
BUILDER'S PLATE

October 2019

Volume 2, Issue 9

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

Superintendent's Report

Our division has been, and continues to be, very busy. We had a successful first event in our Alleghany Western Mini-Meet (AWMM). It was a great learning experience for those that helped organize or volunteered during the day's events. A special thanks to members' wives that really stepped up to run the raffle and sales room; we would have been lost without them. Thanks also to Shorty Parker, not only for donating time, but also for the many items in the White Elephant Sale to help the Division's bottom line

We can pat ourselves on the back, but that event is over and we need to be looking forward. Yes there will be a mini-meet next year, but what we need to focus on even more now is the Northern Express, the 2021 Regional Convention. The mini-meet was so well received by those from outside the division that we've now raised

expectations pretty high for the convention. Please give serious thought to how you can help. We urgently need someone that is tech savvy to set up and run a separate convention website including online registration and payment. So give it some thought and reach out to one of your board members and let them know you can or will help.

We will be asking for volunteers from other divisions to help staff areas during the convention. Lee Farnsworth will be heading this up just like he did for the mini-meet, just on a bigger scale. Lee did an outstanding job making sure all the critical areas were staffed.

I recently attend a NER Division 2 meeting in the Boston, Massachusetts area and did a short presentation for the 2021 Convention. It was well received, and I even met a gentleman

Next Membership Event:

Our next membership meeting will be held on Saturday, October 12 at 1:00 PM at the Cambridge Springs Trolley Station. The program will include a recap of the AWMM, a look at some upcoming activities, and a short program on The Golden Spike Award. The "What's on Your Workbench" segment will continue with members sharing what they have been working on. Our Social Committee chair is organizing an optional lunch gathering. Please read his report for the details.

originally from Erie. He said that he will definitely attend our convention, so I consider it well worth the time spent. It was also great to see how other divisions run their meetings. I got some great ideas for our meetings.

All in all we are on track to keep building our division and moving forward.

Happy Model Railroading

Brad White
MCR Division 12
Superintendent

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; "What's On Your Workbench," during which members share what they have been working on; and educational model railroad related programs, presentations, or clinics.

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 —
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Assistant Superintendent: Mike Hauk

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

Board of Directors: Rob Bennett, Doug Sandmeyer, Chris Mincemoyer

Division 12 Upcoming Events

October: Membership Meeting: 1:00 PM
October 12, 2019 at the Cambridge Springs Trolley Station. Program: mini-meet after-action reflection and ongoing planning for 2021 regional convention.

November: Erie Train Show: November 3, 2019
at Rainbow Gardens is continuing under new ownership. Volunteers are needed for the food concession area.

November: Model Railroad Tours: We are reconfiguring the model railroad tours and details will be distributed by email to the members.

December: Christmas Party: December 14, 2019 from 1:00 – 4:00 PM at Hoss's Steak and Sea House in Erie again this year.



Upcoming Model Railroad Events

The SouthWest Ohio Operations (SWOOPS) weekend has been scheduled for October 18-20, 2019. SWOOPS is an opportunity to operate four sessions among twenty fine layouts. The event is sponsored by the Cincinnati Division 7 of the NMRA's Mid-Central Region. Operatingsessions.com will be updated regularly, and we expect to open for registration at the end of August. Establish an email account on the website to be notified of new information.

Greenberg's Train Show: November 9-10, 10 AM-4 PM. 209 Mall Blvd. Monroeville, PA 15146

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.



ERIE PA RAILRODIANA AND MODEL TRAIN SHOW

Sunday, November 3, 2019

10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

RAINBOW GARDENS - WALDAMEER PARK

200 Peninsula Drive, Millcreek, PA

FROM PITTSBURGH: Take I-79 to Rt. 90 West to 832 North to Alt. 5 West

FROM BUFFALO: Take I-90 West to 832 North to Alt. 5 West

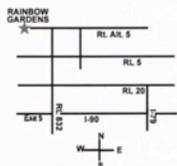
FROM CLEVELAND: Take I-90 East to 832 North to Alt. 5 West

FROM RT. ALT. 5: Take Rt. Alt. 5 turn left go 1/4 mile, turn right and drive through the arches marked Rainbow Gardens.

DOOR PRIZE

—ADMISSION—

Adults — **\$5.00** Senior Citizens & Students 12-18 — **\$4.00**
Under 12 accompanied by an adult **FREE**



DEALER TABLES AVAILABLE

14 FT. — **\$35.00 per Table** 8 Ft. — **\$25.00 per Table**
\$30.00 — 2 Tables or more

CONTACT: IRON SPIKE PRODUCTIONS
244 Crestview Rd
Slippery Rock, PA 16057
(724) 992 - 2035

TRAIN SHOW & SALE

OUR 29TH YEAR



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2019 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Holy Family Parish Saffin Center (NEW LOCATION)
3938 POPLAR LEVEL RD, LOUISVILLE, KY 40213

- Model Trains in All Scales
- Operating Layouts and Displays
- Retail Sales - Over 100 tables
- Information Stations
- Hourly Door Prizes!
- Great Food & Beverages
- FREE Parking

ADMISSION

\$6.00 Per Person – Children 12 and under free with an adult
NMRA members can enter the show at 9:00 AM
with your current membership card in hand

Dealer Tables available - \$30 per table

Sponsored by Division 8 - Mid Central Region - NMRA

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

Website: <http://div8-mcr-nmra.org>

Facebook: @Division8.MCR.NMRA



CSX Pride in Service to make a big show in northwestern Pennsylvania.

Following in the 2017 footsteps of C&O "Chessie" locomotive #8272, the THREE recently christened "CSX Pride in Service" locomotives are scheduled to visit the hallowed erecting halls and grounds of Erie Wabtec/GE where they were built. They will then move to Lake Shore Railway Historical Museum in

North East, PA, for public display on Saturday, October 12, and Sunday, October 13. The museum will open at Noon on both days. An extended schedule of events, including a night time photo shoot with the “*CSX Pride in Service*” locomotives and parts of the “*Locomotives that our Parents & Grandparents Built Collection*” of GE locomotives at Lake Shore, is planned. Please follow our Facebook and webpages for schedules, updates and news.

The “*CSX Pride in Service*” locomotives were originally built between 2008 and 2015 at the Erie General Electric Locomotive Assembly plant at Lawrence Park. The specialty painting and lettering was performed by the same talented CSX railroad professionals from Huntington, West Virginia, shops who recreated the classical “Chessie Cat” Chessapeake & Ohio Railroad paint scheme on GE locomotive #8272 that CSX donated to Lake Shore Railway Historical Society in 2017. Each CSX locomotive is painted to honor the five *CSX Pride in Service* partners and to promote the *CSX Pride in Service* program, a signature community investment initiative with a goal of positively impacting 100,000 military service members, veterans, first responders and their families by 2020.

Additional info about the *Pride in Service* program and these uniquely painted locomotives can be found at

<https://www.csx.com/index.cfm/about-us/media/press-releases/csx-unveils-new-commemorative-pride-in-service-locomotive/>

“We honor our heroes in so many ways,” stated Lake Shore Railway Historical Society president, Alex Hummel. “It is fitting that we honor their service in this railroad setting, too!”

The three “*CSX Pride in Service*” locomotives’ visit to Lake Shore Railway Museum allows another segment of the ‘hero population’ to have their day as well. The volunteer heroes of the Lake Shore Railway Historical Society, which was started in 1956 by community members mostly employed at Erie General Electric, have been preserving and sharing local railroad history and the story of the “*Locomotives that our Parents & Grandparents Built*” for over 60 years. The “*CSX Pride in Service*” locomotives will, *briefly*, become a part of that collection and will be available to have their story told while on display on Saturday, October 12 and Sunday, October 13.

Schedules, updates and news available at: Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/lakeshorerailwaymuseum>

Webpage:
<https://www.lakeshorerrailway.com>

Press release from Ray Grabowski Jr. and the Lake Shore Railway Museum

T-TRAK report October 2019



CMR at the throttle AWMM September 2019

With the help of the folks from CMR we had a very nice T-TRAK display at our mini-meet in September. Bruce Bloomster, Dave Ellis, Doug Sandmeyer, and Brad White, supplying seven of the modules, represented the folks from Division 12. CMR surprised us with some new T-TRAK module platforms including one for a tunnel module. What's next CMR?

It's really time to start building (or finishing) your module for the "Steel City Express" May 28-31, 2020. Bruce DeMaeyer, the T-TRAK coordinator for the region and layout curator extraordinaire, says that the ballroom at the convention center has been secured and we will have 3500 square feet of display space for the layout and vendors.

Doug Sandmeyer
ttrak@div12mcr.org

Social Committee Report Allegheny Western Mini-Meet and Upcoming Events

Thank you Brad and Mike for hosting excellent operating sessions for the mini-meet. At Brad's, as conductor, I got to pilot with an engineer new to the railroad, which helped reinforce my knowledge of the Chautauqua Branch. At Mike's I was a student dispatcher on the Susquehanna & NY. I appreciated that very much as dispatcher hours are hard to get.

Thank you, Rob, Larry, Deb, Shorty, Brad, Harriet, Dave, and Renee for volunteering for Registration/ Information/ Troubleshooting desk, and Display/ White Elephant/ Raffle desk. I volunteered for two time slots, earlier at the registration desk and later as a troubleshooter leaving me time for four clinics.

Thank you Dick and Rodger for their clinic on Downtown Updates and Streamline Moderne Buildings. Do you know that Erie has an iconic Streamline Moderne former Greyhound Bus Terminal (now Coconut Joe's) at 28 N Park Row? And that the Erie Downtown Development Corporation that now owns it wants to demolish it? I agree with this author, don't destroy it! Read all about it here:

<https://www.goerie.com/opinion/20190906/erie-greyhound-terminal-is-rare-dont-destroy-it-letters-to-editor>

Thank you to George Pandelios for presenting his clinic on building the PRR Panhandle/ modeling the prototype. At another meet I attended a different clinic he presented on the PRR



Bill Schopf holds the audience's attention

Our division was well represented by seven of the clinicians with other divisions supplying the remaining five. The clinics were well received and rumor had it that a run on wood at several home improvement stores occurred after Bill Schopf's clinic on wood block structures. Way to go Bill!

My efforts to chair the clinics was a rewarding experience in many ways. I learned a little more about our Mid Central Region, made a few contacts, and I got to meet some very talented people.

I would encourage anyone thinking of giving a clinic to give it a try. You will learn more about the subject matter and have a good time sharing your knowledge with others. A bonus is your clinic will also count towards an AP Certificate.

I now have a new hate/respect for my laptop and its related software however. No worries, I've found a continuing-ed class to try and remedy the situation.

Doug Sandmeyer

Treasurer/Clerk Report

The Alleghany Western Mini-Meet was successful financially. While I had some concerns early on, we ended up over four hundred dollars ahead. I recommend that we carry on with our plan to have a second mini-meet next year at the Ambassador and build on our initial success. While the board of directors has not had a chance to meet since the AWMM to go over participants' feedback forms, we did share some thoughts over email. Combining a few of those thoughts with my feedback, here are a few ideas moving forward:

- The raffle was a big success, both in gathering interest and financially. The revenue went way over what I had budgeted and was the main reason the event was a financial success. A big thanks to Mike and the suppliers who donated!
- Rob's "advertising" on his YouTube channel attracted participants. The numbers of participants that were not NMRA members or from other regions/divisions also helped make the event successful.
- The white elephant sales were below what I had budgeted. My observations were that the sales that we did have were "priced to sell" items less than twenty or twenty-five dollars and items from Shorty's box of miscellaneous "free or donate what you want" items. A number of good quality and reasonably priced locomotives (but above the twenty-five dollar range) had no takers. I am guessing we should build on this experience next time.
- Apparently some participants downgraded their scores on the clinic rooms due to the low temperatures/air conditioning issues.

- The AWMM committee will be revisiting the schedules of ops-sessions and model railroad visits.
- A final question based on several different sets of feedback: Should we switch our food expenses from the continental breakfast and end-of-day snacks to a provided lunch?

Dave Ellis

clerk@div12mcr.org

Brick and Mortar Hobby Stores in Division 12

We have a dearth of train stores here in the division. Several that exist are in New York State. If you visit them, let them know you are a member of the NMRA and you learned about them from the Division 12 newsletter.

Terry's Train Shop

1739 Foote Ave Ext.
Jamestown, NY 14701

716-397-5545

East Dyke Depot

332 E. Dyke Street
Wellsville, NY 14895

585-593-0005

Bova's Music and Train Shoppe

31 McClurg Street
Westfield, NY 14787

716-326-6891

Brick and Mortar Hobby Stores Near Division 12

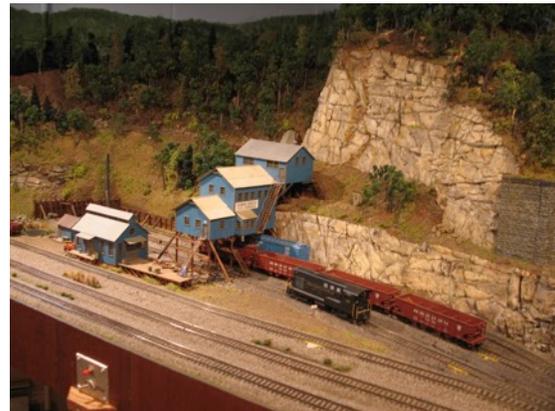
If you visit them, let them know you are a member of the NMRA and you learned about them from the Division 12 newsletter.

Hobby Express

1713 Route 228
Cranberry Twp., PA 16066

724-779-2000

FOR SALE by member



B.T.S. Cabin Creek Mine & Tipple

The model is removed from the layout. It includes buildings, dock platform, operating conveyor with reservoir to hold coal, and DC Motor. Does not include any scenery or track. Interested: Call Shorty Parker 814-476-1030 or 814-823-5929 (cell)

Mentoring in Division 12

At a membership meeting last fall, 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

Thinking about Fascia

Bill Schopf



Fascias are the last things modelers think about when building their railroads. But fascias are critical to the model railroad. They provide places to mount station and direction signs, train orders, switchlists, car cards, and throttles. But more importantly they help pull the railroad and room environment

together. They frame the railroad and make it a picture.

Masonite and paneling are common materials used to build fascias. Both can be easily cut and contoured to marry into the layout landscape. And they can be easily painted. The prevalent colors most experts recommend for fascias are greens or brown earth tones primarily because the prevalent colors on the railroad are green from the grass and foliage and browns from the earth.

For the past couple of years I have hated half my fascia. Several years ago I found a terrific coffee-colored paneling at Home Depot and I faced my entire layout with it. I should have bought all of what they had because it is no longer available. In fact, paneling is pretty much not available any more at any store. And until Martha Stewart decides that paneling is the next in-thing for home decorating, paneling will probably not be manufactured in any kind of varieties.

So I found myself between a rock and a hard place. Because I constantly change things, I was stuck with fascia that had holes drilled all over it where I had pulled out the push button controls when I decided to abandon Tam Valley Singlet turnout controllers and just go with the manual hand throws on Peco turnouts. Over the years I had built a four inch deep extension to the front of the layout here, a three inch extension there, and a five inch extension over there. What I was left with was a long line of what I call "juts and jits." Nothing flowed. The fascia simply looked terrible to my eyes.

I tried WeldBonding brown craft paper from Joann Fabrics to Masonite and attaching that over the worst looking of the old paneling fascia. That looked okay for a while until use and time started to wear it down. It peeled and buckled. I hated it.

So when I decided to put in yet another addition -- this time a 3 1/2 inch wide two track staging yard along my coal branch -- I knew I had to come up with some kind of solution. Repeated visits to Lowes and Home Depot turned up nothing. I even found it hard to find Masonite. And I didn't want to use that product because I'm allergic to its dust and odor and I hate cutting the stuff. Because the fascia on the interior island of my layout was still in fairly good shape, I needed to find a product of nearly the same color as that coffee paneling. Good luck with that one.

And then I stumbled on the flooring department at Lowes. In looking at the vinyl flooring I discovered that not all vinyl flooring is thick and rigid. Some is extremely flexible, and almost all the colors were earth, wood or gray tones. I found some flooring at Lowes that I thought would match, brought it home, peeked at the opening on the box front and held it up to the coffee paneling. Not a good match. Back it went and back to square one.

Then at Home Depot I found the answer. A cherry colored Traffic Master vinyl flooring by Allure. The pieces were a full 6 inches wide by three feet long by 3.8 mm thick, 16 pieces per box at a cost of just under \$50. That was 48 feet of fascia for \$50. A dollar a foot. The match with the panelling was excellent.

Two boxes trucked up to the cashier, and I was headed home to install it.

Vinyl flooring is fabulous for fascia. It is completely water, stain and scratch resistant. It is tough. It's made to be walked on, scuffed by kids, soiled by dirty shoes and pottied on by the pup or cat. I put the worst stickiest double stick tape and permanent 3M Command Strips I could find on a sample piece and was able to remove them with absolutely no damage to the vinyl. Try that with painted masonite or panelling and see what happens.

And the stuff is flexible. I can bend a three foot long piece into a five inch radius. I suppose if you really tried you could snap it in two but you would likely have to squeeze it in a vise to make that happen. I found a double-stick adhesive tape for vinyl flooring at Lowes, ran three strips of the stuff along the old fascia and carefully adhered the vinyl to it. It stuck instantly. I doubt if it will let loose anytime soon, but to be sure I used a screw with decorative washer every 18 inches to make sure. But even screwing in just an eye hook to hang train orders on would suffice to hold it. Along parts of my layout I put up a 2 inch high plexiglass strip to keep an errant elbow from knocking a train to the floor. The small mirror clips that hold the plexiglass are more than enough to keep the vinyl flooring permanently in place.

I surveyed Lowes and Home Depot and found several vinyl floorings that would work. The products vary in thickness from 2 mm on up. Make sure what you're getting is not thick and rigid like floor tiles. A 4 mm thickness has all kinds of flex and will go around any

fascia curves you might have. The products come mostly in 6 or 7 1/2 inch wide planks, 36 or 48 inches long. I would have preferred a 7 1/2 inch wide plank for my job but the cherry color I needed was only available in 6 x 36. Mine had another inch or so of adhesive backing along the length of the plank that would grip to the next piece. I simply ran the adhesive edging that showed through the table saw and then "painted" all the edges with a brown Sharpie.

Quickly, here are some of the choices at Lowes and Home Depot that might work for you:

1. Armstrong ... available at Home Depot ... 6 x 36 ... 24 planks per box ... 2 mm thick ... extremely thin and flexible ... assorted gray colors ... \$32 for 72 linear feet ... less than 50 cents per foot

2. Traffic Master by Allure ... available at Home Depot ... 6 x 36 ... 16 planks per box ... 3.5 mm thick ... pine, oak, teak and cherry colors ... \$49 for 48 linear feet ... a dollar per foot

3. Home Decorators ... available at Home Depot ... 6 x 48 ... 10 planks per box ... 4.2 mm thick ... \$43 for 40 linear feet ... about \$1.10 per foot

4. Matrix by Shaw ... available at Lowes ... 5.9 x 48 ... 14 planks per box ... 3.2 mm thick ... assorted colors ... \$55 for 56 linear feet ... about a dollar per foot

5. Stainmaster ... available at Lowes ... 5 3/4 x 48 ... 10 planks per box ... 4 mm thick ... assorted colors ... \$48 for 40 linear feet ... about \$1.20 per foot

Avoid very thick flooring planks like the Pergo brand. They have no

flexibility and will not bend around any corner curves on your layout. Ask a clerk to let you look at and handle a piece before you buy it. A general rule of thumb: Anything under 4 mm thickness will be flexible enough. Again, I have shaped a 4 mm thick by three-foot long plank into a 5-inch radius circle.

That is what I would call flexible.

If you are thinking about facing your layout edges, consider these types of vinyl flooring. I think you will be more than happy with it.

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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.

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Copyeditor/Proofreader: Renee Reilly

Tool In a Minute

This month's variation on
"What's on Your Workbench"



Strip Wood Sorting Tool Doug Sandmeyer

Sometimes organizing strip wood for a kit can be a challenge. While searching for a bin or some other device one day I hit on this idea. By simply folding a sheet of notebook paper so a flap is created and then starting at one side with your sorted strips, make pockets with a stapler. The paper pocket is then easily labeled with a pencil. If you like, adjust the size, spacing, and position of the pockets. You could even tape it to a wall or shelf when in use.

Division 12 "Goes to the Movies"

A Review of a 2018 Kansas City National Clinic

By Bill Schopf

Joe Fugate of Model Railroad Hobbyist calls them ah-ha moments. We've all had them. And we all wish we could have more.

An ah-ha moment is seeing something you had never seen before. It's a sudden understanding. An insight. A change in our thinking. In our hobby it might come from seeing something on a friend's layout that you had never seen before. It might be a snatch out of a conversation. It might be something as simple as a glimpse at the placement of a piece of track near a building or a creek or a weed patch. But after the ah-ha moment you never look at that aspect of modeling the same again.

My moments come mostly from seeing things -- not reading. I'm a visual person. I hate instruction sheets. Usually if I watch a video on You Tube, Allen Keller's Model Railroad Academy, Trainmasters TV, or the NMRA website, I'll figure out modeling issues a lot quicker.

My most recent ah-ha moment came from watching a clinic from the 2018 Kansas City NMRA National. (Note: Dozens of clinics are available from past nationals. Just log-in to the website, click on Watch Clinic Videos and scan the options.) This particular clinic, just over an hour in length, "Full Operations on a Small, Room-Size Layout" by Dave Capron, MMR, opened up a whole new way of looking at operations on my own railroad -- something I've struggled with continuously over the years trying to get my operations to feel right.

Capron focused on operating smaller bedroom-style or apartment railroads 12 feet by 12 feet or 14 feet by 14 feet. Although my layout is probably twice that big, I found most of what he said completely applicable to a layout of my size (Or actually a layout of any size). Even experienced operators with finished, large layouts could learn from watching this video.

He centered his clinic on the design - or actually re-design -- of a railroad. He began by encouraging his audience to re-evaluate and clarify what they really want to do on their layouts. Operations is quite simply, he states, a real railroad in miniature. And his emphasis throughout the clinic was that you can do on a small layout exactly what you can do on a large layout. It is just, Capron said, another aspect of selective compression.

He debunks the widely held notion that a perfectly designed railroad has to have large square footage of staging yards at the ends of the railroad or in adjoining rooms. Capron's layout is large by any standards -- 45 feet x 60 feet -- and he has twenty-eight staging tracks. But remarkably he only has one staging yard with four tracks. All the rest of his staging locations are on the layout itself. This piece of information was my ah-ah moment.

What you must ask yourself, Capron says, is where can you place your trains on the layout in preparation for operation. Just where are your staging tracks? He suggests staging can be everywhere -- behind a building, behind a backdrop, under a stairwell if you have one. They can be behind a grove of trees, inside a large industry, on any siding, even on the mainline. Anywhere. Just use your imagination. "Think of a railroad," Capron says, "as growing in size of what you can do, not necessarily just growing in size."

He asks a series of simple -- but

provocative -- questions. How many trains will you run in a session? Where will they start? Why can't they start right on the mainline? Where is it written, Capron asks, that at the start of an op session all trains must be in staging --whatever that is? Why do yards have to be big things? With imagination and cleverness, a staging "yard" can be a single track three feet long

Where is it written, he asks, that trains have to be long -- twenty or twenty-five cars? A five to ten car train can be as much fun to operate as a twenty-five car train. And, as he says repeatedly, a train can be as short as an engine and a car. That is all that is needed for a train. One engine. One car.

"The smaller the layout," Capron says, "the more creative you have to be in looking where you can run trains, park trains, stage trains." He offers creative ways to add the number of operators in a session without jamming up the layout room with bodies. He encourages us to think about session jobs other than the obvious engineer, conductor and dispatcher.

I found it a revolutionary video for how I see my railroad. I have limited staging at the two ends of my point-to-point design. Realistically, I can stage two trains in my Wilkes Barre staging and one in my Reading staging. But what do I do with the other six or eight or ten trains I might want to run in a session?

Because of this video, I looked at a 15 inch long siding behind a row of billboards in Mount Carbon, a medium sized town on my layout. It dawned on me that I could park two engines behind the billboards. One could emerge and pick up a train of nine coal cars and a caboose pre-staged on another siding in Mount Carbon. The second engine could pull out from behind the billboard, run up to the upper yard and pick up outbound cars and a caboose that have been pre-staged on

the short yard tracks. Bingo. Two trains ready to go.

I have a siding in Lehigh Center that I never have used for anything because it is a perilous reach for operators. Lehigh Center on my railroad is one town south of Wilkes Barre and its staging tracks. So why not stage a long manifest freight on that siding and just say it is from Wilkes Barre on its way south through the railroad? The dispatcher (me) can switch the siding. Away goes another train. After this train leaves very early in the session, I now have an open track that can simulate a Wilkes Barre destination. If I keep the trains short that are northbound towards Wilkes Barre out of my main yard facility, I can run two or three of them into that siding and have a virtual staging yard on one track.

On my Sinking Creek Coal Branch I discovered I can stage at least four trains underneath breakers and in the small yards. The main Diamond yard can have two pre-staged trains that leave early enough in the session they won't clutter yard activity for the Diamond yard crew.

In short, I can now have trains staged all over the layout at the start of a session and minimize the use of the old reliable 0-5-0 to put them on the tracks or to pull them on to shelves in the middle of the session -- something that is aggravating and time-consuming.

So all this -- plus a two-track-wide by 27 foot long extension edged out into the aisle along my Sinking Creek Coal Branch that I just built -- has in my mind revolutionized how I think about operating my railroad. I have to thank NMRA and Dave Capron for his video. I encourage you to watch it. You will, I know, find him entertaining, informative, and insightful. And I guarantee you will think differently about how you run your railroad after the hour spent watching the clinic.

Author's Note: *Builder's Plate* encourages members to share online videos they have watched that have changed how they think about modeling. That way we can all go the movies every month with a different date on our arms. (How does that grab you!) We would like this to be a regular feature with contributions from all members in the division. Think about contributing.

To publish the *Builder's Plate* we need submissions!

Modeler's tips, modeler's projects, the new "Modeler's Workbench" column, or any other railroad or modeling related stories make excellent submissions. Any member can submit a short article.

To make our membership meetings less business-focused and include more model railroading fun, we also need reports from the officers and committee chairs submitted to the *Builder's Plate*.

Write it up and submit it as a minimally formatted Word document attached to an email to clerk@div12mcr.org. Photos are best formatted as JPEGs.

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.

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.