



THE PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER

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

October 2011 Volume 18, Number 5



<http://www.phillynmra.org/>

NOVEMBER JOINT DIVISION MEETING TO BE HELD IN DELAWARE...

November 12, 2011 – Meeting starts 9:00 am

We are pleased to announce the details of our Fall Division Meeting! This will be a joint meet in conjunction with the New Jersey Division.

Joint meets with our neighbors to the east typically garner over 75 members and we are also expecting the attendance of some of our newest Philadelphia Division members located in Mid and Southern Delaware.

We have once again procured the use of the Community Center at the junction of Rt. 202 and Naamans Road near Wilmington, Delaware.

We have used this venue for the past several years and find it excellent for our needs. We expect to fill all of the chairs in the center. Detailed directions are located elsewhere in this issue.

There will be two morning clinics presented for your enjoyment.

Our own Joe Bergmaier has coordinated the first clinic. Joe has put together several of our own experts in the area of soldering. Different methods of soldering (and related equipment) will be demonstrated. Val Pistilli will be discussing the use of the soldering iron and solder stations used in model railroading and electronic projects. Don Borden will be assisted by Earl Paine demonstrating resistance soldering and its uses in model railroading. Equipment will be on hand for those wanting to try things out.

The second clinic will feature The New Jersey Division's own Mike McNamara. Mike has been active building modules based on US Free-mo standards. He will present on those standards as well as the philosophy behind the concept. He will display construction methods he used and how they differ from the other HO standards. Free-mo modular standards are very popular in other parts of the US (and Europe) and are rapidly garnering increased interest on the East Coast.

The modeling contest will be replaced by a short "bring and brag" session. Volunteers (hopefully more than a few) will have the opportunity to show off their efforts on any railroad related projects in front of the group. Efforts could include models, layout plans, photos, or verbal descriptions of what you are working on. Personal connections are very important to the Division's success, and this attempt should increase our awareness of our colleagues' efforts.

The afternoon will feature open houses in conjunction with the Penna Delaware NJ Maryland open house schedule which can be accessed online at <http://www.modelrailroadopenhouse.com/>.

MID-EAST REGION NMRA CONVENTION October 27 – 30, 2011

It's not too late to plan on attending Piedmont Crossing in North Carolina. The Registrar informs us that walk-in registrations will still be possible at the Convention.

There are many fine clinics, ops sessions and open houses scheduled for your enjoyment.

Details can be found in the most recent issue of the MER Local, or by going online to the event website at <http://www.mer2011.org>

DIVISION PLANS SECOND JOINT MEET

Based on the success of last May's joint meet with the East Coast Santa Fe Modelers group, the Division has decided to repeat the joint venture in May 2012!

The combination of the two groups has allowed nationally known experts to be brought in for clinics and presentations.

This year's guest will be retired Model Railroader Editor and Santa Fe expert Andy Sperandio. Andy is well known as an expert in railroad operations (as well as many other topics) and will present on multiple topics.

Once again the Division will be contributing to the costs of this joint effort. More coverage will be forthcoming in the next Dispatcher!



Greetings everyone. Fall weather has finally descended upon us. With that welcome relief comes a look back at probably the wettest August and September in recent history.

How does that affect model railroaders? The online chatter over these wet months has centered heavily on the problems our Division members have been having with water damage to their layout areas.

A hurricane followed shortly thereafter with record tropical downfalls had many of us scurrying to the basement to check on sump pumps and battery backups in the hope that our railroads would not be damaged. The potential for power failure exacerbated the problem for most of us.

I was pleased (and lucky) that the power did not fail in my basement allowing the sump pump to run almost continuously. Had the power failed, my railroad (and everything else in the basement) would have been a total loss. My battery backup pump would have been useless with that much water coming in. I do not own a generator... (yet).

Others in the area were not so lucky. Cleaning up and drying out railroad basement areas and repairing layout damage was necessary for many of us. Carpet removal, dehumidification, removing wet boxes from beneath layouts and drying out layout legs that had wicked up water were widespread tasks.

How can we prevent this from happening again? How can we protect our railroad investments in both time and money?

We can hopefully learn from each other. The Dispatcher is interested in covering different local methods of layout protection schemes. How have you planned for the next storm? Battery backups and water-powered backups are often not the answer.... most don't move enough water when the going gets tough. Is an emergency generator the answer? ... and at what cost?

Do you have insurance for failed sump pumps? Will this cover "overwhelmed but working" pumps? Do you have national flood insurance?

Let the Dispatcher know how you have handled this potential dilemma. Which systems work the best? What are the maintenance issues? How many gallons per hour does your system need to move? Do you have French drains in the layout room? What other innovative ideas might be out there?

An article may be forthcoming on these issues if enough feedback is received on this. I certainly feel it is a topic worth covering.

From the Division Superintendent



Other than this small column, I haven't written an article for publication since I co-authored some scientific articles for journal publication in the '70s. For years, I've been making excuses: no time, no subject that I find interesting, no subject that others would find interesting, etc, etc. But, just do something a little out of the ordinary and the questions come to you rapid fire.

Such was the case with my backdrop article found elsewhere in this newsletter. I had taken pictures along the way and emailed a few out to friends. The next thing I knew, the article was half-written in a series of emails explaining the pictures. It really doesn't take too much time to write an article if you are describing how to construct something.

How about you? Done something interesting that you can share? It's easy!

Greg Shindledecker

ONLINE EDITION OF DISPATCHER CONTAINS 11 ADDITIONAL PAGES

THE PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER

Official publication of the
Philadelphia Division,
National Model Railroad Association
<http://www.phillynmra.org>

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

Next issue: Dec. '11. Due out approx. Dec 18. Deadline: Nov 30.

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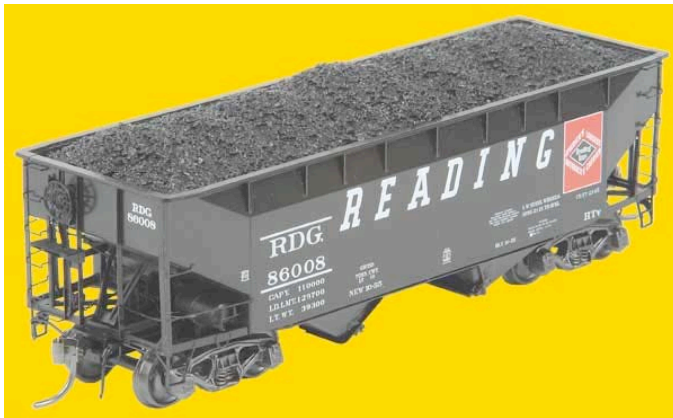
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The Philadelphia Division has embarked on its next car project. MMR Dave Messer and his group have once again selected a car that was often seen in the local area.

Based on the popularity of the Sunoco tank car project, this project is once again a ready-to-run car.

Due to production problems in China, the Division has contracted with Kadec, which manufactures in the USA and has an excellent reputation for detail and prototype fidelity.

The next Dispatcher will contain pricing and ordering info, as well as delivery dates. Stay tuned.

DIVISION SHIRTS TO BE AVAILABLE SOON

At the request of the Board, Division Webmaster Val Pistilli has been researching the design and production of a Division shirt.

Many Divisions across the country regularly wear a custom designed shirt or jacket to meets, round robins, layout visits and similar gatherings. The wearing of this type of apparel is not only appropriate, but advertises the Division to the public!

Val has presented a pull over design with a collar and a pocket, which will have our Division logo (not the new NMRA logo) embroidered into the fabric. Custom naming will be available at an additional cost.

The Board is finalizing color selection, pricing and other details and is also preparing order forms. The next Dispatcher will have more detailed info.

Editors Note:

It is usually my job to make necessary edits in submitted articles to fit the Dispatcher's layout (both on-line and in print). Deciding what to cut or re-write is sometimes a tough job!

This month's article, however, by outgoing Super Greg Shindledecker about his experiences with aluminum backdrops, was so well written and photographed that it stands unedited!

Using on-line space for longer articles with multiple photographs (such as Greg and Angel's) is a plus.

Nice job Shindledeckers! I hope that more submissions are forthcoming as you move forward.

DIVISION ELECTION RESULTS

At the September Division Meet the 2011 election was finalized. After ballots were counted it was announced that the winners for the 4 open Board seats were: John Seibert, Brian Good, Greg Shindledecker and Howard Kaplin.

A welcome is in order to Howard who is new to the Board!

The Division by-laws limit a member serving in the same position to 2 terms. As a result the Board reorganized at their October Meeting with the following results:

Voting Board Members

Superintendent – John Seibert

Asst. Superintendent – Joe Bergmaier

Clerk – Mark Wallace

Treasurer – Howard Kaplin

Member-at-large – Greg Shindledecker

Member-at-large – Pat McTeigue

Member-at-large – Brian Good

Non-Voting Committee Chairs

Dave Messer – AP Chair

Earl Paine – Dispatcher Editor

Rich Newmiller – Asst. AP Chair

Val Pistilli – Webmaster

The Board thanked outgoing Superintendent Greg Shindledecker for two terms of excellent leadership. Greg still remains on the Board as an at large voting member.

Lukens Steel September Meet Report

by Mark Wallace – Clerk

We returned to the Lukens Steel Museum in Coatesville, PA for our recent meet held on Saturday, Sept. 17, 2011 from 9 AM until noon. The meet featured three clinics plus the election results for the Board of Directors.



Mike Rabbit presented the first clinic on the steel industry and specifically on the sintering process in the manufacturing of steel. Featuring

photos and diagrams of the process Mike described a prominent but railroad dependent industry that can make a good layout feature.



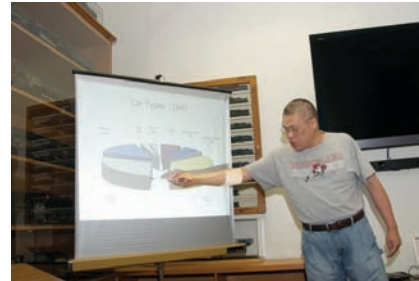
Gene D'Orio gave a talk on Greystone society who administers the Lukens Steel Museum. Gene described the Society's recent project coinciding

with the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 events; the acquisition of one of the compound steel columns or 'Trees' that formed part of the steel structure that formed the first floor base of the lost World Trade Towers. Since much of the steel used in those buildings was fabricated at Lukens Steel, this structural steel 'Tree' column will be exhibited in a future memorial setting on the Museum grounds.

Our Assistant Superintendent Joe Bergmaier announced the results of the Division's Board of Director's elections with Brian Good, Greg

receiving the most votes. There were five candidates standing for four positions. A gracious 'Thanks' to our fifth candidate, Charles Butsch for agreeing to run. The Board will decide on the officers at its' next meeting in October. For those interested or thinking of running for election to the Board, the terms are for two years with 3 openings in even numbered years and 4 openings in odd numbered years. Please contact any of the Board members or officers if you're interested!

Finally Ben Hom capped off the morning with his clinic on developing a model boxcar fleet. He



discussed and showed various boxcar types depending on the era being modeled as well as a geographic breakdown and distribution of

boxcars that would look 'prototypical' on a model railroad. Ben gave some tips on breaking up the 'Sea of Athearn' cars typical to many of our layouts. Ben is looking forward to joining us again at the upcoming Valley Forge RPM in March 2012.

Open House Tours: Normally division members will open and invite us to visit their layouts. The Saturday afternoon featured layouts were; Bill Blackburn Jr's HO-'PRR Great Valley Division,' Jim Hart's HO & Hon3 – 'Lima Wawa and Concordville,' and the St. Alban's Railroad Fellowship (St. A.R.R.) club in Newtown Square. We appreciate and enjoyed the opportunity of visiting, railfanning and seeing some of the great efforts fellow members have put into their layouts.

A gracious 'Thank You' to the Greystone Society and the Lukens Steel Museum for providing a venue for our meet as well as to our presenters; Mike, Gene and Ben for their efforts. We also thank the hosts for the afternoon layout tour for allowing us the opportunity to visit them and their layouts. Again we thank Charles Butsch for offering to run for election and to all the Division members who made the effort to cast their ballots. I also especially thank Board member Earl Paine who is stepping down but has generously consented to continue as editor of the 'Dispatcher.'

Finally we thank all of the Members of the Division for coming out to our event. Next month we'll be in Wilmington Delaware with the New Jersey Division for a joint meet featuring some great clinics, layouts and good fellowship. There are more details elsewhere in this issue. See you then!



Shindlecker, John Seibert and Howard Kaplan

A Not-so-Short History of Railroad Prototype Modelers-Valley Forge

In March of 2003, a number of model railroaders from the Philadelphia area were attending Railroad Prototype Modelers East in Monroeville, PA. In a conversation (polite term), Dick Flock, one of the organizers of RPM East suggested that “the guys from Philly” should run an RPM meet in the Philadelphia area, alternating years with their meet. Bill Schaumberg, of RMC fame, who was a part of the conversation, quickly chimed in that we should do so. The seed had been planted.

In a van on the way home from Monroeville were Paul Backenstose, Jim Dalberg, Dick Foley, the late Bud Kaiser, and Ken McCorry. Long before reaching Harrisburg, we decided to give it a try. As per Dick Flock’s suggestion, we decided to seek sponsorship from the Philadelphia Division, MER, NMRA. This sponsorship would provide three benefits: credibility, NMRA insurance, and a source of seed money. Since several officers of the Division were in the van, approval was obtained. Because there is no national organization for RPM, no approval was necessary from anyone. We decided to invite three more people to join our Committee: Andy Hart, Val Pistelli, and Steve Salotti. All agreed to do so.

The next thing we needed was a facility at which to hold RPM-Valley Forge. Steve had lots of experience dealing with hotels from working on numerous MER Conventions. Steve and Paul talked to many people and visited their facilities. It became obvious that the Desmond Great Valley Hotel and Conference Center was clearly the best facility available, so a contract was negotiated with the Desmond for March 25-27, 2004.

Flyers were distributed, notices placed in many publications and various Internet discussion groups, and we sat back and waited (and waited and waited) for registrations to come in. As March got closer, trepidation set in. What if we don’t get enough registrations to cover expenses?

What if we lose the Division’s seed money? If we were still short money, would the Committee members have to make up the difference? Well, all the worry was for nothing. The meet was a huge success, with 174 attendees, 28 different clinicians, 13 vendors, and over 300 models on display. The seed money was returned to the Division, along with a sizeable donation.

Did we want to run another meet in 2006? Absolutely! We checked around again, but no facility



Figure 1 - The RPM Valley Forge Brain Trust!

even came close to the Desmond. After each meet, a decision was made to hold another Meet in two years, although many attendees thought that we should hold Railroad Prototype Modelers-Valley Forge every year.

Attendance continues to increase at each meet, with 250 people attending in 2010, a year that saw operating sessions on several home and club layouts available before the start of the actual Meet. Fred Alston agreed to join the Committee after several years of pitching in and helping.

We hope that you decide to join us on March 23 to 25, 2012 for a great weekend of model railroading activities. Hopefully you’ll discover what fellow model railroaders from Maine to Illinois have already learned---this is a great event to meet new friends, learn new things, and to go home inspired to put what you learned to use in your own modeling efforts.

**Railroad Prototype Modelers
Valley Forge**
Sponsored by Philadelphia Division, MER, NMRA
March 23-25, 2012
at the
Desmond Great Valley Hotel & Conference Center
Malvern, PA

**Clinics
Model Displays
Vendors' Room
Sunday Home Layout Tour
Operating Sessions**

INFORMATION AND UPDATES
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103 West Uwchlan Avenue
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VENDOR INFORMATION
Steve Salotti
610-489-1940 or Salotti.Steve@gmail.com

When we designed our layout as an island-style rather than around the walls, we immediately realized that some compromises would have to be made. One compromise was in the curve radii: they would need to be tighter. We also quickly discovered that the same was true with the backdrop. As shown in **Figure 1**, the layout is divided for its entire length – about 125 feet - by a backdrop so that it has two distinct sides. To allow for widened areas where industries or other scenic elements needed extra room, the width of the layout



bench work was not divided evenly or consistently (see **Figure 2**). This meant that we needed a much more flexible backdrop than standard tempered hardboard or other commonly used backdrop materials could yield.

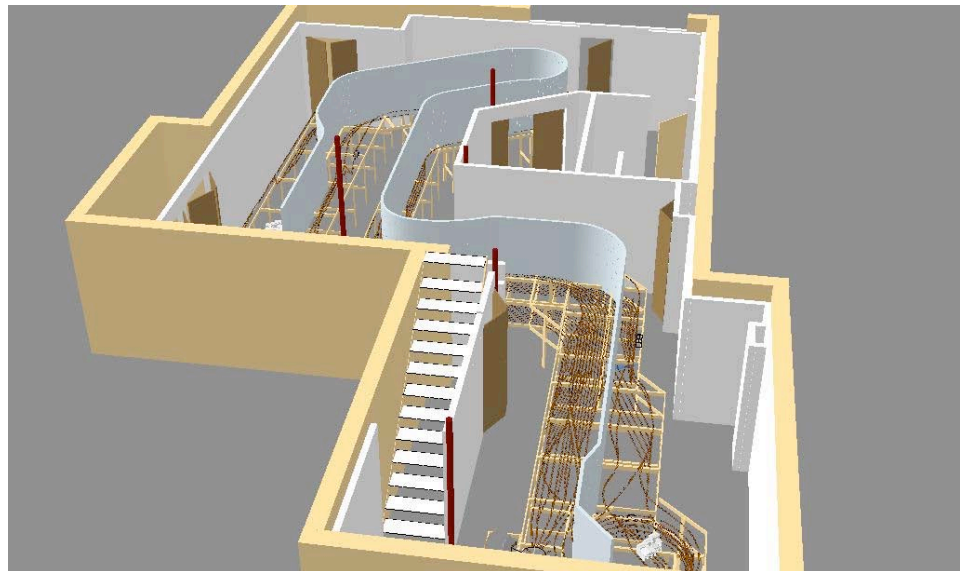
Knowing that eventually we would need to solve this problem, an article from the October, 2006 Scale Rails by Ken Chick called “Seamless Aluminum Backdrop” was originally saved and now utilized. This seemed to be the perfect solution. In his article, Ken described hanging aluminum trim coil, readily available from the hardware store, from a vinyl J-channel to use as a backdrop. Since the aluminum

Figure 1 - Approximate location of backdrop on layout

was thin, it essentially curves as tightly as you wish. His article certainly gives all the details for doing this work, so it will not be duplicated here. The main focus in this article will be to share how we adapted his method to our railroad and possibly provide a bit more detail in the construction steps.

Backdrop supports

One of our goals was not to consume valuable layout space with the backdrop. It needed to be double-sided, with the supports somewhere around the middle of the bench work. We initially planned to use 2 x 4's, but we worried about giving up the real estate. Since the aluminum backdrop was not to be used for supporting any scenery material, the structure only needed to support itself.



We began by screwing 1 inch x 3 inch uprights into the layout bench work to support the J-channel. Being short on carpentry skills, the uprights were positioned so that simple wooden blocks or framing members would supply the needed spacing if the upright was not near a bench work joist (**Figure 3**).

Continued in online section On-line pages 3 - 4 - 5 -6 -7 -8 and 9

November Meet Directions

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).

GATSME Model Railroad Club Annual Open House.

1,800 square feet of HO model railroad in both standard and narrow gauges. Located in the old Fort Washington Elementary School, Prospect and Madison Avenues, Fort Washington, Pennsylvania 19034

Open House dates are: Dec 3 & 4, 2011; Jan 7 & 8, 2012; Jan 21 & 22, 2012; and Mar 3 & 4, 2012. Hours are: 12 Noon to 4 PM each day. Everyone is welcome - bring your friends and family. Donations appreciated. In case of inclement weather check our club's web site or call us during show hours.

Club phone number: 215-646-2033 Web site: www.gatsme.org

Cheltenham Hills Model Railroad Club (as well as many other Club display dates) are listed in the online section of this issue. In addition, the well-known “green sheet” listing club activities in the area is posted on-line page 11.

Planning Ahead ---- Division Meeting Schedules

The Philadelphia division is pleased to offer the following activity dates for your planning. If you have an item you would like included, please contact the editor. They will be included on a first come, first served space available basis.

November 12, 2011 – Division Meet Wilmington Town Center, DE Joint meet with New Jersey Div. Information and direction in this issue	January 14, 2011 – Division Meet Haddon Twp, NJ. Joint meet with the New Jersey Division More information in next Dispatcher	March 23-24-25, 2012 – Valley Forge RPM Meet Desmond Hotel, Great Valley, PA Additional Coverage to appear in subsequent Dispatchers.
May 2012 – Division Meet 1 st or 2 nd weekend in May - TBA Delaware Valley College A repeat of the Joint meet with the East Coast Santa Fe Modelers	September 2012 – Division Meet Montgomery County Date and times TBA	The Dispatcher will be happy to display hobby related dates submitted by members

This Issue’s on-line content ...

- NMRA National News
- Photos from September Lukens Meet
- The Club Open house listing (yearly green sheet)
- 5 additional pages of content

MANY PRINTED SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE EXPIRING – SEND \$7 YEARLY TO CLERK TO CONTINUE

The Philadelphia Dispatcher

Official publication of the Philadelphia Division
of the National Model Railroad Association

4325 Wendy Way
Schwenksville, PA 19473

Inside:

History of our RPM

Metal backdrop on the WM

RPM initial coverage

Division Board News

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

Discounts for Division Members at Local Hobby Shops

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

Iron Horse Hobby Shop

60 S. 6th St. in Reading

10% discount with \$10 min purchase

Herb's Hobbies and Crafts

200 W. State St. in Doylestown

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

Bussinger Trains

Old Ambler Station, Ambler

10-12% off retail

Nicholas Smith Trains

2343 West Chester Pike (3) in Broomall

10% discount (excludes O & G items)

Lin's Junction

128 South Line St.

Lansdale, PA 194446

5% in addition to already discounted prices

VIEW THE DISPATCHER ONLINE !! ADDITIONAL PHOTOS, NATIONAL NMRA REPORTS AND

This year's Sacramento convention attendance topped the 2,000 mark -- the continuation of an upward attendance trend. The folks at the NMRA Membership Booth at the National Train Show signed up 243 new members in three days! Many of the clinicians at the Sacramento convention have uploaded their handouts or full presentations as PDF files to the x2011 website at www.x2011west.org. Anyone can download them. Just look for the Clinics tab, then Clinic Handouts. Based on two big proposals for the 2015 National NMRA Convention, the Board of Directors selected Portland, Ore. as the winner. Details and exact timing of the convention will be announced in the coming months.

The "Carpet Cutting" at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento marked the official start of fundraising for a scale model railroading exhibit in the museum's Gallery area. No NMRA dues or regular revenue streams will be used to fund this project, so its construction will rely entirely on donations. For more details about the Gallery Exhibit, see the article in the May 2011 issue of NMRA Magazine.

The Board continues to review the timing of all future conventions. While a mid-summer date has been traditional because of lower hotel and convention center rates over the July 4 weekend, many NMRA members have voiced the concern that it conflicts with family functions. Constructive suggestions may be directed to the Convention Committee, headed by Pacific Director Peter Jensen.

Registration for Grand Rails 2012 is well underway. Members can visit the website at <http://www.gr2012.org> and either register online or download a mail-in form. Non-members can also sign up at that time. Note that currently registration only covers the costs of attending the convention. Furniture City Flyers Club members will receive the complete list of tours, activities, and merchandise in December, followed by advance registrants, then all other members.

The Howell Day Museum is planning a new release of its extremely popular Commemorative Car #3 -- the Gorre and Daphetid bobber cabooses -- except this run will feature two new road numbers, #3 and #5. As you may know, John Allen was very fond of these cabooses and ran a fleet of them on his G&D railroad. Pricing will be \$19.95 for one car, or \$34.95 for the set of two. Watch for the announcement of their availability at www.nmra.org, or keep your eyes open for the ad which will appear in NMRA Magazine.

AUGUST NMRA NEWS

- Jim Zinser, MMR, and Fred Bock, MMR, have asked me to run this item again: If your Region or Division gives **adult or family classes on model railroading**, Fred Bock, the NMRA's Education Department Assistant Manager, is looking for ideas. Whether your program runs as a one-day seminar or multi-week course, Fred would like to know what your program is about and is looking for lesson plans or other course material. Please email Fred at fbockLSRDiv6@aol.com. Use "Adult Education" as the subject of the email.
- The dust has barely settled from the Sacramento convention, when the folks in Grand Rapids are revving up for next year's get-together. In fact, **registration for Grand Rails 2012 is well underway**. Members can visit the website at www.gr2012.org and either register online or download a mail-in form. Non-members can also sign up at that time. Note that currently registration only covers the costs of attending the convention. Furniture City Flyers Club members will receive the complete list of tours, activities, and merchandise in December, followed by advance registrants, then all other members.
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Again, many of the clinicians at the Sacramento convention have **uploaded their handouts or full presentations** as PDF files to the x2011 website at www.x2011west.org. Anyone can download them. Just look for the Clinics tab, then Clinic Handouts.

In case you missed it last month, the Board of Directors selected **Portland, Ore. as the site of the 2014 National Convention**. Details and exact timing of the convention will be announced in the coming months. For a complete summary of the Board of Directors meeting, visit the homepage of our website at www.nmra.org in the next few weeks. The report will also be published in *NMRA Magazine* in the future.

The NMRA's been rather quiet lately, but we still have some September news:

- The Howell Day Museum is issuing a new release of its highly successful **Gorre and Daphetid bobber cabooses**. Two new bobbers, numbered 3 and 5, are available from Headquarters immediately. A single car is US\$19.95 + \$4 shipping and handling, and the set of two is US\$34.95 + \$4 shipping and handling. The new cars are available in HO scale only, and are ready to run. They feature operating magnetic knuckle couplers and free-rolling metal wheels. Watch for the ad running in *NMRA Magazine*. To order, call HQ at 423-892-2846.
- **Registrations for Grand Rails 2012**, next year's national convention in Grand Rapids, Mich., are taking off. Half of the available Furniture City Flyers Club memberships are already sold. Details about this club can be found on the convention's website at www.gr2012.org. In addition almost 90 clinic slots have been filled, with topics ranging from geared locomotives to timetable/train order operation. If one of your members is interested in presenting a clinic, have them fill out an application form on the website. They're especially looking forward to clinics covering prototype modeling and operations.
- One more convention note: there has been a change in the visitation procedure for Bruce and Janet Chubb's Sunset Valley Oregon System. The **SVOS will now be open a portion of every day** from Sunday, July 29, through Saturday August 4, for **self-guided tours**. Special commemorative tickets will be available each day exclusively for the SVOS, so attendees can choose to visit any time during any open day.
- And a repeat announcement: if your Region or Division gives **adult or family classes on model railroading**, Fred Bock, the NMRA's Education Department Assistant Manager, is looking for ideas. Whether your program runs as a one-day seminar or multi-week course, Fred would like to know what your program is about and is looking for lesson plans or other course material. Please email Fred at fbockLSRDiv6@aol.com. Use "Adult Education" as the subject of the email.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the above, please send them directly to a Director or officer. You'll find those addresses at www.nmra.org or in NMRA Magazine.

Introducing the best deal in model railroading.

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Sign me up!

Fill out this form and include your payment. U.S.: Send \$9.95 (U.S.) to NMRA-Rail Pass Membership, 4121 Cromwell Road, Chattanooga, TN 37421-2119. Canada: Send \$9.95 (Cdn) to NMRA-Canadian Rail Pass Membership, 69 Schroder Cres., Guelph, ON N1E 7B4, Canada.

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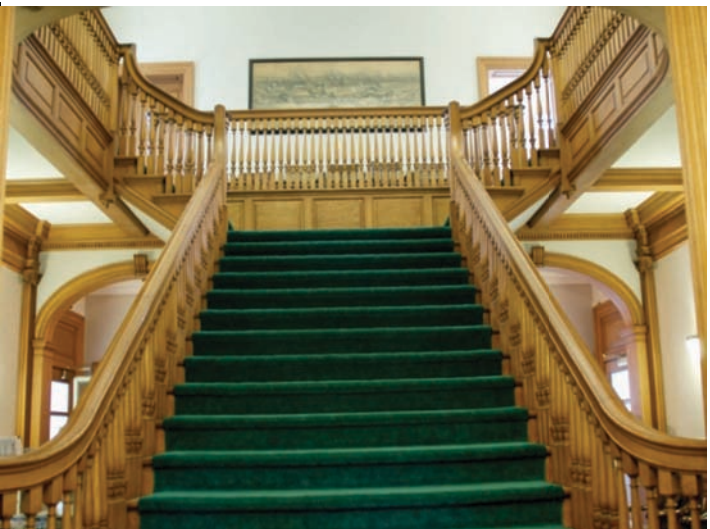
*Rail Pass offer is for new members and those who have not been NMRA members for two years or more. Individuals can join at Rail Pass rates only once; membership renewal will be at the regular membership rate. Rail Pass members can attend conventions and participate in contests, but cannot vote or hold office and will not receive a New Member Pak.

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Using a level, each upright was positioned vertically then screwed into the bench work frame with a minimum of 2 drywall screws for stability. The height was set at 25 inches – 24 inches for the backdrop trim coil and an additional inch to raise the backdrop above the ½ inch plywood / 1.2 inch Homasote® sandwich for flat areas.



Figure 1 - Backdrop supports

J-channel Installation

J-channel is used to support the upper edge of the aluminum. This vinyl building material is available in some big-box home improvement centers, but we had to special order because it was the middle of winter and none was in stock. This also allowed us to order it in a blue color. It doesn't match our final sky blue color, but is better than a stark white.

Being vinyl, the J-channel bends to a certain degree. What we had not counted on were two issues caused by the bending: 1) the tighter you bend the J-channel, the tighter (thinner) the slot used to insert the aluminum becomes and 2) bending the J-channel increases sideways pressure on the support uprights. Were we to do this a second time, we would use 2 x 4's to combat issue #2. The result is shown in **Figure 4**.



Figure 2 - J-channel installed – remember to keep the J-channel level as you attach it to the uprights

Since the backdrop was curved in so many places and the supports were rectangular, this caused a real problem when mounting the channel. Following the advice of a long-time model railroad buddy, we utilized wood dowels as extra support to help in areas where a smooth, rounded edge was required.

Where the backdrop crosses a bench work joist at an angle, the dowel replaces a 1" x 3" and allows attachments at other than 90 degree angles (**Figures 5 and 6**).



Figure 5



Figure 6 - Dowel screwed to an original support to provide a smooth, rounded edge for a variable angle

In curved areas where the rectangular nature of the upright would not allow the J-channel to be screwed securely, we also utilized dowels as spacers. See **Figure 7**.



Figure 7 - Using dowels as spacers to securely fasten J-channel

Installing the Aluminum Trim Coil

The aluminum backdrop material started life as a standard building material called trim coil (**Figure 8**). It can be found in both aluminum and steel, painted and unpainted. It is also sold in varying lengths and heights up to 50 feet long and 2 feet high. We chose 50 x 2 since this allowed a reasonable height and resulted in only 4 joints for a 250 foot run!



Figure 8- Roll of pre-painted (primer) aluminum trim coil

We began the installation by using special pliers that punched the top of the metal and created a locking tab. We purchased a Malco SL5 Vinyl and Aluminum Snap Lock Punch from Amazon for \$18.24 (see **Figure 9**). Caution: when dealing with the very sharp metal, gloves

(**Figure 10**) are a must!

The tab locks the trim coil securely into the J-channel. Note that because the coil is not screwed into the support, this allows the aluminum to move slightly, helping with expansion and contraction issues. We punched each roll at about 6 – 8 inch intervals prior to installation (**Figure 11**)



Figure 9 - Snap Lock Punch

Figure 10 - Punching tabs into the trim coil – notice the gloves used for safety's sake



Figure 11 - Close-up of the locking tabs

When rolling out and installing the trim coil, care must be taken to keep the aluminum from kinking. Two people are a must! Unroll the coil to allow it to straighten and then insert the tabs into the J-channel slot. This part goes very quickly (**Figure 12**). The hardest part is the curves. When the J-channel is curved, the slot is compressed. This makes it harder to push the punched sheet metal up and into its interlocked

position. We used a putty knife to catch the bottom edge of the tabs and then work it up and into the slot. Be careful not to scratch the primer from the metal. If you keep the material rolled, there is much less tendency to kink the metal as you can play it out evenly as you progress.

Figure 1- Installing the trim coil



Figure 122- Installing the trim coil

screw with a washer for this fastening.

Bending around sharp corners is not extremely difficult, but take care to bend the metal evenly. It helps to use a rounded surface (dowel or pipe) on sharp, rounded corners. We did not do this, and the rounded corner was not as even as it could have been. Refer to **Figure 16** for where the aluminum is wrapped around a very small radius.

To secure the bottom, we needed something to allow movement of the backdrop similar to the top. We chose to use a fitting for holding screens or mirrors securely (**Figure 13**). This works well and will be eventually hidden by scenery. Since the bottom clips are not used for support, these can be spaced out at intervals as wide as 2 feet. We could have also used a



Figure 13 - Fastener to hold the bottom of the backdrop

Make sure to start and end each section of trim coil over top of a support. Since the ends will need to be secured with staples or screws. I overlapped the ends slightly and then stapled them together and to the upright support board. Prior to painting, we used the time-honored tradition of taping the joints and spackling them with vinyl-based compound to minimize cracking (**Figure 14**). A good friend helped in the spackling and sanding process and created joints that were invisible.



Figure 14 - Joint smoothing in process

Finished Backdrop

As **Figures 15 and 16** show, this method allowed us to design a free-flowing backdrop using simple materials and little cutting and joining.

We painted the backdrop with a sky-blue latex paint, using a retarder to keep it from drying too quickly. While the blue was still wet, we used a brush to blend ceiling white paint from the bottom of the backdrop up to 1/3 to 1/2 or its height. This established a lighter horizon. The effect is subtle and doesn't show extremely well in these pictures, but it looks great in person! The effect on the overall look of the layout is astonishing. Standing in one spot, you can no longer see the entire layout. It feels much bigger and more isolated than prior to the backdrop construction.



**Figure 15 - View
block offered by the
addition of the
backdrop**

New Membership Recruitment Program

As an aid to membership recruitment, NMRA recently instituted a six month "Railpass" trial membership program which costs the applicant \$9.95. Building on this idea, the MER is instituting a program whereby it will pay the \$9.95 Railpass fee for interested applicants in the MER. In other words, we are making available FREE six month Railpass trial memberships to encourage recruitment of regular members.

What's covered?

Same as Railpass—receive six issues of NMRA Magazine, three issues of The Local, eligibility to attend conventions and meets, eligibility to participate in contests.

What's not covered?

Same as Railpass—applicants cannot vote or hold office, and will not receive the New Member Pak from national (it's rather expensive).

Who can be recruited?

Anyone living within the MER who has not been a member of NMRA during the past two years.

How will the recruitment process work?

(1) The prospective member fills out the MER trial membership application form which was sent to all division superintendents (not the standard NMRA Railpass form) (2) The "recruiter" should also sign the form, and then forward it to: Fred Miller, MER Business Manager, 333 W. Trade St, Unit #2504, Charlotte, NC 28202-1961. (3) Fred will record the information he needs in his data base, and will forward the application to the MER Treasurer. (4) The Treasurer will add the necessary check and forward the application and check to the national headquarters in Chattanooga.

What happens after the member's six month trial period?

The Railpass trial member will receive a standard dues notice from national headquarters. We hope a substantial number of Railpass trial members will sign up to become regular members.

Are there limits on the program?

The MER initially allocated \$2,000 for this program. The Board recently allocated an additional \$1,000 to extend the program to the end of 2010, or when the funds are spent – whichever comes first. When and if we approach either limit, Division Superintendents and members of the MER Board of Directors will be notified. At that time, the program will be evaluated by the MER Board of Directors. If successful, we will try to continue it.

For questions?

Contact Fred Miller, MER Business Manager (mailing address is above, 704-332-1753, tractionfan@aol.com), or John Janosko, MER President (see contact information on page 2). □

National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Mid-Eastern Region Application for Free "Railpass" Trial Membership

YES, please sign me up for a free six month Railpass trial membership in the NMRA—which includes membership in the Mid-Eastern Region, and in my local Division. During this six month period, I understand that I may attend conventions and meets, and participate in contests. I will receive NMRA Magazine, the monthly national magazine, and The Local, the bi-monthly regional newsletter. I will not be eligible to vote, hold office, or receive a New Member Pak.

I also understand that the \$9.95 cost of this six month Railpass trial membership is being paid by the Mid-Eastern Region. (Regardless of who pays, six month \$9.95 memberships are available only once to each person.)

At the end of the six months, I may join NMRA, paying the regular active member dues. During the past two years, I have not been a member of NMRA.

===== Name: Street Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone: ()

Email:

Scale(s): Date of Birth:

Signature of Applicant:

Signature of Sponsor: (Required) (A Regional or Divisional officer or board member)

=====

Date of form: 1/31/07

When this form is completed, mail it to:

Fred Miller, MMR MER Business Manager 333 W. Trade St, Unit #2504 Charlotte, NC 28202-1961

Do not mail it directly to MMRA headquarters in Chattanooga, TN.

Model Railroad Shows

November 2011-March 2012

		Abington Lines Model Railroad Club	Burlington County Model Railroad Club	Coopersburg Area Society of Model Engineers (CASME)	Cheiten Hills Model Railroad Club	GATSMIE Model Railroad Club	Keystone N-Trak	Logan Model Engineers	Royersford Modular Model Railroaders	Schuylkill Valley Model Railroad Club	Saint Alban's Railroad Fellowship (StARR)	Black Diamond Society of Model Engineers (BDSME)
Sat	11/12/11										1-4pm	
Sun	11/13/11										1-4pm	
Fri	11/25/11											7-9pm
Sat	11/26/11		12-5pm		12-4pm			12-5pm		1-5pm		2-5pm
Sun	11/27/11		12-5pm		12-4pm			12-5pm		1-5pm		2-5pm
Sat	12/03/11	12-4pm	12-5pm	12-5pm		12-4pm		12-5pm		1-5pm		2-5pm
Sun	12/04/11	12-4pm	12-5pm	12-5pm		12-4pm		12-5pm		1-5pm		2-5pm
Sat	12/10/11	12-4pm		12-5pm								
Sun	12/11/11	12-4pm		12-5pm								
Tue	12/27/11										7-9:30pm	
Thu	12/29/11											
Sat	01/07/12	12-4pm	12-5pm	12-5pm	12-4pm	12-4pm		12-5pm		1-5pm	1-4pm	2-5pm
Sun	01/08/12	12-4pm	12-5pm	12-5pm	12-4pm	12-4pm		12-5pm		1-5pm	1-4pm	2-5pm
Sat	01/14/12	12-4pm		12-5pm				12-5pm	12-4pm	1-5pm		
Sun	01/15/12	12-4pm		12-5pm				12-5pm	12-4pm	1-5pm		
Tue	01/17/12								7-9pm			
Sat	01/21/12	12-4pm	12-5pm		12-4pm	12-4pm		12-5pm	12-4pm	1-5pm	1-4pm	
Sun	01/22/12	12-4pm	12-5pm		12-4pm	12-4pm		12-5pm	12-4pm	1-5pm	1-4pm	
Sat	01/28/12						12-5pm					
Sun	01/29/12						12-5pm					
Sat	02/04/12	12-4pm			12-4pm						1-4pm	
Sun	02/05/12	12-4pm			12-4pm						1-4pm	
Sat	02/11/12		12-5pm									
Sun	02/12/12		12-5pm									
Sat	02/18/12	12-4pm	12-5pm								1-4pm	
Sun	02/19/12	12-4pm	12-5pm								1-4pm	
Sat	03/04/12					12-4pm						
Sun	03/05/12					12-4pm						
Sat	03/25/12								10am-4pm			
Sun	03/26/12								10am-4pm			
									Note hours vary for each day. Locations vary also.			