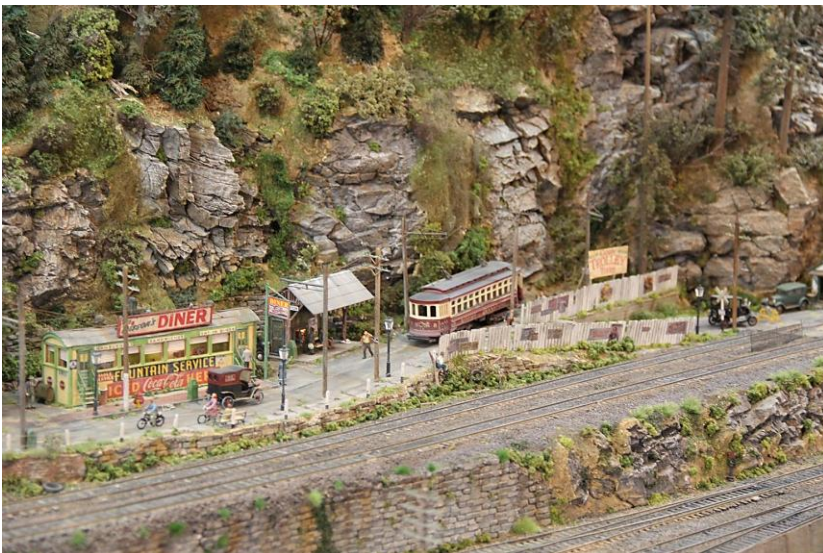
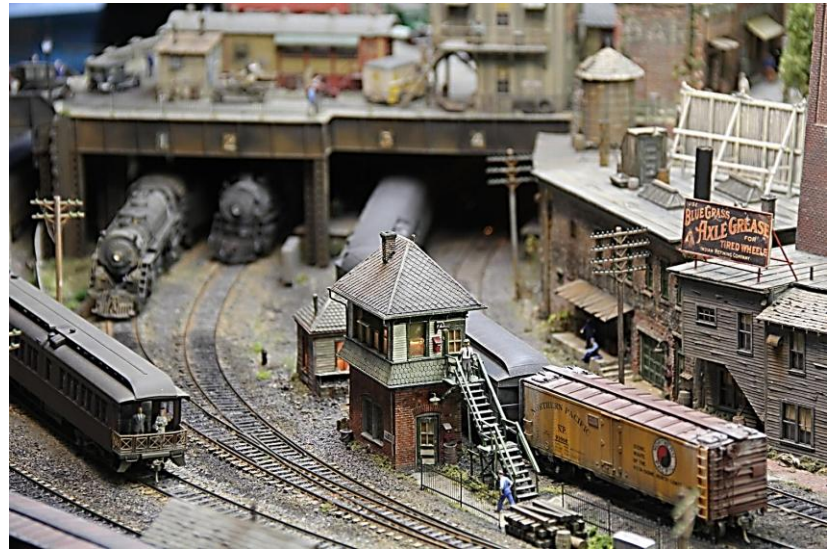
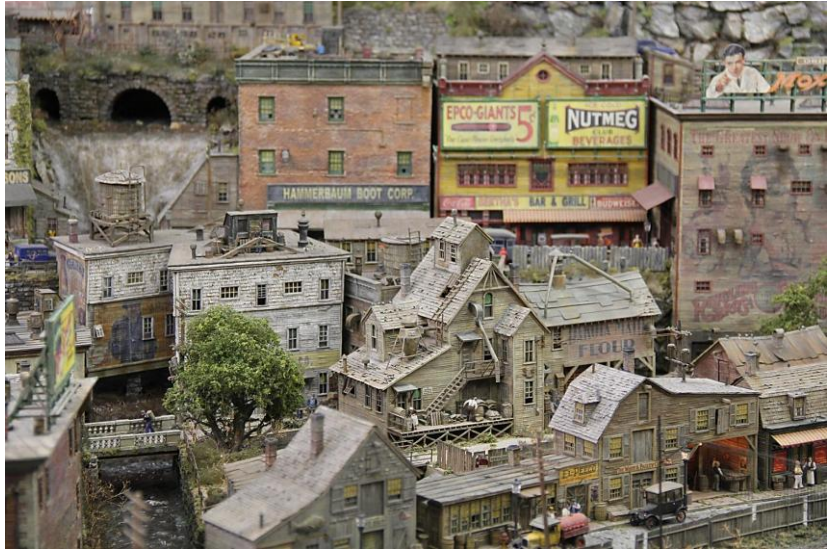
Growing up in the mid- to late 1980s the Franklin & South Manchester layout created by George Selios of Fine Scale Minutes (FSM Kits) was a frequent topic in the *Model Railroaders* I would read each month. It seemed that at least once per year George's layout would be covered showing all of the details he had put into the layout over the past year.

The layout models the mid-1930s in a highly realistic manner where there's many levels of detail to see everywhere on the layout.

George usually hosts a monthly open house for people to visit the layout, one of the dates usually being the Friday before the start of the Amherst Railroad Hobby Show in Springfield. Since I was up at the pre-show clinics, presenting and helping out with their clinics, and I had the morning free, I made the roughly 1.5-hour trip from Springfield to Peabody, Massachusetts to visit George's layout.

The layout was open from 9am to noon on that Friday; I arrived around 10am to see as much as I could of the layout before I needed to head back to the hotel for the afternoon clinics. I ended spending about an hour at the layout. There is so much to see everywhere and in every scene that someone probably wouldn't be able to see everything in the full three hour window. I ended up taking about 90 photos at the layout; there's also a Facebook group for the Franklin & South Manchester where you can find many more photos as well as videos of the layout.

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/159133629715412>)



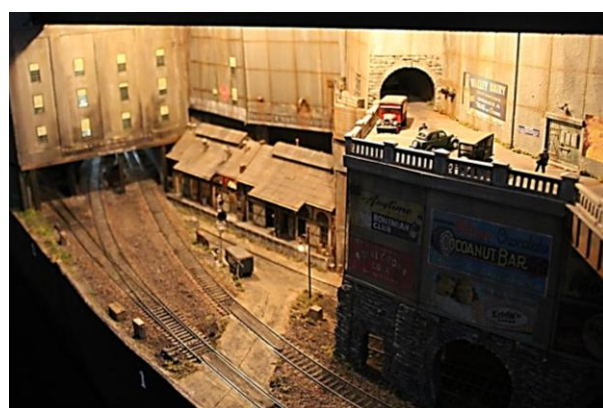
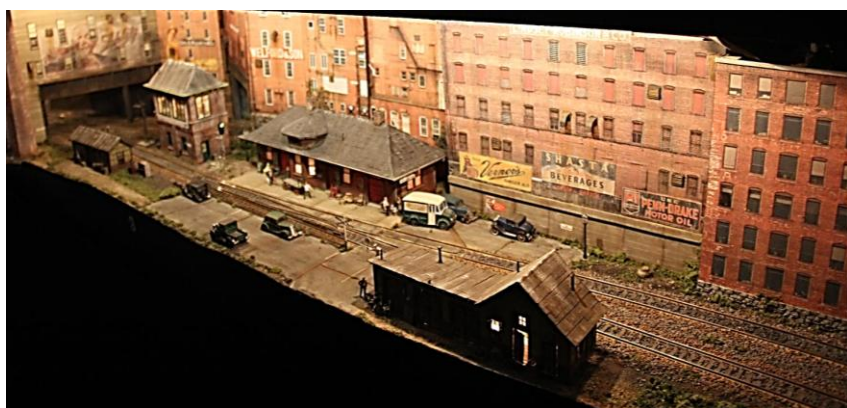












About the author...

A familiar face in the Philadelphia Division, Rog Hinkle has served as a board director, superintendent, and assistant superintendent—the office which he currently holds. An avid Reading fan, he is in the process of building an HO layout depicting the Reading's Lebanon Valley Line, and has presented many clinics about it and related topics. He is also our ops chair, and serves as an officer in the OpSIG. He frequently attends RPM meets as well as regional and national conventions and served as the chairman of the 2019 Liberty Bell Special MER convention hosted by the Philadelphia Division.



ON THE (RAIL) ROAD WITH KEVIN FEENEY

CONVENTIONS – SHOWS – TRAVEL

MIDWEST & WEST

May 13–22, 2023



This trip had three elements chronologically. First, we attended our daughter Erin's graduation from Fox Valley Technical College in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Second, we visited two more state capitols (California & Nevada). Third, I attended a joint railroad event in Reno, NV that included the Southern Pacific Railroad History Center (SPRHC), the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society (R&LHS), and the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS). The third element was the real basis for the trip as it included the semi-annual meeting of the NRHS Board of Directors that I needed to attend given I am one of its nine board members. NRHS board members serve without compensation or expense. They do provide reimbursement, which is fine with me as attending their meetings just gives me another excuse to travel. When Erin told us she was going to her graduation on Sunday 5/14, it became clear that we could attend that on the way west. Visiting the two state capitols was an added bonus as we work through that bucket list.

Readers may recall that on 12/30/20, I flew round trip from PHL to LAX for the day for \$99. However, now the days of cheap airfares are over! In planning this trip, I saw that it was cheaper to fly to Sacramento, CA (SMF) than Reno, and that for the same airfare (\$702.40 each) we could include a stop in Chicago (ORD) from where we could drive up to Erin's graduation in Wisconsin.

Saturday 5/13

We got home from Israel late on May 11th and used the next day to do laundry and catch up with mail, emails, banking, etc. On this day we were up for another early (6:18am) train from Jenkintown. With the weekend schedule we had to change to an airport train at Jefferson and were at PHL by 7:20am. We checked our bags for our 6:45am flight to Chicago (ORD). We breezed through the TSA PreCheck line and wondered why we had not signed up for this before. The regular TSA line went across the concourse over the departure car lanes and the SEPTA tracks toward the attached parking garage. We were both upgraded several days in advance for the flight. We left a bit early at 8:41am and landed a bit late at 10:15am. We landed at the far end of ORD and had a lengthy taxi before coming to our gate. We got the bags and headed up to the ATS (Airport Transit System), an automated people mover connecting ORD's terminals with an offsite facility for rental cars and also a stop on a METRA rail line. This ride only takes a few minutes. For this trip, Alamo had the best rate (prepaid) and soon we were off in a Toyota Corolla.

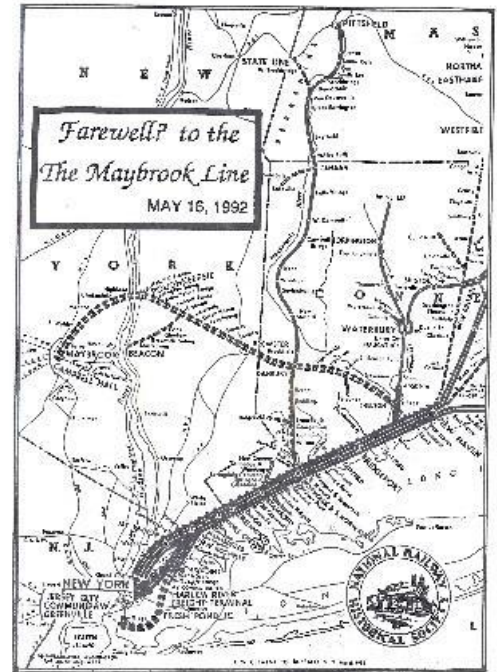
The major north-south highway (I-294) around Chicago is tolled so we went a different way. The rental car companies there offer a toll package of about \$13 a day and usually the cars have a hideable toll device. However, this car had Florida plates meaning we could have used our EZ-

Pass had I brought it with me. We noted the gas prices so we would know where to fill up on the return.

Our first stop was at South Side Trains in Milwaukee. I was there last November when I attended Railfest. It is a small store, but said to be Milwaukee's premier model train dealer. The staff is friendly and it seems to be a local hangout for those afflicted with model railroad disease. The store now sells 3D- printed objects and structures.

I bought a jar of Robert's Brick Mortar, the store's own product; I have seen ads for this for years and always wanted to try it. You rub it onto the sides of a model brick building and it fills in the tiny spaces between the bricks just like the mortar lines on a real building. After I try it, I will attach a picture to a future trip report.

I looked through the older hobby items for sale, but did not see anything that I needed or could resell. However, there were several shelves of old books and railroadiana items including this trip brochure that I bought for \$1. I was on that trip, organized by the Western Connecticut Chapter of the NRHS of which I was an active member. What are the odds of finding something like this there?



Back on the highway we headed north on I-41 to Appleton, WI, about 185 miles from ORD. We have been there before, most recently last November. We checked into a Quality Inn that was disappointing. Our next stop was at the local grocery store, Festival Foods, in nearby Neenah, to buy this (left).

Back in 2020, we were there to help Erin move in and took her food shopping at this store. I like sauerkraut and Carol doesn't so it is wasteful for me to open up a can for one hot dog. I have never seen single packs like this anywhere else. Wisconsin has a strong German heritage and "brats" are very popular there.

We attended a Saturday Vigil Mass and then met Erin and Jason for dinner at the well-rated Town Council Restaurant in downtown Neenah.

The food was very good, but the portions were small and pricey. The bill for the four of us was \$290, including a bottle of wine.

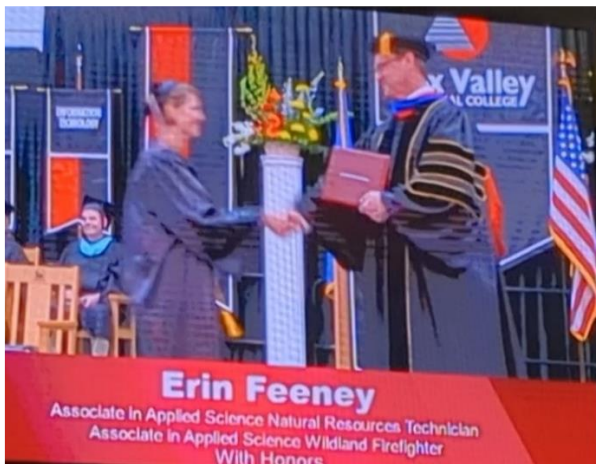


Sunday 5/14

The next morning I found the hotel's offered breakfast to be totally lacking so I drove to a nearby Panera for a bite to eat. We met Erin and Jason for brunch at Becket's, an upscale place on the Fox River in Oshkosh. She hadn't made a reservation and with it being Mother's Day and the day after UW-Oshkosh's graduation, we had to sit at the bar. While the others had breakfast food, I went with a nice burger.

Soon it was time to leave for Erin's graduation. This was her second college graduation; she had graduated from Franklin & Marshall College with a B.A. in





French and Government back in 2010. After working a year in France and spending several years in AmeriCorps, she developed an interest in agriculture and natural resources. Looking for a place to study these disciplines, she found Fox Valley Technical College in Wisconsin, a large school serving over 50 thousand students in over 170 career fields. Fox Valley is based in Appleton, but has other campuses in the area that together offer certificate programs, technical, and academic degree programs offering associates degrees.

The graduation was held in the field house of UW-Oshkosh, who had used it for its own graduation the day before. Erin had to attend FV for three years for two reasons. First, F&M had no required courses, and she took no math or science courses there, so she had to take certain prerequisite courses at FV. Second, she actually completed two degrees: an A.S. as Natural Resources Technician and an

A.S. in Wildland Firefighter, and graduated with honors (4.0 average). After taking a vacation trip to Virginia with Jason, she is looking for a full-time position in her fields that will probably mean moving from Wisconsin. She will NOT miss the winters there.

After the graduation, we headed to Ledgestone Vineyards in Greenleaf, Wisconsin. There are quite a few wineries in this part of Wisconsin. Erin and Jason had been there once before. I bought Carol a bottle for Mother's Day of their "Dry Riesling" that they said really wasn't dry. We verified this with a quick tasting before purchase. Just outside the winery is the Fox River Rail Trail that runs 25 miles south from Green Bay. The line there was originally built by Milwaukee and Northern Railway Company as part of its route between Milwaukee, Green Bay, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The company was later part of the Milwaukee Road and after its bankruptcy in 1977, this particular line and much of the MILW was abandoned.



Monday 5/15

We had some time with Erin before she had to go to class. Yes, even though she graduated she had one more week of classes. We had breakfast at Mateo's Cafe & Restaurant in Appleton. I had a nice strawberry-covered waffle. When I tried to pay with my AAdvantage Aviator World Elite Business Mastercard, the charge was denied. Carol paid with her similar card. I had a text message from them saying there was suspected fraud so they cancelled the card. I called and was told they were mailing a replacement card. This impacted our spending for the rest of the trip.

We dropped Erin off at a doctor's appointment and headed to this Menards in Appleton. This company is based in Wisconsin and has stores throughout the Midwest. Basically, like Home Depot and Lowes, Menards also has some food, clothing, and HBA items. At Christmastime and online it even sells HO and O scale buildings. Instead of sales, it periodically offers an 11% rebate. When we were in Wisconsin last November, I bought some things and eventually received a \$3.97 rebate check. I had it with me and bought two things that came to \$3.90, so essentially free. However, I also got a rebate receipt that showed I was eligible for 44¢. I'll pass as the required postage stamp costs more than that.



We headed back to ORD via a different way. We drove east to the Port of Manitowoc on Lake Michigan. On July 17, 1999, we had arrived there after crossing Lake Michigan on the SS Badger, which was once a C&O Railroad car ferry built in 1952 (like me). It was very easy for me to find the exact date. While on the boat, we watched the news saying JFK, Jr. had died in a plane crash the night before near Martha's Vineyard. We saw no signs of the SS Badger, but the maritime museum there has the USS Cobia, a WWII submarine that was built in Groton, CT. It is here to honor the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company that built 28 submarines during WWII. These were the only "freshwater boats" built for the United States Navy.

Leaving there, we headed south on I-43 towards Milwaukee where we picked up I-94. To avoid the toll in Illinois we switched to US-41 from which we drove to Kenilworth. We spent two hours visiting with friends Andrea Tarbox and David Grancee who once lived in New Canaan. I worked with Andrea at Kennecott and Gartner. We left there just before 5:00pm and headed back to the rental car facility at ORD, which took just over an hour. After a quick ride on the ATS, we quickly checked in and were through TSA PreCheck by 6:15pm. We had been upgraded for our 7:30pm flight to Sacramento, CA (SMF) and learned in advance that we would be served a full dinner en route. The flight on an A321 left at 7:33pm and arrived at 9:55 pm, a few minutes early. We had a very attentive

flight attendant who served a real dinner, ice cream, and drinks.

The SMF airport is located about 10 miles northwest of the downtown. I had flown to SMF once before back in 2011 to attend that year's NMRA annual convention. I reserved and prepaid for a Budget car, but had a problem. My Aviator card was cancelled due to expected fraud. My card was hacked on May 10th just before leaving Israel. The rental agent was able to switch the rental to Carol's name so we could use her Aviator card as the security deposit. I booked the mystery car special and initially was assigned to a brand new hybrid SUV with just 5 miles. I asked for another car when I could not figure out how to start it. Instead, we got another Chrysler minivan.

I booked another Quality Inn as our hotel for that night. It was cheap (\$75) and located in Woodland, CA about 10 miles to the west. This stay was booked to meet the requirements of their current stay twice to get a \$50 promotion. Driving there in the dark, we had the feeling that the I-5 was elevated. The next day when driving to Sacramento we saw that the I-5 passed over extensive rice fields, some of which were just planted and still water covered. Turns out that the Sacramento Valley is the largest rice-growing region in California and one of the biggest in the U.S. Most of the rice grown there is of Japonica (sweet) varieties.

Tuesday 5/16

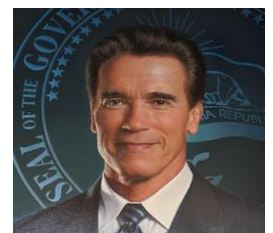
After a decent breakfast in the hotel, we drove into historic downtown Woodland. Clearly agriculture is the basis for this town as we passed a tomato canning plant as we entered. There are also two railroads there. One is now part of the



Sierra Railroad and it runs east/west and then down across the rice fields to Sacramento. This line operates a 14-mile tourist line called the River Fox Train. Historically, this line was once part of the Sacramento Northern and was electrified. The other north/south line is the California Northern (CFRN), part of the Genesee & Wyoming. This was once an SP branch line from Davis, CA. The former SP depot there is now a small museum but it was closed.

Back on I-5 we drove 20 miles south to downtown Sacramento so we could visit the California State Capitol. We entered through a side entrance and went

through security. We were able to quickly join the next tour which lasted over an hour. The legislature was in session holding committee hearings. Construction of the capitol was started in 1860, but was not completed until 1874. It was updated in 1909 and in 1951 an annex was added to the rear. In 1982, it reopened after a complete rebuilding to make it earthquake-proof. On the walls of the capitol are paintings of the former governors and I could not wait till I saw the one for the "governor." I was pleased to hear that the one for Governor Jerry "Moonbeam" Brown had been removed after being defaced several times. Carol got a stamp in her guide to the state capitols book and we left for a quick lunch.





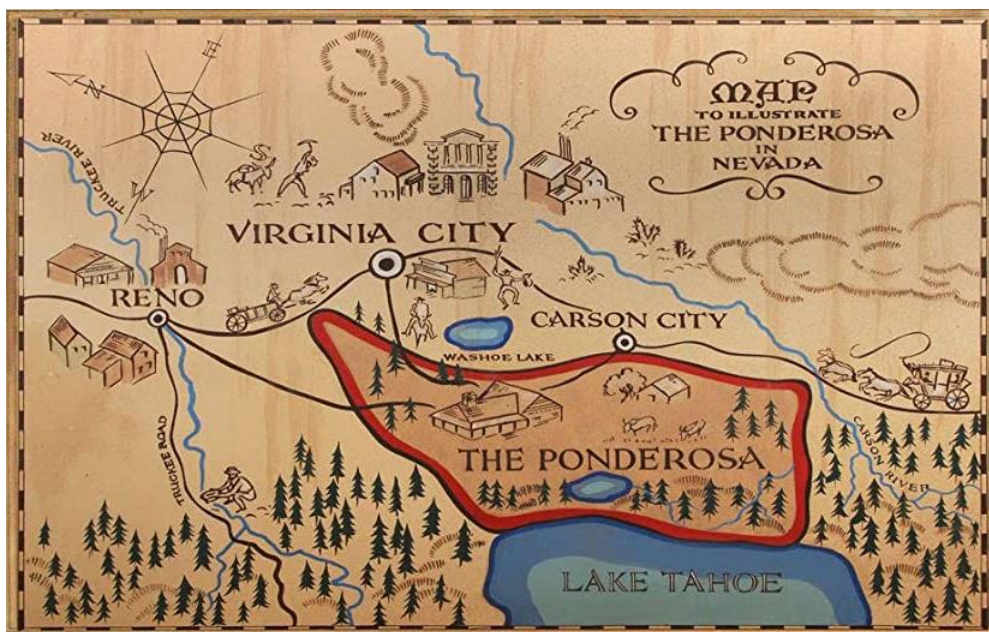
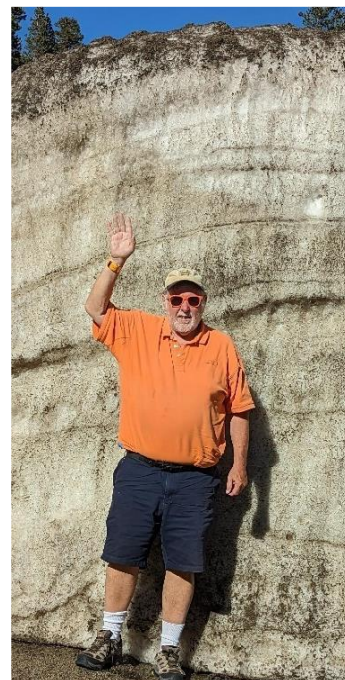
Next, we walked to the nearby Leland Stanford Mansion. Many of the streets there had light rail lines and if I had planned better, we could have parked in a suburb and ridden the rapid transit into the downtown. Leland Stanford was one of the “big four” who invested in the Central Pacific Railroad, later acquired by SP and now part of the UP. He bought the house to serve as his executive mansion when he was California’s governor from 1862-3. At that time, the state constitution set the governor’s term at just two years. Leland and later his wife retained ownership of the 19,000 square foot house with 44 rooms until 1900 when his widow donated it to the local Catholic diocese for use as an orphanage and later a home for wayward girls. The State of California acquired the property in 1978 and now it is a state historic park.

Leaving “Sac” (as the locals call it) we headed east on US-50 to Nevada. This starts as the multi-lane El Dorado Freeway, later becoming just four lanes and finally two lanes as it crosses the Sierra Nevada mountains. It crests at Echo Summit at 7382 feet. The total drive was just over 105 miles. We had made the drive once

before in November of 1979 for an abortive ski trip to Lake Tahoe. Our Thrifty rental on that trip died on the climb up the mountains and we ended up being towed into Lake Tahoe. We arrived in Lake Tahoe finding the ski places were not open yet. This time as we approached the summit there were huge snow piles from the 2022/2023 record winter.

We drove down into the California side of Lake Tahoe looking for some place to eat, but kept going till we crossed into Nevada and had really nice prime rib dinners at the Hard Rock Casino. Mine was a perfectly done end cut. From there, we drove along US-50 along the eastern edge of the largest alpine lake in the U.S.

before climbing up to and through another mountain pass at 7146 feet. Driving this way, we passed through what was



seemingly part of Ben Cartwright’s Ponderosa Ranch of the Bonanza TV show fame. Incidentally, the Ponderosa is sideways on this map with north to the left. From the summit on US-50, it was downhill to Carson City, which is Nevada’s capital at 4683 feet. Its population is just under 60,000, but it has the distinction of being the state capital with the largest land area, some 146 square miles. In 1969, the city merged with a county such that now the city’s western border goes all the way to Lake Tahoe. We stayed at a newer HI Express with points. FYI, US-50 across northern Nevada was once described by *Life Magazine* as the “loneliest road in America.”

Wednesday 5/17



After breakfast, we drove to the Nevada State Railroad Museum which was actually closed to the public that day. However, this day there was a special trip there from the railroad event in Reno we were heading to. It made no sense to drive to Reno only to come back on the bus so I decided to just show up. The folks from the event were not happy with my doing this, but the folks from the museum welcomed me just asking for a donation, which I made. This museum has an extensive collection of restored standard- and narrow-gauge equipment, some of which were made by Baldwin in Philadelphia in the latter parts of the 19th century. We had the run of the place and all rode on a steam train around the property. We left before the group did and stopped for lunch at El Pollo Loco.

We tried a self-guided driving tour of Carson City for a few blocks, but eventually just parked by the State Capitol. Like most capitols, it is in a park-like setting, but this one had a lot of trees. It is also pretty old as the original building was completed in 1870; it was later expanded on the sides and to the rear. The capitol building was completely rebuilt in 1981. While the state's elected officials have offices in the building, the Nevada Legislature and Supreme Court are now in other buildings that are close by.



There was no security checkpoint though there was an armed policeman on duty who stamped Carol's book. There was no tour so we just walked around for over an hour. I talked with several of the employees in the various offices.

We left looking for the Virginia & Truckee Railroad. The GPS took us to a trailhead, but that was in the wrong direction. Eventually, we found Eastgate Depot off US-50 just east of Carson City, but nothing was happening there. The group from the railroad event was supposed to ride the V&T so we headed to Virginia City, which became a boomtown of 30,000 folks after the 1859 discovery of the Comstock Lode, the first major silver deposit discovery in the United States. Today there are vestiges of the mining activity everywhere. The town is now a major tourist attraction. We found the V&T Railroad several streets down from the main road with the train just sitting. I passed through the train to get a better picture from the other side. I stopped to talk with some of the attendees who filled me in on what the group had done there. They had had their ride and the train was stopped so the riders could tour the V&T shops.



The coaches looked familiar and this was confirmed by the DL&W marking on the trucks. These were the so called "Boonton" coaches that were about the last such open-vestibule cars produced and

which ran on commuter service in New Jersey until the early 1980s. We drove up to the station there to await the train's arrival.

Leaving Virginia City, we drove north on Nevada State Route 342, the Comstock Highway, which travels northerly and westerly through winding sections on both sides of Geiger Summit before descending thousands of feet to a junction with I-580. We took the highway to Reno and then local roads to Nugget Casino, our hotel for the next four nights in Sparks. This was a complex of two high-rise buildings located between I-80 and a UP rail yard. No doubt this is the reason why it was chosen for the railroad event. This was the view from our room.



Supposedly it had been recently updated; it lacked the glamour of Vegas casinos and supposedly is family oriented. Dinner was a decent coal-fired pizza at Grimaldi's in Sparks.

Thursday 5/18

Finally, we were at the joint railroad event which actually started on Tuesday evening when the R&LS had a meet and great event. The R&LHS is very similar to the NRHS, so much so that the two groups should probably merge. However, the R&LHS values its independence; it is a smaller organization with only a handful of active local chapters. The SPRHC was the other group at the event and was the organiz-

er. This is a new group for me. It aims to preserve the history of the SP and its members seem to mostly be former SP employees. I often meet retired hourly railroad employees at various events, but here the former SP employees were managers and officers, including Robert Krebs, who had become its president and was later the CEO of ATSF and BNSF. The SPRHC offered over 20 presentations over Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

I would have liked to have attended some of the Thursday presentations, but instead I was booked on an all-day bus tour of the Western Pacific Railroad Museum (WPRM) and a visit to a lumber mill. The WPRM is located in Portola, CA 50 miles to the northwest. As the bus crossed into California, the guide pointed out the route of the former Nevada, California & Oregon (NCO) narrow-gauge line that was acquired by the WP in 1925. The WP was started in 1903 and completed in 1909 to link Ogden, Utah with Oakland, CA in an attempt to break the SP's near monopoly on rail traffic into the bay area from the east. The WP was supposed to be part of Jay Gould's planned transcontinental railroad system that at one time stretched from SFO to Pittsburgh. However, after the panic of 1907 and other issues, it never came to be. Amazingly more than a hundred years later and despite scores of railroad mergers, we still don't have a single Class I US railroad that goes from east coast to west coast!

The WPRM is located in the WP's former steam/diesel shops adjacent to what was its main line, still actively used today by the UP. The WPRM is said to be the largest railroad museum devoted to a single railroad family. This seems a bit of a stretch to me as the collection includes scores of WP equipment, but also that from UP, D&RGW, SP, MP, MKT, SN, etc. We had the run of the place for several hours and I was able to take a short hop on a train of cabooses that circled the property.

Here are a few examples of historic rolling stock located there.



There were actually several locomotives from Kennecott Copper which was a surprise for me. I worked at KCC in the late 1970s and was aware of its railroad operations. I asked someone at the museum why they were there and was told that when the museum first started in the early 1980s, it would accept almost anything.



After lunch, we re-boarded the buses and headed some 30 miles west to Quincy, CA, which has a large lumber mill for Sierra Pacific Industries, the second largest lumber producer in the United States. It manages almost 1.9 million acres of timberland and is the largest private landholder in California. I thought we were going to tour the facility, but instead we did a drive-by and then stopped to look at this locomotive and some lumber cars through the fence.

The switcher is used to haul the loaded lumber cars several miles to a connection with the UP. Back on the bus we had a 1.5 hour (81 miles) ride back to the Nugget. Along the way, we passed several areas that were flooded with the snowmelt from the past winter's record snowfall. Since this area is a basin, the water cannot leave; it just evaporates. We arrived after 5:00pm.

We drove to downtown Reno, a few miles west, for dinner. We tried to eat at one small casino with great food deals

to attract gamblers, but there was a long wait. Instead, we ate here. Now a brew pub and distillery, the Depot had been the headquarters and final station on the NCO Railway. The line at its peak had 238 miles of 3-foot, narrow-gauge track. By 1928, the SP had converted it to standard gauge and today much of it has been abandoned. We walked around downtown Reno. There were several glitzy, Vegas-style casinos, but we did not go



on and we saw guys in bowling shirts leaving the building dragging cases, no doubt filled with their bowling balls.

Friday 5/19

This morning I attended a two-part “Retrospective SP Panel” where groups of former SP execs explained actions that were taken and those not taken in the 1960s, 1970s, and post de-regulations in the 1980s. I would have liked to have stayed for more sessions in the afternoon, but left on another bus tour, this time to the Summit Tunnel. First a bit of railroad history. In the 1860s, as the Central Pacific (CP) was building east across California and had to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains. This was a much more difficult job than what the UP faced building across the flat prairie in Nebraska and eastern Wyoming. The CP used approximately 10,000 Chinese workers to build its line including miles of tunnels on both sides of the California mountain divide. The high point on the CP was at Donner Summit (7056 feet) and here the Summit Tunnel #6 was built. It was longest at 1659 feet and deepest being as much as 124 feet below the peak. It took 15 months to build with thousands of Chinese workers digging and blasting on four faces at once 24/7 after a central tunnel was bored. It was completed in 1867 and in use up until 1993 when the original alignment was abandoned.



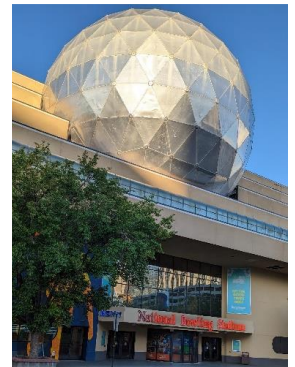
Our plans were to hike the tunnel which, while still owned by UP, is seemingly open to the public and known as the Pacific Crest Trail and Donner Peak Trailhead. We were even given a flashlight to use inside. However, this was not to be. We arrived at Donner Summit after an hour's drive west, mostly on I-80 only to find the entrance was blocked by snow.

In case you are wondering, yes, the Donner Pass is where, in 1846, an unfortunate group of California-bound settlers were trapped by early snowstorms. After their food ran out, the 45 survivors resorted to cannibalism in order to survive the harsh winter. We left earlier than expected and headed over the pass to Truckee, CA about 9 miles to the east. Heading down the east side, the bus stopped for this spectacular view shown on the previous page.

We spent about 1.5 hours in Truckee, which is a tourist spot. It is also an Amtrak stop for the California Zephyr in both directions. The former SP station is now the visitor center and has a small museum. Next door is the Truckee Railroad Museum housed in a former SP caboose. Inside there were several displays and a small HO layout. The museum is only open on weekends, but special arrangements were made to be open for us. I guess that since the caboose was in “Truckee” that no trucks under the caboose were required.



into any. We saw this classic sign and came back to it when it was dark to take this picture. Nearby is the National Bowling Stadium with 78 lanes. There was a tournament going





I walked to the end of the main street where there was this historic rotary snowplow once used by SP. This is the business end of the machine. The heavy snow here was known by railroad track workers as Sierra cement. I walked back to the bus stopping for an ice cream cone. Back on the bus, we had a 40-mile ride east on I-80 to the Nugget. By the way, Truckee is where the UP keeps its snow-fighting equipment and the bus guide noted that since it was all gone, it must mean that winter is over.

For dinner, we drove to the southern part of Reno to eat at Cheesecake Factory. A friend had given me a \$25 gift card he was not going to use. I have not been to one of these in years and their menu was massive with too many

choices. I went with the "factory meatloaf," which tasted more like pot roast. There were three big slices so I took one back to the hotel for my lunch on Saturday.



Leaving there, we headed to the Peppermill Casino. Until now, the only gambling we had done was a few pulls on a slot at the Hard Rock in Lake Tahoe, stopping after winning \$8. I had seen the Peppermill's highway billboards saying new members get \$100. Well, not quite. Turns out they will cover up to \$100 in losses the first day with free play. We each started with our own \$20. After a few pulls I was up \$21.75 and stopped. Carol played through her \$20 and then lost on all the free play. It was time to leave.

Saturday 5/20

Today, the vendor room was finally open. I had brought out some SP books to sell, but that did not happen. There was a large room with maybe 20 tables scattered along the edge of the room and very few folks in the room. The Pacific Coast



Chapter of the R&LHS had two tables and was selling railroad paper items for \$1 each. I bought ten that I could easily resell including a 1964 Annual Report for the original Norfolk Southern Railroad. I always enjoy reading old railroad annual reports so I buy them whenever they are well-priced for R&R (read & resale). They also had scores of HO vehicles for \$1, but I only bought one. There were a few dealers selling models, but I didn't see anything interesting there—mostly UP, SP, ATSF, BNSF stuff like you

would expect out west. On the other side of the room was a railfan from California selling off his extensive personal collection of transit and train maps and timetables. Priced at 15 for \$1, I went through six tubs of them and bought 150 items for \$10; some will easily resell for \$2-\$3 each on eBay! Up on the fifth floor was a very small RPM meet and I only spent a few minutes there as it was mostly SP equipment. I thought this mini-diorama was very well done.

I went back to the room and ate my lunch; the meatloaf was cold because there was no microwave in the room or in the hotel for that matter. I changed into my bathing suit and joined Carol in the large, indoor pool for the rest of the afternoon. Eventually, we went back to our room and changed into our clothes so we could go to Mass. But first let me digress. On Thursday, Carol had a dilemma. She received an email from our church in Pennsylvania reminding her that it was Ascension Thursday, a holy day of obligation. She looked at Reno's Catholic churches online and did not see any special Mass for this. Looking further she read that the Diocese of Reno moved this to the following Sunday. She called me because she

did not know what rule applied. I told her it was decided by where we were at the time, but she decided to go to Mass anyway that day at the St. Therese of the Little Flower Church. Carol has always considered her to be her patron saint. Back from Mass she mentioned to me that two older women left Mass in a stretch limo.

We decided to go to the same church because she knew where it was and we could easily go out to eat near there. As we pulled in, she pointed out the stretch limo she saw on Thursday. During Mass, Carol whispered to me noting the two women I talked about. We talked with the Hispanic priest for a bit after Mass and followed those two women out of the church. I decided to ask them about their ride. Turns out they must have been two high rollers from Nebraska who stay at the Peppermill. I mentioned we had been there the night before. They said the limo brings them to and from Mass every day whenever they are there. I should have asked if going to Mass daily helps with their winnings. For dinner, we drove to a nearby Raising Cane's. This is a newer chain from Louisiana with great chicken. We got a combo box with an extra finger and drink for \$15.32.



Leaving the parking lot we saw this USDA fire truck. I sent a picture to Erin. Her degree would qualify here for this type of work, but her body probably could not handle it. I drove



through the Reno Airport complex on the way back to our hotel. Seems like the terminals are being expanded. The view from our room not only faced the tracks, but also toward the airports. From the many planes I saw landing, I would say that Southwest is the dominant carrier there. Next



to the airport is a NV ANG (Air National Guard) base that had a Mc Donald Douglas F-4 Phantom II stuffed and mounted. The NV ANG flew the photo-recon version (RF-4C) from 1975-1995. Back at the hotel we packed up our clothes.

Sunday 5/21

Finally, it was the day for the NRHS activities. First up was the meeting of the Advisory Council, which theoretically is composed of one rep from each council. This is a legacy thing because at one time the NRHS board of directors had over 150 members—one from each council—and the meetings were a total disaster. This day there were about 35 chapters represented in person or on Zoom. The meeting lasted two hours and several recommendations were made to the BOD. What followed was a lunch break. I headed to the In-N-Out Burger two blocks away. This is a California-based chain with no franchises, a very simple menu, and a cult-like following.

Walking back to the hotel, I passed a small railroad museum with several pieces of SP rolling stock.

The Nugget can be seen just over the train shed. Also, there is the original Spark Depot (next page). The gate to the equipment was locked, but the door to the depot was open so I walked in. The woman there knew nothing about its history—not surprising as it is now an art gallery. The woman did say a family had come in earlier asking where they buy the tickets for the train to Virginia City.

At 1:00pm it was time for the NRHS BOD meeting. There were four members physically there and the rest of the BOD was on ZOOM.





Much of the meeting was redundant as the various officers and committee made the same reports as given to the Advisory Council. Much time was spent talking about future conventions and meetings. The 2023 convention will be in south Florida the first week in September, and now the one planned for 2024 in Harrisburg might be moved to 2025. Since this joint meeting in Reno went so well, I suggested that we look into having similar meetings in the future with other railroad historical societies. Personally, I have reached out to the folks at Illinois Traction Society (IT) about their April 2024 meeting.

Meanwhile Carol had checked out of our room, moved the suitcases to the car, and was sitting in one



of the lounges reading a book. The BOD meeting adjourned about 3:25pm. I found her and we left the Nugget heading to the Amtrak Station in downtown Reno. The station there now was built by the SP in 1926. Originally the tracks ran through the middle of the downtown at grade often tying up the cross streets for most of the day with the



volume of traffic. The station was enlarged in 2007 as part of the Reno Transportation Rail Access Corridor (ReTRAC) project that lowered the tracks below grade. In doing so, many interesting things were uncovered including an abandoned pedestrian tunnel, the unknown basement of a Masonic lodge, and artifacts dating back to the mid-1800s and earlier. As luck would have it, I arrived at 4:00pm just as the eastbound California Zephyr #5 was arriving and on schedule. I walked down to the lower level and watched

as more than a few attendees from the joint event boarded the train, which had left Emeryville, CA (near Oakland) at 9:10am that morning. It was scheduled to arrive in Chicago at 2:50pm on Tuesday 5/23, but in fact arrived at 5:10pm or a mere 2 hours and 20 minutes late. On 5/17, the corresponding westbound train #5, departed Reno 8 hours and 48 minutes late.

We left Reno and headed west on I-80 heading for SMF airport. Google Maps said it was 138 miles and would take just over two hours. However, we were in no hurry as our plane did not leave until 11:59pm! In about 40 minutes, we were passing by snow-covered mountains where we could see the UP's rail line off in the distance. I got off the highway to show Carol the town of Truckee. As luck would have it, an eastbound UP freight train with auto racks passed through while we stopped (next page). Back on I-80, it was basically all downhill from there. There were elevation markers along I-80 every thousand feet from 6,000 to 1,000. By then, we were in Auburn, CA in Placer County. This town was part of the California Gold Rush in the late 1840s. The eastbound Central Pacific built its rail line through there in 1865.





We originally planned to eat dinner at a Chinese place in Sac, but by 6:30pm we were just east of Roseville and hungry, so we stopped at a Cattlemens. This is a California chain of upscale steak restaurants where I have eaten before. The inside of the place was very woody and western looking. We had two nice steaks and dinner came to \$86, which

was our most expensive on the western part of our trip. It was almost 8:30pm when we left there and SMF was only about 25 minutes away.

We returned the rental car and took the bus to the terminal. There was no one in line at AA when we checked in. We were upgraded for the flight. There was not much of a line at TSA Pre-Check so we were quickly in the terminal which was surprisingly busy with both arriving and departing flights. AA had one at 10:20pm that went to CLT and arrived after 6:00am EDT. I wished we were on that as our 11:59pm flight to DFW was scheduled to arrive 5:18am CDT. On board, I



I had a quick T 'n' T and tried to fall asleep, however in reality this was just a 3-hour flight. We left a few minutes early and arrived in Dallas 13 minutes early at 5:05am. AA's operations at DFW are spread over several distant terminals connected by an overhead air train. However, this time our connecting flight at 6:40am was only a few gates away in the same terminal. After going to the bathroom, I looked for some iced tea, but found none available so I just waited for our flight. We had already been upgraded for this flight so on this trip we were four for four—score! I was tempted to try and make my own iced tea on the plane, but it is messy and my teabags were in my checked bag. So instead I settled for two bottles of Dr. Pepper that I had before, during, and after a full-served breakfast. Pictures of Carol's to left and mine on the right.



With Carol on a keto diet, she traded her cinnamon roll for my melon fruit. I took home my yogurt and she had it once at home. The flight to PHL landed from the south and arrived at 10:32am, some 22 minutes early. Our bags came at 10:45 meaning we missed the 10:40am train. We both sat down for a while and we were engrossed in emails when I realized it was time for the 11:10am, but we missed it by 2 minutes. Really not a great loss as that train required a change at Jefferson. Instead, we took the next train at 11:40am which went to Jenkintown. We were there by 12:30pm and home 15 minutes later. We did a few things in the house and then both headed to bed for a few hours. I was up for a K of C meeting that evening at 7:00pm and stopped at Wawa for dinner when it was over.

On Tuesday, we had to cut the lawn again, get the held mail, empty the suitcases, etc. We were both really tired so we have to stop with the red eye flights. 🛏



NEW ENGLAND ROAD TRIP

June 15–30, 2023

This was a road trip in my car (2007 Mercury Grand Marquis) of nine states (PA, NJ, NY, CT, MA, NH, VT, ME, and RI) that covered almost 2000 miles. On the trip was me, Carol, my sister Kathy from Florida, and Emmet, our granddaughter, who lives in Franklin, CT. However, the trip also included roundtrip flights on AA (more on that later) and a model railroad event.

Thursday 6/15

Carol actually started the trip two days earlier (6/13) by taking Amtrak to Connecticut. She did this to get Emmet ready for the trip and to get Colleen's house ready for our arrival. Kathy and I left in the early afternoon for a 226-mile drive across northern New Jersey, the Tappan Zee Bridge, and along the Connecticut shoreline. Plans to stop and see friends in New York and Connecticut while driving up did not work out. There were no traffic issues. We stopped at the original Pepe's in New Haven for an early dinner. Kathy had never been there.

We arrived at daughter Colleen's house around 7:30pm only to find Carol and the folks there trying to sort through the junk in their shed. We stayed for a while and headed to Rosemont Suites in Norwich, CT for the next three nights. Kathy and I cannot stay at Colleen's house due to issues with many dogs and cats.

Friday 6/16



I was up early for an hour and fifteen minute drive to Springfield, MA so I could attend the New England RPM. This is an annual event like other prototype modeler meets that I attend. I missed this one last year and the timing of this year's event all owed me to attend by only driving from Norwich, CT to there and back. I was there as the meet started at 9:00am. There were several guys there that I knew plus model displays, vendors, and two days of informative clinics.



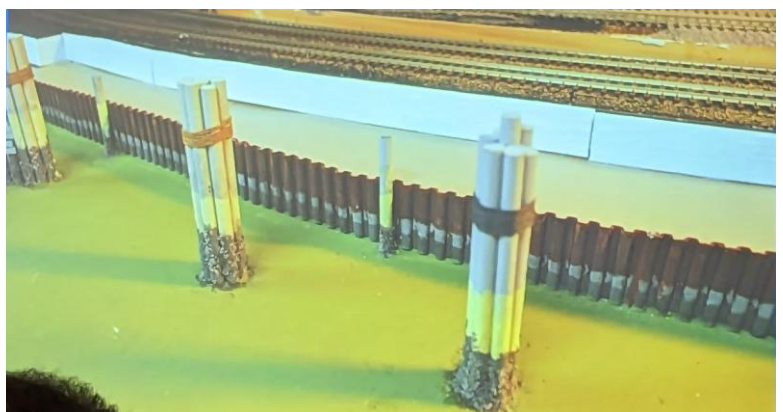
I shared a hotel room there with my friend Eric Dervinis, although he did not get there until late in the day due to traffic and weather issues. I took him to dinner at the

historic Storowton Tavern located in the Big E Fairgrounds in West Springfield. My trip to NERPM and back to Connecticut was about 120 miles.

Saturday 6/17

There were more clinics. I particularly liked this one showing how to make a harbor scene.

At the end of the day, I went out to dinner with a group of folks attending the RPM at the Munich Haus in Chicopee and then drove back to stay the night with Kathy in Norwich, CT.



Sunday 6/18

Kathy and I left the hotel early and headed to Colleen's house about 10 minutes away. We picked up Carol and Emmet to attend the 10:30am Mass at Sacred Heart in Norwichtown. We have been to Mass there before. After Mass, we headed back to Colleen's house to get Emmet's suitcase and things before leaving on our 213-mile trip to Lincoln, NH.



En route, we stopped at a HO layout in Charlton, MA that was open for NEPRM. It was a typical early 1950s New England scene, but with an amazing lift panel that Emmet opened.

Leaving there we stopped for lunch at a KFC (Kevin Feeney's Ch icken) near Worcester, MA. We continued up across Massachusetts into southern New Hampshire and continued to Lincoln in the White Mountains. Our stay there was yet another timeshare inspection trip. This one was with Bluegreen Vacations that is affiliated with Choice Hotels and Bass Pro Shops.

In fact, their initial offer was made last year after making a separate reservation with Choice. I saw they had a property at South Mountain in Lincoln and quickly realized I could use this stay as the start of a New England road trip. We had a large, one-bedroom suite that slept four with the foldout couch in the living room. It had a complete kitchen so I went out to the local Price Chopper and bought \$67 of food for dinner and breakfast while there. We also brought some food and beverages with us. The facility was in good condition; there were two pools plus hot tubs. Emmet went swimming as soon as we got there and swam almost twice daily for the rest of the trip.

Monday 6/19

Carol and I needed to attend the sales presentation at noon. Our 4-day/3-night package cost \$249 but after attending the presentation, I received 40,000 Choice points and a \$125 visa gift card. We have been to several other timeshare presentations and I would have to say these folks were about the nicest and their proposals could be quite reasonable to those with a younger family. Such a purchase made no sense for us, given that we have points to cover hundreds of hotel nights.



About 2:00pm we left for Lake Winnepesaukee, which is the largest lake in New Hampshire and second largest lake in New England. The M/S Mt. Washington is a large 230-passenger ship made in 1940 that cruises the lake. Also, there is the M/V Sophie C., which is one of the last U.S. mailboats. We drove along the edge of the lake eventually going as



far as Laconia, NH about 50 miles from Lincoln. The week before was the 100th anniversary of Laconia Bike Week and we heard there were upwards of 40,000 bikers there. The scene at Weirs Beach the week before looked like this. There were still some bikers in the area and we saw numerous places where the roads had black burnout patches.

In Laconia, we stopped at the ex- B&M station from where on certain days one can rent a rail bike. Monday was not one of those days. The downtown was all

older brick buildings and the rest of the city was typical New England. We stopped at a Hannaford Supermarket to buy some more food and beverages (wine).

Driving back, we stopped in Weirs Beach, a major summer destination. Emmet had to go out on the rocks there and put her feet





Pemigewasset River. There were a number of its Budd RDCs parked behind the McDonald's there. Also, there were other pieces of historic rolling stock a short distance away including what seemed to be a dinner train.



Across the tracks on a siding was an old Green Mountain (GMRC) box car plus a gondola filled with granite rocks. It was time for lunch so we went into a Dunkin' for some food. My sister Kathy finished first and went outside to the car. She quickly came back in saying a train is coming. I ran behind the DD (that was trackside) and saw this locomotive with several gondolas full of granite boulders. Oddly, one of the gondolas was IC (Illinois Central). The railroad in Barre is the state-

in the water. To the left was a large, public, sandy beach.

Also, there was a train station for the Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad that runs along the west shore of the lake. The two ships mentioned above leave from the back side of the station.

In Lincoln, there is a related tourist railroad called the Hobo Railroad that offers an 80-minute train ride along the



Tuesday 6/20

Once we were up and looked out the window, our plans for the day quickly changed. The original plan was to drive to the Cog Railway that climbs up Mt. Washington, which at 6,288 feet is

the highest peak in the northeastern U.S. and the most topographically prominent mountain east of the Rockies. Looking out the window, we saw fog on a much lower peak near our hotel. So, we switched Wednesday's planned trip to this day and that trip was a drive to Montpelier, the capital of Vermont. It was about six miles to the west of Lincoln—all on two-lane country roads. About halfway there, we came to this covered bridge.

Eventually, we came to Woodsville, NH, located on the Connecticut River, which forms the border between New Hampshire and

Vermont. We stopped at a local tourist information booth and picked up some maps, brochures, and even free postcards. Once in the town proper, we came to this former B&M station. Emmet has to climb on everything so she got on this old wooden caboose there.

Once in Vermont, we headed to Barre where I knew there was an active shortline. Barre is the self-proclaimed "granite capital of the world" and the railroad there was built to provide transportation for the heavy products from the granite quarries. We first came to this former station (next page).



owned 12-mile long Washington County Railroad (WACR). Since 1999 WACR has been operated by the Vermont Railroad System of which GMRC is a part. Just west of Barre is the Vermont Granite Museum with Barre & Chelsea #14, a 70 tonner that was built in 1947. We did not have time to visit the museum.



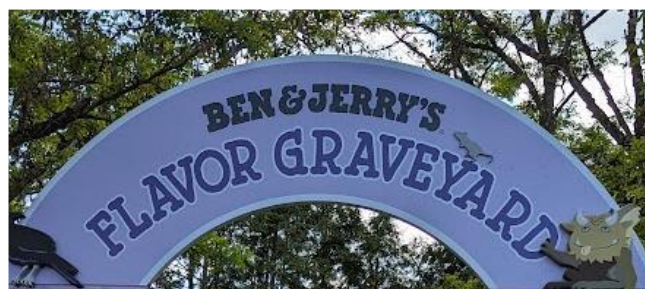
We continued to Montpelier, which has the dubious distinction of being the [least populous state capital](#) in the U.S. with just over 8,000 residents. (Its daytime population swells to over 20,000 with state employees and other workers.) It was selected as Vermont's capital because of its central location and accessibility, and because the local residents provided land and money to build the first state house (capitol). It is the only state capital without a McDonald's (I did not see any other fast food there either, not even a Dunkin'!) FYI, Vermont is the state with the fewest Walgreens with just six including three supercenters.



The State House was easy to find on State Street. This is the third such building and this one was completed in 1859. It has the distinction of being the oldest capitol in the U.S. where the legislative chambers are still being used as originally designed and decorated. We picked up a brochure for a self-guided tour. Both houses of the legislature are overwhelmingly Democrat, but have long included members of third parties. The legislature was in session as it tried to override the governor's veto of several bills including the budget for the next fiscal year.



After Montpelier, we headed 13 miles west on I-89 to Waterbury, VT to visit the Ben & Jerry factory there. Kathy bought tickets for the tour during which we had a taste of chocolate chip cookie dough and a sample of a new flavor not yet available in stores. Outside, by the parking lot was where their discontinued flavors end up.



We drove back to Lincoln via a more northerly and scenic route on VT-2 and then south on I-93. If possible, I try to make circle trips to see more of sights, scenery, etc.



Wednesday 6/21

We checked out of the hotel and drove 33 miles to the Marshfield Base station of the Cog Railway, passing the Bretton Woods Ski Resort, the largest in New Hampshire. The Mt. Washington hotel there was the site of a 1944 “United Nations” Monetary Conference that established the International Monetary Fund and made the U.S. dollar the world’s reserve currency. The Cog Railway to the top of Mt. Washington opened in 1869 making it the first such railway in the world. It is approximately three miles long with an average grade over 25%; the maximum grade is 37.41%. The tickets cost \$79 per adult and \$56 for Emmet. Carol and I tried to ride this once back in July 2011, but were turned back due to bad weather on the top. Mt. Washington is known for extreme weather. The highest wind velocity ever recorded by mankind was 231 MPH back in 1934. On Feb. 4, 2023, the weather observatory there recorded a record wind chill of -108.4° F; the actual temp was -47.2° F. The coldest temperature ever recorded was -50° F way back in 1885.

Originally, there were steam engines like this that pushed the coaches up the mountain. However, today most of the trips are powered by a modern locomotive that uses bio-diesel fuel.



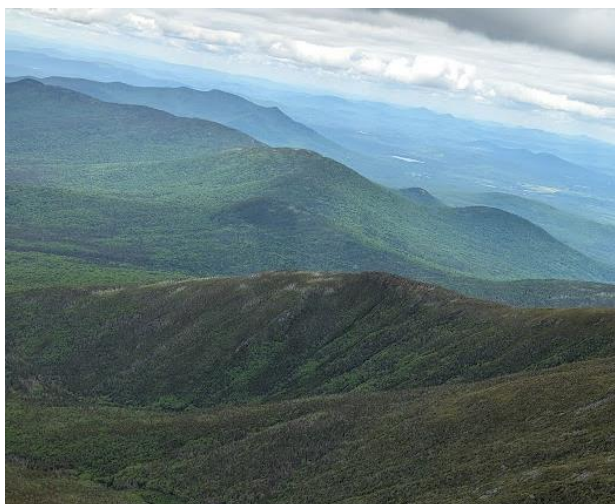
explore the visitor center. There was food available plus souvenirs. Our train ticket got us free admittance to the interactive extreme weather exhibit. I talked with a group of college-age folks who hiked up; they said it took about 4.5



Our ride up took about an hour. While it was clear on top when we arrived at the base station, it was foggy when we arrived about noon at the summit. We had about an hour to explore the visitor center. There was food available plus souvenirs. Our train ticket got us free admittance to the interactive extreme weather exhibit. I talked with a group of college-age folks who hiked up; they said it took about 4.5 hours. The guide on the train said we passed through four different zones with the top one largely devoid of any vegetation. Folks can also drive to the top using the Mt. Washington Auto Road on the east side of the mountain. That road follows the original wagon route used to reach the top in the mid-1840s. Although privately owned now, for much of its history the Cog Railway was owned by the Boston & Maine Railroad whose former Fabyans Station still stands a few miles west of the base station.

The ride down was faster, about 45 minutes. Once down a bit from the top it did clear up and the guide on the train said that to the northwest one can see mountains in southern Quebec, Canada. Supposedly on clear days folks can see the Atlantic Ocean that is about 65 miles to the east. The guide mentioned that in colonial times, Mt. Washington was used in navigation by ships coming from England. Once spotted, it directed ships to turn to the left for Boston and to the right for Portland and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Leaving the area, we headed south to Conway, NH about 35 miles away. Conway is a major tourist destination for New Hampshire. There is lots to do and see there plus you can shop in quaint stores or at one of the many outlets there. We stayed at the [Green Granite Inn, part of the Ascend Hotel Collection](#). This was something new for me as I booked the property through Choice



Hotels—one night for money and the other night with points. A bit of research found that the Ascend Hotel Collection is made up of one-of-a-kind, independent resort, boutique, and historic hotels. The property was fine—it needed a bit of TLC, but the room was large, there was an indoor pool, and the included breakfast was nice. We had dinner at Wicked Fresh Craft Burgers, after which we stopped at the LL Bean Outlet. Back at the hotel, we went swimming in the pool.

Thursday 6/22

We had the whole day in Conway and split up. Emmet and I were dropped off at the Conway Scenic Railroad (CSRR), while Carol and Kathy went outlet shopping. Its unique station was built in 1874. The CSRR is privately owned and is now promoted as a heritage railroad vs. a tourist railroad. This change (no doubt) comes from Brian Solomon, the noted railroad author and columnist for *Trains Magazine*, who is their director of marketing. Brian lives part time in Ireland and this is how such railroads there (and also in the UK) are promoted. Conveniently, there was an interview with Brian in the *Conway Daily Sun* newspaper (remember them) on June 21st. The article mentioned the CSRR recently acquired several additional passenger cars including a former Ringling Brothers' dorm car that is being used to house summer workers, a former Amtrak baggage car, plus three additional first-class cars for use on the Mountaineer Excursion trains to Crawford Notch.

The CSRR is no doubt the most successful railroad of its type in New England. It operates daily from Memorial Day through just before Thanksgiving. On the day I was there, it operated four trains: a 55-minute round trip down the Conway Valley, a two-hour plus trip up the valley to the Sawyer River, and the Mountaineer—a 4.5-hour round trip up to Crawford Notch. Emmet and I walked around the grounds taking pictures. I put a penny on the tracks showing her what the train did to it.

The last picture of the DC-3 was taken at a North Conway Model Railroad Club, which is located in one of the CSRR buildings. I have always wanted to have a plane flying over my HO layout and hopefully this picture will motivate me to add one. Our ride went north through woods and along the river for an hour to a siding where the locomotive did a run around and pulled us back. Along the way we passed several buildings that date back to the B&M's operation of the line. Emmet and I rode in the regular coach seats and along with another couple; we were the only folks in the former CNJ car. Carol and Kathy picked us up and we headed back to swim at the pool. Their shopping included LL Bean, Jockey, and Talbots. For dinner, we walked across the street from the hotel to Fiesta Jalisco for a nice Mexican meal.



COACH 1140

Built in 1925 by Standard Steel Car Co. for the Central Railroad Company of New Jersey. This car was once used on CNJ's vast fleet of commuter trains that operated from the suburbs and Jersey shore points to Jersey City, N.J., where ferry boats transported the passengers across the Hudson River to Manhattan. This car is 72' long, weighs 55 tons, and seats 78 passengers.

Friday 6/23

We checked out and drove towards Augusta, the capitol of Maine, about 90 miles to the east. We stopped at the visitor center as soon as we crossed into Maine for more maps, brochures, and free postcards. Along the way, we stopped at a Hannaford Supermarket and I tried to return all of the deposit cans and bottles we had accumulated and that I found on the ground, etc. It was impossible to return them at the store because I needed to have one of the customer cards and then the store only took certain ones. I asked the clerk how folks do this and he said to go to a redemption center. Well, driving along in Lewiston, I saw one so we stopped. Kathy came in with us to see how this works because they don't have deposit cans or bottles in Florida. We watched a young man manually sort the cans and bottles into various bins and Emmet got



\$2.45 in can money.

It was lunchtime when we arrived in Augusta and we went to the Red Barn, which was great. The onion rings were something else. Kathy, Carol, and I each had lobster rolls. They had theirs with mayonnaise, while mine was "clear" with just hot butter. Emmet had a hot dog. We tried to get her



to try various seafood in Maine, but she refused instead having mac 'n' cheese, hot

dogs, etc.



After lunch, we drove to the urban part of Augusta, which is the [tenth most populous city in Maine](#), and [third least populous state](#) capital in the United States after [Montpelier, Vermont](#) and [Pierre, South Dakota](#). Portland was Maine's original capital, but it was moved 55 miles to Augusta to be somewhat closer to the rest of Maine (still, Kent at the top of Maine is 260 miles away). Maine was originally part of Massachusetts and became a state in 1820 as part of the Missouri Compromise. The State House is located in a complex of state buildings by Capitol Park that is away from the city's commercial downtown area near the Kennebec River. The State House was completed in 1832 and has been remodeled and expanded several times, most recently in 2014 when the original copper dome was replaced. It is the oldest capitol in the country where the legislature still meets in the original chambers.

Its house of representatives serve part-time, but it is unique in that Maine is the only state in the U.S. in which three native tribes have direct representation. The House was in session while there.

The evening before the House narrowly (74 to 72) passed a bill that would allow abortions any time before birth if deemed necessary by a medical provider. The current law allows abortions until a fetus becomes viable, which is generally considered to be about 24 weeks.

Leaving Augusta, we drove 50 miles east to Belfast, which is a small city located on the mouth of the [Passagassawakeag River estuary](#) on [Belfast Bay](#) and [Penobscot Bay](#). I booked the Fireside Inn & Suites because it was located on Belfast Bay. It was a very nice property with an indoor pool,



except there was no free breakfast and it was the most expensive place we stayed at during the entire trip (\$226 for one night). The other reason for going there was to see the Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad. I had a 2002 brochure that said it was the sixth oldest continuously operated railroad in the country, but as it turned out that is no longer the case. The railroad is now a bike trail. After an afternoon



swim in the indoor pool, we headed to the harbor area for dinner. Kathy and Emmet later walked down to the rocky beach on the bay and said the water was very cold. We ate at the Dockside Family Restaurant where I had scallops and a raspberry pie. Nearby was this old

building with ads from a much earlier era.



Saturday 6/24

We checked out of the hotel and drove to a weekly farmers market in downtown Belfast. It was a mix of food and craft vendors. Kathy bought a jar of blueberry jam to take back to Florida. Carol bought some jewelry and gifts. From there, we started our drive back to Pennsylvania, driving south on US-1. At times, we were within sight of the coast; other times it was just a road through rural Maine. Our first stop was in Rockport, but there really wasn't anything there to see so we continued to Rockland. This city has a nice downtown and a harbor area with a ferry to some of the outlying islands. A boat from American Cruise Lines was in the harbor and I talked with one of the "boat" folks during our walk downtown. Carol and I have looked at their cruises which are quite expensive. Their 11-day/10-night New England Explore cruise starts at \$7180 per person. However, the man I spoke with said it was worth it.



We stopped for lunch at the Rockland Café, which was very nice. I had a fish cake and fish stew. Carol and Kathy split crab cakes. After eating, I spoke with the woman who owned the place about the lobster dinner she offered for \$31.95. It included a lobster, butter, lemon, fresh cut fries, and coleslaw. I told her about our experience at Young's Lobster Pound in Belfast the night before where a tiny lobster was \$36 with a bag of chips and an extra charge for lemon and butter. Needless to say, we did not eat at Young's.

I was surprised to see these two engines there. Midcoast Railservice (MCRI) became the lessee-operator of Maine DOT's 57-mile Rockland Branch on



08/01/22. It is wholly-owned by New York's Finger Lakes Railway, hence the NYC-like lighting stripe paint scheme.

We continued down US-1 and other roads to Pemaquid Point. Carol wanted to go to an artisan craft store there that had very nice things, and Kathy wanted to see the lighthouse there. She had been unable to see another lighthouse further up the coast due to fog. Incidentally, there are 65 lighthouses along Maine's coast, inlets, and islands..

We drove back north and crossed US-1 heading to the Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington Railway Museum in Alma (photos on next page). The WW&F, which is a narrow gauge, two-foot line, was operating that day. It started in 1895 and lasted till 1933. At its peak, Maine's

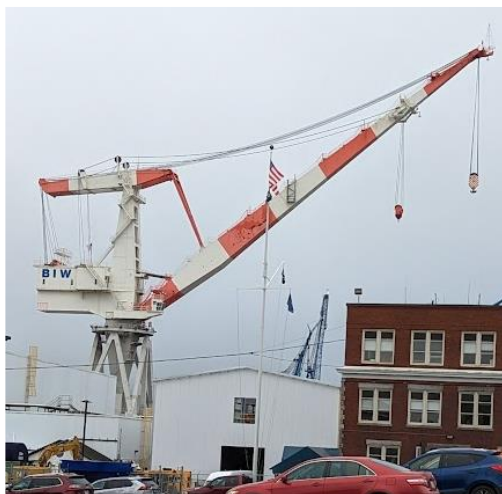


two-foot-gauge railroads had over 200 miles of track. The Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad was the largest and it also closed in 1933. This museum has restored about three miles of two-foot gauge track and runs trains year-round. I got out of the car with Emmet to walk around and see the heritage equipment. Luckily for me, that day's train had just returned from its final run. The passengers got off and then the engine was turned on the manual turntable and put into its roundhouse. I was able to just walk into several buildings, which was good because it was raining. The museum store and



ticket booth were not open then, but perhaps were open when folks boarded the train.

Leaving there we head to Bath, home of Bath Iron Works, which is a major builder of frigates and other ships for the U.S. Navy. I could not get a good picture of the shipyard which is on the Kennebec River, but was able to get a picture of BIW's largest crane. We drove around parts of Bath and headed to our hotel, a Rodeway Inn & Suites that was located between Bath and Brunswick. I usually don't go that low on the hotel food chain, but there were not a lot of properties to choose from. The place was actually okay. We got a very large room with a kitchenette but there was no pool for Emmett. I actually screwed up and had made two reservations for this night near Bath. I forgot about the other one until I reviewed my credit card statement once home.



For dinner, we drove back to Bath to eat at The Cabin. It looked interesting when I saw it earlier and had favorable reviews. Still, it made a very bold claim! Once inside it was a bit of a dive but it had a decent crowd. I asked two women about their pizza and they were very pleased with it. Well, the pizza was actually quite good. Turns out it was cash only, but that was not an issue as my sister bought dinner that



night. Carol and I had this sausage and mushroom pie while Kathy and Emmet had a cheese pie. The Cabin offers a 28" party pizza that is equal to four large pizzas and can be sliced into 32 squares or 16 VERY large triangles. All total, we drove about 120 miles this day.

Sunday 6/25

We had waffles and other food for breakfast at the hotel. After checking out, we headed to the 9:30am Mass at St Mary's in Bath. This is one of nine Catholic churches in a sizable part of coastal Maine that have now been combined into one parish. At the end of Mass, the local Knight of Columbus council awarded a scholarship to a young woman going to University of Maine to study nursing. We went downstairs to the reception that was held after Mass to celebrate the event.



Before leaving Bath, I stopped to take a picture of its former Maine Central passenger station (service ended in 1959) and what was once a double deck (trains and vehicles) bridge across the Kennebec River. From June 30th till July 3rd, the MCRI had a Budd RDC on display there. MCRI hopes to restore some passenger service in the area starting

this fall.

From Bath, we headed east partially retracing our route from the day before. We ended up in Boothbay Harbor, which is a major tourist destination. We parked and then walked around for about an hour and a half. We saw this store; that is Carol, Kathy, and Emmet in the picture out front. An older sign on the side of the building says:



We bought lunch at a bakery/café and some gifts/souvenirs. Leaving the harbor, we headed further south on the

peninsula to Ocean Point for a view of the ocean and another lighthouse on a distant island.



Leaving the Point, we drove to Boothbay Railway Village. This is a recreated New England village with antique autos and a two-foot narrow gauge steam train. Again, the luck was with me because, as we arrived the steam train pulled into the station. While the coach was native to Maine, the 0-4-0T (tank) locomotive #6 was made in Germany in 1934. It operated on narrow gauge lines



in Poland through the end of WWII and later in Germany. Amazingly, this museum bought the locomotive in 1969 after reading it was for sale in *Trains* magazine's classified ad.



We headed west and along the way stopped at The Taste of Maine Restaurant for dinner. The food was very good, albeit a bit pricey. Dinner for the four of us with some drinks was \$145, which was our most expensive meal of the entire trip.

We drove to Freeport, Maine where we stayed at the Freeport Hotel for the next two nights. This was another property in the Ascend Collection. Emmet was in the pool shortly after we arrived. We used the laundry machines there although doing so used up \$6 in quarters.

Monday 6/26

After breakfast and Emmet's morning swim, we drove to the LL Bean complex in the center of Freeport. We were last there over 10 years ago. This is the location of LL Bean's flagship store that has been open 24/7 for decades. I have two quick stories to the point. During the Yom Kippur War (October 1973), Israeli troops fighting in the Golan Heights were hit with a very early snowstorm and winter conditions for which they were totally unprepared. A military attaché at the Israeli Embassy in DC knew of LL Bean and that it was open 24/7. He flew up to Maine and purchased winter gear for several hundred soldiers. An EL AL Boeing 707 landed in Portland and the gear was flown to Israel. In the spring of 1977, I was an internal auditor with Gulf+Western Industries and was doing an audit of Bostonian Shoes in Lewiston, Maine, which was an old mill town. One night we drove to Portland to have a nice lobster dinner and afterwards I suggested we stop at LL. The other guys asked how. It was late. I knew it was open 24/7 (even though no one said that back then) and the other guy did not believe me until we got there.

That morning, my belt broke so I bought a new one there. We walked through the flagship store, the hunting and fishing store, and the home goods store, but skipped the bike, boat, and ski store. If those stores weren't enough, there is an LL Bean Outlet two blocks away in a shopping complex with other outlet stores.



The nice woman there gave me a 2023 calendar for the Downeaster and I helped myself to a few of the paper schedules that are provided by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority.



I thought the schedule on the left might be in some native-American language and was very surprised when Google Translator said it was Somali. Amtrak itself no longer provides any schedules either on paper or even online. Amtrak's current management does not feel they are necessary anymore. Instead, Amtrak offers an awkward travel planner that requires riders to know exactly where they want to travel from. I saw some folks standing on the platform with luggage. Looking at the schedule, I saw that a southbound train #684 would arrive in a few minutes at 11:13am. The station is on a slight curve and there was a big gap between the train and the platform requiring a bridge plate to board. The spacing may also be there to allow for freight traffic.



Also, two blocks away is the Amtrak station for Freeport. The Downeaster started in 2001 between Boston and Portland; this very successful service was extended to Brunswick in 2012. I walked into the attended station that doubles as a visitor center.



We left Freeport and headed to Portland with our destination being its Jetport (PWM). Recently, in my spare time (hah!), I started a new Knights of Columbus council at my parish in Jenkintown, PA. The council meets on the fourth Monday of the month, which was that day and as the Grand Knight I needed to be there. So, I used 55,000 miles on AA to cover the flight. It also cost me \$11.20 for the taxes. I flew on AA #2570 at 1:10pm and arrived at 2:45pm. I did not have any luggage but Carol gave me a big shopping bag full of her purchases at LL and other stores to take home as it occupied too much space in the trunk. I waited for the 3:40pm SEPTA train that went right to the Jenkintown station and took a LYFT ride home from there. I forgot to bring my SEPTA senior pass with me but the conductor let me ride for free when I showed him my similar pass for Boston's MBTA. Why I had this with me will be explained later. My K of C meeting went well. While I was away in Pennsylvania, Carol and Kathy took Emmet to Portland Children's Museum and did more shopping.

Tuesday 6/27

The girls in Maine checked out of the hotel and drove to see the Desert of Maine. It is a natural curiosity whose main feature is a 40-acre expanse of barren [glacial sand](#) in [ME](#). Meanwhile in Pennsylvania, I drove to the Jenkintown station, parked my car, and took a SEPTA train to PHL. I had my SEPTA senior pass this time. I had AA #2570 at 10:57am. Oddly, this was the same flight number as what I flew on the previous day. In fact, it was a turnaround flight on an A319. I was upgraded to the small eight-seat business cabin and had a Tito 'n' tonic en route, but forgot the lemon packs from WAWA. I arrived early and thought about lunch as I saw this by my gate.

Linda Bean is LL's granddaughter and used her name to get into the lobster business in the early 2000s. Back on April 1, 2018, I was in Illinois for a train show and my early morning flight from Peoria to ORD was cancelled due to a late season snowstorm. Instead, I was put on a flight to CLT where I connected to a flight to PWM, yes Portland, ME. En route, I flew directly over PHL albeit at 33000 feet. I arrived in Portland at lunchtime and was booked on a late



afternoon flight from there to PHL. However, as I exited the plane in PWM, I noticed its next flight was to PHL in about an hour. I asked the gate agent if the flight was full and it wasn't. I asked if I could get on it, and they let me. I asked where could I get a lobster roll? He pointed to Linda Bean's. So, I bought a lobster roll and some chowder to eat on the plane and went back to the gate to be ticketed for the flight. As I boarded a few minutes later, the gate agent who helped me (a middle-aged guy) turned to a younger agent next to him and said, "This is Mr. Feeney. He just flew up here from CLT for lunch!"

I skipped the Bean place thinking the others in the car would want lunch, too, plus it was expensive. Carol picked me up a few minutes later and we headed south on US-1 avoiding I-95 which at that point was the tolled Maine Turnpike. We stopped at Scarborough Lobster, a shack-type place on Route 1. The prices were very reasonable. The three adults had lobster rolls. They were out of hot dogs so Emmet had cole slaw and some other snack food that we had with us. After lunch, we continued south on Route 1 and found another can/bottle redemption center and redeemed what we had accumulated. This place had reverse vending machines and Emmet got another \$1.35 in "can money."



We continued south and drove through Orchard Beach, a beach resort. I parked the car so Kathy and Emmet could walk on the beach. Our next stop was at the trolley museum in Kennebunkport. I have always wanted to visit it, but bummer it is closed on Tuesdays. However, the gate was open so we just drove in.

There was an eclectic collection of transit equipment, much of which was in poor condition (next page).





We headed to the center of Kennebunkport which was filled with tourists so we did not stop. Instead, we drove out to the Bush family compound that was right on the ocean. Several cars were stopped like us to take a picture.



We drove through the town again and headed to the Maine Turnpike because we were late for our next stop in York, ME to see Heather and Jorge Martin. I knew them from when I was on E*Trade's Client Advisory Board. As we were leaving, the Martins recommended that we go see the Nubble Lighthouse, saying it was the most photographed one in Maine. It was spectacular and the sky was perfect.

For our last meal in Maine, we went to the Weathervane Seafood Restaurant in Kittery. This is a small, family-owned chain. I had picked up their brochure at the Maine visitor center near Conway a week before. I had a fried seafood platter while Emmet had her own personal pizza and ice cream for dessert. Kathy had a yuge plate of clam strips that she did not finish.

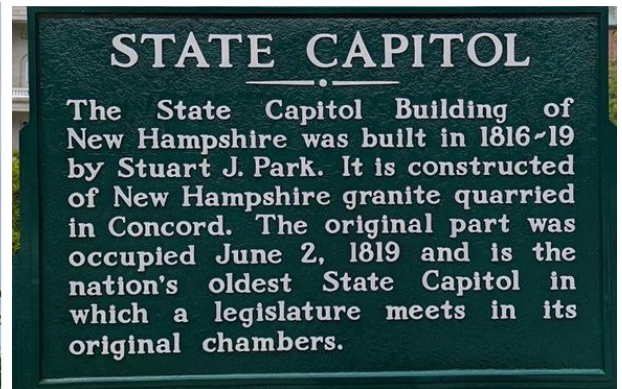
After dinner, we drove 47 miles to the HI Express near the Manchester, NH Airport, where we stayed for the next two nights. We were upgraded to a larger suite room. Emmet and I went swimming; she had an interesting conversation with two women that were also in the pool.



Wednesday 6/28

Readers might be wondering why we were back in New Hampshire. It made no sense to visit its State House when we were in New Hampshire the week before. After breakfast, we headed north on I-93 towards Concord, which is New Hampshire's capital. However, we stopped quickly at the rest stop. New Hampshire's rest stops are unique in that they feature a YUGE liquor store. New Hampshire is the only state that has neither a tax on earned income nor a general sales

tax. There is an 8.5% tax on meals and rooms and since tourism is the largest industry in New Hampshire, effectively folks from out of state (like us) provide a large portion of the state's revenue. The liquor stores are state run and decades ago, they were repositioned to sell spirits at discounted prices and without sales tax. Back in the 1980s, the State of Connecticut had revenue agents sitting in the parking lot of the southbound rest stop there during ski season and anyone with Connecticut plates who bought liquor, found a Connecticut tax bill in their mailbox shortly after they were home. We bought a few bottles of wine but think Total Wine's prices are better.



Back on I-93, we were in Concord a few minutes later. It was only 21 miles in total between our hotel and the New Hampshire State House. We parked on the street right in front. Once inside, Carol got her 50-state capitol book stamped and we were able to have a tour. New Hampshire is a relatively small state, but it has the largest legislature with 400 representatives and 24 senators. The house looked more like a college



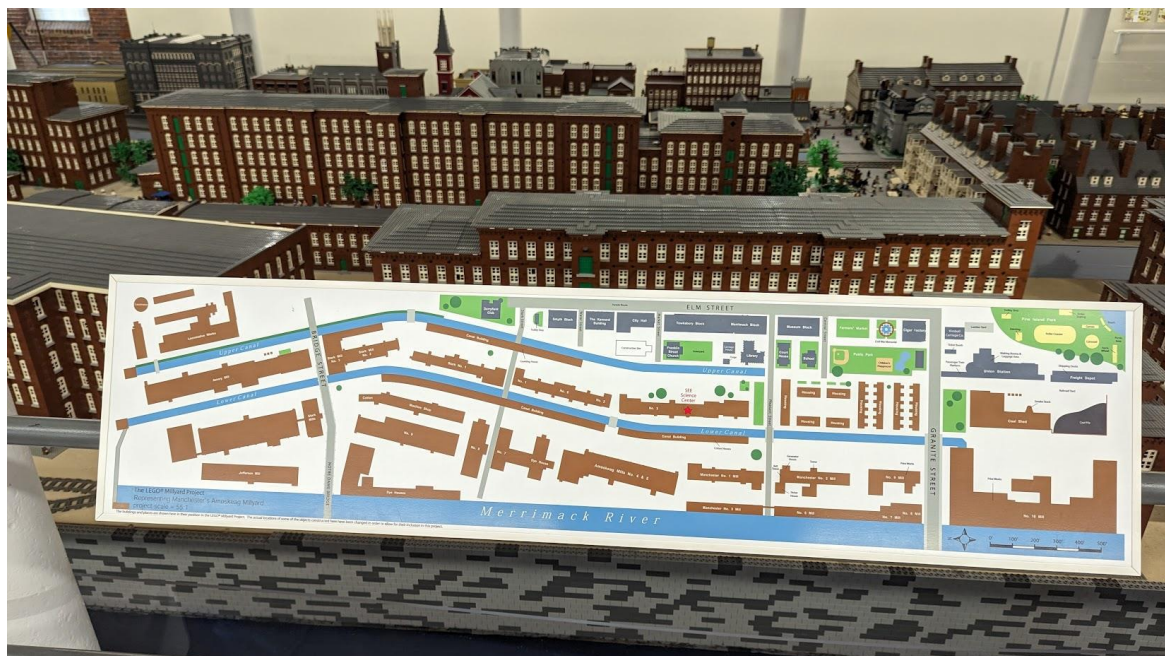
auditorium than a legislature chamber. However, it only meets part-time and its members earn a whopping \$100 per year (plus mileage). The session begins in January and goes through June, but it only meets on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday starting at 4:00pm because most representatives have day jobs.

This was an interesting display (next page) about New Hampshire's historical role of hosting the first presidential primary every four years. However, New Hampshire is about to lose that distinction, as the Democrats have made South



Carolina's presidential primary on February 3, 2024 for the first time, saying that New Hampshire's population is not representative of the country in that it is 92% white and less than 3% black. New Hampshire voters from both parties have an independent streak. In 1968, President Johnson did poorly in New Hampshire's presidential primary almost losing to Eugene McCarthy.

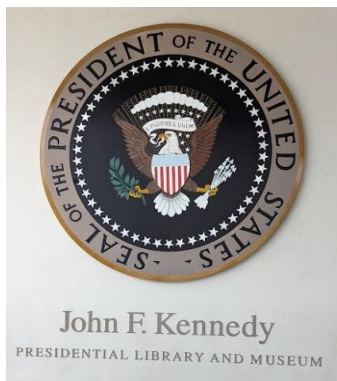
We had lunch in the basement cafeteria and then walked down the main street. Carol bought Emmet a nice pair of real shoes. We drove back to Manchester and went to the SEE Science Center. This is one of several museums located in the Millyard, a complex of 19th century buildings that once housed the largest textile mill in the world. It was basically a children's museum, but the major attraction for me was the world's largest permanent Lego display which used approximately one million Lego bricks. It represents Amoskeag Mills that closed in the 1930s.



Leaving the museum, we drove through Manchester's downtown; it is the largest city in the state. Eventually, I drove to see its airport which was just south of our hotel. Manchester-Boston Regional Airport (MHT) is a smaller, award-winning airfield that is only 50 miles from Boston and close to New Hampshire's major ski resorts and beaches. Traffic at the airport really took off (pun intended) when Southwest started flying there 25 years ago. Other airlines flying there now include American, United, Spirit, and Amazon (cargo for the Boston region). Avelo Airlines, a new carrier, just began nonstop service to/from Raleigh Durham (RDU) on June 21st.

Back at the hotel, I had leftovers from my seafood dinner the night before plus Kathy's clam strips while Emmet finished her pizza. Carol and Kathy went out to Five Guys.

Thursday 6/29

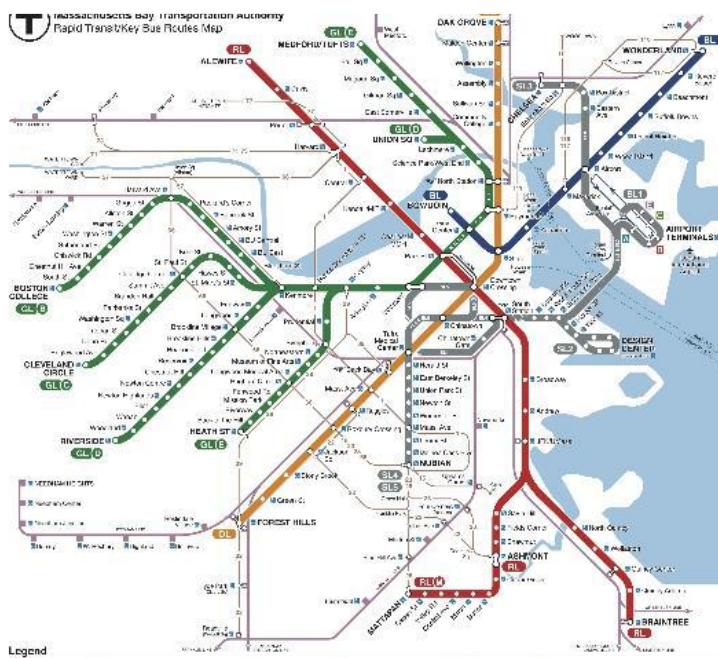


We had another very nice breakfast at the hotel and checked out. We left at 9:30am for a 57-mile drive to the JFK Presidential Library in Boston which took over 1.5 hours due to traffic. The JFK Library is set on a point in Boston's Harbor that was picked by Jackie O. Parking was free.



Inside, we all had free admission using the membership card that we got at the Eisenhower Museum in Kansas back in February. It started with a 17-minute film that gave some historical background about JFK and his family including his exploits with PT109 during WWII. The film ended with the 1960 Democratic convention in Los Angeles where JFK received his party's presidential nomination. There was a display on the televised presidential debates. When I was standing by this display, there was a docent-led tour.

The museum covered the Cuban missile crisis, the start of the civil rights movement, and JFK's July 1963 trip to Berlin (Ich bin ein Berliner). His assassination was barely covered. There was just a black-and-white CBS broadcast with Walter Cronkite announcing his death. No mention of the Warren Commission, the grassy knoll, etc. Kathy and Emmet finished up before me and were outside along the harbor. Carol came out last and forgot to have her presidential library guidebook stamped.



through several levels, we came to a street designated for people only.

Once I had my orientation, we walked towards Boston Commons. Along the way, I saw two of these from Boston Ducks (DUKWs) (next page). I was surprised as the similar services in Philly and other places were eliminated after tragic accidents. We were heading to the Massachusetts State House on Beacon Street, however we stopped at a bar called

We got back on I-93 and drove towards Quincy. We got off at the first major exit for lunch and ended up eating at a Chipotle. Emmet would not eat her tacos saying they were too spicy. Back on I-93, we exited for the Red Line T (MBTA) stop at Wollaston (red dot on map).



I was able to find street parking two blocks away saving the \$9 daily fee to use the MBTA's park 'n' ride garage. I was able to use the CharlieCard (MBTA's smart fare card) senior card that I obtained on a day trip to Boston last year. With the card, I paid \$2.20 for a round-trip ticket. Carol and Kathy paid \$4.40 each and Emmet rode free. In a few minutes, we boarded a subway train to Alewife. The Red Line runs above ground until Broadway and then runs as a typical subway. We exited at Downtown Crossing where the Red, Green, and Orange Lines all come together. After going up



Emmet's where Emmet was served a free soda and given a T-shirt with the bar's (and her name) on it.

Eventually we got to the State House. The oldest part of it was completed in 1798 and is the oldest building on Beacon Street. A few years later, Paul Revere provided copper sheathing to cover the dome. Late in 1874, it was covered in gold leaf at a cost



of \$2,862. Over the years, the building has been expanded several times, notably in 1895, 1900, 1917, and 1990. In 1997, the dome was re-gilded at a cost of \$300,000. More recently, the exterior and major interior rooms have been restored. We were able to take a guided tour hosted by a young intern that covered the major parts of the building.

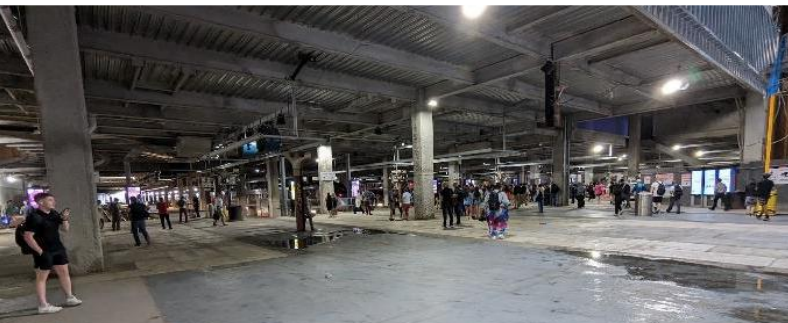
Leaving the building, we walked through part of Boston Commons. I decided that we would walk to South Station to catch the Red Line. I wanted to see the new building being added on top of it.



Inside the head house were lots of commuters waiting to catch their MBTA train home. Sadly, the train shed and platforms are now devoid of sunlight because of the new office tower.



We went down several levels and boarded a very crowded train heading to Braintree. I stood for several stops though a nice man did get up so Emmet and Carol could sit down. We got to the car and headed to a restaurant in Fairhaven, MA (55 miles, near New Bedford) for dinner. Carol and I had been to this particular restaurant two times, three years ago on a trip to Martha's Vineyard, but I could not remember the name of the place. So before we left on this trip, I went to a Google Map of the area looking at restaurants. Lo and behold, Google showed me the restaurant (Gene's Famous Seafood) saying I had been there three years ago. New Bedford is where the scallop fishing boats are based and Gene's absolutely has the best scallops I have





ever had. My sister agreed with me. Emmet even ate two bites of one.

Our hotel was a half hour away in Seekonk. It was a very large and nice Clarion Hotel. Emmet had to go for a swim as soon as we arrived.

Friday 6/30

This was the last day of our trip. We stopped to visit with my father's second wife who lives in Riverside, RI. From there, it was a short drive to the Rhode Island State House in Providence. Of all five capitols that we saw on this trip, I would have to say this one was the most impressive for several reasons. It is entirely built of marble. In fact its dome is the fourth largest self-supported marble dome in the world. The biggest one is Saint Peter's in the Vatican followed by the Minnesota State Capitol and the Taj Mahal. It was built between 1895 and 1904. This was one of two (also Maine) on this trip where we could see up into the dome. The legislature was not in session so we were able to park in one of the official lots. We had an excellent tour given by a woman from the state library. I asked her about Rhode Island's recent name change. FYI, Rhode Island is the smallest state, but was the one with the longest official name: Rhode Island and Providence Plantations which dates back to its founding in 1636. (This was always a great bar bet question.) In 2020, Rhode Island voters approved a constitutional amendment to drop the latter part of the name as they consider the word "plantation" to be racist. The librarian pointed out several places on the tour that still have the old name. It will end up being very expensive to eliminate all traces of it on the capitol and other state and municipal buildings.



We left Providence going west on US-6 towards Emmet's home in Franklin, CT, some 50 miles or an hour away. However, I missed the turn to stay on Route 6 and ended up on I-295 south. I stayed on it given we needed to have lunch. Exiting RI-2 we saw another Pepe's. I did not know there was one in Rhode Island We had another great pizza for a late lunch.



From there, it was a 45-minute ride to Emmet's house. We dropped her off with her suitcase and knapsack and said our good-byes. Once home, we found a bag full of her dirty clothes in the trunk of the car. The rest of the ride home was routine—I-95 to I-287 and across the Hudson. We

stopped at the Palisades Center (Mall) in West Nyack, NY, so we could eat a quick dinner in its food court. My sister Kathy had never been there before. It was almost 10:00pm when we were home in Abington. Everything was fine with the house, except the grass needed to be cut again. My sister flew home to Florida on Sunday, July 2nd.

P.S. This is what Montpelier, VT looks like after the recent record rainstorm. The whole city was flooded. The dome of the State House can be seen in the picture. The streets we drove on were covered with several feet of water. 🇺🇸



St. Louis Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet July 28–29, 2023

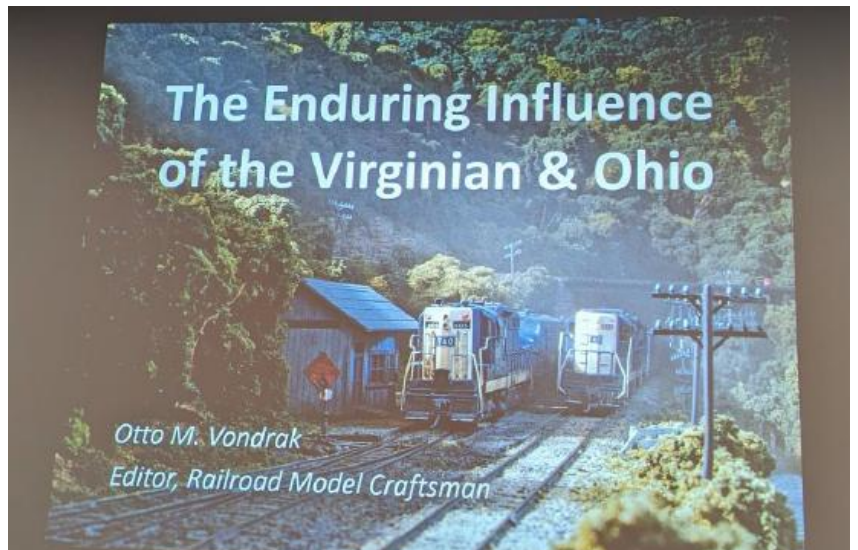
It seems that there are an increasing number of RPM meets. These are informally organized although some do run under the NMRA umbrella, if for no other reason than access to the NMRA's liability insurance. This particular one, in its 16th year, is an annual event with the largest attendance of any RPM meet. Almost 700 modelers attended this year's meet held at the Gateway Convention Center in Collinsville, Illinois (about 15 miles east of STL), despite competition from the NMRA's Mid-Continent Region (MCoR) convention being held that same weekend near KC.



Otto Vondrak, the editor of *Railroad Model Craftsman*, called "A Look at the Virginian & Ohio." Otto's presentation expanded upon the V&O material that was included in RMC's 90th anniversary issue back in March 2023.

In addition to the clinics, there were perhaps thousands of models on display. Most were midwest railroads with plenty of IC/ICG ones just for me!

I have attended this meet more than a few times such that it is now on the list of model railroad events that I attend annually. Given its location and those who generally attend, it is perfect for someone like me who models the Illinois Central in August 1969. One unique feature of this meet is that it features a different theme each year. Prior themes have included grain, coal, and last year, the kit. This year's theme was "The Layout—A Weekend at the Theater." Most of the 20 clinics offered during the two-days related to this year's theme as did the keynote presentation by



Also in the 38,000-square-foot room were scores of dealers and vendors including these major manufacturers: Athearn, ClassicOne, Funaro & Camerlengo, Iowa Scaled Engineering, Otter Valley, Scale Trains, SoundTraxx and Tangent.



Several new products were launched at the show including the Squealer from ISE. I tried to buy one on Saturday only to find out ISE sold out of the 50 that they brought to the show.



There were lots of 3D print parts available and a new company, Railfanmodels, was selling HO passenger and freight cars that were completely 3D printed for hundreds of dollars.



It seemed there were more “learning stations” this year. These were hands-on demonstrations of various modeling techniques that included weathering, spray painting, JMRI, building turnouts, creating backdrops, and introducing Bluami. These were grouped together in the middle of the show floor. Nearby was a large HO Free-Mo layout.



Another unique aspect of this meet is the number of railroad historical societies that have tables. This year 16 were present including Burlington Route, Central of Georgia, Chicago & Eastern Illinois, Chicago & North Western, Gulf, Mobile & Ohio, Illinois Terminal, Barriger National Railroad Library, Louisville & Nashville, Milwaukee Road, Missouri Pacific, Monon, New York Central, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Southern, Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, and the Wabash. These groups generally offered back issues of their publications and several had limited-run HO rolling stock kits, decals, and buildings for sale as they tried to recruit new members. On Friday evening, the officers of the various historical societies held a closed meeting at which they shared best practices and talked about holding possible joint events.



In addition to the activities held on site, there was an available layout tour on Friday evening. At the conclusion of the meet at 4:30pm on Saturday, there was a door prize drawing. Every attendee received one ticket. I would estimate there were over 200 prizes available and I won a small 3D printed grain silo from ISE that will go perfectly on my layout set in central Illinois.

I did not spend a lot at the meet, buying only a few employee timetables, some \$1 and \$2 publications, some 3D printed parts, and a pile of past issues of the *Green Diamond* magazine from the now defunct Illinois Central Historical Society. I also bought two kits for a friend in the NJ Division. I picked flyers for several future shows/meets including one for the 17th St. Louis RPM Meet scheduled for July 26 and 27, 2024 which I hope to attend.

Two unusual things happened at the meet. First, some of you reading this know that I sell donated things for the GATSME Club on eBay. Well, the day before I left for STL on July 27th, a man in Springfield, Illinois won three Marklin engines on one of my auctions. I contacted him saying I was going to the RPM meet and would be in Springfield on Sunday, July 30th and could deliver them (My wife and I were doing a midwest capitol tour after the meet). To my surprise he said he would be at the RPM meet on Friday. We met at the GM&O Historical Society table and I delivered his three engines.

The second thing was that I had myself scanned at the mini-prints booth. For those unfamiliar, this is a company that specializes in the 3D printing of miniature figures. I am having a whole bunch of them printed up in HO scale and will be giving them to family members and well as to the hosts of layouts that I visit or operate on. A friend said it was a scary thought that soon there will be miniature Kevins on model train layouts all across the country.



TEXAS EXPRESS – 2023 NMRA National Convention

August 20–27, 2023

This is the annual convention of the NMRA and the event that USED to be the highlight of my year. However, given I have attended 33 of them, not so much anymore. I actually attended every annual convention starting in 1985 (Milwaukee) through 2011 (Sacramento). My streak ended because I was living in Bulgaria during the summer of 2012. This was not a great loss for me as it was in Grand Rapids, Michigan and I have never been a fan of Bruce Chubb (famous model railroader who lives there).



I started another run in 2013 (Atlanta) when I returned to the USA from living in Korea. That run continued through 2018 (Kansas City). The 2019 convention was in Salt Lake City and I chose NOT to attend after being in that area to attend the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad on May 10th, 2019. The 2020 convention was cancelled; 2021 was a virtual one that did not interest me. Last year, the convention was in Saint Louis in place of the one originally scheduled for the United Kingdom that was cancelled when the Olympics and Commonwealth Games were rescheduled. I planned to attend the 2022 one. In fact, I flew to STL from MSP after spending a week in the Midwest only to arrive with COVID. Instead of sharing a room with Eric Dervinis, I checked myself into another hotel and hunkered down for three days and flew home wearing two masks. Eric picked up my registration materials and goodie bag.

I had heard of some issues with the staff on this year's convention, but that was resolved. Registration was off compared with some prior years. The count was in the low 900s when I arrived but eventually exceeded 1000 by the end of the week. I had been on the committee for the 1993 convention in Valley Forge, PA which had record registration of 3600+. For the second year in a row, there was NO silent auction at the convention. This has long been very popular with attendees, but can be a real challenge to the convention staff. I can speak from experience having worked on the auctions at 1993 and 2006 conventions.

This year's convention was different in that it was held at the Gaylord Texas Resort. These are the same folks that run Opryland and other "resorts." Typically the convention is held at a large urban hotel with lots of meeting rooms. The central area of the property is covered by a huge clear roof with the hotel rooms along the outer edge. Nearby is its water park that was closed till Friday, perhaps because of the heat and that schools there were already in session. The Dallas Metroplex has had a record number of days with the temperature over 100 degrees this summer. There has been no rainfall for perhaps two months.



I registered several months in advance (was #247). I signed up for two prototype tours and volunteered to present the clinic I was supposed to give in 2020 and 2022.

Sunday 8/20

Like most of my trips, this one began by driving to SEPTA's Jenkintown station early this day. However, I had to start even earlier than normal due to the revised Sunday schedule that resulted from the Southwest Connection Improvement Program. This program started on July 26th and ran through August 26th during which SEPTA was replacing the 80-year-old trackwork just west of 30th Street Station. Instead of getting on at Jenkintown and riding right to Philadelphia, I had to transfer to a bus at 30th Street. My 5:26am train arrived a bit late at 30th Street, but I was still able to transfer to the 6:10am bus and was at PHL about 15 minutes later, plenty early for my 8:27am flight. There is NO traffic on the Schuylkill Expressway at that hour on a Sunday morning.

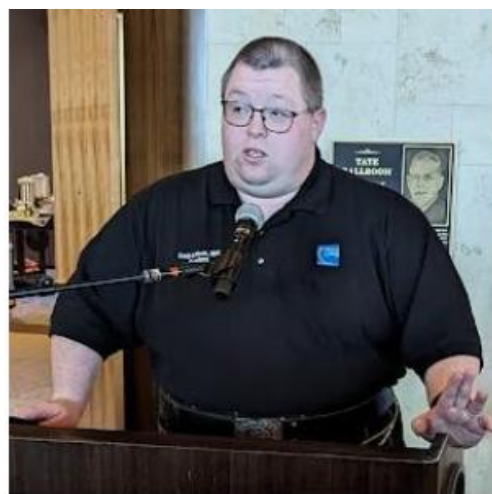
I originally booked my AA flights to/from DFW on April 13th for 39,000 miles. Following the advice that I saw on a Yahoo chat group about the AA Advantage Reward program, I checked the flights periodically after that. On July 5th, I switched to a connecting flight via Austin for 28,500 miles. If you cancelled a flight booked with miles, the original miles go back to your account and you are charged for the new lower amount. On August 15th, I switched again to a connection in Atlanta for 26,000 that also arrived a bit sooner. I was originally flying down with my friend Eric Dervinis

who stayed with the Austin flight, except it was oversold. He took a voluntary bump for a \$375 voucher and was put on a later nonstop flight to DFW arriving an hour earlier. Had I stayed on the Austin flight, the same thing would have happened to me. Bummer!

My flight left PHL a few minutes early and arrived in Atlanta at 10:18am, 19 minutes early. The ATL airport is huge and dominated by Delta. The relatively few AA flights are in the TI terminal, which has the connection to MARTA, the transit system. Because of my Executive Platinum status, I was upgraded for this and the connecting flight. In between the flights, I read a magazine and got a decent lunch from Grindhouse Killer Burgers just before boarding my scheduled ATL-DFW flight. It also left a few minutes early and arrived 25 minutes early at 1:35pm. The DFW airport is also huge and laid out differently from ATL that has linear parallel terminals. DFW has five semi-circular ones and since AA is the dominant carrier there, it uses three of them. I arrived in the A terminal and needed to get my bags which always takes time there. Then I had to go outside into the hot air and get on a bus to terminal B to catch the TEXRail train. This line goes to Fort Worth and is only a few years old. The train uses modern diesel MUs from Stadler (a Swiss company) and is known as FLIRT (Fast Light Intercity & Regional Train). The line comes into the DFW complex from the northwest. There is another train operated by DART that goes to Dallas from the A terminal. Once at B, I had to go down two levels and walk outside again in the hot air for several hundred feet to the station. The train was scheduled to leave at 2:40pm and it was getting close. I called Eric who had just missed the 1:40pm train asking him to buy me a ticket to save time. I got to the train just before the doors closed and sat down by him. Shame I did not have time to take a picture.

It was a short 10-minute ride to the TEXRail's Grapevine station, which is across the tracks from the historical Cotton Belt (SSW) station which is used by the heritage railroad based there. One of the Grapevine shuttles (currently free) was waiting by the station. We boarded; it left at 3:00pm and less than 10 minutes later we were at the Gaylord, my home for the next six days.

First, I have to say some things about the Gaylord. Our room cost \$179, but with five distinct taxes, the real cost was \$204.73 a night. We didn't have a car so the \$15 per day parking fee for hotel guests (\$25 if not a guest) wasn't an issue for us. There was NO free parking anywhere nearby—ditto for other food restaurants. So Eric and I, like many other convention attendees, were stuck there for the week. I constantly complained about the prices. Eric said it was resort pricing. It's rip-off pricing to me. Luckily we were NOT charged the "resort fee" paid by regular guests. We had a 9th floor room with an obscured view of the central area. We had daily maid service though they did not speak English. A



20-ounce bottle of Dr. Pepper in one of the stores was \$5.41. We picked up our registration badges and were surprised to see that our goodie bag included a HO convention car from Scale Trains. We were able to attend a 4:00pm clinic on the Lehigh & Hudson River Railway and then had tacos for dinner Sunday in the Tex Mex Cantina and it cost \$50 for the two of us. I paid for all our meals to partially offset my share of the room cost for six nights.

At 7:00pm, there was the President's Welcome Reception that was initially hosted by John Doehring, member of the NMRA's BOD. He asked us to introduce ourselves to someone we did not know (twice) and then asked for suggestions to improve the organization. Next was Gordy Robinson, our president, who lives in the Orkney Islands off the coast of northern Scotland. There are no railroads there, but nevertheless he is a Master Model railroader (MMR) and is building a large N-scale layout in his home there. Modeling there must get expensive! Gordy isn't Scottish, but was still wearing a kilt. We don't know if he was going commando. He was surprised by the turnout

(several hundred) and talked about changes to the organization and things we can do together in the future.

Monday 8/21

I signed up for probably what was the highlight of the convention: a tour of BNSF's corporate headquarters including its Network Operations Center (NOC) and



a visit to its nearby Alliance Yard which handles intermodal traffic. This tour was so popular that a second session was added and I was on that. For me, access to prototype tours like this are the key reason for attending a NMRA convention. We boarded a nice coach bus at 9:15am for a half-hour ride west to the BNSF campus in Fort Worth. We had to wait until the first section was done before we could enter the building, however we were able to get off the bus to see the four shiny stainless steel passenger cars preserved there that were once part of its executive fleet. Once inside, we were given



an extensive tour of the art collection that BNSF inherited from its predecessor roads. Back in the early 20th century, the western railroads commissioned paintings of the natural parks and other western scenes that were used in their advertising and promotional brochures for passenger train travel. The first part of the collection that we saw was from the GN and NP. Many of the works (though not this one) were done by John Frey (1859-1934) who alone painted over 300 scenes of Glacier National Park for the GN. Later on the tour we saw art that had been commissioned by the Santa Fe.

Finally, we got to see the NOC, which is located in a purpose-built structure that could probably survive being hit by a small nuclear blast. It was built in 1995 and expanded in 2017. The projection screen in the back

was the world's largest single screen when built. Close to the screen are over 100 dispatchers that are on duty 24/7 covering most of the BNSF system that runs upwards of 1,400 trains a day. For some reason, California operations are



dispatched from San Bernardino. Operations in the Houston area are handled locally jointly with the UP. I certainly expected to see the dispatchers there, but was surprised to learn that there are also hundreds of management personnel in the same facility from other parts of the BNSF. This includes staffing, motive power, track maintenance, and the functional business units for grain, coal, intermodal, etc. The idea is that if there is a problem, the dispatcher can talk directly to the appropriate supporting personnel. Our guide showed us a short video that described how the NOC operates. Leaving the NOC, we took the elevator to the basement where we were allowed to shop in the company store. Attendees were seen wearing BNSF merchandise for the rest of the week.

We reboarded the bus and drove to BNSF's Alliance Intermodal Yard about 10 miles to the north. Driving there, we passed Perot Field/Alliance Airport (AFW), which was the world's first airport designed exclusively for cargo and corporate aviation. Even though DFW is nearby and has extensive air cargo operation, this field opened on 27,000 acres in 1995 to serve as a regional hub for FedEx and more recently Amazon Air. The Alliance Intermodal Yard is located on 530 acres and handles 10-14 intermodal trains daily. One of these trains is often 15,000 feet long. 85% of the traffic is



containers; 15% is still trailer on flat car (TOFC). The yard is somewhat unique in that as the containers are unloaded they are placed on a chassis. Intermodal yards with less space are forced to stack the containers. The terminal manager is one of just five BNSF employees on site; all of the work functions are outsourced to "partner companies." He said that the workers who handle the containers must wear protective clothing to protect them from the heat. Recently the terminal manager was checking the trackside temperature with a heat gun and found it was 158 degrees. The ride back to the Gaylord was a half hour and we got there by 1:30pm.

I was starving so we headed for lunch at the Texas Station restaurant. That morning I tried to buy some pastries in the Marketplace store but the central registers were closed and there were maybe 25 folks in the other line buying coffee. So, I had nothing to eat and the previous night's dinner had been three bite-size tacos. The burgers were too expensive so I went with some different tacos. Lunch for the two of us cost \$50 all in. After lunch, I went into the Marketplace store where there was no line and bought two pastries (\$7.31) for Tuesday's breakfast. After putting them in our hotel room's refrigerator, I went to the SIG room. These are special interest groups that exist under the NMRA umbrella. In the room were Layout Design, Layout Command Control (LCC), American Civil War Railroads Historical Society, a new one called Women in Model Railroading, the Northern Pacific Railway Historical Association, and the very popular



Op SIG whose tables were manned by Rob Hinkle. Rob is an officer in the Philly Division and was seemingly the only other division member (besides Eric and me) to attend the convention. I signed up for two operating sessions through this SIG. I was able to see a 4:00pm clinic on flatcar loads by a modeler who writes a monthly column on them in the *NMRA Magazine*.



After no breakfast and a light lunch, I was ready for an early dinner. We went to Zeppole which has been recently redecorated. We had a nice server named Starr. Prices were a bit steep, so I had the meatball appetizer and some roasted potatoes while Eric had lasagna. Strangely our soft drinks were not on the bill which amounted to \$72 with tax and tip. Note the gold-plated dinnerware.



I also had more than a few slices of the bread though I did have to ask for butter. I saved one meatball and a bunch of potatoes for lunch on another day.

The rest of the evening was spent in clinics. These ran from 8:00am to 9:30pm with meal breaks for lunch and dinner. In total, there were over 240 clinics, some of which were repeated and others which were hands-on requiring preregistration and an extra fee. A series of them were Modeling with the Masters (MMRs). I attended one clinic on Japanese trains as Carol and I plan to go there in 2024, and an interesting one from a historical perspective about dining on the rails.

Tuesday 8/22

I was up early and ate the pastries that I had bought the afternoon before. I was able to make iced tea all week in the room using the supplied coffee machine and the supplied English breakfast tea bags. I had lemon juice with me and was able to bring some lemon slices back to the room after the meals. I signed up for another tour, this time to the Museum of the American Railroad (MAR). This visit was actually a long time in coming. Since 2021, Carol and I have traveled to DFW each January so that, among other things, I could attend the Plano Train Show, which is the biggest one in Texas. Back in 2021, while I was attending the show, Carol drove to Frisco to see the National Video Game Museum. When we were back together, she told me there was a train museum behind it and a large layout in the same building. We drove there later in the trip, but MAR was closed. In January 2022, we were nearby on a layout tour and drove to the museum only to find it closed again. The MAR has been in the hobby press lately with a story in the September 2023 *Trains Magazine*. It was also the feature story in a special issue of *Cowcatcher Magazine*, a regional model railroad/railfan publication that was given to convention attendees and also distributed at the National Train Show.

Our tour was hosted by Michelle Kempema, the executive director of the Colorado Model Railroad Museum in Greeley, CO (been there, done that) and one of the founders of the new Women in Model Railroading SIG. Through her professional contacts she made arrangements for the MAR to open early for us at 9:00am and for us to have free access to the outdoor collection. Normally access is only through docent-led tours. I boarded the same coach bus as the day before at 8:15am and settled in for a half-hour drive to a newer, planned community in Frisco. Back in 2007, the city offered the MAR 12.5 acres of land and other incentives to move from a very constrained site at the Texas State Fairgrounds in Dallas. Ground was broken in 2011 and over the next two years several thousand feet of track were laid. A connection was added to nearby BNSF trackage and eventually the collection was moved there from the fairgrounds



site. When we arrived, the rear gate was open for us to just walk in.

The MAR's collection includes 65 locomotives as well as passenger cars and other rolling stock. For me, there were two things of particular interest. First, for some weird reason they have a complete 10-car set of the Highliner electric MUs that were introduced by the ICRR in 1971 and ran until 2016 under Metra. The other one is UP 4018, which is one of only seven preserved (out of 25 made) Big Boy steam locomotives.

I certainly could have stayed longer in the yard, but it was getting hot and inside was a large G-scale (1/24) layout with a number of western and urban scenes (next page). At 10:30am we were told to be on the bus. We drove a few blocks to a Babe's Chicken Dinner

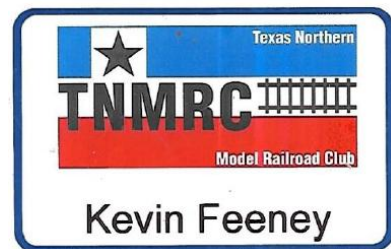




House. This local chain serves chicken (3 ways), chicken fried steak, and catfish family style in faux buildings that look old and run down. Interestingly, Carol and I first learned of this chain by seeing the location in



Frisco across from the historic Frisco depot (not part of the MAR). Special arrangements had been made such that we could enter the restaurant at 10:45am; normally Babe's opens at 11:00am. We had lots to eat and as we were leaving a server told us to take the leftovers since we had paid for them. I took four biscuits and butter for breakfast the rest of the week. I said something about the butter melting because it was so hot outside. My friend, Doug Auburg (on the right below), suggested putting the butter in my wallet.



We were back just after 1:00pm. At 2:30pm, I attended a clinic about operations on the Pennsylvania Southern layout. As I get more into operations, I want to learn the different techniques that model railroaders use on their layouts. At 4:00pm, it was time for OP SIG Cattle Call. I had signed up to operate the Texas Northern Model Railroad Club (TNMRC) that evening. At the Cattle Call, those who had signed up for the various railroads available that night assemble and work out the logistics of getting to each layout. Many of the attendees, like me, did not have a car. Luckily, I was able to get a ride with a modeler from Temple, TX who is a BNSF engineer. The TNMRC is the largest permanent model railroad layout in the DFW Metroplex and one that I have seen three times before when attending the Plano show. This was why I signed up for this layout; I find it very hard to operate a layout when it is the first time I have ever seen it.

The layout was only 25 miles to the east in the northern part of Dallas, but with rush hour traffic it would take over an hour. En route we stopped for dinner at a Whataburger, a regional fast-food restaurant chain based in Texas. Their buildings are very distinctive and there was an excellent model of one on the TNMRC layout. There were nine of us there to operate and I was able to be a yardmaster handling the incoming trains in Cook Yard for two hours. I need time in this category to earn the NMRA's Chief Dispatcher certificate. The drive back was quicker and we were in the Gaylord just after 10:00pm.



Wednesday 8/23

I was inside the Gaylord for the whole day. Since nothing was of interest for the 8:00am clinics, I skipped them. At 9:30am, I presented my clinic: “A look at the Union Pacific Railroad Through Its Annual Reports: 1945-1969.” I have given over 20 similar clinics on other railroads at the annual and regional conventions, and at two historical societies. I originally prepared this clinic for the 2020 convention and was rescheduled for 2022. This is the last time I will present a clinic like this, having basically run out of major Class I Railroads to review. I only had a handful of attendees. At 11:00am, I attended another clinic on layout operations, this time the Louisville Southern.

OPERATIONS ROAD SHOW



For lunch I had my leftover meatball and potatoes. After lunch I attended “Fallen Flags of the Northeast: 1959-1981,” but had to leave before the presentation was finished. I had a 2:00pm appointment to run on the Operations Road Show layout. For years, this group brought a large HO scale layout to the annual convention that attendees could operate. I saw it each year, but that was before I became interested in operations. That layout was retired in 2019 and starting last year the group switched to N scale using the Free-Mo standard.

Amazingly, the plans for the layout and the op session were created virtually, and then the individual modules came to the convention and were assembled. President Gordy even brought two modules with him all the way from the Orkneys. These were actually 3D-printed and came disassembled in his suitcases. This is the larger of his two modules.

I was able to be a yardmaster again and earned two more hours credit toward Chief Dispatcher. This was the first time I have operated a N-scale layout, which is about half the size of my HO layout. This layout used color-coded tabs to sort the cars.

At 4:00pm, I attended a clinic



by Joe Fugate of *Model Railroad Hobbyist* fame on painting in the post-Floquil world. This had been the paint of choice for many serious model railroaders, but was discontinued a while back. The clinic told how to match the Floquil colors using paints that are currently available.

For dinner, Eric and I wanted to go to the Old Hickory Steakhouse. I was ready to have their 20-ounce Cowboy Ribeye for \$63 (a la carte), but the place was closed on both Wednesday and Thursday nights. So we ate at the



Texas Station again and this time it cost \$50 all in all. Again, we were NOT charged for our soft drinks. Sitting at the next table was Cody Grivno, a senior editor at *Model Railroader* magazine. I said, “Hi” to him and asked if he remembered what I gave him back in 2015 at the Portland, OR convention. After a bit of prodding, he recalled a bag of MR buttons that were given out each year at prior National Train Shows (Cody on the right). I am not sure what I did right after dinner, but I did attend “Setting the Scene” by friend John Lowrance at 8:30pm. At the very first NMRA convention I attended in Milwaukee in 1985, John presented the very first clinic I ever attended, and I was hooked.

Thursday 8/24

This was a day full of clinics. I presented my UP annual report clinic again at 8:00am and this time had about a dozen folks in attendance. There was no silent auction this year, but I had brought a small suitcase full of UP railroadiana and managed to sell \$48 worth after my clinic. Also, at the end of the clinic, a man whom I don't know, but have seen many times over the years came up and thanked me for giving this and my prior annual report clinics as he found them very interesting. The next clinic at 9:30am was "A Brief History of Railroad Time." The time zone system that we use was first implemented by the U.S. railroads in 1883. After a brief discussion of that, the majority of the presentation focused on railroad watches which obviously were the presenter's main interest. At 11:00am, I managed to participate in an extra-fee clinic on painting HO figures even though I had not signed up in advance. This ran for two hours during which I managed to paint three figures. This was practice for when I paint the figures of myself that I am having 3D-printed after having been scanned at a recent RPM meet.



his layout. When asked, he said that he would NOT do it again. I looked for other things to see at the convention and came to this. Kato is a Japanese manufacturer of very accurate N- and HO-model trains. They had a booklet there describing how to make a mini-diorama and supplied the material: a piece of foam and a section of their N-scale track plus other fun things to put on the diorama. There were some folks there to help, as well.

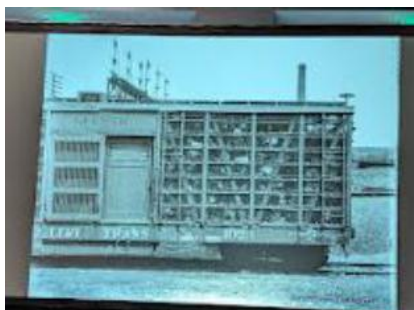
The results were certainly interesting and some very amusing, however I could see how some serious model

After lunch, I attended "Confessions of a Layout Collector." The presenter managed to acquire three large O-scale, 2-rail layouts, one of which had belonged to John Armstrong, the famous layout designer. He told how he was able to combine pieces of the three to make



sell for just a few dollars at train shows. For dinner, Eric and I returned to Zeppole and splurged, even having dessert, such that the meal cost \$104 all in all.

The rest of the evening was spent in a two-part clinic on livestock shipping, which was quite appropriate given that we were in Texas. Up through about 1970, railroads handled cattle in stock cars from ranches to packing plants and union stockyards. The last movement of hogs was in 1982. The first part covered the movement of cattle, pigs, and sheep. The second part covered fish, racehorses, dairy cows, chickens and other fowl, and lastly oysters. The shipping of chickens was perhaps the most interesting as the trade was from the midwest and south to New York City and other eastern cities with large, Jewish populations. Each car held 1000+ live birds and in the middle there was a room for an employee who fed them and got rid of the dead ones. This service lasted until about 1960. Guess he had eggs for breakfast each day!



Friday 8/25



There were no clinics scheduled till the afternoon as the National Train Show (NTS) opened early for convention attendees at 10:00am. I decided to join Eric for breakfast at the Tex-Mex place. He had been eating breakfast there each day. This was my breakfast which cost \$42 all in all! The bill for both of us was \$77. Sitting at the next table was Steve Priest, CEO of Class One Models. I mentioned something to Eric about that company and we ended up watching a video that Steve hosted. I called over



to Steve and told him what we were doing and he said there must be a better use of our time.

I got to the NTS at 9:45am and stood around until the doors opened at 10:00am. Once inside, I made a bee line to this company. I had been in their store in Deshler, NE earlier in August and had ordered a new product

called the Squealer from ISE. It was a sellout at the recent RPM meet I attended in late July, and did not want to miss it again. I got it and now just need to figure out how to install it. It will replicate the squealing sound a freight car makes on curved track. My next stop was at JP 3D. I ordered a 3D-printed head house (like the thing on top of silos to the left or rear) for the small grain silo on my layout, and had made arrangements to pick it up at the NTS.

Surprisingly, there was no NTS program though the special *Cowcatcher* issue was available again. I spent three hours stopping at manufacturer booths, and looking for deals on older items at vendor booths. I skipped most modular groups, planning to come back on Saturday morning.



I did stop at the Texas T-TRAK Club layout and saw several very interesting modules.



Walking back a different way to attend a 1:00PM clinic, I came upon this model of the Gaylord.

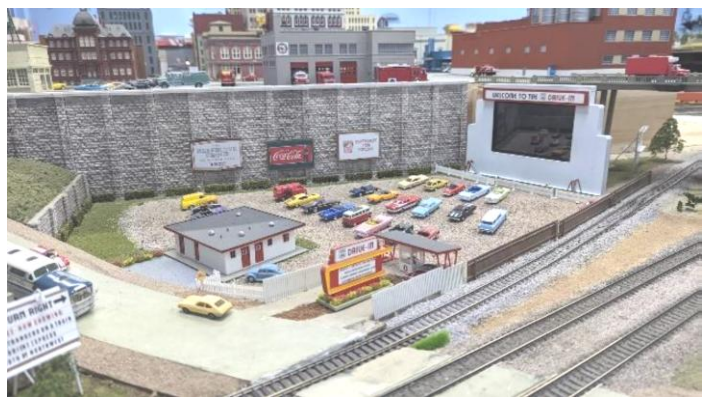


The 1:00pm clinic on scratch building an industrial area was very short and disappointing. Nothing was of interest from the 2:30pm clinics so I sat in the foyer for an hour, charged my phone, and worked through the hundreds of email that had accumulated since Sunday.

At 4:00pm, I had another OP SIG Cattle Call. I had signed up for the TNMRC again. I hooked up with a modeler from South Carolina who attends the show I go to each February by the Asheville, NC airport. We stopped for dinner at an In-N-Out burger. Can you say double double?



At the TNMRC, I was able to be a yardmaster again, but this time handling the trains departing from Cook Yard. This night I had my phone with me so I took these pictures of their neat layout.



We ran longer than Tuesday night so I had 3.5 hours of operation. Highway traffic was light so we made it back in less than 35 minutes, arriving after 10:30pm. I packed up as I was flying home the next day.

Saturday 8/26

This was my last day at this year's convention. I decided to skip the banquet on Saturday night. For breakfast I had the last two of the biscuits from Babe's, but was able to add bacon left over from my \$42 dining experience the day before. I went to an 8:00am clinic called "Kitbashing: Thinking Outside the Walthers Box," which was excellent. The NTS opened at 10:00am so I headed over there. I should mention that the NTS was open to the public Friday from 1 to 6pm, Saturday 10am to 5pm and Sunday 10am to 4pm. A three-day pass for the public cost \$30 (plus paid parking) and one- or two-day passes were also available. For convention attendees the cost of NTS is included in their registration fee. There were a few hundred folks waiting to get in at just before 10am, however the line cleared quickly once the doors were open. I headed to the back of the room to see the modular layouts. By far the largest one was a huge N-scale (1/160) layout celebrating the 50th Anniversary of N-TRAK. At one end, there was a tail of T-TRAK modules. Other layouts included HO (1/87), Lionel O (nominal 1/48), S (American Flyer 1/64), and even tiny Z scale (1/220). There were also two LEGO train layouts.





I managed to find a few bargains and bought two older HO freight cars, three HO vehicles and a bunch of parts, as well as an HO truck with custom lights. I also bought some kits that I can reasonably resell. I could have bought more, but they would not have fit in my suitcases.

On the way back to my room, I bought this food for lunch in the Marketplace for \$9.69. I posted this picture on Facebook saying everything is bigger in Texas. I packed up my purchases and checked the room for my stuff. I headed down to the stop for the free shuttle that was due at 10:08pm. I got on and it first went to a mall and then to a Bass Pro Shop before it returned to the Gaylord. From there, it headed downtown, arriving at 1:35pm. I knowingly missed the TEXRail train by a few minutes. The shuttle driver recommended going up in the observation tower in the Visitor Information Center (VIC) that was next to the shuttle stop and TEXRail station. So, that is what I did. The



ground floor of the VIC is a large food court. I paid \$3 and rode the elevator up 150 feet with a guide. They put my bags in a locker. The tower was four-sided and I could see Fort Worth and Dallas in the distance, had a clear view of DFW, and could see much of Grapevine including the Gaylord. Looking west:



Looking south:



Looking north:



I came back down and got my bags and walked out to the train station. It was hot and over 100 degrees. A man originally from Greece, now living in El Paso, started asking me about the train. This happens to me all over the world. I bought a senior ticket for \$1.25 and awaited the eastbound train to DFW due at 2:26pm.

There were only a few passengers on the train which arrived at DFW 10 minutes later. As we came on to the airport property I could see where the Silver Line from the Plano area will eventually join this line. Construction of the Silver Line was delayed because of COVID and should be completed in 2024.

I left the train and had to walk outside but under cover to enter the B terminal. I used the AA check-in counter there even though my flight was in A. I had been upgraded again. I checked my bags, breezed through TSA PreCheck (found no money) and took the Skylink tram to A. I exited near my gate A33 and was there at 2:56pm. I don't think I have ever gotten through a major airport so quickly. The agents at A33 were closing out a flight to Cleveland and I asked them if my flight had meal service—YES! I have been surprised by meal service on other flights after eating in the airport before the flight. I can't see this information when looking at my reservations. I went through more emails and did a few surveys for AA loyalty points.

My flight was delayed with no explanation. Instead of a 4:55pm departure, we left at 5:41pm. Once at cruising altitude, a very efficient flight attendant with 32 years of service took excellent care of the 20 passengers in the front cabin. I had a choice of beef or pasta while those who paid for the higher class were able to book other meals in advance. The meal was served on real china and included a shrimp cocktail, a small salad, plus dessert. The flight came straight in from the south

(along the Delaware River) to land at PHL. No circle trip over South Jersey this time. I never expected to make the 10:12pm bus to 30th Street. My two bags did not come until after 10:20pm. I went outside to wait for the next bus at 11:12pm. It was certainly cooler than Texas. The bus came a bit late but still I was in 30th Street Station by 11:35pm and managed to make a late 11:41pm train to Lansdale. This skips a few stops and I was in Jenkintown a few minutes after midnight. Initially I could not find my car keys, but eventually I found them in my suitcase. I was home just after 12:30am.



Cincinnati Division, MCR

N&W HC-46 ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper

Using Accurail's 2200 Series ACF 2-Bay Covered Hopper as the basis, we are offering it in a Norfolk & Western repaint scheme. These cars are N&W class HC-46 and are from an original batch of fifty built by in 1966 by ACF with the Round Herald paint scheme. Subsequently some cars went through a general maintenance program and were repainted in the block N&W livery. Photos were found showing at least three of these cars (road numbers 170753, 170768 and 170794) were reweighed at some later date because that area is "patched out" on the car with the new data displayed. Those same photos place these three cars as being in service in 1992 and 2004. It is these three, highly unique, road numbers that Cincinnati Division 7 is now offering for sale as limited edition kits.



Pricing is \$25 per car, or a 3-car set at \$70. Shipping (via USPS Priority) is \$10.40 for one car and \$17.10 for two to three cars. Ohio residents, please add 7.8% sales tax on the total price of the kits and the shipping/handling fee. Customers outside the USA, please **contact us** for shipping arrangements and charges.

To order, please send **your email and phone** information along with a **check or money order** in US dollars, payable to Cincinnati Division 7, MCR, NMRA, to:

Cincinnati Division 7 Car Projects
c/o Paul Maciulewicz
9151 Congress Court
West Chester, Ohio 45069

Contact our **Car Projects Chairperson** with any questions.

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

Railroad Prototype Modelers- Valley Forge

March 22-24, 2024

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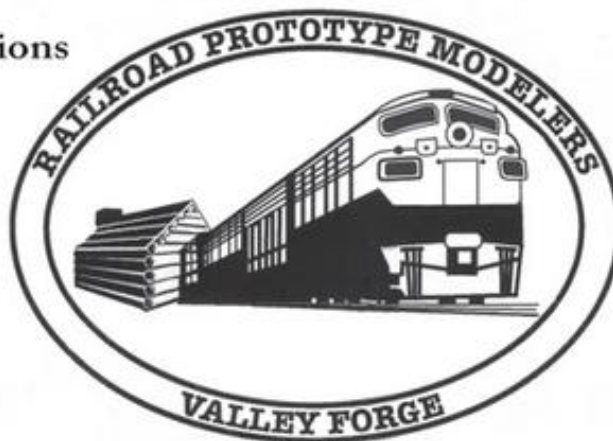
Thursday & Friday Operating Sessions

Many Clinics

Model Displays

Vendor Rooms

Sunday Home Layout Tours



For information and updates
rpmvalleyforge.com

Registrar

Steve Salotti

rpmvfregrar@gmail.com

Clinic Information

Rob Hinkle

robhink@gmail.com

Vendor Information

Drew Marshall

vendorsvfrpm@aol.com

Ops Sessions

Mark Wallace

mwallace665@verizon.net

New Jersey Division 50th Anniversary Gondola

50th Anniversary Gondola

A review of the cars. They are \$35 each, or a set of two for \$65. Car numbers are 1968 and 2018, which was the year that the New Jersey Division was founded and the year we celebrated our 50th anniversary. The model is from Tangent Models and is a superb model of a 52'6" Riveted Drop End Gondola with 70 ton trucks. The placement of the brake wheel on the side is an identifying feature of a drop end Gondola. They're ready to run and come with Kadee couplers.

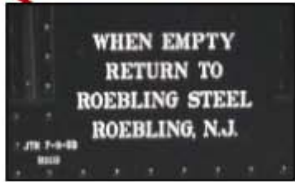
We acquired equal amounts of the two car numbers. Cash or check will consummate the deal and you'll be hauling stuff around your layout in no time!

These are excellent looking and beautifully running cars, but, a car not decorated for a prototypical railroad, they do have the look of a gondola that you might see in any train consist from the 1930's to the 1980's.

To order cars Contact Mike Prokop at njwrr@aol.com or by mail use the Order Sheet. USPS Priority Mail postage is: \$9 for one car and \$10.75 for two cars.



The Reporting Marks "NJD" for this car identify the owner as the New Jersey Division and the "X" designates a Private or Non-railroad owner.



This Stencil indicates the Gondola is in Assigned Service to Roebling Steel. It must be returned to Roebling after its load has been delivered.

The car body is black with white lettering and data conforming to the 1950s

The cost is \$35.00 for one car or a set of both numbers for \$65.00

A check made payable to the NJ Division must be included

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Telephone _____

**See Tangent website for more information
support @tangentscalemodels.com
Return this form to NJ Division NMRA;
PO Box 276, Crosswicks, NJ 08515-0276**



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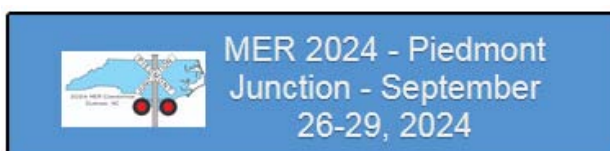
If you missed out on any of our previous events, all of the videos are saved on the NMRA YouTube channel:

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

Upcoming NMRA Conventions



Upcoming MER Conventions



2025
New Jersey Division convention TBA

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.

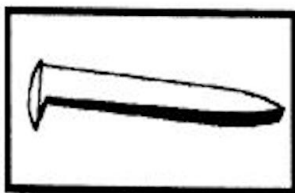
Manufacturer’s descriptions and specs:

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: _____

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