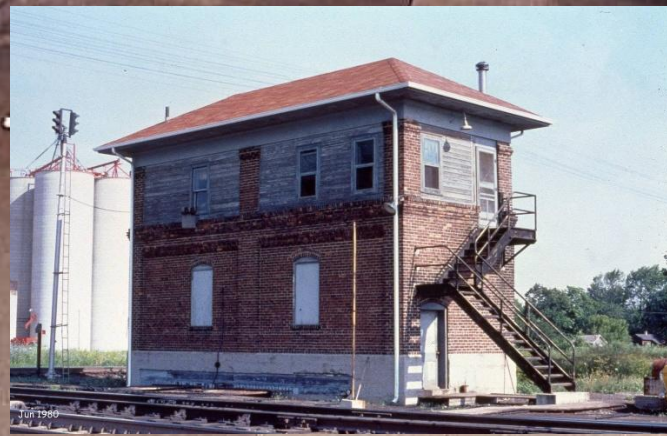
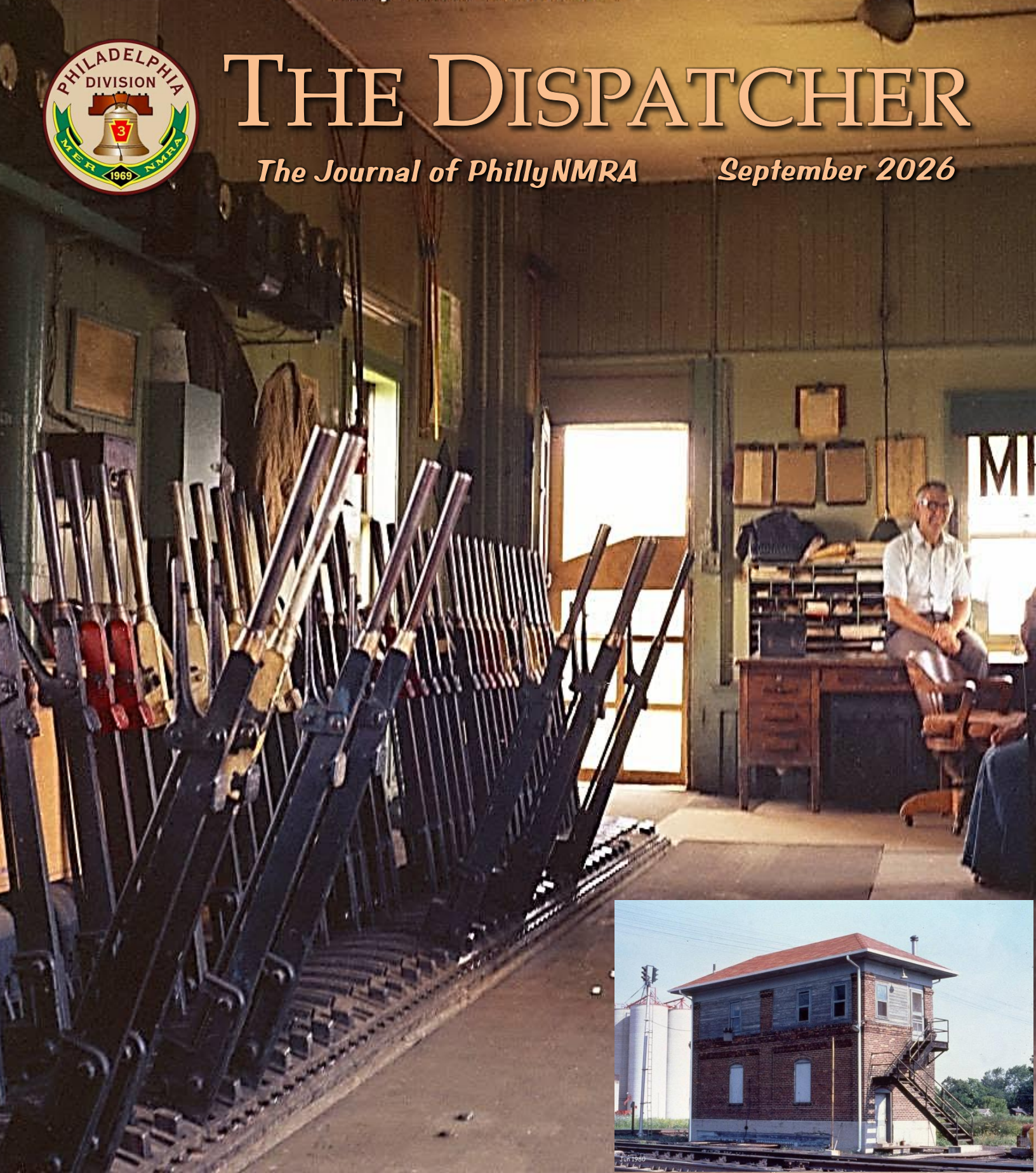




THE DISPATCHER

The Journal of PhillyNMRA

September 2026



The Baltimore & Ohio's HM Tower in Hamler, Ohio, which guarded the crossing of the Detroit, Toledo & Ironton. Removed from service in the 1980s and demolished in the 1990s. Pictured is operator Marv Baden. Photo by Wally Mattes, June 13, 1974.



THE DISPATCH

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



September 2026

PhillyNMRA.org

Volume 33, No. 5

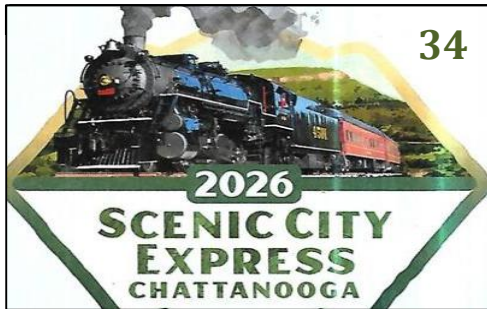
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ONLINE NAVIGATION: Click on any page to be taken there. Click on any footer to return here.



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Smoke Bush Trees



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2026 SCENIC CITY EXPRESS CHATTANOOGA

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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.

Next Issue: October 2026. Due out approximately October 15. Deadline for submissions: October 1.

Online Subscription: Free. Make sure the clerk has your current email address and that you keep your info updated at nmra.org/members.

Print version: Print subscriptions are no longer available. A mailed summary of upcoming events is available on request.

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From the Super's Desk

Welcome to the fall season all you model railroaders!

September 26, 2026, we'll be at StARR located in Newtown Square, PA. Our lunch will be provided by the division. Afterward, this venue will allow members to operate the club layout. For anyone wishing to learn about operations, this meet will be for you. Club members will assist both the inexperienced and seasoned.

The Fall MER convention is slated to be held on October 16, 17, and 18. This year's location will be Virginia Beach, Virginia. There will be the usual clinics, layout tours, and lots of camaraderie. Models will be evaluated in the celebration room. There will be a culmination of the weekend with a banquet Saturday night which will include the announcement of the winners participating. Registration is still open. I would encourage you to attend this convention.

Finishing out this calendar year on November 7, our last meet of the season will be held in North Wilmington, DE. It will be a joint meet with our friends from New Jersey.

November is also model railroad open house season. Venture out and enjoy seeing these great layouts.

Changing subjects, John Young's letter printed in the May 2026 *NMRA Magazine* has tongues wagging. The big question on everybody's mind is defining our mission in the 21st century. We hear a thousand different people say a thousand different things. There will be a lot more decided as time goes on. The main goal of the change is to have all divisions doing the same thing. There are some lacking and some meeting the goals of the national board. My opinion is there should be free membership to all those under the age of 18 as the cost of model railroading is beyond most youngsters. I also believe this program should be evaluated every two years instead of ten. At a shorter interval changes can be made as deemed appropriate.

On a sad note, Bill Fagan passed away recently. Bill was a consummate volunteer. He served on the board and continued afterward as layout coordinator. He purchased the pretzels for each meet and was our videographer, having videoed hundreds of layouts and earning him the nickname of "Video Vigilante." All these videos can be seen on YouTube.

Bill was the person who initially got me interested in the NMRA and encouraged me to pursue my MMR. Most of the things Bill accomplished were done behind the scenes. Bill was also a fellow marine. We thank him for his service to both our country and our organization. He will be truly missed.

Joe



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to the September issue. This month we feature another useful modeling article by Eric Hansmann as well as Kevin Feeney's report from the National Convention. Should be some good reading.

Hope everyone had a great summer filled with both model and prototype railroading and that you are diligently writing up everything you did. Hope to see you at the meet in Newtown Square.

Howard

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September Meet with StARR in Newtown Square

On Saturday, September 26, 2026, the Philadelphia Division will meet at the St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 3625 Chapel Road, Newtown Square, PA 19073. Doors open at 8:30am with the program beginning at 9:00am. Maps and directions on page 5.

The first clinic for this morning's program will be presented by Treasurer Jeff Witt, titled **"Electronics Tips, Tricks, and Lessons Learned: A retired electrical engineer's advice and information for non-engineers."**



Mystified by electronics? This talk includes discussions of basic theory, LEDs, diodes, and other components, wiring, power supplies and more, with examples and lessons learned to illustrate. Online resources will also be provided.

Jeff Witt, division treasurer, has been a long-time aficionado of everything John Allen, the famous model railroader and photographer whose photos and articles graced the pages of the model railroad magazines for decades. Jeff's own HO model railroad, the Taggart Transcontinental, inspired by John Allen's work, has been the subject of articles in past issues of *The Dispatcher*. Jeff has also presented several clinics over the years.

Our second clinic is why we are meeting at this location. Frank Martin, Chief Dispatcher of the St. Alban's Model Railroad will present a clinic titled, **"Introduction to Model Railroad Operations on the St. Albans Model Railroad."**

This two-session clinic is intended to introduce model railroad operations to those with little or no operating experience; others may find it interesting as well. The morning session will present and discuss railroad operations and how it is modeled on the St. Albans Model Railroad. The afternoon session will involve hands-on participation in an

actual StARR operating session. Priority will be given to first-time operators for job assignments. Don't be scared! Come and operate! Regular StARR operators will be on hand to assist as needed.

The St. Alban's Model Railroad Club had its beginnings as a modular club that met in its current location. It eventually became a permanent layout and through the dedicated work of its members has developed into one of the most impressive club layouts in the area.

All attendees are encouraged to bring a model or project. Toward the end of the meet, we hold a Show & Tell. It's an open-mike opportunity to share a recently completed project or a glimpse into an in-progress work.

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 ahead of time.

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

Following the morning program, lunch will be served consisting of three varieties of hoagies and pizza. Following lunch, we proceed downstairs to the club layout for the second half of the StARR clinic—the operating session.



Please come and join us for a morning of education, fellowship, and fun. Hope to see you there!

Planning Ahead – Division Meets & Other Upcoming Events

September 2026
Philadelphia Division Meet
St. Alban's Episcopal Church
3625 Chapel Road
Newtown Square, PA 19073

October 15–18, 2026
MER Convention "Tracks to Tidewater"
Holiday Inn Virginia Beach
5655 Greenwich Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23462

November 2026
Philadelphia/New Jersey Division Meet
Brandywine Town Center
4050 Brandywine Pkwy
Wilmington, DE 19701

January 2027
New Jersey/Philadelphia Division Meet
TBA

January 9–10, 2027
Philadelphia Division Table
Greenberg Train Show
Greater Philadelphia Expo Center
100 Station Avenue, Oaks, PA 19456

February 2027
Susquehanna/Philadelphia Division Meet
TBA

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

September Meet Maps and Directions

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

From North

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

From South

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

From Exit 9

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

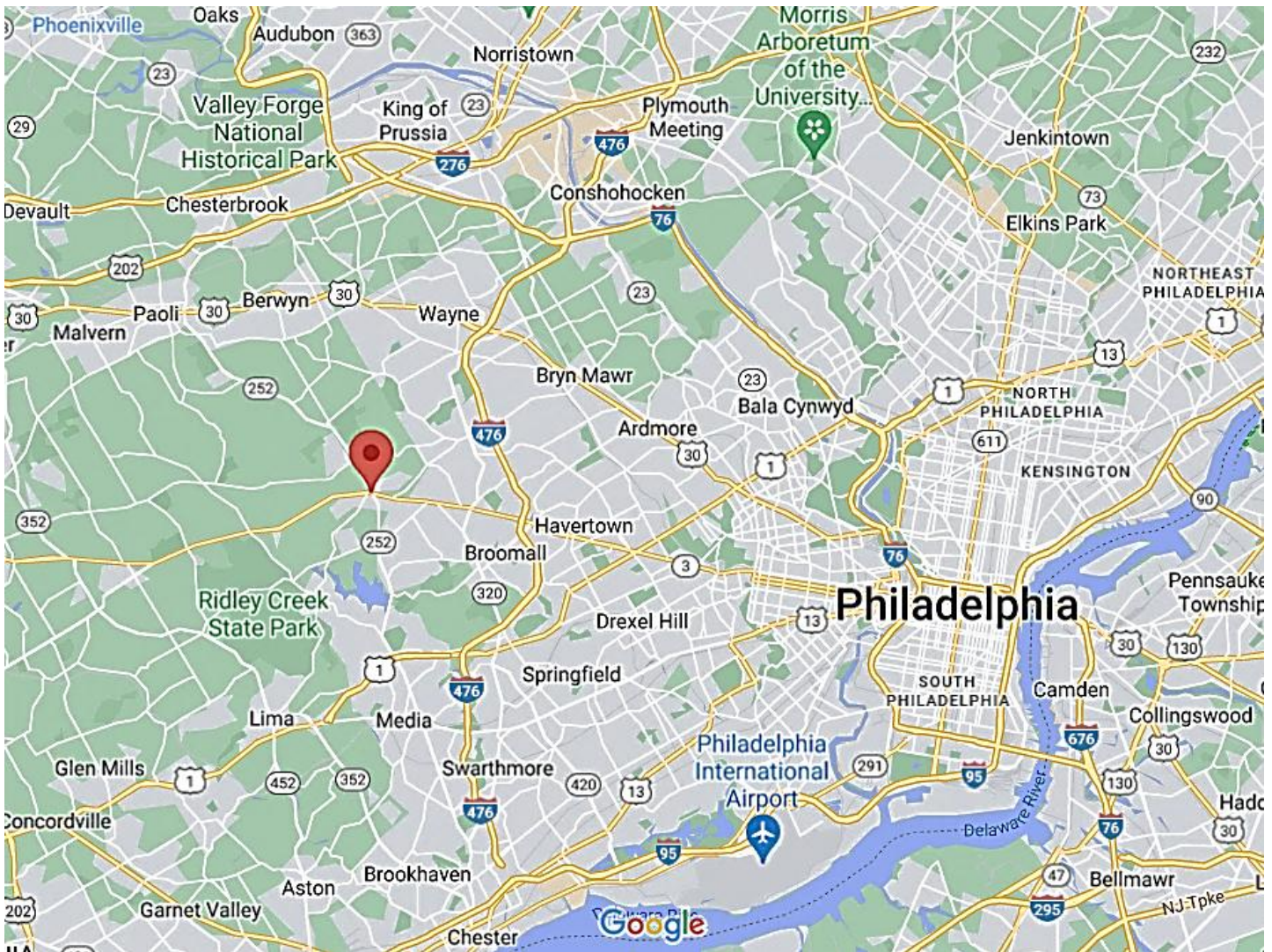
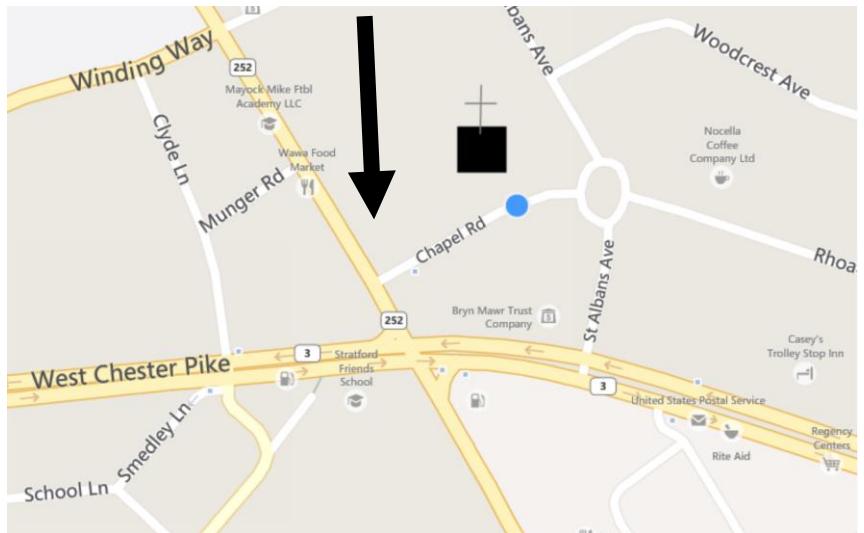


Photo Contest for New Banner

The division will be purchasing a new pull-down-shade banner to advertise and promote the division, the NMRA, and the hobby of model railroading at meets and events. This will contain the NMRA's new logo. We would like to give all our members a chance to have one of their photos included. Our extinguished panel of judges will determine which would be the most appropriate to include in a collage for the sign.

So what if your photo isn't chosen? Well it turns out that everyone's a winner because whether it is or isn't chosen for the sign, it definitely will be published at some point in *The Dispatcher*. I would like to revive a section we used to feature called Around the Division—somewhat similar to Trackside Photos, but including not only layout photos, but any photos or information you'd like to contribute.

Please submit your photos to the editor, Howard Kaplan at hakaplan@rcn.com, and include a caption of any length with any degree of detail you'd like. The captions will not appear on the sign, but everyone's photos will appear in the ATD section in an upcoming issue and will include the caption.

Around the Division

We are reviving the feature called "Around the Division" which includes division news, photos, and any information you'd like to contribute. We'd also like to expand this section to include links to the following:

- Blogs
- Substacks
- Facebook Pages

- Websites
- Layout business cards
- Timetables/paperwork
- Op session news/requests for operators
- Round robin news/requests for new members

and anything else that that pertains to division goings-on. I depend on the membership to provide me with division news so I can pass it on to everyone else through the newsletter.

Photos for *The Dispatcher* Cover

I've mostly been using historic dispatcher-related photos for the covers of *The Dispatcher*, but I would like to feature photos of our own members' layout CTC panels or other control panels and boards. Please send photos and associated information or captions to Editor Howard Kaplan.

Potomac Division AP Clinics

The Potomac Division is running a series of clinics on the NMRA AP program in an effort to provide information to our members and answer their questions. The clinics are either virtual or in person and we are opening them to any NMRA member. The virtual clinics are aired through Zoom and require registration to gain access to the actual clinic.

The information on the clinics can be found on our website: <https://potomac-nmra.org/pdnewsite/Clinics/2026%20Achievement%20Program%20Series%20Clinics/Potomac%20Division%20AP%20clinic%20schedule>

Philadelphia Division Treasurer Hits the Big Time

Look what showed up on page 4 in the July 2026 issue of *Model Railroad Hobbyist*: It's VIP day on Jeff Witt's Taggart Transcontinental.



3. In this Gorre & Daphetid throwback, **jlwitt** (Jeffrey W.) says, "Leased Gorre & Daphetid power slogs past Whitby Tower on the Taggart Transcontinental. G&D president Mark Harrison Vanderlip and his daughter Annabelle (lower left) are touring the TT."

Colebrookdale Railroad Excursion

On Saturday, August 8, 2026, the Philadelphia Division sponsored an excursion on the historic and scenic Colebrookdale Railroad, formerly a branch of the Reading Railroad. Member John Huntzinger took the following photos.





Conductor Steve Wysowski, with passengers Joe Walters and Rob Hinkle

Philly Division Table at the Oaks Train Show

On Saturday, July 18 and Sunday July 19, the Philadelphia Division manned a table at the Greenberg Train Show at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, PA. Among those officials who manned the table were Mike Dettinger, Jeff Witt, and Rob Hinkle (taking the photos). We thank them for representing our division and reaching out to the public to increase awareness of the hobby and of the National Model Railroad Association.



Big Boy Comes to Pennsylvania and Philadelphia



UP #4014 "Big Boy" alongside Reading 2102 on the Reading & Northern in Dupont, PA on 7/1/26 ([Railfan Rowan](#))



In Philly, the train uses the wye bridges over the Schuylkill River to turn around to back down into the navy yard ([Railfanner 4014](#))



Above and below: In West Conshohocken after leaving the navy yard on July 4, 2026 ([Storm Chaser Justin Selig](#))



Links

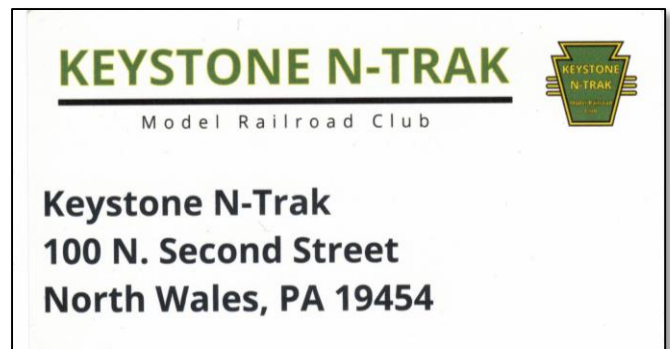
Philadelphia Division Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=philadelphia%20division%203%2C%20mer%2C%20nmra>

Jeff Witt - Documents my Taggart Transcontinental layout, structure, and rolling stock. Construction starting in December 2012 to the present. It also contains a downloadable PDF operations guide:

<http://witt-family.com/LayoutConstruction.htm>

Alan Silverblatt - Train DB Plus model railroad database software: <https://silverblatt.net/train-db-plus>



Classifieds

LAYOUT FOR SALE – Ron Albert's Delaware & Bound Brook

Contact Ken at kennrossiter@gmail.com 267-475-0971

Videos:

[Ron - Westbound RR](#)

[Ron - Caboose](#)

[Ron - Eastbound RR](#)

<https://youtu.be/dirtt18nQxA?si=I9xeAOZaE-Cz6Klm>

Details and photos: <https://www.phillynmra.org/wp-content/uploads/Disp2026-06.pdf>

Philly Train Trivia

by Adam Eyring

1) How many miles did the Fairmount Park Transit have?

2) What was historical about Fairmount Park open cars?

Answers on page 78.

IQ Test

by Albert Einstein

What is the missing element in the following series:

2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 30, 34, 40, 46, 52, 56, 60, 63, _____, 69.

Answer on page 78.

In Memoriam



Bill Fagan:

The Video Vigilante



William “Bill” Fagan of Warminster, PA passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family on August 18th, 2026 at the age of 77. He had suffered with pulmonary fibrosis. He was the beloved husband of Agnes Fagan (Wallace) with whom he shared 53.5 years of marriage.

After graduating Cardinal Dougherty High School he was hired by Bell of Pennsylvania before being drafted into the U.S. Marines in May of 1968, where he served as a sergeant and was later honorably discharged. He then continued to work for Bell of PA, Bell Atlantic, and finally Verizon where he installed lines, moved up to supervisor, and later retired after 30+ years. During retirement life he enjoyed bowling, had a strong passion for model trains and spending quality time with his family and friends.



Bill was a member of the Tuesday Night Round Robin, a group of modelers located mostly in Bucks and Montgomery Counties. He modeled in N scale, and his impressively scenicked layout included a helix hidden in a closet, and was all done with Kato Unitrack—so well-detailed that one could hardly tell. He named it the Reading Pacific after the railroad he grew up with in Philadelphia and the one whose paint scheme he liked the most, the Union Pacific. It is hoped the layout will remain in the family.

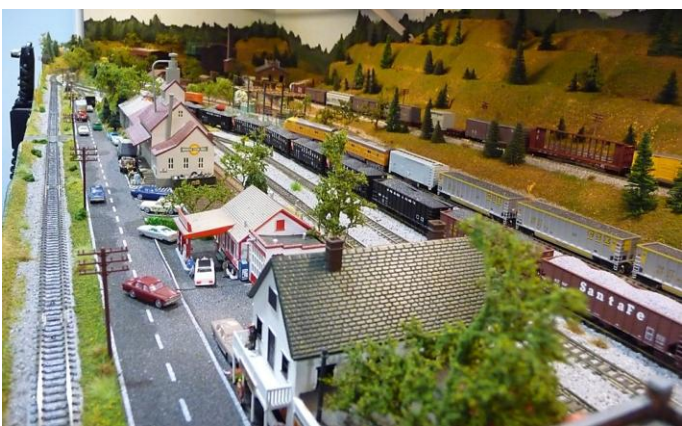
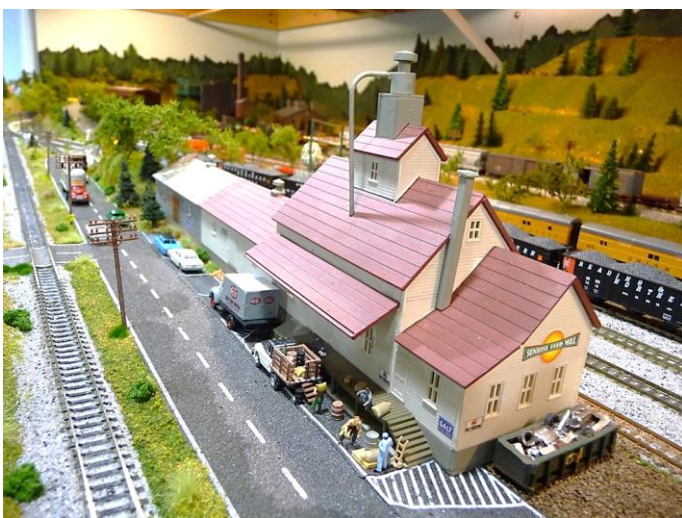
Bill was active in the Philadelphia Division, having served on the board of directors for a number of years, and then remaining involved as the division’s layout coordinator. In that capacity, he organized the layouts for both the 2019 and 2025 Mid-Eastern Region conventions sponsored by the division. He was efficient in what he did, and easy to work with.



Several years back, Bill began experimenting with mounting small video cameras at the front of a train to take “cab ride” videos as viewed from the perspective of a locomotive engineer. The effect was unique and compelling and in no time he had videoed layouts in California, Idaho, Maryland, Florida, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. At the latest count, it was 189 layouts with 816 videos and 2,880 followers on YouTube with 1.8 million views. His videos comprised a regular column in each issue of *The Dispatcher*, and can still be seen on the division website and on his YouTube channel.

Bill had loving family and lots of friends both in and out of the model railroad community, and he will certainly be missed.

On the following pages are some scenes from Bill’s model railroad. Bill expanded the layout after these shots were taken. Updated photos will be published in a future issue. Here is a link to a flyover he posted on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eEwUlpBBX8>







Saturday, June 20th was a beautiful day for the Philadelphia Division to hold its June meet and 5th Annual BBQ at Alverthorpe Park Picnic Pavilion in Jenkintown, PA. Members filtered in as Philly Division Board members set up for the meeting and the cook-out. Twenty-nine Philadelphia Division members signed in along with two guests. The general opinion is that there were several more guests present who did not sign in. Guests are always welcome at our meets, but are particularly welcome to attend our annual BBQ.

Philadelphia Division Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR, called the meet to order at 10:10am. In his opening remarks he expressed thanks for everyone attending. Joe briefly spoke about the recent happenings at the regional and national levels, particularly with the new logo and “branding.” Joe then conducted the division’s Annual Business Meeting. Each of division officers gave their reports. Next, the results of the board elections were announced. Three current board members were running unopposed for re-election, Mike Dettinger, Michael Junod, and Joe Walters. All three were re-elected. The Annual Business Meeting was then closed.



Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR welcomes attendees and opens the annual business meeting



Nice looking crowd

At this point, the food was ready and all present helped themselves to hot dogs and hamburgers, sodas and various chips. It was reported that 40 hamburgers were served along with an unknown number of hot dogs.

After the food fest, the Rockledge Model Railroad Museum along with Mark Kessler’s layout were open for visitors.

This meet and BBQ was a wonderful activity that too few division members attended. If there is one meet you should attend each year, it is this one, if, for no other reason, the free food. It was a great social activity and a great start to the summer. If you currently don’t attend meets, please try to attend at least one next year. The Philly Division meets have a lot going on, clinics, show and tell, white elephant tables, door prizes, 50/50 raffle, coffee, doughnuts, and, thanks to Joe, Philly soft pretzels. Hope to see you are our next meet!



Respectfully submitted – Michael Junod, Clerk

A break was taken during which 50/50 tickets were sold and folks browsed the various sale tables.

After the break, Michael Junod presented a clinic on installing illuminated PRR style markers in HO Bowser cabin cars. In addition to many photos, Michael’s clinic also featured live demonstrations of the completed marker installations. The clinic also included a couple of “short subjects” at the end on constant current sources for lighting purposes.

Following the clinic, a final break was taken for 50/50 ticket sales. Next, the winning 50/50 ticket was selected and door prize tickets were drawn.

**WE WELCOME OUR NEW
PHILLY DIVISION MEMBER**

Daniel Dabson, Dover, DE



Newsletter Editor Howard Kaplan threatens members with punishment if they don't start writing articles



Members appear unfazed



Clerk Michael Junod delivers his presentation...



...and receives his appreciation certificate from the super

Below: Layout owners receive appreciation certificates for holding open houses



Mark Kessler



Bill Howard on behalf of Rockledge Model Railroad Museum



Kevin Feeney discusses his display of freight cars

Lunchtime!



Pit masters hard at work: Jeff Witt tends the burgers while Steve Wysowski prepares the plates

Attendees anxiously, but patiently wait their turn



Grilled to perfection!



Jeff Witt photo

Steve W. sets up the feeding trough



Jeff Witt photo

Smoke Bush Trees

by Eric Hansmann



Many of us model a location in the Appalachian region and need trees to cover our expanse of ridges and valleys. It is currently a good time of year to harvest blossoms that can be used for modeling deciduous forests.

The smoke bush or smoke tree plant is an ornamental shrubbery that is common in older neighborhoods and offers great possibilities. The blossoms have an armature structure similar to oaks and maples.



I found this smoke bush plant down the street from my home. The blossoms can range from three to ten inches in length.

May and June are good times to scout your neighborhoods for smoke bush or smoke trees. Here are a few websites with additional photos to help you identify these plants out in the field.

<https://plantdetectives.com/collections/smoke-bush>

<https://www.wilsonbrosgardens.com/cotinus-coggia-royal-purple-smoke-tree-7g.html>

<https://www.wilsonbrosgardens.com/cotinus-dusky-maiden-topiary-smoke-tree-7g.html>

The blossoms are similar to the Scenic Express material. Optimal harvest time is late June and early July. I've seen these typically growing in side yards and backyards of older homes. Check with the property owner about harvesting. I've found many folks are happy to have the blossoms harvested. A 30-gallon garbage bag can fill quickly and they are free.

After harvesting, remove any seed pods and stick the stems into styrofoam sheet strips to hang upside down to dry to encourage straighter blossoms.

After a couple of months, the blossoms are ready to prep for the layout. Each blossom can be trimmed to size. I often use smaller lower branches as saplings. Spray the blossom with cheap green spray paint then sprinkle on a mix of light and medium shades of green ground foam while the paint is dry. The paint acts as an adhesive for the ground foam. Cheap hair spray can also be used but the blossom color may not work well with green shades of ground foam. Once these are dry, they can be planted in your scenery base.



This is how the hillside appears after the smoke bush blossoms are planted. Mix a few shades of green ground foam to vary the appearance and texture.



Here's a view of the hillside before all of it was covered. You can see how the blossoms extend the height of the scenery and loom above the models. A few model trees here were also made using oak leaf hydrangea blossoms. Using a variety of tree material reflects the appearance of an Appalachian region scene.

The model images were taken on the HO-scale Mon Valley Model Railroad Club layout in Morgantown, West Virginia. The layout was dismantled several years ago but the club has relocated and are busy building a new HO-scale layout.



About the author...

Eric Hansmann has been model railroading since the mid-1970s and built his first HO-scale layout following a John Armstrong plan in an Atlas track plan book. He has had articles published in the Layout Design Journal, Model Railroad Hobbyist, Model Railroad Planning, and Railroad Model Craftsman.

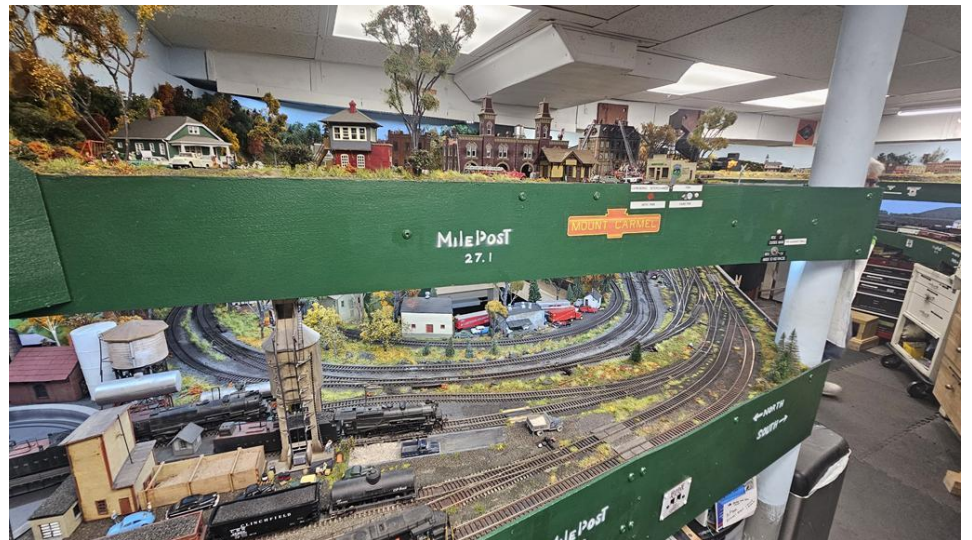
Eric was consumed by the narrow-gauge bug for several years, but settled into HO-scale prototype modeling, focusing on the mid-1920s. He moved to Philadelphia in February of 2023 and unpacked his HO-scale B&O Wheeling Freight Terminal in a 10x16 space. It offers a different pace for operations. He is working on designing, building, and operating a new layout inspired by a forgotten B&O branch in Pittsburgh—the Allegheny Yard Branch on which he spoke in February.

He posts regular hobby activity updates to his blog (<http://designbuildop.hansmanns.org/>), and manages the Resin Car Works blog (<http://blog.resincarworks.com/>).

June Layout Tours

Mark Kessler (HO)

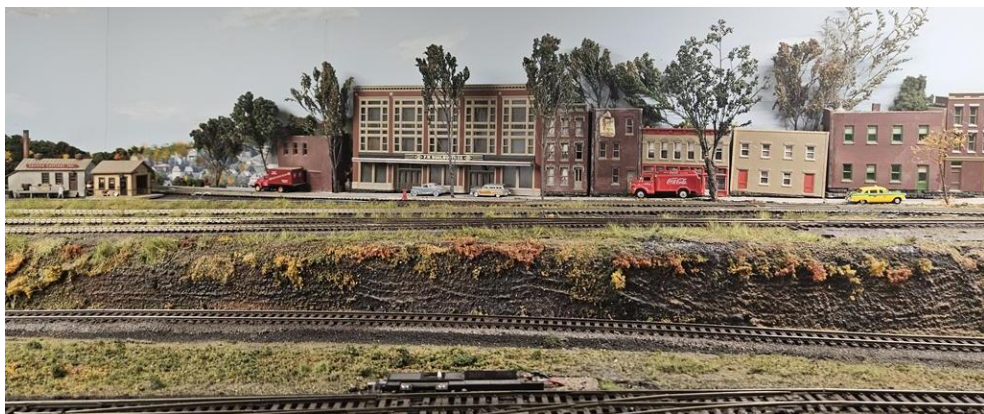
Photos by Rob Hinkle



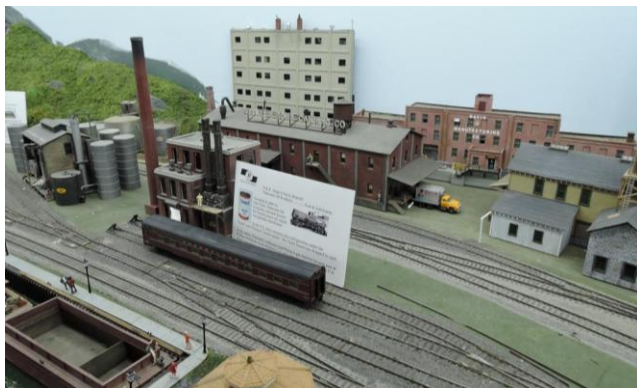




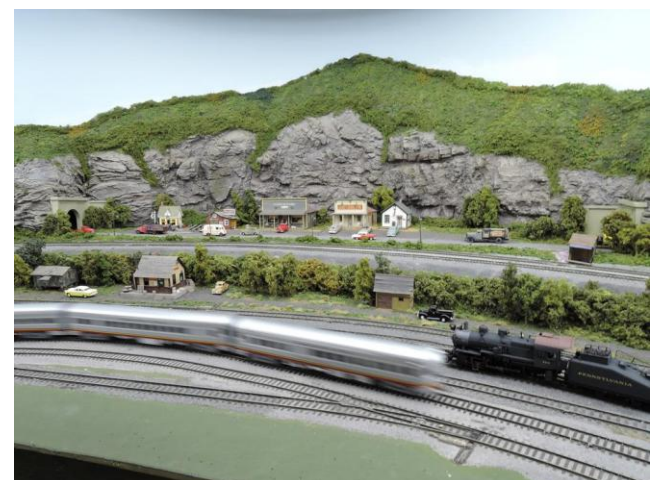














Division Financial Statement

Philadelphia Division, MER, NMRA

Income Statement, 07/01/2025 through 06/30/2026

Jeffrey L. Witt, Treasurer - August 23, 2026

Income/Revenue:		\$ 1,969.27
- sales of donated items		\$ 448.45
- MER/National rebates		\$ 451.00
- 50/50 ticket sales, snack contributions from meets		\$ 490.00
- money market interest		\$ 579.82
- transfers/information		\$ -

Expenses:		\$ (2,168.62)
- meeting hall rentals		\$ (409.30)
- meet coffee, donuts, pretzels		\$ (837.55)
- printing and postage		\$ (133.57)
- paper, frames, and ink for certificates		\$ (230.70)
- equipment (hardware, cables, etc.)		\$ (110.52)
- web site hosting, Election Buddy fees, etc.		\$ (446.98)

Convention Related:		\$ 5,844.97
- Division share of MER convention profits (funds to/from MER, income/expense of Division)		\$ 2,695.23
- Convention "direct" revenue/expense transactions (transactions included in MER audit)		\$ 3,149.74

*Note: these include **ONLY FY 2025-2026** amounts, NOT FY 2024-2025 amounts*

Net Profit (FY 2025/2026):	\$ 5,645.62
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From TruMark Credit Union Statements:

07/01/2025 Funds Balance:	\$ 21,473.54
06/30/2026 Funds Balance:	\$ 27,119.16
Increase/decrease:	\$ 5,645.62

Division Organization

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (elected)

OFFICERS

Superintendent – Joe Walters, MMR (2028)
Assistant Superintendent – Rob Hinkle (2027)
Clerk – Michael Junod (2028)
Treasurer – Jeff Witt (2027)

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Mike Dettinger – Member Outreach (2028)
Steve Wysowski – Clinics (2027)
Alan Silverblatt – Venues (2027)



APPOINTED POSITIONS

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

HELPER SERVICE

EVENTS

Clinics – Steve Wysowski
Layouts – Chris O'Brien
Venues – Alan Silverblatt
Refreshments – Joe Walters, Kevin Feeney
Door Prizes – Steve Wysowski
Certificates/Awards/Printed Materials – Earl Paine, Howard Kaplan

MEMBERSHIP

Member Outreach – Mike Dettinger, Steve Koffel
Membership Records – Michael Junod

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

OPS – Rob Hinkle

ITEM DONATIONS – Kevin Feeney

MEDIA

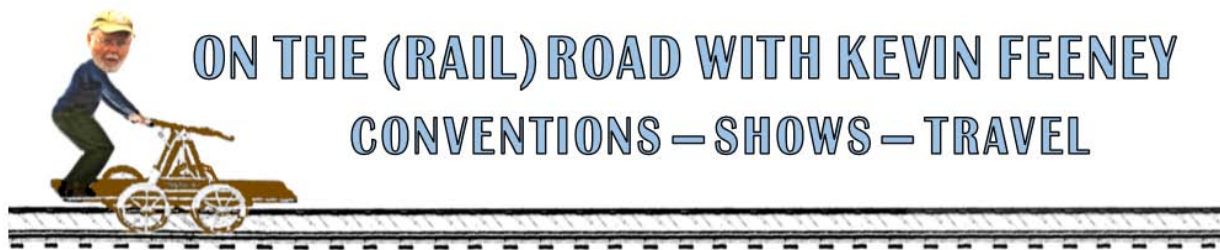
Social Media – Rob Hinkle
Webmaster – Howard Kaplan
Newsletter – Howard Kaplan, Earl Paine, Joe Walters MMR, Michael Junod
Photography – Rob Hinkle, Howard Kaplan, Michael Junod, Jeff Witt

DIVISION APPAREL – Howard Kaplan

Hobby Shops

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

Henning's Trains
128 South Line Steet
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-362-2442
henningstrains.com
10% in addition to already discounted prices



SCENIC CITY EXPRESS July 23–August 7, 2026

The NMRA's National Convention is held in a different city each year. Over the years, it has been held in a few cities, such as Milwaukee, Kansas, or St. Louis, more than once. However, this is the first time it was ever held in Chattanooga or even in the state of Tennessee. I certainly could have flown down there, but instead, made a family vacation/road trip that covered 2,736 miles and passed through eight states (PA, DE, MD, VA, NC, TN, GA, SC).

We left our home on Thursday 7/23 and headed for Alexandria, VA to see some relatives. I have been to their house several times, but never noticed that there is a small CSX yard across the street. After a



pizza dinner at a **Pepe's** there, we drove to a Hampton Inn near Front Royal, VA to spend the night.



The next morning we drove into historic **Front Royal**, the entrance to SKYLINE DRIVE. Its visitor center is located in a former Southern Railway Depot. From there, we drove west on I-66 to

I-81 for a five-hour, 340-mile drive down the scenic Shenandoah Valley. Most of the vehicles on



I-81 were tractor trailers. We stopped at a **Buc-ee's** to use its famous bathrooms. We were by Roanoke at lunchtime so we got off the highway. After eating at a Cook Out, I drove to where the Norfolk & Western (N&W) Railway was based. This hotel was once owned by the N&W and



was famous for serving peanut soup. Across the street is the former N&W passenger station



that now houses the **O. Winston Link Museum**. In the distance under the overpass to the right was the location of the former N&W shops. Leaving Roanoke, we drove by the NS yard there where I saw this well-preserved Conrail load coal hopper (next page). Amazingly, CR has been gone for more years (1999-2026) than the years of its independent existence (1976-1999).



Back on I-81, we saw our first huge patch of kudzu. This is an invasive, Asian plant that can grow



up to one foot per day during the peak season. It was brought to the US originally in the 1930s and planted by highway departments for erosion control. It is now the vine that ate the South.



We stopped at a visitor center after we entered Tennessee and saw this sign. We continued driving till we reached Johnson City, TN. We ate at **Freiberg's**, which describes itself as the only German restaurant in this part of TN. Oddly, it had beer, but no wine, and my iced tea came in a



huge beer stein. Johnson City owes its creation to railroads. Historically, it was served by the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio Railway (CC&O), Southern, Clinchfield, and the East Tennessee & Western North Carolina. The latter was called the **Tweetsie** and it ran on narrow-gauge track to Boone, NC with some dual-gauge track around Johnson City. Its depot has been

preserved and now houses a Mexican restaurant and a brew pub. The visitor center is located in the former CC&O passenger station and freight depot that was built in 1905.



A summer thunderstorm had passed through while we were eating. As a result, there were wisps



of fog in the mountains as we drove 75 miles south on I-24 towards Asheville, NC. We spent Friday and Saturday nights with a relative who lives near the AVL airport.

On Saturday 7/25, I drove to Hendersonville, NC and visited two layouts. The first was the **Apple Valley Model Railroad Club**. I have been to this club many times as I have been coming to the



Asheville area for over 25 years to visit friends and family who relocated to the area. The AVMRRC is located in a former Southern Railway Depot on the line that once went down Saluda Grade (steepest mainline grade in US at 4.9% to 5.1%) with a nicely restored SR caboose on its south side. Inside, there is a large, well-done HO layout and outside to the rear is a huge garden scale layout. The club is open every Saturday, hence my visit on this day.



I had another reason to visit the AVMRRC that day. I brought my ancient DCC device with me to have Dan Lang, my longtime friend, see if he could make it work. Dan is a retired physician and we have called him the “digital doctor” for years. He is in charge of the electronics at the club. Unfortunately, my Digitrax DCS100 unit is dead. I would see Dan in Chattanooga as well. I helped myself to a few free magazines before leaving the club and this included the current July/Aug 2026 issue of the *Narrow Gauge & Shortline Gazette*. That magazine had Charlie Getz’s final column. He had been writing a monthly column in that magazine since 1976!

On the way to my car, I stopped at **French Broad e’N’pire N-Scale Club** which was also open.



That evening on the way to dinner, we passed the Blue Ridge Southern's GP39-2. The **BLU** is a Class III shortline that operates over 90 miles of ex-NS



track in Western North Carolina around Asheville and is owned by Watco. I saw covered hoppers stored by the Hendersonville Depot.



On Sunday 7/26, we drove to Chattanooga through the Smoky Mountains. We took our time and made several stops along the way. We stopped in Bryson, NC, the headquarters of the **Great Smoky Mountains Railroad**. This railroad is owned by the same company that owns the heritage railroads in Durango, CO and Branson, MO. I hadn't checked the

schedule and learned that today's train had left around 11am and would not be back till 4pm.



The track by the depot had these strange oil/grease streaks for a considerable distance.

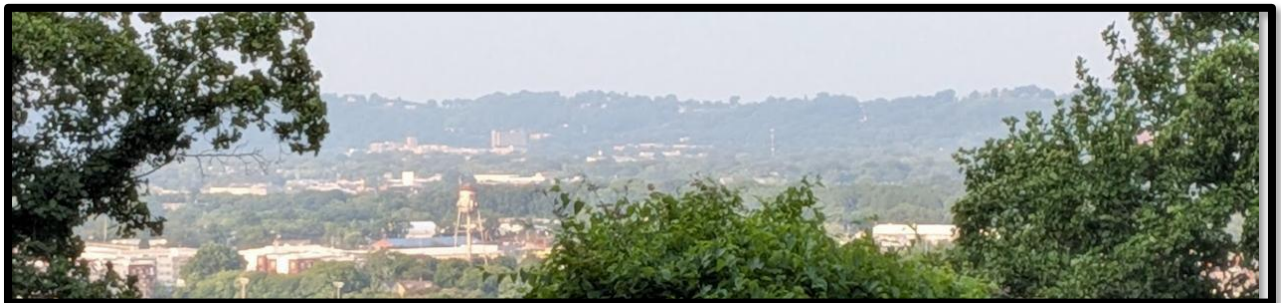
We continued our drive through the mountains and a river gorge. Amazingly, just as we came to Nantahala, NC (20 miles from Bryson), GSMR #1702, a 2-8-0 made by Baldwin in 1942 for the US Army Transportation Corps, arrived. The locomotive has been owned by the GSMR since 1991 and underwent a complete restoration from 2014-2016. Nantahala is a base for water rafting.



Continuing to the SW, we passed massive patches of kudzu. We saw where the kudzu was growing over automobiles and even buildings.



We arrived in Chattanooga about 5:30pm. We were not staying in a hotel, but rather a house that my daughter Erin, who was joining us for the week, found on Airbnb. The house was located on Lookout Mountain and we reached it by driving up (the operative word) Old Mountain Road, which passed under the incline to the top of Lookout Mountain twice. From the house, we had a nice view to the northeast.



The house slept eight and was fully furnished. Joining us for the convention was Paul Hobbs, a NMRA member and friend from New Zealand. I picked him up later that evening at the



Chattanooga Airport. He

had flown from Auckland to Sydney to Dallas Fort Worth to Chattanooga. He comes to the US several times a year to attend NMRA and railroad historical society events. He is an expert on the Spokane, Portland, and Seattle (SP&S) Railway.

Some words about my involvement with the NMRA's annual national conventions are in order. My first convention was Milwaukee way back in 1985. At that time, I was a "lone wolf" modeler, and I didn't really know what the NMRA was. The attraction of that convention for me was that it offered tours of Kalmbach and Walthers. To attend that convention, I was required to pay an extra \$6 for a temporary NMRA membership. When that expired, I renewed and later became a life member. From 1985 through 2011, I attended each year's national convention. It was fun to travel to many different cities.¹

In 2012, I was living in Bulgaria and being no fan of Bruce Chubb, I saw no sense in flying back to the US to attend the convention in Grand Rapids. I was back in the US in 2013, so I attended Atlanta and started another run through 2018 (Kansas City). I skipped Salt Lake City in 2019 because we had been near SLC on May 10th for the 150th Anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad. We all know what happened in 2020 and the virtual convention in 2021 was of no interest to me. I traveled to St. Louis in 2022 to attend the convention, but upon arrival, found that I had COVID. I was supposed to share a room with Eric Dervinis at the convention hotel. Instead, I booked a room at a hotel by the airport and hunkered down for a few days before putting on two masks and flying home. I was at the 2023 convention in Gaylord, TX when the temperature was over 100° most of the time (a TV news program showed a woman baking bread in her mailbox). This was followed by attending Long Beach, CA (2024) and Novi, MI (2025).

¹Milwaukee, Boston, Eugene, OR, Birmingham, AL, Houston, Pittsburgh, Denver, Columbus, OH, Valley Forge, PA, Portland, OR, Atlanta, Long Beach, CA, Madison, WI, Kansas City, St. Paul, MN, San Jose, CA, St. Louis, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, Toronto, ON, Seattle, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Detroit, Anaheim, CA, Hartford, Milwaukee, & Sacramento.

While there was a local committee for this year's convention, the NMRA's national headquarters located in nearby Soddy-Daisy, TN handled the registration and was actively involved during the whole week. The convention followed the shortened format pioneered by last year's convention. However, while both started on Monday, the Novi committee had allowed us to pick up our registration material on Sunday evening. This year there were several hundred pre-registered attendees standing in line waiting for the registration table to open on Monday 7/27 at 10am. Someone on this year's committee made an executive decision to open registration 10 minutes early. I received my badge and holder, the official timetable, a pin, a green tote bag donated by White River, and some promotional materials. Notice the badge was devoid of a registration number, my city/state, and my scale. Things like this were common on prior conventions' badges. While those who were MMRs had that on their badge, there was no notation identifying first-time attendees.



Any walk-ins were directed to another area to register with the staff from headquarters. Last summer, given the low attendance at Long Beach in 2024, the 2025 convention planned for a certain number of attendees such that attendance was limited to those who were preregistered. This year between those preregistered and those who registered on site, the total attendance was over 1,430, which is the highest number in quite a few years. While I only saw two others from the Philly Division, there were more than a few guys from the New Jersey Division in attendance.

The 2026 convention officially began with clinics at 1pm, however, there were a few layouts that were actually open at noon. Attendees had been sent an email list of available layouts a few days before the convention. The convention ran from 1pm to about 9:30pm on Monday and then 8am to about 9:30pm on Tuesday through Friday. On Saturday, the National Train Show opened at 9am and there were clinics and an awards ceremony from 1pm till after 6pm. Rather than talk about the convention chronologically, I will review the week on a functional basis starting with the location.

CHATTANOOGA CONVENTION CENTER

The convention was held in this purpose-built facility that was constructed in 1985 and expanded in 2003. It is located in downtown Chattanooga and featured a large exhibit hall, ballrooms, and lots of meeting rooms. It is attached to a Marriott that was the official convention hotel and pricey at \$255 per night





all in with taxes and parking. There were several sponsors of the convention. SCALETRAINS was clearly the major sponsor (more on its involvement later). On Monday and Tuesday, we shared the convention center with a show for gun dealers that used two of the exhibit halls. I saw this poster then in the men's room. The National Train Show (NTS) made use of all four exhibit halls later in the week.



The facility was quite nice. The air conditioning worked so well that I saw guys wearing light coats and sweaters even though the outside temperature was in the 90s. My only

complaint was the lack of food in the center. There was only a coffee shop, vending machines, and a limited snack bar available. There was nothing else nearby except the Marriott. After the first day, I stopped at a Publix grocery store near where I was staying to buy a sandwich and bring it with me. Carol picked me up at the convention center at 5pm on Monday to Wednesday, and I had dinner at the house. Afterwards, I drove myself back to the convention center and parked for free on the street.

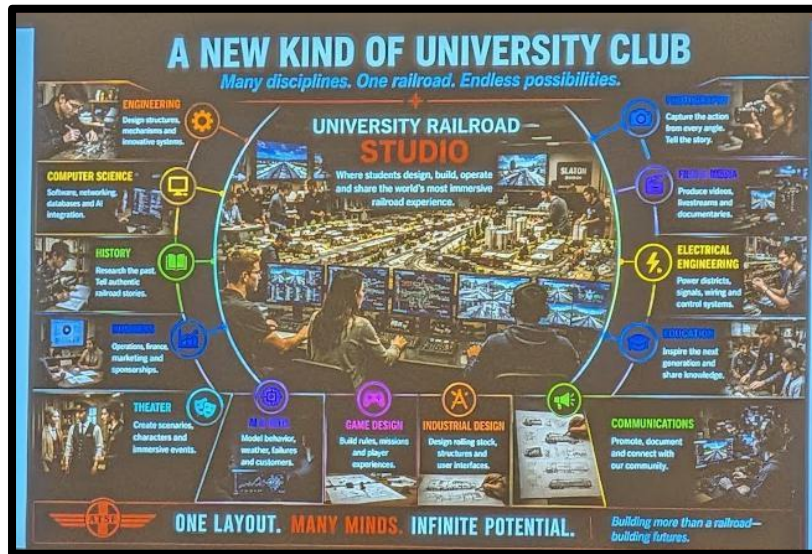
CLINICS

For me and some others, the variety and depth of the clinics are the primary benefit of attending a national convention. I didn't volunteer to give a clinic this year, however on July 15th, I received an email asking if I would like to present one. I said yes and once at the convention learned that about 20 clinicians cancelled due to various reasons. I brought two clinics with me on a thumb drive and in the clinic office signed up on their "extra" board, but I never heard anything more from them. Every day, there were several substitute clinics being offered such that the schedule in official timetable was almost useless. We received an addendum in the registration package and further changes were posted on a daily basis.

For most of the time, there were six clinics running simultaneously. On Monday, there were 29 clinics offered over the afternoon and evening. The clinics were scheduled for one hour with a half-hour break between each session. There was a one-hour break for lunch and two hours for dinner. The clinic rooms were quite large, seating about 120 people and were sometimes full with standing room only! There were no clinic "tracks" per se, but one room was used almost exclusively for DCC and electronic clinics while another had many T-TRAK clinics. There were so many interesting clinics that at times it was difficult to decide which one to attend.

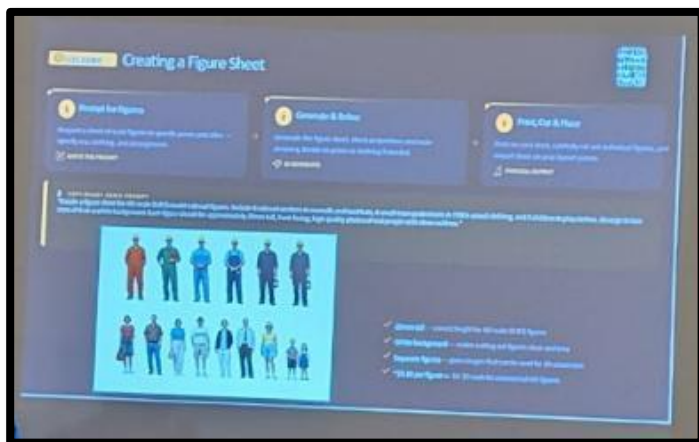
I attended a mix of clinics on M/T/W including modeling skills, railroad history, track and locomotive maintenance, operations for T-TRAK, understanding railroad signals, using AI, 3D printing, etc. All, but two were quite good. The second clinic I attended on Monday was

entitled “Make It Rusty.” I am building a slash burner that needs to be quite rusty, so I was looking forward to this clinic. Well, the goober presenter forgot his PowerPoint presentation and spoke in a southern drawl the likes of which I have not heard in years. I could not understand a word he was saying. I and others quickly walked out and went to another clinic. Pelle Sjøeburg was one of the featured presenters, but his clinic was a major disappointment. He showed a few slides while **READING** his presentation that lasted about 15 minutes (YES – English is not his first language!). On the other hand, Tony Koester presented an interesting update on the Proto-48 layout that he is building of a small WABASH branch in IL. Two clinics I attended were presented by young

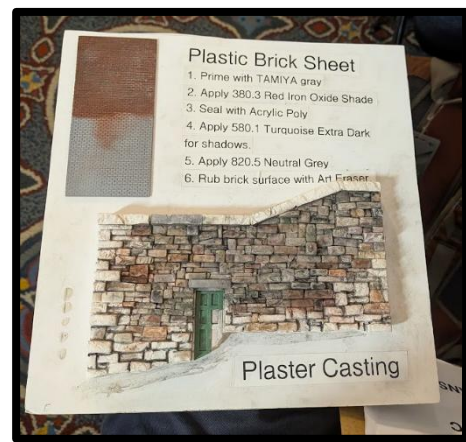


employees of **SCALETRAINS**. Two clinics will be very useful for me. Joe Fugate from **MRH** showed the best way to clean track is using *Deluxe Materials Track Magic*. Another clinic showed how to turn *Pan Pastels* into a quick drying, flat paint with 91% alcohol. The most “different” clinic was about the model Railroad club at **TexasTech University**. The students there have built a

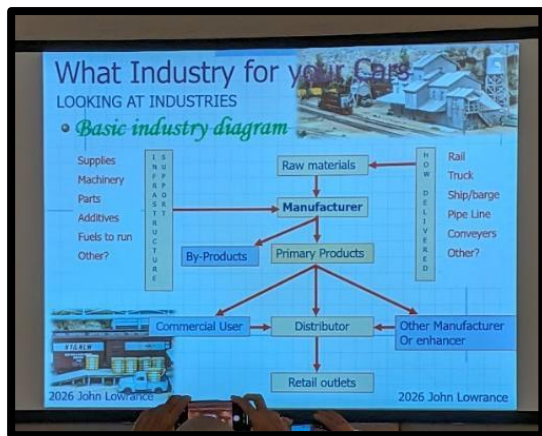
large HO layout (left) and they operate it, not as typical model railroaders do, but as a game with random events and ways to keep score plus for things like STEM/STEAM.



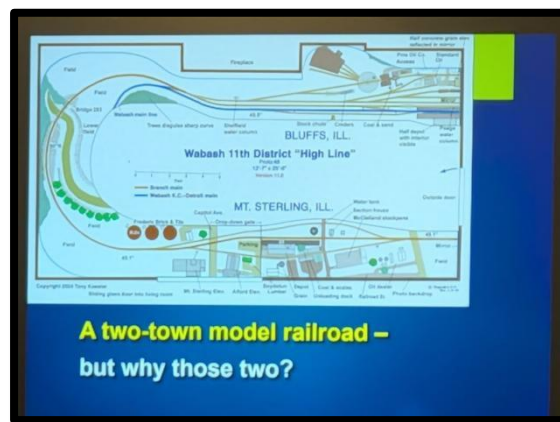
Using AI



Painting with Pan Pastels



By John Lowrance MMR



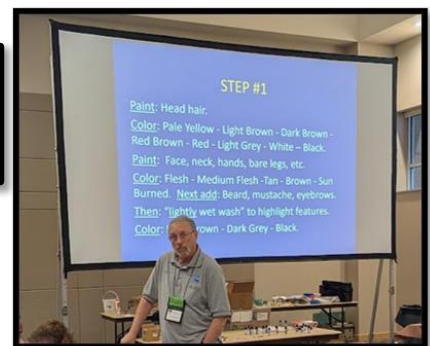
By Tony Koester

INSIDE EVENTS

There were five added-fare **Modeling with the Masters** sessions. This session was painting figures. There was a company store selling convention hats and shirts, and heritage and older NMRA items with the “boob



logo.” There were also several tables donated items



offered for sale. This included HO buildings (I got three nice ones for \$5 each), HO passenger cars for \$12 and N-scale rolling stock for \$1 each. I heard several guys express

disappointment that there was no convention car. However, with the shift to more prototypical operations, convention cars are not as popular anymore.

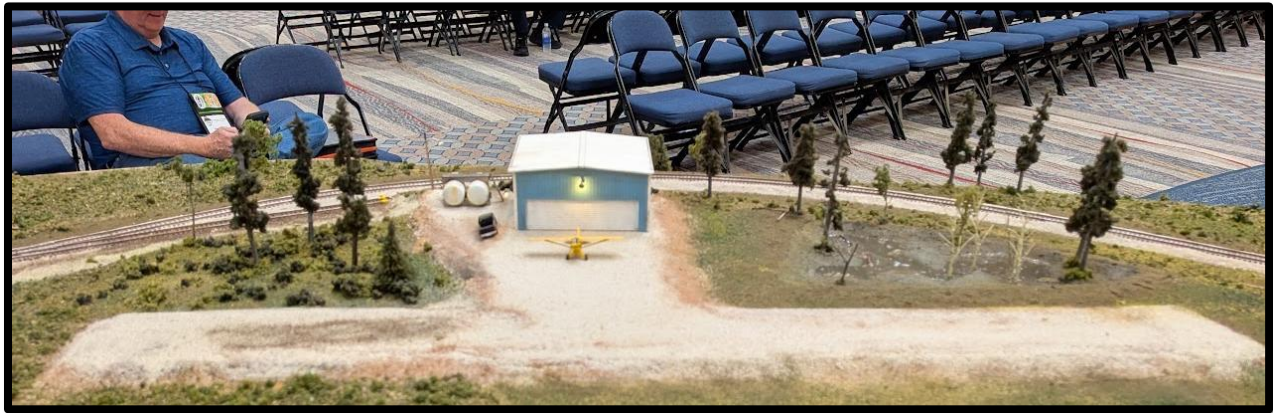


BARNs. There was an article about this in the April **NMRA**

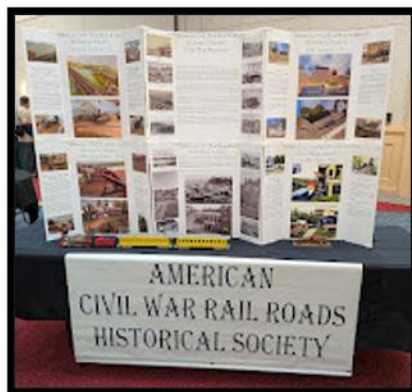
There was a room for the non-rail attendees. The *Model Contest* is now called “A Celebration of Models, Photos & Crafts.” Given the number of attendees, I would have expected more models to be presented. Besides the normal categories, there was an added popular contest for **ROCK CITY**

Magazine. I decided to participate about a week before we left on this trip. I purchased a laser-cut kit HO barn at the **Kutztown Flash Train Show** on 7/18 for \$3 and over the next few days assembled and painted it. I used plastic letters to make the iconic sign on the roof. There were about 10 barns in the contest with the others being much better than mine (#5). Still, someone admired my barn as I picked it up late on Thursday and I sold it to him for \$5.

The large ballroom served several purposes. It was the waiting room for the tours. It had the



OPERATIONS ROAD SHOW layout. This is a large *Free-moN layout* that offered operating sessions during the week. Along the edge of the room were tables for the SIGs and other groups. The

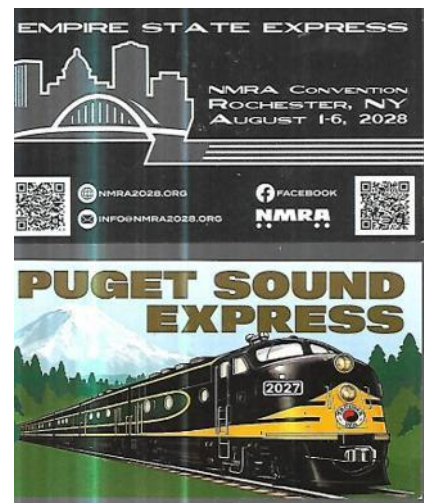


SIGs included: O- Scale, LCC, and the Civil War. The latter had several dioramas in several scales and that SIG was in fact piggybacking its annual convention with the **Scenic City Express**. There were tables for the next two National Conventions – the

PUGET SOUND EXPRESS in Tacoma, WA on August 10-15, 2027, And the **EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS** in Rochester, NY on

August 1-6, 2028. Finally, there was a table for the **MOTION MUSEUM**. This is a new museum that is being built along I-75 in northwest Georgia. It will tell US history through transportation and will feature the G-scale layout that was formerly in the **EnterTRAINment Junction** attraction located in Chester, OH. That facility closed on 1/5/2025. **Firecrown Media**, the Chattanooga-based company that bought *MR* and *Trains* Magazines from Kalmbach, is behind this new endeavor.

The timetable said that **RDG Company Technical & Historical Society's** huge HO layout was making its first appearance at a national convention, but several of their key members were



recently injured and the group had to cancel. Still, I don't know where it would have been located in the convention center.

TOURS

There were a mix of layout, prototype, and railroad tours during the week, but oddly none of them were listed in the Official Timetable. There were layout tours by motor coach, but only on Tuesday. The two prototype tours on Thursday went to **FMW SOLUTIONS** and **Komatsu**. Friend Dan Lang attended the tour of **FMW SOLUTIONS**, a company that “solves complex railroad challenges for railroads, institutions, public agencies, film productions, and private organizations through engineering, restoration, operations, compliance, and strategic expertise.” Turns out, it is located in Soddy-Daisy, TN and next door to the NMRA headquarters there.

There were several railroad tours on/with the **Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum**, a convention sponsor. The former NMRA headquarters' building is located on the TVRM that is next to an ex-SR NS mainline.



Readers who are modelers may recall that Con-Cor marketed a model of the building in HO and N scales. Decades ago, the TVRM sold that land to the NMRA with a right of first refusal. When the NMRA decided to sell its building in 2013 after moving the library to the California State Railroad Museum and abandoning the idea of building a museum in the basement, TVRM bought the building for its use. The TVRM is the largest operating railroad museum in the South. There were **Missionary Ridge Locals** that included a ride through an 1850s railroad tunnel and a tour of its shops. I rode one on Tuesday afternoon. There was a short, three-car consist pulled by TVRM 4617.



This is a GP10, a Paducah-rebuild of an IC/ICG GP7/9 (specs n/a), that was acquired in 2024. Oddly, this locomotive is not included in the TVRM's rolling stock on its website.

Leaving the TVRM depot, the train was wyed and then ran several miles on a former SR mainline before passing through the 979-foot tunnel under Missionary Ridge. This former SR mainline was abandoned in 1954 as the new freight cars could not fit through the 1850s tunnel and a new mainline (now NS) was built adjacent and to the north. At TVRM's shop, 4617 was put on a



turntable. Riders watched it turn before being taken on a brief shop tour. There we saw the former SR 4501, a 2-8-2 steam locomotive, being made ready for a trip later in the week.



Behind it was a passenger car in the classic IC Panama Ltd. livery. There was a dinner train one evening (I heard it was disappointing), and also a night photo shoot at TVRM.

There were walking tours of the **Chattanooga Choo Choo**, located a few blocks from the convention center. There, the former **Southern Railway Terminal Station**, opened in 1909 and closed in 1970, was turned into a major railroad-themed hotel in the 1970s with its rooms located in former passenger cars. It also included a substantial HO layout on an upper level. I saw the layout in 1978 and watched one of the diesel locomotives burst into flames. I didn't go on the tours, but stopped to see the Choo Choo



as we were leaving the city on Saturday afternoon. It certainly has seen better days. Some of the stores were empty and the layout is long gone.

There were two major fan trips. On Thursday, **SCALETrains** sponsored a trip behind former SR 4501, to Summerville, GA. This was just over 100-miles round-trip, but took an entire day. However, the entire operation was extremely well done, thanks to the staff from TVRM and **SCALETrains**. **SCALETrains** said the trip was its way of giving back to the hobby. There was a record-length consist of eleven historic passenger cars (built between 1911-1950) and a former B&O office car (built in 1917). I rode in this car, a former C of G coach that was built in



1947 and ran

on the famed *Nancy Hanks II*. The trip ran on four railroads: TVRM, the Chattanooga Belt Line, a very short stretch of NS and then mostly on the Chattooga & Chickamauga Railway (CCKY). The latter is owned by Genesee & Wyoming, but operates on ex-C of G tracks now owned by the State of Georgia. In Chattanooga, we rode past the National Cemetery that was established there in 1863 to bury Civil War dead and is the second largest US military cemetery, after the one in Arlington, VA.

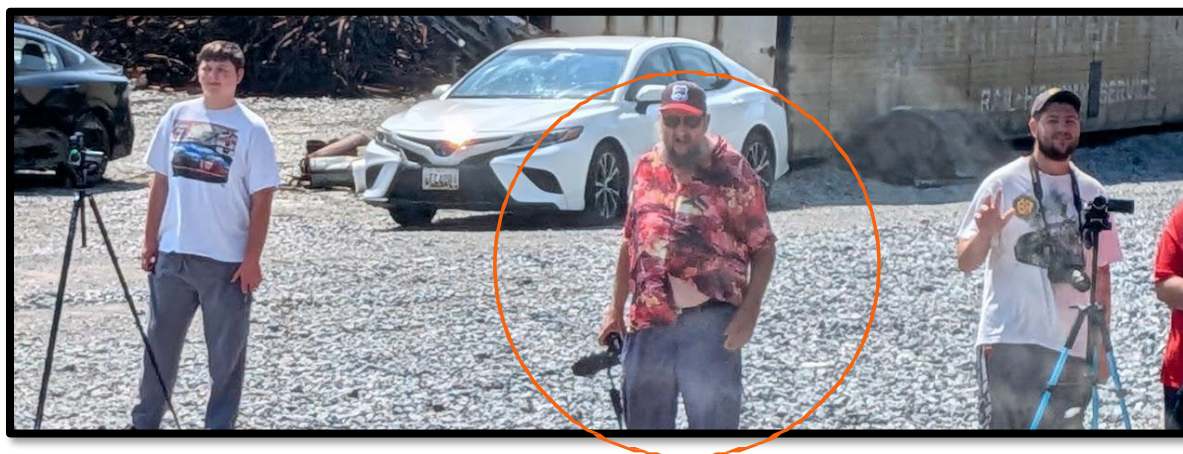


We passed Lookout Mountain and I could clearly see the world's steepest passenger railway, the

Incline Railway. On this picture I also marked the approximate location of the house we rented.



There were a steady crowd of railfans and the public all along the tracks. Some, like Steve Barry,



editor of *Railroad & Railfan Magazine*, were clearly chasing the train. A constant parade of invited guests from the hobby press plus other key folks passed through my car and the train.



Pelle Sjøberg
MR Columnist



Cinthia Priest
NMRA Magazine



Shane Wilson
SCALETrains



Gordy Robinson
NMRA PREZ

It was lunchtime when we arrived in Summerville, GA. The former depot is now a museum, but for those on the train, it was a place to go to the bathroom. Once the 400+ people were off the train, 4501 pulled ahead for servicing while the rest of the consist was pulled back by a CCKY diesel. In a park across the tracks, a catered BBQ lunch awaited us. I was in a good position



when the consist was pulled back and moved quickly to the food and luckily was the first one served. After almost everyone was served, Shane Wilson spoke to us.



He thanked us for being on

the train and supporting his company. He mentioned several new products and members of his staff walked around the tent with pictures of them. This included locomotives with the semiquincentennial (250) logo. After over an hour there, we started to load the train. However it was only done through two doors, so it took a while. Eventually, we headed back to Chattanooga. By Georgia Northwest Technical College in Rock Spring, GA there was a photo

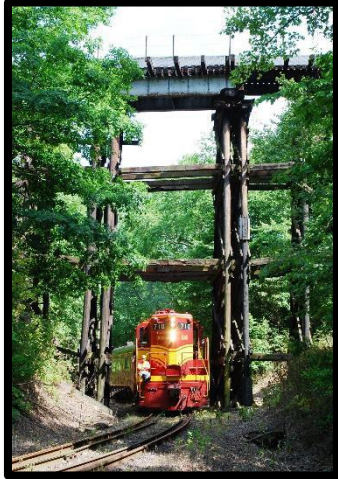


runby.

Soon, we crossed the border into Tennessee and made our way through Chattanooga to the TVRM. Along the way, most riders received a specially-decorated, HO passenger car. The N scalers will get a new hopper car in the mail in a few weeks. I paid \$150 for the whole day that included the ride, lunch, and the car. Carol had dropped me off at the TVRM at 7:30am on her way to go whitewater rafting on the Ocoee River. I was able to get a ride back to the Convention Center.

I arrived there just at 8pm or just in time for the **Annual Member Meeting**. President Gordy led the meeting and told us about the actions taken at the BOD meeting earlier in the week. He said everything we do on-line is moving to GoogleWorks. However, in doing this everyone will need to create a new log-in. I was surprised when he said the NMRA only has email addresses for about half of the members. The 2029 convention will be in Indianapolis and the BOD is working closely with a group (not disclosed) for 2030. He solicited bids for 2031-2035. He announced a cut in the annual dues to \$50 with everyone getting a digital magazine. We will move to auto-renewal and for our younger members, there will be a continuous monthly subscription at \$5.95 available. While our membership is staying about the same, the average age is constantly increasing. He said in 10 years, a good number of our members will be gone (dead). He announced a new achievement certificate for modular model railroading. The meeting continued with questions from the audience.

On Friday 7/31, the Convention had a trip on the **Hiwassee River Scenic Railroad**. There were four



busloads of people on this tour including friend Dan Lang. This is part of the TVRM operations on former L&N trackage and was almost a five-hour trip. This trip started in Delano, TN and traveled through the Hiwassee Gorge where at one point, the train track spirals and loops over itself. At the “Loop,” the tracks corkscrew on themselves as they climb the mountain near Farmer, TN. There are only six of these railroad loops in North America (*i.e. Tehachapi*) and this is the only one ever built east of the Mississippi River. At the end of the trip, there was a near riot when it was announced that two of the four buses would travel to **SCALETrains** in nearby Cleveland, TN before returning to the convention.

LAYOUTS

There were over 30 layouts available for visits, some of which also offered separate operating sessions. Each layout had a page in the timetable and they were grouped by location (Local/NE/SW/W/NW). The latter group was over 100 miles away in central Tennessee and were on CDT, not EDT. One of them was an ICG layout that I really would have liked to see. There were some in Georgia and Alabama. Some layouts were open twice. The problem for me was that there was no map. I didn’t need a map for directions (have google maps on my phone), but for their relative locations.

Friday was my day to see the layouts. I went through the timetable the night before and picked several local ones and roughed out a route. I left the house before 9am and drove to the first layout in Hixson, TN only to find this note on the door. Guess I should have checked the update info at the convention center.

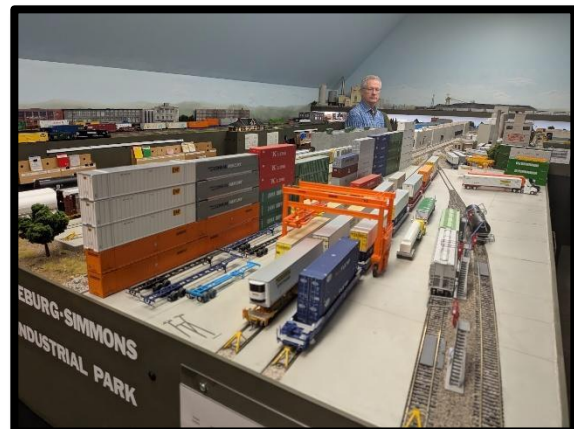


From there, I headed north to see the **Soddy-Daisy Southern**. This was a well-done HO layout in an extended building



that once was the owner’s garage. He sure likes to make buildings!

The next layout was also in Soddy-Daisy and it was a freelanced, **NS switching layout**. However, to see the layout, I first had to attend a meeting of modelers anonymous (Haha). Once inside, I



was treated to a modern well-done, HO layout.

The next layout was in Harrison, TN and near the **TVA's Chickamauga Dam**. I ended up driving across the dam three times because once across I noticed the layout I was heading to didn't open till noon and it was still before 11am. Back across the dam, I drove to the **C&NW Madison**



Division. This was a HO layout also with HO traction and O-scale C&NW modules, walls of display



Trains and tools, a train store (I bought some parts), and a room of Coke things.



Back across the dam, the next layout was in Harrison and the one that opened at noon. It was the **North Tennessee Southern**. This was a nicely-detailed, two-level HO layout. However, the two levels are not connected and one is DC and the other is DCC. He ran out of room and the only



place to build was to go up! While there, other attendees told me that the **TVMR Club** layout was open, but not listed as such in the timetable.

My planned route included a visit to **SCALETrains**. As mentioned, they were the major sponsor of the convention and in fact were a primary reason the convention was in Tennessee. They had a public open-house on most of Friday in their facility in Cleveland, TN. The pick-up truck that Shane Wilson drove on his road trips was parked out front. I saw him at the



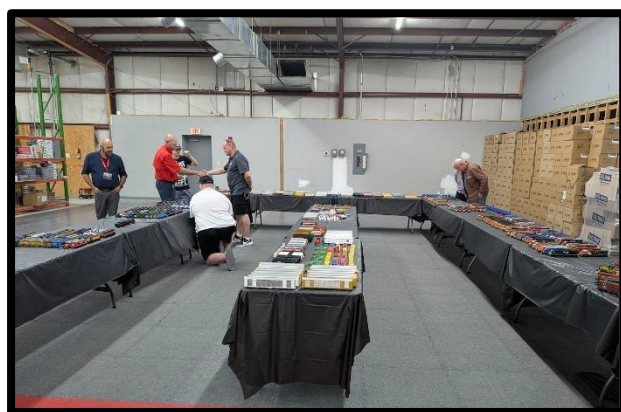
Rockledge and Lehigh & Keystone clubs last year. There was a new N-scale layout in the foyer as you entered and then visitors had a free run of the place. There were fruit, drinks, and snacks in



their break room and these were my lunch. I walked from room to room seeing Shane's office, product development, their mission/value statements, and their research library.



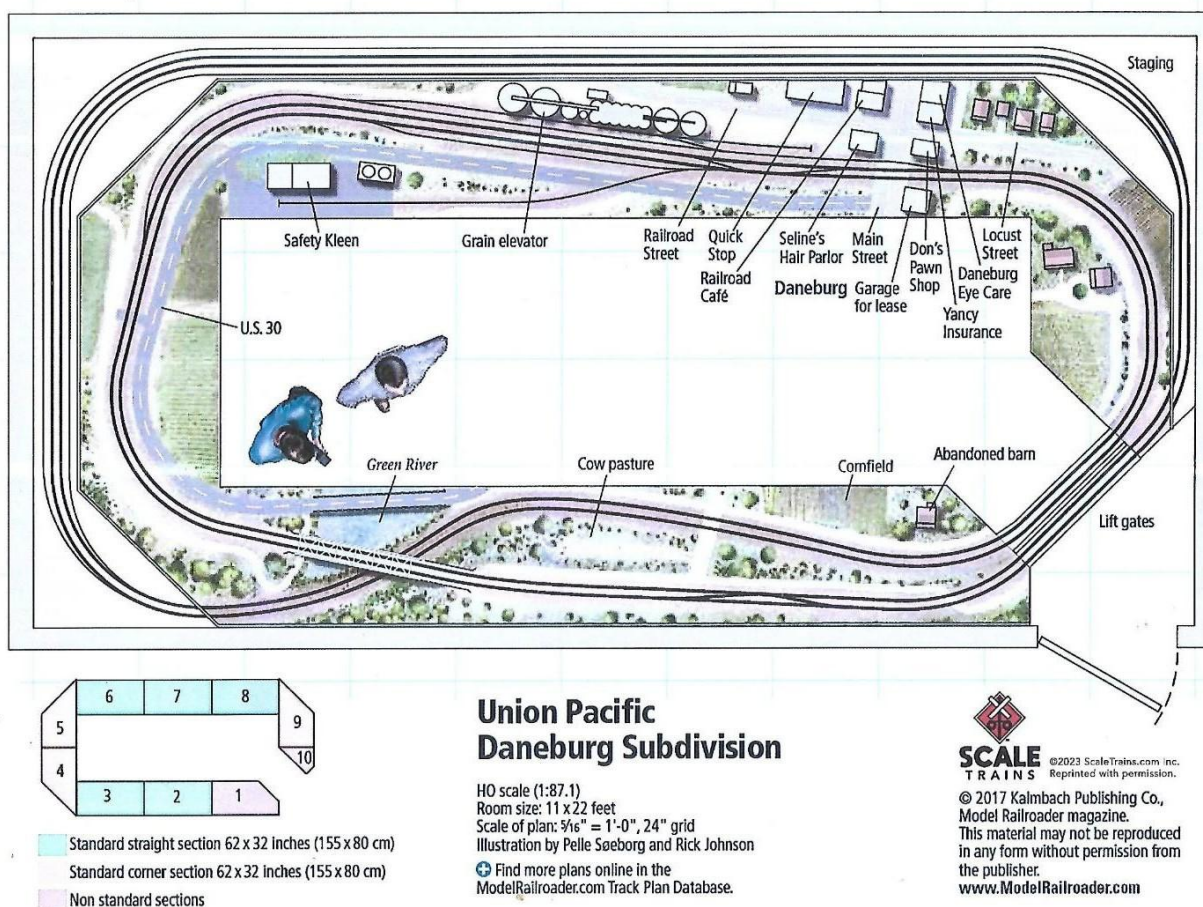
In the photo studio, their staff photographer took my picture in front of this display.



Working my way to the back of the building, I came to their warehouse where there was a display of all their products and everything *in-stock* was on-sale at deeply discounted prices.



It was a good thing that they didn't have anything I needed or wanted as there was a very LONG line of guys waiting to make their purchases. I continued my tour in their building and came to



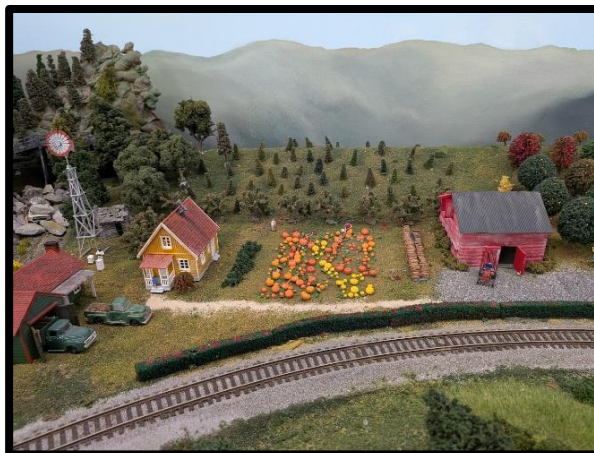
a room that housed this HO layout that was built by **Pelle Søborg** who was *there* telling about it. He built the layout in Denmark and had to sell it as he was moving. He posted an online ad expecting to sell off the structures. To his amazement, the folks at **ExactRail** wanted to buy it. So, Pelle carefully packed everything into a 20' shipping container and sent it off to Utah.

In 2023, **SCALE**Trains acquired ExactRail and the layout was moved in a U-Haul truck to Tennessee.



Well at 2pm, it was time to head back. I decided to stop here as it was just off I-75 in Chattanooga. This HO layout is located in the basement of what was the NMRA headquarters. I was in that space several times using the former library and when I was a NMRA officer and director. We had a BOD meeting there once. The L&N Historical Society is located on the first floor. There

were cars parked in front of the building and the front door was open. So, I went in; a sign said the layout was downstairs. I went down and came to another door that wasn't locked so I walked in. It was dark and NO ONE was there. I turned on the lights and spent 15 minutes



looking at a huge, well-done layout. When I had seen enough, I turned off the lights and left as I came in. However, since I was at the TVRM, I went over to see their **Exhibit Building** that I had missed on my two other visits there this week. Admission to it was included with the **Missionary Ridge Turn** trip I had taken and I had the ticket still in my badge holder.

Inside, there were various exhibits scattered around. It presented a lot of info about Chattanooga, local railroads, and the impact of railroads and the TVRM, but I guess the exhibits were done by amateurs and not professional museum folk. Still, it was worth the half hour I spent there.



I drove back to the convention and passed under this 1907 railroad overpass. There were tracks everywhere in Chattanooga as it was along a major railroad junction. Historically, these railroads



included: Western & Atlantic, NC&StL, L&N, Southern, Alabama Great Southern, Central of Georgia, and the municipally-owned Cincinnati Southern Railway (now owned by NS). I was able to park on the street, but had to put money into the meter as there was paid parking until 6pm.

NATIONAL TRAIN SHOW

This event comes at the end of each national convention. The show was open to the public on Saturday and Sunday at 9am. Normally, convention attendees, who get free admission, have a period of early entry. There was no mention of this happening this year on the website, but at registration, we learned that we could go into the NTS on Friday evening from 5-8pm. This

would be after the various vendors and layouts had completed their set-up. So, that is just what I did. The show floor was just over 100K sq. ft. Oddly, there was no program or even a map of locations. Perhaps there was one online? We entered on a long side of the hall and there were rows and rows of manufacturers, dealers, and historical societies that covered the length of the floor and about half of its width. The rest of the width was full of modular layouts including what became the world's largest **T-TRAK** layout (more on that in a bit).

The major manufacturers were there with ScaleTrains having a very sizable booth in the center.



Missing were Digitrax, NCE, and TCS. I got emails from Mini-Prints and Conowingo Models saying they would be there, but I never saw their booths. About 10% of the booths were covered up.

Without a floor map, I wasn't sure what to do. So, I just went up and down the aisles. I took a brief look at the huge T-TRAK layout, planning to see it and the other layouts on Saturday. I went to throw out something when I noticed a large garbage container was **completely full of trains**: HO freight cars, Lionel, legacy HO passenger car kits, toys, etc. I was so stunned that I never thought to take a picture. Well, I started dumpster diving and soon two other guys joined me. A few minutes later **Otto Vandrak**, editor of *RMC* came by and asked what we were doing.

I have known Otto since he was in high school and came to the NMRA's Metro North Division meetings. I had personally started that division in 1995 in Connecticut. I ended up with a plastic tote full of stuff and immediately made a car run. The picture below, taken when home in



Pennsylvania, shows what I found on Friday plus *most* of the stuff from several boxes of older Lionel and O-scale cars and parts that I found on Saturday. I said *most* as I sold 10 O-Scale trucks to guys in a modular club on Saturday for \$20. I ended up giving boxes of the free stuff to Otto who put them out at the **White River** booth. While at that booth, I took advantage of White River's special pricing and subscribed to *RMC*. I also got the current issues of *RMC* and *PTJ* for free. I was at the NTS till 8pm, but the crowd was pretty thin as I left the hall. I was also very hungry and fortunately there were leftovers in the fridge at the house. Carol, Emmet, and Erin were gone somewhere.

Saturday 8/1 was our last day in Chattanooga. We needed to check out of the rented house by 10am. I helped pack up the night before, but left most of the work to Carol and Erin. Paul Hobbs had attended the convention with me earlier in the week, but didn't feel well and stayed at the house for two days. He's 80. Carol and I drove him to a motel by the CHA airport at 8:45am. He had a flight to DFW on AA on Sunday then flights on Qantas to Sydney and finally Auckland. Because of the time difference, he left late on Sunday and finally arrived home on Tuesday. Carol dropped me at the NTS just at 9am and I told her to pick me up at noon.

Once inside, I finished going through the manufacturing and dealer booths. As mentioned, I found three boxes full of vintage, larger scale trains at the back of the hall. I purchased two used HO hopper cars for \$5 each and a few parts. At several booths, I looked through their \$1 or bargain boxes. Sorry, I can't bring myself to spend \$50 for a HO freight car or

\$125 for a caboose, or about \$300 for a DCC locomotive with sound. I spent about two hours looking at the various modular layouts and spent my last half hour walking the entire length of what became the world's biggest T-TRAK layout. For my non-modeler readers, T-TRAK is a scheme where folks make a small module approximately 1-ft. square using



certain pieces of Kato's N-scale Unitrack. The modules don't have legs so they are placed on tables (hence the T). While seemingly new, the T-TRAK actually started in Japan 25 years ago.



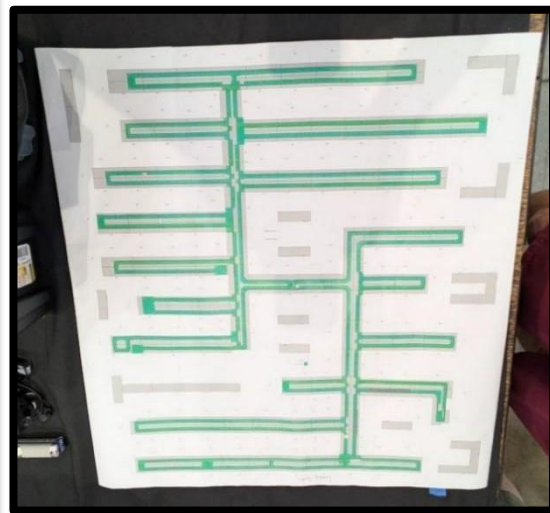
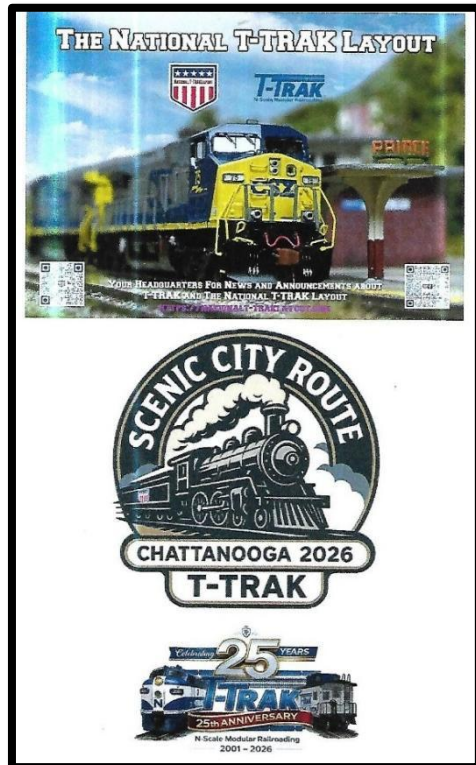
There were also modular layouts in every scale from all over the country plus a very large LEGO layout. This display illustrated the relative size of the different scales (from the bottom > G/Lionel O/S/HO/N/Z). Here's a few of the layouts I saw:



The layout in the lower right is from a company called **3DPTRAIN** and all of the O-scale rolling stock was 3D printed, largely in one piece! **Tony Koester** was helping out at the *trains.com* booth that used to be part of Kalmbach. Even though their new owner, Firecrown Media is based in Chattanooga, there was no presence by *MR* nor I did see any of their full-time staff during the week.



The T-TRAK layout was huge and located in an area that was 105' by 105'. There were over 700 individual modules with 170 modelers bringing them from 49 states plus DC and overseas. The previous world's largest T-TRAK layout was in 2018 at that year's NTS in KC, but that only had 340 modules in a 70'x70' area. A six-panel, folded brochure was available giving all of the details and included a track plan. However, the actual track plan was slightly different as obviously the



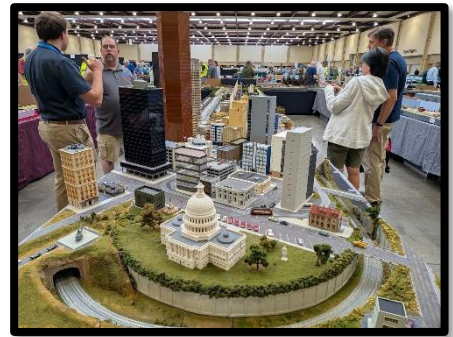
brochure was printed in advance. The National T-TRAK Layout website said there were 715 modules of various sizes equivalent to 1511 equivalent

single units. There was about 93 scale miles of track while the actual length was .58 miles. I walked every inch of the layout and some of the scenes I saw were very prototypical while others were whimsical. Clearly several connecting modules were purposely built for

this event to allow extended operations over the modules. At an average scale track speed of 45 mph, it would take a locomotive over two hours to navigate the entire "Scenic City Route."

Here are scenes from the T-TRAK layout. The person in the third photo is John Nawn, former Philly Division super.





Eventually, it was time for me to leave. Walking towards where I would be picked up, I passed this Z-TRAK layout in an inside foyer. The concept is the same as T-TRAK, the difference being the scale. T-TRAK is N-scale or 1/160 while Z-scale is smaller at 1/220. Carol and Emmet were waiting for me when I walked outside just after noon. In fact, our car can be seen sitting outside the windows in the rear of this picture. Carol and Erin had handled all the things at the house. Erin drove to the airport in her rental car. She was flying on

Delta to Detroit and then to Milwaukee. We drove to **The Incline** so I could go for a ride on it, but the line was too long so I just settled for this picture.

Near where we had stayed is the **International Towing & Recovery Museum**. I had driven past it several times a day for the whole week. As we drove by it on Saturday, I sensed that something special was going on there so we stopped at it. The first tow truck was built in Chattanooga after WWI and



several companies that today make these types of trucks are based in Chattanooga. Normally, the museum has paid admission, but for some reason it was free that day. Inside the museum were about 20 restored tow trucks and displays of toy ones.

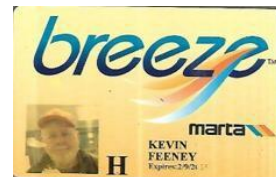


The retail area had all kinds of toy tow trucks and auto/truck Americana merchandise.

We were done with Chattanooga, but this wasn't the end of the trip. We drove south toward Atlanta where we would stay for two nights with relatives. On Monday 8/3, we started our trip back north and with the stops we made, that took five days. Since the primary purpose of this trip report is to have it published on the Philly Division NMRA *website*, I am going to leave out the more personal details of the rest of the trip and only include the railroad and related things.



On Saturday, we drove by this sweeping curve on I-75 near Dalton, GA. FYI, the area around Dalton is the **Carpet Capital of the World**. On Monday 8/3, we drove to Dunwoody at the top of the belt around Atlanta so we could board MARTA, its heavy rail transit system. While Carol and Emmet stayed on the train to the downtown, my sister Kathy (who was now traveling with us) got off at an intermediate stop so we could go to MARTA's headquarters. My MARTA's Senior card had expired (I have them for several major cities) and Kathy is moving to the area to be close to her son who lives in Hiram, GA. We both got new cards. Unfortunately, mine didn't last long as I lost it somehow on the ride back to Dunwoody.



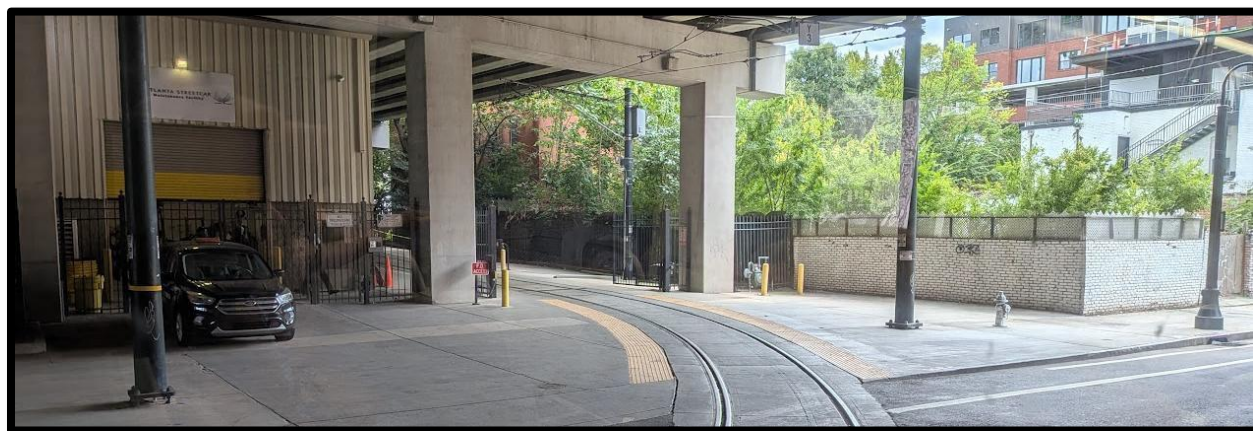
Carol and Emmet went to **CokeWorld** and Kathy and I met them there. In the retail store, there



were a variety of diecast Coke vehicles for sale. The packaging said these were HO-scale, but to my *expert* eye they seem bigger than that. Other vehicles were

offered in 1/43, 1/50, 1/64, and 1/72 scales. Leaving there, we walked by **Centennial Park** which was closed off. A terrorist bombing had occurred there during the 1996 Summer Olympics.

We boarded the **Atlanta Streetcar** and rode its loop. This track leads to its car barn which is



located under I-85. We rode to Five Points near where the historic SR's **Terminal Station** was located. It was demolished in 1972. This is MARTA's Rail Map. We rode **Yellow** and **Red** trains back to Dunwoody and had dinner in the area before driving to a HI Express on the east side of the I-295 belt loop. We stayed there two nights.

On Tuesday 8/4, we drove to nearby **Stone Mountain**, a large quartz monzonite dome located 15 miles east

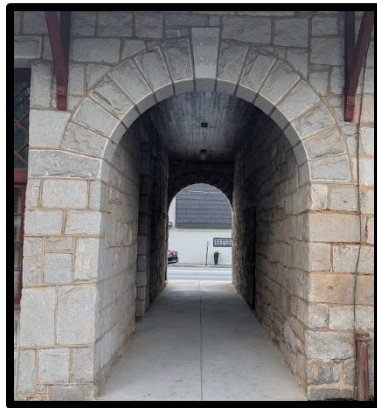
of Atlanta. Rising 1,686 feet above sea level, it features the *world's largest bas-relief carving* depicting Confederate leaders and serves as the site of Stone Mountain Park. This picture is from later that day.



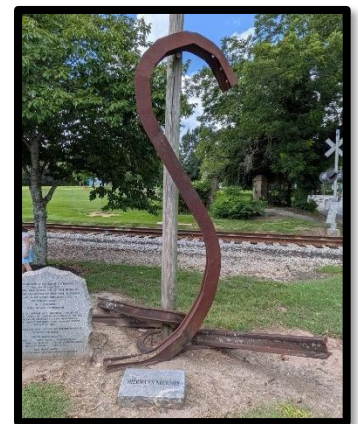
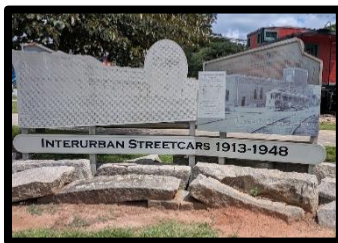
Carol and I were last there in the 1980s. However, before we went to the park, we drove around the historic village coming to this former Georgia railroad depot that is being repurposed as a visitor center. The massive stone structure was built in 1857, rebuilt in 1914, and used as the city hall for a period beginning in 1964.



An unusual feature of the depot is this stone archway that runs through



the building from the tracks to the street. Note the 1857 and 1914 years on the keystone. Diagonally across the street is a small park commemorating **Atlanta Rapid Transit (ART)**. This was an interurban line that ran between Atlanta and Stone Mountain from 1913 to 1948. ART's trolley barn and power station still exists a few blocks away and is the historic village's cultural center. It is said to be one of the few surviving trolley barns in GA.



The picture to the right shows a "Sherman Necktie." This was a piece of rail that was removed and ruined during General Sherman's "March to the Sea" across Georgia late in 1864.



We went for lunch at a cookout, after which there was a torrential rainstorm. We waited till after the rain stopped, and drove to the park. It was closed due to the storm, but the attendant let us in for free and said we could just drive around. We stopped where there is a hiking path up the mountain and water was running down the rocks. Another disappointment was not being able to see the **Stone Mountain**



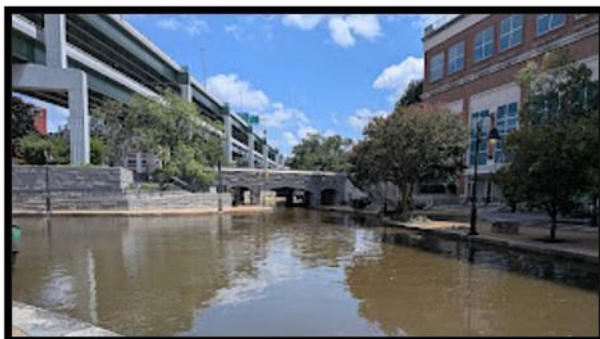
Scenic Railroad which offers rides around the mountain. It only runs on weekends.

We drove around the park stopping to see the *bas-relief carving* pictured on page 33. It was started in 1923 by the famed-sculptor **Gutzon Borglum**, but he quit or was fired in 1925. He went on to work on Mt. Rushmore. Meantime Stone Mountain sat idle till the site was purchased by the State of GA in 1958. Carving work restarted in 1964 and the simplified design that appears now was completed in 1972 using jet-powered cutting tools. To give you an idea of its size, at its maximum depth, the sculpture is cut 42' into the side of the mountain. It certainly needs a good power washing!

Wednesday 8/5 was a LONG day of driving, over 500-miles (almost 9 hours) between Tucker, GA and Midlothian, VA (just outside Richmond). We stopped briefly here to find out about an



upcoming special event. It is located at the SR's former Spencer Shops. This was a very early articulated auto rack.



On Thursday 8/6, we spent the day in Richmond. In the morning, Carol, Emmet, and Kathy went to see a nature center near our Holiday Inn Express hotel while I stayed in the room and worked on this report. In the afternoon, we went to see Richmond's **Canal Walk**. This is a walking and bike path built along what had been the historic **James River and Kanawha**

Canal. We skipped riding the boats that travel its 1.25 miles length. Just south of the canal is a



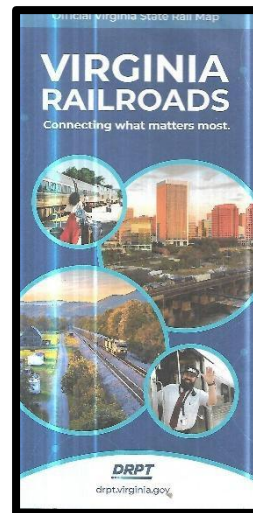
very rare,
triple-level rail crossing.

Luckily for me, a CSX coal train was on the upper level when I took this picture. The right shows a staged shot from the Internet.



We went to the end of the Canal Walk where there is a floodwall marked with the record water levels during several storms. Carol needed a bathroom break so she found there was a visitor center two blocks away. The rest of them walked there with her and then she called me to say the visitor center was located in the former **Main Street Station**. This was built in 1901 and used by the

Seaboard Air Line and the C&O. I walked over to see it and realized I had been to it several years ago. Since the early 2000s, Amtrak has served the station on a limited basis. We helped ourselves to travel brochures in the visitor center including this map. I wish I could have got one of these buttons.



For dinner, I went to a Wegman's near our hotel and bought a rotisserie chicken and other food that we ate in the breakfast room of the hotel.

Friday 8/7 was the last day of our trip. We left Richmond at 9:45am and drove north towards Alexandria. The traffic was light at first, but then so heavy that as we approached DC Google Maps took us off I-95 onto RT1 and other streets. We had a pizza lunch at the same Pepe's we ate at on the way down and then drove to visit with Larry Steuber, a friend from college who



lives out past Dulles Airport. We left his house at 3:45pm and immediately hit traffic. Again, we were directed off the highway to local streets. We crossed the Potomac River into Maryland on MD-15 and took that up to Gettysburg, PA. There we got on US-30, the Lincoln Highway, and stopped for dinner at a Bob Evan's in York. The rest of the drive home through Lancaster, KOP, etc., was one I have done many times. I splurged and rode on the PA Turnpike for one exit from the Blue Route to Ft.

Washington. This was the only toll paid during the whole trip! It was just 10pm when we pulled in our driveway!



I realized now that I forgot to mention two things. First, Chattanooga is where **Moon Pies** are made. This is an enrobed marshmallow-filled graham cracker snack. Originally,

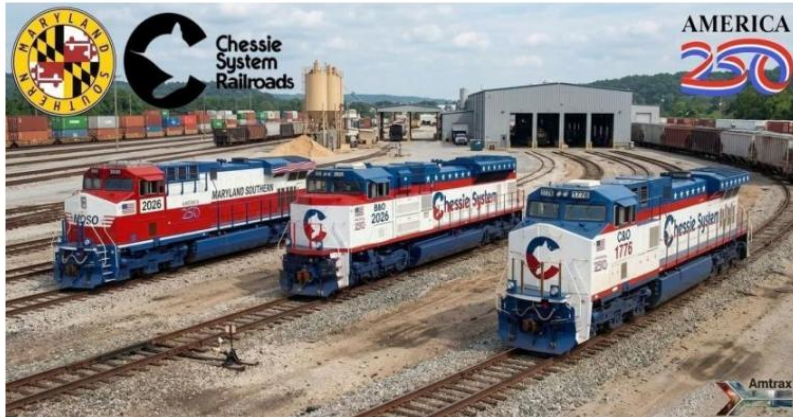
they were just chocolate-covered, but now they come in many varieties. Moon Pies were given out FREE at the registration desk all week. This picture shows them for sale at the TVRM Lastly, this picture shows all the FREE and other stuff that I came home with from the convention and the NTS.



Special: America 250 – How Different Railroads are Commemorating America in 2026

(unless noted, all pictures from individual railroads)

Quick History Lesson: July 4, 2026 commemorated the 250th anniversary of the 2nd Continental Congress adopting the *Declaration of Independence*, NOT the birth of the United States of America. The USA was born on September 3, 1783, when officials from Great Britain and Colonial America signed the Treaty of Paris, formally ending the American Revolution. July 4, 2026 was also the 200th anniversary of the deaths of former Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.



(Maryland Southern & Chessie System Heritage Units – CSX Transportation System)



(Rio Grande Railway Heritage Unit – Union Pacific Railroad)

Below – North Shore Scenic Railway (Duluth, MI)
Above Right – Metra (Chicago, IL)
Below Right - Canadian National (Memphis, TN)



Canadian National second unit



Western Maryland



East Penn Railroad



Appalachian Mines Railroad



Virginia & Ohio Railroad



Reading & Northern



Illinois Central Railroad



Wilmington & Western Railroad



Prairie Line Railroad

Railroad News

From the *Scranton Times*



Big Boy's Visit to Steamtown USA

During the two-week Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 visit in June 2026, 55,000 to 100,000 people flocked to the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton, PA. This shattered previous records, with roughly 35,000 rail fans packing the site in just the first two days alone.

The massive crowd size for the 4014 can be broken down into a few distinct records and statistics:

- Advance Tickets: Over 55,000 tickets were reserved for the opening days and the two-week display period, with over 25,000 reserved for opening day alone.
- Official Park Estimates: Prior to this, Steamtown's annual attendance was about 60,000 visitors. Officials estimated this single event would reach or exceed 100,000 visitors.
- Previous Record: For comparison, Steamtown's largest prior crowd was 30,000 people during its entire opening weekend in 1995.
- Line Wait Times: Wait times to see the locomotive up close in the railyard took upwards of 3 hours, with lines spilling out into nearby Lackawanna Avenue.

From *Trains*

B&O Railroad Museum changes name, focus

The new National Museum of Railroad History & Innovation will explore the “past, present [and] the possible” of American railroading

Bob Lettenberger

<https://www.trains.com>

Brookfield, WI

July 14, 2026

Baltimore, MD – What was the B&O Railroad Museum is now the National Museum of Railroad History & Innovation.

As part of its \$38 million expansion in advance of celebrating the 2027 U.S. railroading Bicentennial, the museum is changing its focus to look beyond the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, to the “past, present [and] the possible” of American railroading, the museum announced this morning.

Rooted in the place where American railroading began, the museum’s name change reflects a broader vision honoring the legacy of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad while embracing the continued role of railroads in shaping America’s future, the museum says.

“Nearly 200 years ago, a bold vision launched from this very place transformed our nation,” says Kris Hoellen, museum executive director. “As we prepare to commemorate the Bicentennial of American railroading, we are embracing a name that reflects both our responsibility to preserve one of America’s greatest transportation stories and our commitment to exploring where rail transportation is headed next.”

Museum expansion

The museum is located on the 40-acre Mt. Clare Shop campus where the B&O — the nation’s first common carrier railroad — was founded. The centerpiece of the site is the fully-enclosed 1884 Baldwin roundhouse. The current expansion will elevate the roundhouse in the museum experience, making it the crowning conclusion to a visit. A significant portion of the current work focuses on the [South Car Works building](#), which will become the museum’s entrance, exhibit center, and archives facility.

Founded by the B&O Railroad in 1953, the museum has focused on telling the origin story of American railroading. Original collection pieces were the remnants of the railroad’s exhibit at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and the railroad’s own 1927 centennial celebration.

Past, present, the possibilities

The 14,000 square-foot Innovation Hall, slated to open in January 2027, will introduce a new museum experience illustrating the present and future of railroading technology through “The Future is Here” exhibit. Interactive experiences will help visitors explore engineering, automation, sustainability, freight systems, passenger mobility, and emerging innovations that are shaping the next generation of U.S. railroading. Together,

the museum's campus and Innovation Hall will connect the place where American railroading began with the technologies shaping its future.

"As the birthplace of American railroading, we tell the story of America through the lens of the railroad," Hoellen says. "This perspective is fairly unique among transportation museums. Railroading is a story of ingenuity, perseverance, entrepreneurialism, and innovation — the American story."

"The Future is Here" will discuss present and future rail technologies, Hoellen says. It will be divided into four galleries: The future is faster, safer, smarter, and more connected. The exhibit will also showcase railroad careers that range from designing sensors to exploring how technology is changing traditional industry jobs. Other "on-campus workshops and labs will inspire our younger visitors to invent future solutions to today's problems with hands-on activities," Hoellen says.

Collections shift

The expansion also signals a shift in the museum's collections. Previously, the museum focused on rolling stock, small objects, and documents relating to the B&O and its affiliates. Under its new identity, the museum will expand its scope to include additional railroads and historic rail events beyond the B&O.

"As the birthplace of American railroading," Hoellen explains, "we believe it is a natural fit for us to widen our view of American railroading, while remaining loyal stewards to our site's important history. The mission of the collection will be two-fold. The first is that we will continue to honor our historic site and collect objects and documents that preserve the legacy of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

"Second, we will continue to collect and expand our collection of artifacts that preserve the impact of railroading's innovations on our society — technologically, culturally, socially, and economically. From this lens, we will not limit ourselves to any specific companies or seek to restrict our focus to any one region."

Archive access

Another facet of the expansion and focus change includes opening the museum's archives to the public. Holdings include documents and photographs from the B&O and other significant railroads in the region, including the Western Maryland Railway, Chessie System, and CSX Transportation.

"Our archives will now be on public display located directly adjacent to the entrance to the museum for maximum view," Hoellen says. Like other facilities, the new archive location will have a front-facing, public reading room, which will be staffed during museum hours.

"Visitors can walk-in and initiate a research request or genealogical search, explore parts of the collection we cannot put online, or talk with historians and archivists to learn more about their areas of interest" Hoellen says.

The new space will also feature rotating exhibits showcasing new acquisitions, the museum's most important smaller artifacts and documents, and lesser-known treasures. Visitors will also be able to request to see certain documents and artifacts while visiting.

A defining moment

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, a museum advocate, endorsed the new focus, saying: "This announcement represents a defining moment for one of our nation's most significant cultural institutions."

He adds: "The birthplace of American railroading has long preserved a story that began in Maryland and transformed America. As the National Museum of Railroad History & Innovation, it will continue to honor that extraordinary legacy while helping future generations understand rail's continuing importance to our economy, our communities and our future."

While the institution's name is changing, a strong commitment to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad remains. The story of the first U.S. common carrier railroad will continue to be a central feature of the museum's exhibits, collections, educational programs, and historic campus.

"The B&O is not being left behind — it is the foundation upon which the museum's expanded role as a nationally significant institution is built," Hoellen explains. "With today's announcement, we celebrate the past, the present, and the possibilities of American railroading."

For more information on the National Museum of Railroad History & Innovation, visit its [website](https://www.phillynmra.org).

From *Railfan & Railroad*

Semiquincentennial Locomotives to Gather in Spencer, N.C. in August

July 17, 2026

<https://whiteriverproductions.com>

Bucklin, MO

Specially-painted Semiquincentennial locomotives from across America will gather at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, N.C., August 28 to 30 for what is being billed as a once-in-a-lifetime event to celebrate the country's 250th anniversary. The event is being sponsored by White River Productions, NCTM, and *Trains Magazine*.

While the exact list of locomotives that will appear at the event has not yet been released, officials say Class Is, short lines and passenger railroads will all be represented.

"White River Productions is thrilled to participate with the North Carolina Transportation Museum to bring America's 250th celebration to the forefront," said Kevin EuDaly, owner of White River Productions and publisher of *Railfan & Railroad*. "This will be a rare opportunity to see a tremendous group of specially painted locomotives in one place."

The "America 250 Locomotive Celebration" is the third major gathering of locomotives at Spencer in the last 15 years, following 2012's Norfolk Southern Heritage Locomotive Family Portrait and 2014's Streamliners at Spencer event.

"The North Carolina Transportation Museum has been honored to host landmark events like the Norfolk Southern Heritage Locomotive Family Portrait in 2012 and Streamliners at Spencer in 2014," said Museum Director Kelly Alexander. "The America 250 Locomotive Celebration continues that tradition and gives the American public a chance to witness a piece of living railroad history."

"We're pleased to partner with the North Carolina Transportation Museum on this extraordinary event," *Trains* Editor Bill Stephens said. "The America 250 Locomotive Celebration will allow us to recreate the memorable 1975 *Trains* photo of Bicentennial locomotives in Chicago. But unlike that event in the Belt Railway of Chicago's Clearing Yard, which was closed to the public, the America 250 Locomotive Celebration will allow everyone with a paid admission ticket to get in on the fun."

With the Bob Julian Roundhouse as its backdrop, the resulting image of red, white, and blue locomotives is expected to become one of the defining railroad photographs of the Semiquincentennial year.

Each day of the three-day event will feature different photo opportunities, with locomotives rotated on the turntable and arranged in groupings by railroad. Night photography sessions sponsored and coordinated by *Railfan & Railroad*, and train rides pulled by a museum diesel locomotive will be offered. A list of participating locomotives in the America 250 event will be released as details are firmed up.

[Ed. Note: As of July 31, 30+ locomotives have been scheduled to appear.]

Ticket details and additional information are available at nctransportationmuseum.org. Tickets go on sale Monday, July 20 at 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time for museum members and Tuesday, July 21 at 9:00 a.m. Eastern Time for everyone. The North Carolina Transportation Museum is located at 1 Samuel Spencer Dr., Spencer, N.C.

From Mary Deeter via *Eastern Shore Undercover* Facebook page

Vehicle On Train Tracks – Driver Fighting With MSP Trooper (Wicomico County)

Connelly Mill Rd - Delmar, MD July 24, 2026

Troopers from the Maryland State Police (Salisbury Barrack E) have been dispatched to the railroad tracks off Connelly Mill Road for a female that has turned onto the train tracks and is blocking the trains.

The driver is now yelling at the train crew and doesn't seem to be in the right state of mind.

- 9:55 AM - A Trooper is on the scene. The train is blocked by a Chevy Avalanche with Virginia tags.
- 9:57 AM - The Trooper just advised that the driver is non-compliant and has used force on the lady.
- 9:59 AM - The Trooper just keyed up and is yelling for any officer in the area to respond to assist, Wicomico County Sheriff's Office or Delmar PD. The lady is actively fighting with the trooper.
- 10:02 AM - The Trooper now has the lady in custody. EMS is en route to the scene.
- 10:03 AM - There are now multiple backup officers on the scene.
- 0:06 AM - The Trooper has multiple scratches and injuries on her hands and arms from the non-compliant arrestee.

Multi-car train derailment reported in Laurens County, South Carolina

July 26, 2006

<https://www.wyff4.com/>

Greenville, SC

Laurens County, SC – Train cars derailed in Laurens County, South Carolina, on Monday morning, according to authorities.

The derailment was reported about 5:20 a.m. near Whitten Road in the Cross Hill area of the county. No injuries were reported. Despite the original report that 21 cars derailed, CSX officials have revised this number to 17.

Laurens County officials said six of those train cars have the capability to safely contain hazardous materials, but none of them contained hazardous material. That was confirmed by a CSX Hazmat team.

It was later revealed by Greenwood County officials that the white material spilled from one of the rail cars, previously identified by CSX as plastic polymer, has been identified as sodium borate (Borax), an active ingredient in laundry detergent.

At this time, officials do not believe any material from the spill has reached Lake Greenwood.

While there is no impact to the safety of Lake Greenwood's water, Laurens and Greenwood County officials asked residents and visitors are to use caution near the lower train trestle as cleanup operations continue.

A CSX spokesperson said the cause of the derailment is not known and under investigation.

"CSX has their own team to find out the cause, how to prevent it in the future and mitigate the damage done," Laurens County Fire Services Deputy Director Gabe Mull said.

Cleanup and Repair Operations Underway

Cleanup Operations

Greenwood County is working with the Department of Environmental Services (DES) to remain informed and provide updates on cleanup efforts. A DES inspector is on-site and will remain throughout the cleanup process.

CSX crews are conducting cleanup operations using mechanical equipment, including a skid steer and vacuum truck, to safely remove the material from the derailment area. A containment boom will also be deployed in the water as a precautionary measure to help ensure there are no residual impacts.

Repair Operations

In addition, CSX is beginning repairs to the damaged trestle. As part of the repair work, CSX will construct a stone cofferdam Monday night and plan to install a turbidity curtain to contain any material displaced during construction.

We are told that these measures are not related to the spill and are being implemented solely to facilitate trestle repairs.

"They have some very heavy equipment to lift, they have to rip up the tracks that have been damaged and then replace all of those, so some massive equipment on site taking care of that situation," Mull said.

Greenwood County will continue to monitor the situation in coordination with CSX, SCDNR, Laurens County, and other regional partners and will share additional information as needed.

What is Borax?

Borax is a naturally occurring mineral compound used in products such as detergents, cleaning agents, glass, ceramics, and other industrial applications.

Sodium borate is classified as a non-hazardous material for transportation. While elevated concentrations may affect sensitive vegetation and aquatic species, and direct contact with large amounts of material could cause skin irritation, CSX is actively removing the material through cleanup operations designed to prevent potential impacts to the surrounding environment.

Borax can be harmful if swallowed in large amounts, especially by small children and pets.

Impacts to Traffic

At this time, only one of the elevated openings beneath the lower train trestle is available for boat passage. Boaters traveling through the area should proceed with extreme caution, remain alert, and follow all directions from South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) officers.

Officials said the stretch of Whitten Road near Lake Greenwood reopened Monday afternoon, after residents on the south side of the train tracks that run perpendicular to Whitten Road were unable to leave for several hours.

Greatest Time of Your Life

Do not let anyone talk you out of spending 30 minutes at a train show because THAT 2 hours could be the greatest 5 hours of your life.

Crazy Laws Still on the Books

In Switzerland it is illegal to own just one guinea pig. Being a “social animal”, you MUST have at least 2.

In Alabama it is against state law to attach a live duck to another living object, even as a prank or game.

Lawyer Quits

A lawyer resigned from his law firm and became a dog groomer. It turns out he prefers boxers over briefs.

Additional Upcoming Events

from the Delmarva Timetable

Upcoming Events

(Mid Atlantic Train Show List, Model Train Shows And Schedules 2.0 Facebook page and subscribers)

(Highlighted events signify club participation. Highlighted events signify tentative club participation and information.)

Ongoing 2026 – Tour the Red Caboose. PRR 477123, built in 1917, at the Lewes Junction Railroad & Bridge Association. 1st & 3rd Sundays. Hours: 10a-2p, weather permitting. The caboose is located between the Lewes Public Library and the Lewes History Museum, 111 Adams Ave., Lewes DE. For more information, please visit: www.lewesjunctionrr.org.

Ongoing until October, 2026 – HO Scale Operating Session. DelMarVa Model Railroad Club, 103 E. State St., Delmar, DE. Time: Noon-5p. Watch the “HO Layout News” section of the *DelMarVa Timetable* for exact dates. Anyone with an interest in railroad operations is invited to participate. Club membership is NOT a prerequisite. For more info, contact: info@delmarvamodelrailroadclub.org.

Ongoing until November 2026 – Steaming Day at the Marshall Steam Museum at Auburn Heights. 3000 Creek Rd., Hockessin, DE. 1st Sunday of each month. Hours: 12:30-4:30p. Admission: \$15-Ages 13+, \$10: Ages 12 & under. FREE: Infants under 1 and Friends of Auburn Heights Members.

Ongoing 2026 – Delaware Train Gang. Monthly meetings, 2nd Wednesday. Smyrna Diner, 99 S. Cory Ln., Smyrna, DE. Starting at 1:30p. For more info, contact email: samtrains@outlook.com, or call Sam Eaton 302-373-0534.

September 12, 2026 – Patcong Valley Railroad Club Open House. 1308 US 40, Richland, NJ. Hours: 10a-3p. For more information, see our website: <https://www.petcongvalleyrailroad.com>.

September 19, 2026 – Delmar Heritage Day. Railroad Ave., Delmar, DE. **Rain date: September 26.** Hours: 10a-2p. There will be: <https://www.townofdelmar.us/heritage-day.htm> <https://www.townofdelmar.us/heritage-day.htm>.

September 19, 2026 – 6th Annual Hemlock Train Show. Ag Expo Building at Hemlock Fairgrounds, 7370 Fair St., Hemlock, NY. Hours: 10a-4p on Sep-19 and 10a-3p on Sep-20. For tables, please contact: Tom Frey at 585-734-1662 or Bob Kleinman at 716-440-3156.

September 19-20, 2026 – Pufferbilly Days™ Train Show & Swap Meet. Boone County Fairgrounds Community Building, 1601 Industrial Park Rd., Boone, IA. Hours: Sat: 9a-3p; Sun: 9a-1p. Admission: \$5, kids 12 & under FREE. Free parking, Restrooms available, model and train hobby vendors, railroadiana & memorabilia, railroad exhibits & displays and UPRR mainline a few hundred feet away for your train watching pleasure. For questions or info, contact: Jane Schultz at 515-230-0977.

September 20, 2026 – Old Colony Model Railroad Club 26th Annual Model Train Show. Taunton Inn & Convention Center, 700 Myles Standish Blvd. (Rt. 495, exit 25), Taunton, MA. Hours: 10a-3p. Admission: \$5, kids under 12 FREE with adult. Scouts in uniform FREE. FREE parking, all gauges of trains,

September 26, 2026 – Magnolia Train Show. Magnolia Community Center, 425 W. Brooke Ave., Magnolia, NJ. Hosted by Strasburg Model NJ) Railroad Club of New Jersey. (www.facebook.com/StrasburgModelRailroadNJ). Hours: 9a-3p. Admission: \$5 per adult, kids under 12 FREE.

New and used model trains for sale in all scales, operating model railroad layouts, handicap accessible, free parking, food sales. For info call: Dave Luciano at 856-745-4325 after 6p, or email: luciano1@comcast.net.

October 3, 2026 – Hurlock Fall Festival. Main St., Hurlock, MD. Hours: 10a-5p. The Fall Festival offers a full day of events – a kick-off parade down Main Street at 10 a.m., arts & craft show, flea market, food, family activities, music by Last Call Band with Buddy Bloom and Chain Break Band with Paul Baker, and train rides in two passenger cars. Advance Train Ride tickets (\$10 per person) can be purchased at the Town of Hurlock office at 311 Charles St. (8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday to Friday. **NOTE: Tickets not on sale as of press time.**). Limited tickets will be available the day of the event. The train departs from Hurlock Train Station for a round trip to Federalsburg at 11:00 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:30 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. For more information call the Town of Hurlock at 410-943-4181 or visit: <https://www.hurlock-md.gov>.

October 4, 2026 – 48th Annual Lehigh Valley Regional Train Show & Expo. Charles Chrin Community Center, 4100 Green Pond Rd., Easton, PA. Hours: 10a-3p. Admission: \$5, kids 12 & under FREE. Timetables, lanterns, model trains, pictures, books & magazines, food & beverages on site, kids can enter to win HO scale train set, ** **Digital presentations by noted local photographers** **. For more show info, visit: <https://www.lehighlines.org/chrin-flyer.html>.

October 10, 2026 – Patcong Valley Railroad Club Open House. 1308 US 40, Richland, NJ. Hours: 10a-3p. For more information, see our website: <https://www.petcongvalleyrailroad.com>.

October 15-18, 2026 – Tracks to Tidewater-NMRA Eastern Region Convention. Holiday Inn-Virginia Beach, 5655 Greenwich Rd., Virginia Beach, VA. For more info, visit: <https://mer-nmra.com/savethedate/index.html>.

October 20-24, 2026 - Fall Train Collectors Association (TCA) Eastern Division York Meet. York Expo Center, 334 Carlisle Ave., York, PA. TCA membership required to attend. Future dates at <https://easterntca.com/read-more.htm>.

November 14, 2026 – Central New York NRHS Great New York State Model Train Fair. NY State Fairgrounds, 581 State Fair Blvd, Syracuse, NY. Hours: Sat.: 10a-5p; Sun.: 10-4p. For details: please visit <https://www.modeltrainfair.com>.

November 15, 2026 – Model Train Show sponsored by Alto Model Train Museum Association, Inc. Blair County Convention Center, 1 Convention Center Dr. (Plank Rd. exit off I-99), Altoona, PA. Hours: 9a-2p. 140 +/- tables of scale models, toy trains & parts, food available, clean restrooms, well-lit display area, over 80 parking spaces. Come visit the largest trains show from Pittsburgh to Harrisburg. For more info, contact: Steve Barr, 1422 20th Ave., Altoona, PA, or call 814-312-6178.

November 21, 2026 – Hartly Train Show. Hartly Volunteer Fire Co., 2898 Arthurville Rd., Hartly, DE. 9a-2p. Admission: \$5, kids 12 and under FREE. Over 150 tables of toys and trains. A model train will be on display in the engine bay. Food is available for purchase made by the Ladies Axillary. For more info, visit: <https://hartlyfire51.com/>

November 28-29, 2026 – Thanksgiving Model Train and Vintage Train Show. Roberts Wesleyan University, 2301 Westside Dr., Rochester NY. Open at 9:30 for TTCS

November 28-29, December 5-6, 2026 – DelMarVa Model Railroad Club Open House. 103 East State Street, Delmar, DE . Enjoy 8,000 square feet of trains operating on seven layouts displaying several scales. Layout in the Camelot Hall on the 2nd floor. Access is stairs only. Hours: Sat.: 11a-4p; on Sun.: Noon-4p. For details, please visit: www.delmarvarailroadclub.org. (December 6 is the 40th Anniversary of the club's first open house.)

December 12, 2026 – TCA Keystone Division Meet. Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Rd. Lancaster, PA. This is the intersection of US Route 30 and PA Route 72. Hours: 9a-1p with Keystone members admitted at 8am. For details, please contact Russ MacNair, Meet Registrar, email russmacnair@gmail.com or call 717-664-2335.

January 2-3, 9-10, 2027 – DelMarVa Model Railroad Club Open House. 103 East State Street, Delmar, DE. Enjoy 8,000 square feet of trains operating on seven layouts displaying several scales. Layout in the Camelot Hall on the 2nd floor. Access is stairs only. Hours: Sat.: 11a-4p; on Sun.: Noon-4p. For details, please visit www.delmarvarailroadclub.org



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

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

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

Philly Train Trivia Answers

by Adam Eyring

1) How many miles did the Fairmount Park Transit have?

Answer: Fairmount Park Transit was 8.8 miles.

2) What was historical about Fairmount Park open cars?

Answer: The Fairmount Park Transit open cars were the next to last open cars in regular service in the US. (Connecticut Company's football specials in New Haven outlasted them).

IQ Test Answer

by Albert Einstein

What is the missing element in the following series:

2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 30, 34, 40, 46, 52, 56, 60, 63, _____, 69.

Answer: Millbourne. These are the stations on the Market Street Subway-Elevated in Philadelphia. If you missed it, don't feel bad. This was a question from an advanced mathematics course in a Ph.D program.



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

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

YouTube channel:

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

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/NMRAORGModelRailroading>

Upcoming NMRA Conventions



Division Apparel

Division apparel is available in the following styles: Short-sleeve polo with or without pocket, short- or long-sleeve button down shirt, and cap. Details can be found on the order websites.

New apparel with NMRA branded logo (logo available in three colors):

<https://www.threadsembroideryllc.com/nmra>

Email: email@threadsembroideryllc.com



Original apparel with traditional division logo: https://www.daylightsales.net/?s=Philly+nmra&post_type=product

Email: daylightsales@gmail.com



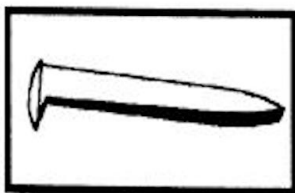
Manufacturer's descriptions and specs:

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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