
BUILDER'S PLATE

December 2020

Volume 3, Issue 11

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

Superintendent's Report

By now I hope all of our members have received the word that the MCR Regional Convention (*Northern Express*) scheduled for this coming May in Erie, Pennsylvania has been canceled. At some point in the future the convention will return to Erie, but the current BOD is not willing to make a commitment that a new BOD and officers will need to fulfill.

Enough about business; back to trains. The Wednesday evening before Thanksgiving I watched *New Tracks Meetup*. If you haven't heard of these regularly scheduled programs on Wednesday and Saturday evenings at 7:00 PM EST, please

consider attending them. A special guest coming up on Saturday, December 10, will be George Sellios, and he will be talking to attendees and answering their questions. If you go to YouTube and search for *New Tracks Meetup* you will find past videos.

I wanted to see the show on Thanksgiving eve because the guest that evening was Andy Keeney. I got to operate on Andy's layout in May of 2019 as part of the OP-sig's Southern Michigan OPs weekend. Andy's presentation was a Power Point on the conception and building of his "Nashville Road." Though the Nash Road is a much larger layout than I want to build, I was

Next Membership Events:

Our next membership meeting will be held on **Saturday, January 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM on Zoom**. We will send out the invitation and program as we get closer to the date.

While Division 12 was invited to take part, the December Open House and Christmas Dinner at Lakeshore Model Railroad Association has been canceled.

impressed with his layout. My project engineer, Fred Lotte, also accompanied me that weekend, and I made sure he also watched Andy's presentation.

The sale of my friend's model railroad collection has begun. I had hoped to have a larger open sale the weekend of Thanksgiving, but due to the jump in Covid-19 cases I am still doing the sale by appointment only. An updated inventory list should have been sent just before or with this newsletter. Please contact me to set a time to look over anything you're interested in.

Lastly I'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. To a much better 2021 – it shouldn't take much to improve on 2020.

Happy Model Railroading
Bradley White
Division 12 MCR
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

When face-to-face membership meetings return, they 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 —
superintendent@div12mcr.org

Assistant Superintendent: Mike Hauk —
ap@div12mcr.org

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

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

Division 12 Upcoming Events

January: **Membership Meeting:**
 January 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM. This will be a virtual meeting on Zoom.

Upcoming Model Railroad Events

December Open House and Christmas Dinner at Lakeshore Model Railroad Association has been canceled.

Northeastern Region NMRA Virtual Convention: NERx December 1 – 4, 6:30 –10:30 PM each evening.
<http://millcity2020.org/>

The Clarion Model Railroad Club & The Cranberry Mall Present

A CHRISTMAS TRAIN SHOW

LOCATED IN THE FORMER BON-TON
FREE ADMISSION. DONATIONS ACCEPTED

SHOW FEATURES	SHOW DATES & TIMES
~ O-Scale Layouts	Saturday, Nov. 7, 10am - 6pm
~ LEGO Train Layouts	Sunday, Nov. 8, 1pm - 4pm
~ HO- Scale Layouts	Saturday, Nov. 14, 10am - 6pm
~ N- Scale Layout	Sunday, Nov. 15, 1pm - 4pm
~ G-Scale Layouts	Saturday, Nov. 21, 10am - 6pm
~ T-Trak Modular Layout	Sunday, Nov. 22, 1pm - 4pm
~ Railroad Speeders On Display	Black Friday, Nov. 27, 10am - 8pm
~ Model Railroad Hobby Shop	Saturday, Nov. 28, 10am - 6pm
~ O-Scale Train Set Raffle	Sunday, Nov. 29, 1pm - 4pm
~ AND MORE!	Wednesday, Dec. 2, 6pm - 8pm
	Friday, Dec. 4, 6pm - 8pm
	Saturday, Dec. 5, 10am - 6pm
	Sunday, Dec. 6, 1pm - 4pm
	Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6pm - 8pm
	Friday, Dec. 11, 6pm - 8pm
	Saturday, Dec. 12, 10am - 6pm
	Sunday, Dec. 13, 1pm - 4pm
	Wednesday, Dec. 16, 6pm - 8pm
	Friday, Dec. 18, 6pm - 8pm
	Saturday, Dec. 19, 10am - 6pm
	Sunday, Dec. 20, 1pm - 4pm

Clarion Model Railroad Club
 515 Main Street, Clarion, PA 16214
 For more information call: John Netzlot at: (814) 591-0286

Cranberry Mall
 8945 U.S. 322, Cranberry, PA 16319
 (814) 878-2353

Links to upcoming model railroad events as they resume 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.

Division 12 Updates



The Division 12 convention committee (and board of directors) has reached the difficult decision to cancel the Northern Express, the Mid Central Region convention, planned for May 20 – 23, 2021 in Erie.

We did not make this decision lightly. After much discussion, we realized that the unknowns were too great for us to continue to hope to host the event.

COVID-19 cases are at their highest numbers as we speak here in Erie and Crawford Counties. While vaccine development is looking very hopeful, we have no guarantee that the rollout to the general public will be completed by May. We wondered if clinicians, vendors, or attendees would be hesitant to travel to or attend an event, even with safety protocols in place. We are unable to guarantee that our hosts will be able or willing to

provide tours. Will local model railroaders be willing to open their homes for model railroad tours? We wondered if we could ensure the experience expected of a Mid Central Region convention, and more importantly, the health and safety of our attendees.

Our division cannot risk the further financial liability moving forward. Our contract with the venue stipulates a greater penalty for canceling the closer we get to the date of the event. Our contract is also based on minimum numbers of rooms booked and banquet numbers. If a limited number of people attend, we stand to take a severe financial hit. If Division 12 was an older, well-financed division we might have taken a little more risk, waiting longer to see if the outlook improves.

The canceling of several upcoming railroading events had a big impact on our committee's decision. It really put a lot of things in perspective. The National N Scale Convention in Reno planned for June of 2021 was recently canceled. We also got word the day of our meeting that the NYC Historical Society convention that was to be held in Cleveland in May of 2021 had been canceled.

We had hoped to host a great regional convention, showing off Erie and providing members of the Mid Central Region an outstanding experience. As it appears that we may not be able to do that safely or to the level we aspired to, we made this difficult choice to cancel the *Northern Express* planned for May 20 — 23, 2021.

Division 12 November Meeting

The membership of Division 12, MCR, NMRA met virtually on ZOOM at 10:00 AM on Saturday, November 14, 2020. The following members were present: Rob Bennett, Bruce Bloomster, Dick Bradley, Dale Desser, Larry Dodge, David Ellis, Lee Farnsworth, Mike Hauk, Nick Ozorack, Doug Sandmeyer, Bill Schopf, and Brad White. Also joining us were Dave Neff, Larry Smith, and Bob Weinheimer from other divisions of the MCR. A quorum (at least ten members) was established with twelve Division 12 members present.

Announcements

Brad White mentioned several upcoming model railroad events and noted which ones have been canceled and which ones are still on. The status of several that he mentioned has changed since the meeting:

- While Pittsburgh canceled the 2020 and we canceled the 2021 Mid Central Region Conventions, the 2022 Indy Junction, three-region convention and Pittsburgh in 2023 are still on.
- Lakeshore Model Railroad Association is holding several open houses with an open invitation to

Division 12. Both have since been canceled due to the spiking of COVID-19 case numbers.

- It appears that the Clarion Model Club is still hosting the Christmas Train Show in the Cranberry Mall. Details are elsewhere in the newsletter.

Guest Presentation:

Bob Weinheimer took us through his presentation on “Getting Started in Operations.” If you missed his presentation or want to review it, a videotape of his clinic at the 2017 National Convention and the EduTrain PowerPoint of the presentation with notes are both available on the members' only section of the NMRA website.

During the “questions” section after his presentation, Dick Bradley brought up several questions about the role of paperwork, particularly overview or job cards, the role of route cards and waybills, and using switch lists. Doug Sandmeyer expressed interest in how Bob assigned positions.

Modeler's Questions:

We had a series of modeler's questions:

- Brad asked about replacing older couplers on N scale rolling stock. Bruce Bloomster suggested that he

has found Micro-Trains' couplers to be the best option and that #1133 seemed like the choice for Brad's specific need. Micro-Trains has an extensive conversion chart on their website.

- Nick Ozarack had several questions. The first concerned the difference in light intensity between his two Rapido RDCs. After some discussion, the consensus was to go to the source and ask Rapido what to do.
- His second question was more general; he wanted advice on shopping for older brass locomotives. As he is focusing on Canadian Steam engines, brass often is the only option. Along with the general advice that he is going down a serious rabbit hole were some specific ideas from Mike, Dick, and Doug. Mike suggested that PFM is usually a safe bet, but with all brands some variety of quality occurs from model to model. In general, make sure that the mechanism rolls freely, strip it down to the frame, clean and lubricate everything, check for driver wear, and add extra tender pick-ups.
- Finally, it was mentioned that NorthWest Short Line is back in business so a trustworthy source of parts does exist.

Sharing What I've Been Working On:

1. Brad White shared that the Thursday Night Modelers' Night has been well attended with positive feedback.
2. Brad also shared an engine house he has been working on and has recently painted.
3. Dick Bradley suggested that moving forward with virtual meetings, a more organized form of bring and brag might have more participation from the members. He also pointed out that some other divisions have organized topics and/or contests.

Other ideas for future meetings:

Following up on Dick's idea, Mike wondered about how to best transition to AP judging in the virtual world. We have several folks in the division that would like to be considered for AP scenery. How do we move forward with that? Beyond good photos of their work, what are the hard and fast guidelines? Frank Koch may have the answer.

Nick expressed interest in exploring layout design and operations design philosophy: Why I did it the way I did and what would I change?

Finally, a suggestion was made that we survey the membership for

desired topics and include a section on "Why I don't attend the Saturday Morning Meetings?" (virtual or in-person).

Submitted by David Ellis

clerk@div12mcr.org

Brick and Mortar Hobby Stores in Division 12

We have a dearth of train stores here in the division or even near the division. Several that exist are in New York State. If you visit any of 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

Hobby Express

www.hobbyexpressinc.com

1713 Route 228
Cranberry Twp., PA 16066

Mercer Junction

<https://mercerjunction.com/>

151 North Diamond Street
Mercer, PA 16137

Mentoring in Division 12

After discussing several approaches to offering mentoring in the division, 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

Committee Chairs and Volunteer Positions:

Achievement Program: Mike Hauk
ap@div12mcr.org

Newsletter: Dave Ellis
clerk@div12mcr.org

Operations Coordinator: Dale Desser
operations@div12mcr.org

Social Committee: Lee Farnsworth
social@div12mcr.org

T-Trak: Doug Sandmeyer
ttrak@div12mcr.org

Webmaster: Chris Mincemoyer
webeditor@div12mcr.org

Landscaping for the Model Railroad

Doug Sandmeyer

During this past year the folks at Quagmire Sand & Gravel have been experimenting with various commercially available products for railroad ballast, fill, and landscaping materials. A number of readily obtainable products were identified as possible candidates. They are all natural rock and may be found at the big box stores for very reasonable prices. As purchased, these products may not be ready for use and require grading with the use of a sieve.

Depending on your intended use any number of devices may be used for a sieve from an old door screen in a frame, a kitchen sifter (not your wife's) to a dedicated sieve set having one or more wire screens of differing

mesh sizes. The first photo is of the ordinary kitchen tool.



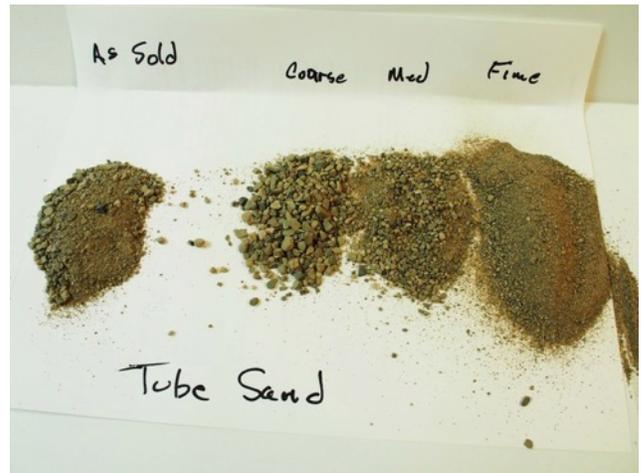
The second is a set of three soil sieves purchased from Amazon. It's nice to know I'm now ready to plant Bonsai trees.



The grid sizes are: Fine – .065", Medium – .100", and Coarse – .250". These are the sizes used in the following example photos. It's important to note when looking at the photos that the .065" screen will pass up to .065" and anything smaller so if you're working in small scales you may want to source a

smaller screen if you are making ballast. For reference the area shown in the photos of stone is roughly 10" wide. There are a lot of small fines in all these products so several products could be further screened if needed.

Tube Sand:



I had read or heard somewhere, possibly from our own Dave Ellis, that Tube Sand was a good scenic material. With sifting for size, I found it could be used in a number of places. This product comes in a sausage shaped tube that is frequently used this time of year to add weight over the rear axles of pickup trucks. I purchased mine at the Home Depot store. From left to right in the photo: as purchased unsifted, Coarse .250" and larger, Medium .065"–.100", and Fine .065" and smaller. Tube sand resembles creek and stream gravel in its rounded shape.

Paver Sand:



Paver sand is usually crushed granite and used for drainage when setting tile in walkways. I found mine at the Home Depot in two colors, more like similar shades of gray. I found that this product had the most variation in size of any and you will see the extra category resembling boulders. Because of the size variation it didn't look like it would be as good for its intended use as pathway stone. This crushed granite is irregular in shape; think talus as a possible use.

Paver #9



Paver #9 was purchased from a commercial stone shop in a large bag. Anyone need any crushed granite? This paver material is uniform in size, so when sifting it the result was concentrated more than the others and thus might be more useful in larger scales. The color is a medium gray. Think "gray card," if you are a photographer. It has an irregular shape; think talus again but with a much more uniform size.

It may be possible to color these materials by mixing them with powdered chalks or pigments. I did not try this except to mix some with sanded grout. While sanded grout did not work for this, it does work as a scenic material for ground cover and comes in a wide variety of colors.

As this experiment comes to an end I find I have an excess of material. If any one is modeling a landscape supplier and needs something to fill your supplier's bins, you are welcome to a variety pack.

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Copyeditor/Proofreader: Renee Reilly

Railroad Reading

David Ellis

Updating my “books I want to read (or reread)” list, I have added a new category: railroading books. Several, but not all, of these titles came from recommendations from blogs that I read, notably those of Tony Thompson and Bernard Kempinski. While none of these are model railroading books, they do break down into two categories of railroad non-fiction: history and what Thompson calls “informative stories.”

The railroad history books on my list start with two very different views of the story of the first transcontinental railroads by two very different historians: *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863 -1869* by Stephen E. Ambrose and *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* by Richard White. The third railroad history book on my list is about even earlier railroading: *The War Came by Train: The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad During the Civil War* by Daniel Carroll Toomey.

From a blog post titled “More Railroad Stories,” I compiled a list of books that Tony Thompson “found instructive as well as fun to read.”

1. *Vanishing Markers* by Ralph E. Fisher
2. *Set Up Running* by John W. Orr and James D. Porterfield
3. *Westsider* by Dan Rehwalt
4. *Boomer: Railroad Memoirs* by Linda Niemann

All of these except *Westsider* are currently available new or used on Amazon, but check with your local bookstores or libraries first!

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.

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

Modeler's tips, modeler's projects, the “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*.

Builder's Plate encourages Division 12 members to share their favorite YouTube videos or DVDs. The more you share, the more the rest of us can learn from the modeling masters that are out there. Give it a shot in the coming months and tell us what you've been watching “At the Movies.”

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.