

BUILDER'S PLATE

November 2018

Volume 1, Issue 8

Newsletter of Division 12, Mid Central Region, NMRA, Inc.

Superintendent's Report

Happy birthday Division 12! It was one year ago this month that the Mid Central Region board of directors gave official approval for the formation of Division 12 in the MCR.

So how are we fairing after a year? When the request was made by Division 5 to help in the formation of the new division there were twenty-two NMRA members in the eight counties that were to make up the new Division 12. As of the roster report dated November 1, 2018 we are now at thirty-six members. After this past weekend's train show in Erie I know that number is going up as we had one person join at the show and several more show interest because of our upcoming layout tour (it's not an open house).

I was curious how we compare to other divisions in our region. So here are the numbers:

Division 1 - 96 members
Division 2 - 212 members
Division 3 - 150 members
Division 4 - 195 members
Division 5 - ?
Division 6 - ?
Division 7 - 260 members
Division 8 - ?
Division 9 - ?
Division 10 - 65 members
Division 11 - ?
Division 12 - 36 members

The Divisions that I did not have counts on ether did not include them in their BOD reports or did not send in a report.

Happy Model Railroading

Brad White
Div. 12 MCR
Superintendent

Next Membership Events:

Model railroads will be open to members and their guests this Saturday, November 10, 2018 in Fairview, Erie, McKean, Cambridge Springs, Meadville, and Warren PA. A flyer will be attached to this newsletter's email.

The Division 12 Christmas party will be open to NMRA members, their family, and guests on December 8 from 1:00 until 4:00 PM at Hoss's Family Steak & Sea on W 26th Street, Route 20 in Erie.

The next membership meeting will be in February at the Trolley Station.



Division 12, MCR, NMRA, Inc.
The Alleghany Western Division:
Expanding your model railroading horizons

Please visit our website: www.div12mcr.org

Or  NMRAAlleghanyWesternDivision

Meetings

Membership meetings typically include announcements and limited business, Bring and Brag during which members share what they have been working on, and an educational model-railroad related program, presentation, or clinic.

NMRA: <https://www.nmra.org/>

Mid Central Region:

<http://www.midcentral-region-nmra.org/>

Division 12 Superintendent:

Superintendent@div12mcr.org



Officers and BOD

Superintendent: Brad White —
superintendent@div12mcr.org

Assistant Superintendent: Mike Hauk

Clerk/Treasurer: Dave Ellis —
clerk@div12mcr.org

Board of Directors: Dick Bradley, Doug Sandmeyer, Chris Mincemoyer

Division 12 Upcoming Events

November: NMRA-only Model Railroad Tour: Model railroads from the division will be open to NMRA members on November 10 from 10:00 AM until 4:00PM.

December: Division 12 Christmas Party: The division party will be open to NMRA members, their family, and guests on December 8 from 1:00 until 4:00 PM at Hoss's Family Steak & Sea on W 26th Street, Route 20 in Erie.

January: Division 12 Ops Sessions: Members may open their railroads to instructional operations sessions.

February: Membership meetings: resuming after winter weather break on February 9, 2019 at the Cambridge Springs Trolley Station.

March: Erie Train Show: Division 12 members will put on clinics on the stage at Rainbow Gardens. T-Trak committee members will participate with their modules with other groups to have a larger combined layout. The division will have commission and donation sales.

Upcoming Model Railroad Events

Greenberg's Great Train and Toy Show: November 10 and 11, 2018

Pittsburgh area public train show located at 209 Mall Blvd, Monroeville, PA 15146 from 10 AM – 4 PM.

37th Annual Greater Buffalo Train and Toy Show: November 17 and 18, 2018

This show is held at The Events Center at the Hamburg Fairgrounds. Show hours are Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Sunday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

RIT Tiger Tracks Train Show and Sale December 8 and 9, 2018

Rochester, NY's largest train show. Show hours are Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM.

Mid Central Region Convention: May 2 – 5, 2019

Our region's yearly convention, *The Bullet 2019*, is relatively close this year, in Boardman, Ohio. Please note the request for volunteers from Division 12 in this issue of the *Builder's Plate*.

Links to these and additional upcoming model railroad events can be found on the Division 12 Website: <http://www.div12mcr.org>
Use the search button on the "Welcome" page or use the "News/Events" page, either by scrolling or clicking on the "Train Shows and Conventions" category link.

If you are aware of upcoming railroad events, please let the *Builder's Plate* editor and the webmaster know, so that we can list them.

Editor: clerk@div12mcr.org

Webmaster: webeditor@div12mcr.org

Plans for 2019: Thoughts from the Clerk

After our October membership meeting we received the following email from a member:

Please let the Executive Team know that I thought we had a very good meeting today. Division 12 is moving in a direction that I feel is beneficial to members especially the newbie model railroad novice (which I am).

I want to learn and it seems to me the framework you are carving out is in that direction.

At a recent board of directors meeting, we initiated planning for the schedule and agenda for the membership meetings in 2019. We were in agreement that we needed less business and more modeling content. In addition to the meetings, we intend to offer mentoring possibilities and "how-to" articles in the *Builder's Plate*. Yes, we are taking on a major project with September's "Big Event, aka the Mini-Meet", but our general focus will be on learning, whether basics for a new modeler or new skills for more experienced modelers.

The *Builder's Plate* is a publication of Division 12, Mid Central Region, NMRA. All opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of Division 12, the MCR, or the NMRA.

Editor: David Ellis

Division 12 Volunteers Needed for *The Bullet in Boardman*

I was most pleased to hear of Division 12's willingness to help us run *The Bullet in Boardman* (May 2-5, 2019). I urge those wishing to help to please contact Luana Peters, our volunteer coordinator. Her email contact is the "click here to volunteer" link on www.div1-mcr-nmra.org/the-acy-bullet-2019

At this point almost all volunteer positions are open and if anyone has a specific interest I'm sure they can be accommodated. Below I've attached a list of the areas we need help with as we see it now. I expect this list may expand as we get closer to the convention date.

1. Convention administration/registration
2. Company Store and White Elephant
3. Hospitality Room
4. Bus Captains
5. Contest room
6. Arts & Crafts judges
7. Model contest judges
8. Module judges

9. Module load in/load out
10. AV support

Steve Zapytowski, MMR #612
Assistant Superintendent
Division 1, Mid-Central Region
National Model Railroad
Association
www.div1-mcr-nmra.org/the-acy-bullet-2019

Networking at the Erie Train Show:

Thoughts from the editor and photographs from Harriet Beckman

Last weekend, Division 12 had several tables at the Erie Train Show at Rainbow Gardens where we "showed the flag."



Mike H. and Doug S. tend the tables

We had trains running on the T-Trak modules all day; gave out Halloween pretzels; talked with prospective new

members; helped two members of the Meadville Model Railroad Club put together boxcar kits; and sold some donated building kits, railroad hats, and N scale pickle cars. (Thank you to Mike H., Brad W., and Ed B. for donating! Special thanks to Harriet B. for running home for extra lighting.)

In addition to showing the flag, the train show was a chance for some division networking.



Left to Right: Dave E., Lee F., Brad W., and Mike H.

Here, Lee F., our Social Committee Chair, talks with the Executive Committee about RSVPs for the Christmas party and plans for the summer picnic in June. Brad W. and Dave E. met with the folks running the show about having clinics on stage in March. Brad talked with other groups with T-Trak modules at the show and started plans for a larger combined layout at later shows. Members stopped by and talked with Mike and Dave about working towards Achievement Program certificates. Other members stopped by to give feedback on our first year. (Mostly positive, just like our experience at the Erie Train Show this year!)

A Modeler's Thoughts:

Reflections and Advice on Operations Sessions for Newbies by Dick Bradley

I received the following e-mail from Brad White:

> I was thinking about the operations part, last night and I feel that new members are afraid of signing up for op-session. We should have a beginners' op-session. The best way to learn is hands on. Dick, we're on the same page. Sign me up.

>

> Div. 12 MCR

> Superintendent

My response to Brad and what happened:

Yes, we are on the same page about having op-sessions for newbies. To me newbies are people who have never operated on my layout. They may be either old hands in the operating game or rank beginners. Neither is familiar with the idiosyncrasy of my layout. Both need introductory guidance.

I think of welcoming newbies as a teaching opportunity. I need to prepare guidance for them, both paperwork and oral. And I need to arrange the trains in the session to allow completion of a run in a fairly short time (sense of accomplishment with little stress for the newbie). And the trains need to have some sort of functional

organization (sense of participation in a coordinated railroad operation for the newbie).

As I prepared for the recent op session with newbies I made for each participant

- 1) A simplified diagram of the layout
- 2) A simplified train order/switch list
- 3) A cheat sheet about NCE engineer radio cabs

Each of these single-sheet documents was accompanied by a brief talk. These three documents were used before going to the distractions of the layout. Newbies were welcome to bring them to the layout.

When at my layout I plan to give more detail about track switch-toggles (no hand throws), the use of KaDee couplers (yellow marks) and macros (staging track selection). As trains run I explain their function on the layout. All that instructional talk and the ensuing questions take time away from running trains. It's a lot of extra activity beyond a "normal" op session. I hope that orientation talk time is not wasted but makes starting smoother and the op session more enjoyable.

As trains begin to run I find that my role changes from teacher to coach. If regular crewmembers participate in the op session they may become coaches. Often a crewmember pairs with a newbie to jointly operate. In these pairings be sure the crewmember is willing and able to assume the role of coach.

The newbie op session was run on Sunday, October 21, 2018.

During a break I asked for comments about my introduction to the session. The responses were positive - or merely polite. And I received a couple of suggestions for improvement. So some attention was paid to the three pages and the talk. The NCE throttle cheat sheet needs improvement, particularly the use of the option button and the requirement to clear throttles. At the layout I forgot to explain uncoupling, and it was an initial problem.

During the op session I explained the functions and interactions of the trains. I think that was helpful. In general I am pleased with the operations during this four-hour newbie op session. Apparently my introductory attempt was of some value.

I'll use these procedures again and I recommend this sort of planned newbie introduction to others. While your introduction to your layout may contain the same topics as mine, your introduction is particular to your layout. Make a track sketch omitting yard and industry details to guide us around your layout. Explain to us newbies the car routing system which you use. The throttle cheat sheet should tell us how to use the brand you have. If you require use of bells, whistles and rule 17, give the newbies how-to instructions. And if your layout is modern enough to use Form D, plan to give us lots of instructions and equipment.

Finally, a few words for the newbies: Do NOT assume; ask for guidance. If photos are allowed do NOT stop operations for long times while you compose the perfect image. Do NOT wear loose or floppy clothing

(particularly raglan sweater sleeves). Unless the owner says otherwise do NOT bring food and drink into the layout. Do NOT worry about goofs; they can be fixed. And smile, model railroading sessions are fun!

Division 12 Christmas Party

Let's make this year's Div. 12 party memorable fun for all! So all members please attend and bring a guest. If you haven't already, Please RSVP to Lee at social@div12mcr.org by November 10, 2018 so we can give Hoss's an idea of how many guests will be attending.

The Christmas party will be at Hoss's Family Steak & Sea on W. 26th Street, Route 20 in Erie on December 8, the second Saturday in December. The function will be from 1:00 until 4:00 as their party room is available from 12:30 PM until 4:30 PM and is right sized for our group. It can accommodate 30-50 people, which should be big enough for our members plus spouses, family, or guests. We can order traditional style, full service order at the table, from the full menu. We'll want separate checks so gratuity will be separate too. Also, we have several

banquet tables reserved to set up the T-Trak modules.

Mentoring in Division 12

At the October membership meeting, we discussed several approaches to offering mentoring in the division. Ultimately, we decided the best approach was to keep it simple, or at least, informal. We came up with starting a list of members who felt comfortable mentoring on specific topics. To contact the mentors, either email the clerk (clerk@div12mcr.org) who will forward your email, or contact them directly.

- Brad White: DCC, Signaling
- Dave Ellis: Backdrops
- Ed Blenner: Scenery
- Doug Sandmeyer: Benchwork, Wiring, Soldering

Newsletter Submissions!

To publish the *Builder's Plate* every month (our goal) we need submissions from the members. Modeler's tips, modeler's projects, and any railroad or modeling related stories make excellent submissions. You don't need to be an officer or board member to submit a short article. Write it up and submit it as a Word document attached to an email to clerk@div12mcr.org.

Modeler's Tip:

Ground Cover That's Not Ground Foam by Dave Ellis



As you can see on the base scenery on this T-Trak module, I use ground foam. I have nothing against ground foam, but model railroaders can dig deeper in our search for scenery materials.

Literally, we can dig in the back yard for dirt to represent, well, dirt. Gerry Leone, in a clinic on "dirt cheap" scenic materials, suggests putting the dirt in a bucket in the back of the garage for a few months to dry out and let any creepy crawlies crawl out. I was in a hurry, so I spread my dirt on a baking sheet and baked it in the oven for about thirty minutes.



After it cooled down, I used a strainer from my collection to separate the dirt from the pebbles. Both are useful for different applications. To make even finer dirt, one can use stocking material over a container to sift/sort into fine dirt and medium coarse dirt.

While out in the yard, digging up dirt, other scenery materials may be at hand: gravel, dried stems from the herb garden, and dried leaves from trees.



Years ago, I went into production mode grinding up leaves and I still have jars of scale leaves in my collection. If memory serves me right, it was a Lou Sassi book that introduced me to using an old blender to pulse leaves, with enough water to cover them, after tearing the leaves themselves from the stem. Then, using an old t-shirt to wring out most of the water, one spreads the results on a baking sheet and dries it in the oven. Again, filtering through a strainer provides fine and medium leaves.

While it took a trip to the big box store (and not even the local one), and it wasn't free, tube sand is another inexpensive "not ground foam" ground cover. While I use it straight out of the

tube, it can be sifted, separating out the larger pebbles. As I use it for talus around rocks and along river edges, I like the mixture of sizes before straining. It wasn't free, but the sixty-pound bag will last a very long time.



Using natural materials can help keep the costs of scenery supplies down, but more importantly they add texture and variety. Ground foam has its place, but it is not the only ground cover.

Committee Chairs and Volunteer Positions:

Achievement Program: Mike Hauk
ap@div12mcr.org

Newsletter: Dave Ellis
clerk@div12mcr.org

Operations Coordinator: Dale Dresser
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Social Committee: Lee Farnsworth
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T-Trak: Doug Sandmeyer
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Webmaster: Chris Mincemoyer
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NMRA Partnership Program

The NMRA Partnership Program is a member benefit that truly has a tangible payback. The NMRA has partnered with model railroad manufacturers of all sizes, giving them exposure on the NMRA website in return for receiving generous discounts for NMRA members all year long. Some provide members with special codes, others prefer a phone or email order, but all appreciate the additional business from our members. And of course, our members appreciate the extra savings -- savings that can actually pay the cost of NMRA membership!

For complete descriptions of the partners, the discount they offer, and instructions on applying the discount on your order visit the NMRA Partnership website (<https://www.nmra.org/partnerships>). If you are not signed in as a member, you will only see a list of the partners offering the discounts. To see the instructions on how to apply the discounts you need to register or log in as a registered member. If you have not registered, here is an [FAQ](#) with instructions for how to register at the NMRA website.