

WHEEL REPORT

FALL VOL. 18/19 NO.1



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Fall SMD Meetings

September Membership Meeting Cancelled

Murphy's Law states, "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong." That is the case this September. Most of the Division's leadership will be unavailable the second Sunday of the month. With obvious schedule conflicts the weekend before (Labor Day), and the weekend after (Mainline Hobby Supply layout tours), I have made the decision to cancel our membership meeting. Enjoy these last few weeks of summer. We'll see you all soon.

To Be Determined

I'm working on the meetings for the remainder of the fall. You can expect to be notified about two weeks before each meeting by mail or email, the same way you get your *Wheel Report*.

Alex Polimeni, Division 10 Superintendent

October: Sunday, Oct. 14, 2018, 2 to 5 pm.

November: Sunday, Nov. 11, 2018, 2 to 5 pm.

•Versions of the *Wheel Report* posted on the SMD web page contain no maps or street addresses. Please **c o n t a c t** the **D i v i s i o n** at SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com for directions.

•Future meetings will be listed in the winter edition of the *Wheel Report* and on-line at smdnmra.org.

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On the cover: Jerry Skeim's scratch built PRR Woodsboro station in O-scale. Read more about Jerry's project on page 10. Photo by Tom Fedor.

The *Wheel Report* is the official publication for the South Mountain Division of the NMRA. The newsletter is published three times annually. Please send your letters, articles, and pictures to the editorial team members listed to the right.

2018/19 submission deadlines:

- Winter 2018/19.....November 15
- Spring 2019.....February 15
- Fall 2019.....August 15

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“Clutter from the Super's Desk”

“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.” - William Shakespeare, Henry V

I want to begin the Division's new year by thanking all the people who made the last go 'round possible, and for some reason, agreed to let us do it all again. As a “green” Superintendent, I want to tell you that the South Mountain's officers, advisory committee, newsletter editor and webmaster have all been an absolute pleasure to work with. I would like to thank those of you who graciously opened your homes to our members this past year, some of whom did so for the very first time. Last, but not least, I'd like to recognize all of you who attended our meetings, and who made the April Mini-Con as outstanding as ever. Last year saw incredible turnout almost every month, with a lot of faces each time.

Looking ahead, I'm incredibly excited to keep this momentum rolling. To that end, I want to hear from YOU, both at the meetings and by email or phone (but, ideally, face to face at the meetings!) regarding what you want to see from the Division- and what you'd like to do to help make it happen.

As always, I want encourage everyone to contribute to the *Wheel Report* with anything and everything railroad. Tell us about what you've been working on, or perhaps where you've been railfanning the prototype recently. Invariably, there is no shortage of interesting stories at the meetings, so don't tell me you have nothing to write about.

Furthermore, we're still looking for meeting hosts and clinics through the winter; if hosting or speaking is something you might be interested in, again, get in touch! Working with you to make this Division the best it can be, is literally what you elected us to do. Reckon we must've done something right, seeing how you all kept us on.

Here's to another year!

New Division Email Address

As we start a new season of membership meetings, I'd like to let everyone know the Division now has a dedicated email address: SouthMountainDiv@Gmail.com. This account is accessible by all currently elected officers, and will be handed off to our future officers, as well. Although we want you to be able to contact our leadership directly, this is meant to keep private email addresses from being published as official, public points of contact, as well as allow our officers to better coordinate on Division business.

Going into 2019, you should expect SMD news to be distributed from this address. You may want to take a moment to update your email account's address books ahead of time, too. My intention is to slowly phase in use of this “official” account over the winter, if you have any general business or need to refer a third party, please remember to make use of the new address. Thanks!

Alex Polimeni, Division 10 Superintendent

NMRA memberships...

...can be renewed online at: <http://www.nmra.org/membership-application-and-renewal>. There are hyperlinks at the bottom of the web page for the online “U.S. Renewal Membership Application” and a two page Portable Document Format (PDF) that can be printed, filled in, and mailed to the address included at the top of the PDF document. Current one year renewal rates are \$75, which includes the NMRA magazine, and \$47 without the subscription.

Crossroads of the MER Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA 2018 Convention

October 4 - 7, Rockville, MD

On line registration

<http://merregistrar.coffeecup.com/forms/2018%20Online%20Registration/>

Fill in the form. Then click “Submit” at the bottom of the form. You will be taken to the payment page.

Mini Convention chairperson Pete Clarke reported at the May, 2018 SMD business meeting that 250 people were in attendance last April. Pete joked that it was a “Reasonably popular event.” Clarke is encouraging more informal clinics in the future. Speaking of the future, he also volunteered to coordinate a 2019 Mini-Con. Although a firm date has not been established, the 2019 Mini will likely happen in April and avoid conflicts with area shows, like [The Great Scale Model Train Show](#).



First time clinicians gave positive reports. All commented that they enjoyed the interactions and learned a lot from others. Superintendent Alex Polimeni saw that people were very engaged with clinicians. “It wasn’t just a show,” said Alex, “It was more of an experience for people.”

Bob Geldmacher provides instruction on the making of his tall pine trees to Ed Albiker of Bedford, PA (left) and Donald Foor of Everett, PA during the NMRA South Mountain Division annual Mini Convention at the Blue Ridge Fire and Rescue hall on Saturday, April 7, 2018 in Blue Ridge Summit, PA. (Tom Fedor)



Steve King lectures on "operating as the prototype does" during the NMRA South Mountain Division annual Mini Convention at the Blue Ridge Fire and Rescue hall on Saturday, April 7, 2018 in Blue Ridge Summit, PA. (Tom Fedor)

Don Chatley of McConnellsburg, PA was the winner of the [Mainline Hobby Supply](#) gift certificate. While not currently an NMRA member, Chatley said he is getting back into the hobby after 21 years.



Matthew Walter, 6, of Berlin, MD operates a large switching module during the NMRA South Mountain Division annual Mini Convention at the Blue Ridge Fire and Rescue hall on Saturday, April 7, 2018 in Blue Ridge Summit, PA. (Tom Fedor)



Dottie Caldwell discusses structure painting with Meredith Fritz of Baltimore, MD (right) during the NMRA South Mountain Division annual Mini Convention at the Blue Ridge Fire and Rescue hall on Saturday, April 7, 2018 in Blue Ridge Summit, PA. (Tom Fedor)

Our HO_{n3} EBT model railroad has been “complete” for many years. However, the Shade Gap Branch was represented by only a hidden return loop out of Orbisonia. For at least 10 years, the five-year-plan was to drill a hole through the wall between the layout room and the laundry room to model the branch.

A couple of things happened in 2016. Pete offered to build an O-scale building for the Bricktown Model Railroad Association’s layout at the Isett Heritage Museum in Huntingdon, PA. His workbench proved to be way too small for this endeavor. Jane remembered a large workbench we inherited when her dad downsized his home. She found it under our basement steps and set it up in the laundry room. It was just the right size for the project. Once that project was done, we kept the workbench as a dispatcher’s desk.

Our 30-year-old washing machine was finally on its last legs. Our 2016 Christmas gift to each other was a new front-loading washer and dryer. The front-loading part is essential to the story; it left the air rights above the washer available. When the new washer and dryer were delivered, the workmen took away the old units and a broken chest freezer. Now there was enough space for model railroad expansion!

Why we needed to go to Shade Gap

Our model railroad evolved. We got heavily into operations and had 6-8 people over to run trains once per month.

Before the expansion, ganister and lumber were transported on the Shade Gap branch (reverse

the Shade Gap, Booher, and furnace operators (not to mention any mainline train crews) were all standing in the aisle in front of Orbisonia. Our friends are not HO scale, so this was a big bottleneck. Also, it is not much fun to run a train through a reverse loop.

The Shade Gap extension would keep a crew busy (and out of Orbisonia) for a long time switching limestone, iron ore, lumber, and ganister.

A Short History of the Shade Gap Branch

By 1926, the Shade Gap branch was pretty stable. But its history was anything but stable. In the early years the branch only extended a short distance up Blacklog Creek (through the

area called The Narrows) from the iron furnace. Iron ore and limestone were dug there and sent to the furnace. In the early 1880’s the line was extended to near the town of Shade Gap to connect to the proposed South Pennsylvania Railroad. Plans to extend further ended in 1885 when construction on the South Penn railroad ceased. Rather than crumble, the Shade Gap branch continued to expand. This time it followed iron deposits up the Shade Valley. It reached iron mines in Stair in 1886, then Goshorn, and Nancy in 1890.



The morning passenger and freight trains meeting in Shade Gap. (Pete Clarke)



Returning to Orbisonia through the mouse hole. (Pete Clarke)

loop), iron ore was from the Booher branch (the same loop), and limestone came from the dead-end track near the iron furnace. This meant that

Alas, the iron furnace closed in 1893 and that pretty much ended traffic along the branch north of Shade Gap. In 1902 the iron furnace re-opened. This brought a renewal of limestone shipments, but iron ore was shipped in from the



Track gang clearing a fallen tree between the iron and limestone tipples. (Pete Clarke)

Great Lakes region. In 1905 the track north from Shade Gap was removed. In 1908 the furnace shut down permanently. Yet, one year later the line was extended to Neelyton. Lumber became a significant amount of freight along the line. In 1918 Mount Union Refractories opened a ganister quarry in the narrows. Then, in 1919, General Refractories opened a ganister quarry and the Shade Gap branch was extended from Neelyton to Stanton to the tipple for that quarry. In 1924 the state of Pennsylvania began road improvements which brought more freight to the line. More stuff happened later, but our story only goes up to 1926.

In 1920 the Rockhill Iron & Coal Company and the EBT were sold to the Madeira, Hill &

Company. It was renamed the Rockhill Coal & Iron Company.

The fictional history of Shade Gap continues

By 1926 (the year that we model) the Madeira, Hill & Company realized that the RCI and EBT were not making money at the rate they had hoped for. Looking around they saw only one way to resolve the issue. They needed a sucker to purchase it from them. To make it more appealing, they rebuilt the iron furnace, put it back in blast, and developed a niche market for the resulting iron. City residents loved ornate iron fences around their property!

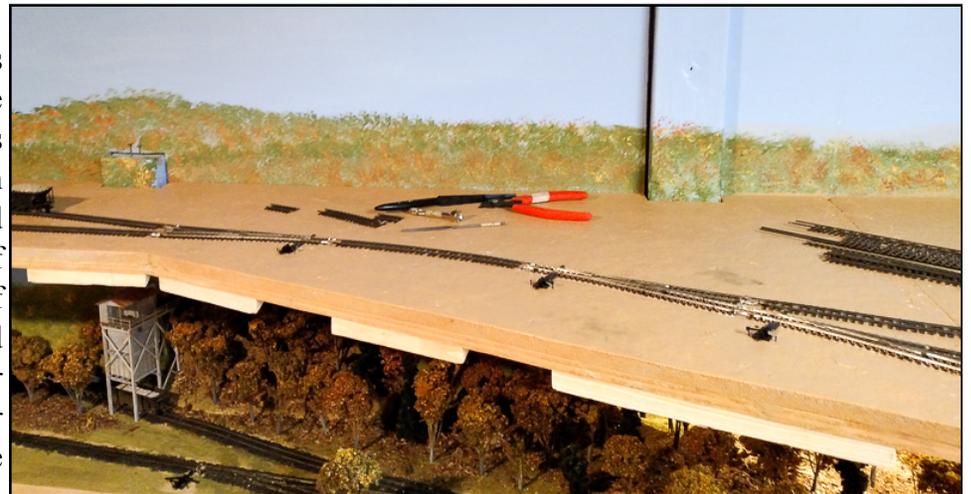
Needing raw materials on the cheap, they reopened the Shade Gap branch to the iron mines north of Shade Gap and also to limestone quarries along the line.

Building the extension

Much of the branch is on a narrow shelf. We mounted shelf brackets to support ½-inch plywood and laminated Homosote® on top of that. The towns of Shade Gap and Neelyton are triangular in shape (to allow for wye tracks) and are supported by 1x4-inch braces run from 2x4's mounted to the walls.

The hardest part was the helix. To make this we mounted threaded rod under the stair risers. The sub-roadbed is supported by nuts and washers on these rods. This allowed us to adjust the grade over and over until we got it to the point that little #7 (purchased back from the Ohio River & Western to handle the traffic increase) could pull the hill.

Even with our extension we don't have room to model The Narrows. Therefore, we've had to push some of the mines that were in that area further toward the town of Shade Gap. In/near Shade Gap we were able to fit in a tipple for limestone and two more for iron ore. Because these are all being built in a hurry and on the cheap, they have used the plans for one of the early wooden NARCO tipples that had been near Three Springs.



The bottom level, Shade Gap, had to be completely scenicked prior to adding the upper level. (Jane Clarke)

A friend built three copies of a White Ground tipple kit for us. Also, we have the coal trestle to supply coal for local use (there are no coal mines along the Shade Gap). We decided that because the line to Shade Gap had been in place for quite a while that it surely would have been built with stub switches (turnouts). Given its roller coaster history, it is doubtless true that every time management thought of upgrading to points switches, the future turned dark and they decided to save the money. So, stub switches are still in place today. Instead of choosing to learn how to build turnouts with Fast Tracks, Pete chose to get stub turnout kits from BK Enterprises. Fine products, but a wiser person might choose

to go the Fast Tracks route. Pete believes he spent at least two months of modeling time per turnout to get them installed and working.

In Neelyton we have a lumber mill (there really was one there) which sends out finished lumber and also raw logs. Neelyton also has a coal trestle. Just outside of town we have the Stanton ganister tipple. Built after the town of Shade Gap (both in real life and on the layout), we decided that Shinohara points turnouts would be the wiser choice for Neelyton, both

for ease of initial construction, and because they are higher and harder to reach. (We expect the stub turnouts to need regular tuning). To limit the number of turns in the helix and for ease of operations, Neelyton sits only 12 inches above Shade Gap. The turnout at the tail of the wye is controlled by a Tortoise™ by Circuitron. The low distance between levels caused this Tortoise to have to be mounted above, rather than below, the turnout. We learned that this

return trip the long overhang of the back end swung out and hit a 2x4-inch stud that supports the stairs. What to do? Just pull out the Dremel tool of course! Not to worry, we only needed to remove perhaps 1/8th of an inch. So far the stairs still stand. But there will be no standard gauge cars (on narrow gauge trucks) going to Neelyton.

From the mouse hole that connects to the main layout, there's about 16 feet for the narrows and the track of Shade Gap. The unscenicked helix is about 22 feet of track. Then there's another 12 feet of scenicked Neelyton. In total the branch is about 50 feet long.



Number 7 heading up the helix. (Pete Clarke)

mounting position means you have to have a flexible joint in the throw wires. An empty soup can disguised as a silo hides the switch motor. Not all the structures are built, but the track is all in place and so everything exists operationally.

We tested that helix over and over until #7 could pull at least 4 cars up. Wonderful, we got it right. Then we ran the M-1 up (for several years the M-1 did handle passenger service on the branch). It went up just fine, but on the

Traffic on the Shade Gap branch

We envisioned a bucolic country scene with a very short train. But once active, the line was found to be one of the busiest parts of our EBT. The daily freight train handles a minimum of 3 cars of limestone, 3 of iron ore, 2 cars of ganister and 2 lumber cars. Ten cars may not sound like much, but on the Mt. Union to Robertsedale mainline, trains are 6-8 cars long. Then add occasional cars for coal loads, flats for finished lumber, tank cars of asphalt, tank cars for water, box cars for farm supplies

(going in and coming out) and hay, it really adds up to a busy line and a long train.

In Shade Gap, empty limestone and iron ore cars travel from the furnace to those tipples. Cleaned coal comes up from Mt. Union to the coal dealer's trestle. Standard gauge tank cars

of asphalt come from the Timber Transfer in Mt. Union to be unloaded into trucks for road projects. The mines in Robertsdale had a recurring shortage of water, but there's plenty of water in our Shade Gap. So, from time to time a tank car is sent to fill up and then goes to the storage ponds near Robertsdale. Box cars bring seed, fertilizer, equipment, and all the supplies sold at the local

store. Then farm produce gets shipped out. Years ago Pete led a spring exploration that studied the brick plants. Every picture showed bricks being protected by straw so they would not be damaged in transit. That straw comes from the farms in Shade Gap and Neelyton.

In Neelyton the lumber mill sends out flat cars of finished lumber. Some of that will head up to Robertsdale for construction while some will

go to Mt. Union and be transferred to standard gauge box cars at the transfer shed. The mill also ships logs which go to the timber transfer to be moved to standard gauge gondolas. Ganister from the Stanton quarry goes to the NARCO plant in Mt. Union.



An overview of the branch. Shade Gap is on the bottom and Neelyton on the top. (Pete Clarke)

Track plan

We have developed a rule on our EBT. Whenever possible, to the greatest extent possible, use the track arrangements on the real railroad. Why? Because they had years to figure out what they needed to get the work done. We were able to get a pretty close match in Shade Gap. Trains from Orbisonia/Rockhill Furnace come in from the left, there's a passing siding and a wye to the rear and the stub track

to the coal trestle on the right. In real life, trains then continue on to Neelyton and enter from the left. But our Neelyton is directly above Shade Gap, so our trains enter Neelyton from the right rather than entering from the left. Neelyton had two passing sidings, but we were

short on space so have not included them. The wye allows locomotives to be turned and also functions as the passing siding.

Running the Shade Gap Branch

In an operating session the first train up the Shade Gap is the morning passenger train. It started the morning in Robertsdale, made stops down the line to Orbisonia, and is handled by the M-1. It makes a

station stop at the iron furnace, then passes through "the mouse hole" and enters the Shade Gap (or laundry) room. It makes a station stop at Shade Gap and then it runs on up to Neelyton. It turns on the Neelyton wye and then starts its return trip.

In the meantime, Engine #7 pulls out of the roundhouse, is serviced, and picks up its cars from the yard. It runs to Shade Gap and meets

the returning M-1. If run well, the crew will switch the limestone loads/empties and do any coal or miscellaneous traffic as both these are trailing point switches. The cars picked up plus the empty iron ore cars should all be left in Shade Gap. The hill to Neelyton is steep, so only Neelyton cars can be taken. There are more cars to leave in Shade Gap than will fit on the passing siding, so the crew needs to leave some on the wye. The train then heads to Neelyton with only empty ganister and lumber cars. Once in Neelyton the crew should switch the lumber track first, and then leave all cars on the front leg of the wye while they turn the locomotive. They then switch the Stanton ganister tipple and re-assemble the train. Now they run back to Shade Gap and switch the iron ore tipples. Then they collect all the cars and assemble the train for the return trip to Orbisonia.

Sounds simple, but which leg of the Shade Gap wye did you leave the excess cars on? If the wrong one, then have fun figuring out how to get them out and still have the locomotive on the correct end and facing the correct direction. Similar decisions exist in Neelyton. If done well, this is at least a one hour job. If done less

than well... We've had crews still working when the afternoon passenger train (a scheduled train which the freight extra has to clear for) comes back. Having fun, but still working.

Did it work?

We think so. We achieved our goal of getting the Shade Gap crew out of the layout room for



Switching the saw mill in Neelyton. (Pete Clarke)

half or more of the time of our operating session. Unexpectedly, we also get the passenger crew out of the room for a significant amount of time. The Shade Gap train is now the most interesting train to run on our layout. That's quite a change from the days of just running into a hidden return loop. It has also added a great amount of traffic variety to the entire layout. Of course there's limestone, iron ore, and ganister. But there is also lumber,

which gets to Orbisonia and then spreads out all over the EBT. And straw—we really didn't expect that, but it adds interest to take straw down to the brick plant. Soon we will add harvested crops going to market.

We ordered plans for the Shade Gap station and freight shed from the Friends of the East Broad Top company store <www.feht.org/Costore>

and built those interesting models. We will get the chance to model the farming area of the valley. We look forward to making a field of harvested corn (we model November). Still needed are models of the Neelyton station, houses, and Stanton's tipple. So there's lots of modeling to keep us busy in the future. Plus, we get to see part of the EBT that most of us seldom think of.

References:

Rainey, L. and Kyper, F., *East Broad Top*, Golden West Books, San Marino, CA, 1982.

Rainey, L., "The EBT in the Iron Age, Parts I-IV," *Railroad Model Craftsman*, March, April, May, and June 1990.

[An abridged version of this article appeared in the Fall 2018 issue of [Timber Transfer](#), (the magazine of the Friends of the East Broad Top). Used with permission. -Ed.]

The following is an update about my scratch built O-scale Woodsboro, MD Pennsylvania Railroad station that was shown at the April 2018 Mini-Con. At that time it had no roof but the rest was pretty much completed.

Some background

In December of 2017 while driving through Woodsboro, MD, I happened to spot the station along Old Creagerstown Road and it struck me that it would make a good subject for a scratch building project. I live fairly close and so a number of trips over to the station to take both photos and dimensions was accomplished in December and January. I have never before attempted scratch building any structure, so for me this was uncharted territory. By late January I gathered the materials I thought I needed and began construction. There were a number of minor misadventures along the way which were all part of the learning process for me. It may be very obvious to some but, to be in full disclosure, I did not scratch build the windows or doors.

Those items are [Grandt Line](#) and [Tichy](#) products. Also of note for anyone that might visit the station, I did take a bit of artistic license with the platform.

Structure completion

As you can see from the pictures I have completed the roof. I do not have a background in either carpentry or home construction, so everything that I assembled is through my own observations, and I hope common sense (although my wife might disagree with my having any common sense some of the time). I feel that the roof came out decently and

platform. Depot figures and passengers may be the final additions, unless I decide to detail the interior.



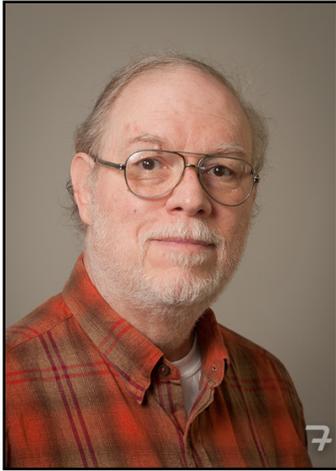
Getting involved as a presenter

While attending monthly SMD meetings leading up to this year's Mini-Con, I spoke with Mr. Pete Clarke, one of the main convention luminaries (I think he will agree that the title fits him well) who takes a major role in putting the convention together. Pete felt that I should present it at the Mini, answering questions about scratch building and just chatting with other interested modelers about similar projects. I wasn't too keen on doing that at first but with his persistence I did agree. Honestly, it was very enjoyable. Having the opportunity to meet those folks who stopped by and were interested in conversing about scratch



I am very happy with it. I have added a few details like wagons, luggage trollies, and scales, which came as unpainted kits by [Berkshire Valley Models](#), to lend some life to the

building and modeling in general was informational for me and a lot of fun.



Most model railroaders should be able to design their own model railroads, not that I think we all are geniuses like John Armstrong. Some of us have gifts, training, and experiences that others do not have.

Nevertheless, I think that all of us are capable of coming up with some basic ideas about the design of our layouts. Two reasons for my thinking are:

1. The nature of what we are trying to design.
2. The positive changes in layout design over the last 50 years or so.

The Nature of What We Are Trying to Design

Design can be quite intimidating. After all, design is in the dreaded realm of “creative.” Since not all of us consider ourselves creative, it is helpful to remember the following:

- Our goal is to design a model railroad, not the Sistine Chapel ceiling or Monticello.
- Railroads are works of engineering and, as such, rather rational in their conception. Analytical thinking is quite appropriately

applied to layout design. “Creative” thinking may not be absolutely essential for this task.

- Railroads are linear entities; therefore, linear thinking is appropriate for the design of models of them.
- If our goal is to “replicate the prototype,” we are not necessarily trying to design anything. The prototype has done the design work already. As well-known modeler Jack Burgess has noted, “copying the prototype was much easier than developing well-designed yards from scratch” ([Model Railroader, January 2000, pg. 126](#)).

Because of the nature of what we are modeling, we can use our everyday mental abilities such as analyzing, setting priorities, making choices, and problem-solving to develop reasonable representations of prototype railroads. We can solve the “problem” of our layout design just as we solve the other problems we encounter in the hobby – creatively, I expect, since model railroaders are very good at problem solving.

Changes in Layout Design over the Years

In the last fifty or so years, there have been many changes in the art/science of layout design:

- We have better design tools: John Armstrong’s “Doodling by the Squares” for fitting a mainline into our spaces, N-Trak’s modular approach with David Barrow’s “Domino” adaptation for home layouts, and

Tony Koester’s “Layout Design Elements” for adapting prototype track configurations to model the places on our layouts.

- We have a growing amount of prototype information. Consequently, we can (if we want to) base our designs on specific prototype locations.
- We have the internet for research (finding prototype information, for instance) and computers with programs for computer-aided layout design.
- The style of layout we prefer has changed drastically from the “spaghetti-bowl”/ control panel style to a more linear, walk-around style. These walk-around layouts, with decentralized controls (local turnout controls, no electrical blocks, DCC, and radio throttles), offer us the opportunity to model the prototype the way we would experience it when we railfan. The prototype is linear; we can think about it in a linear fashion as we design; our model of it can be linear. We can straightforwardly match the prototype’s route map and the way we would experience riding on a train over the line. Consequently, designing a layout can be more logical and less intuitive.
- We have an additional 50 years of published track plans to guide us. Many of these plans demonstrate a great amount of creativity. We can base our layouts on these plans and avoid the issue of creativity almost completely.

- In addition, we have more possible assistance/critiques available from a wider base of fellow modelers: the [Layout Design SIG](#), “[Model Railroad Planning](#),” the on-line forums, and the people we meet in our organizations like the [NMRA](#), the [MER](#), and the [SMD](#).
- Finally, one of the most promising aids we have is the experience we have gained from operating. We often know whether a particular track configuration will work because we have experience dealing with it during operating sessions.

These advances in the art/science of layout design are powerful tools. We can put them to work designing our own layouts, even if we eventually turn to someone else for aid or even for the final design. As a result of our efforts, we will be better informed about what we want and more vigorous advocates during the design process.

Possible Strategies & Techniques

How might the design-challenged hobbyist approach the design of a model railroad? While complete discussions of strategies and techniques are far too long for this article, a short list of possibilities would include the following:

1. Practicing on published track plans
 - The designer has already done the creative work; we can revise and

repurpose it for our own likes and dislikes. In the process, we stretch our design abilities.

2. Using diagrams as a step between the research and design stages.
 - Diagrams are abstract. They incorporate both graphic and verbal information. One especially helpful diagram is the string diagram, which provides a way to give our research specific locations along the proposed mainline.
3. Running scenarios on early stage diagrams to check potential operation.
 - Paper clip trains on schematic track diagrams.
4. Using tracing paper (or layers in a computer design program) so we do not have to redraw everything when we change our minds.
5. Using home-made templates to speed up the drawing process while maintaining reasonable accuracy.
6. Mocking-up trackwork, buildings, and scenery on benchwork to see what fits.
 - This approach sort of skips the conventional layout plan drawing altogether.

Undoubtedly, there are many more strategies we can investigate, but the list above will suffice for now.

A Final Thought

Why do I write about layout design for the SMD, a group of modelers, most of whom already have layouts designed, under construction, or being operated? We are all ambassadors for our hobby. We ought to convey to newcomers that one of the wonderful characteristics of model railroading is that it gives us so many opportunities to do things we did not think we were capable of, including designing a layout.

NMRA eReading Links



<https://www.nmra.org/members/turntable>

<https://www.nmra.org/members/bulletins>



<https://www.mer-nmra.com/MEReLocalsCurrent.html>

I had taken Amtrak's Southwest Chief to Kansas City before and when I read that [The NMRA 2018 National Convention](#) was to be at the Westin Hotel across the street from Union Station, I decided to go. I sent in my basic registration last December and then I didn't hear anything. I half expected them to contact me with information about tours, clinics and a banquet so I could make some decisions and send in reservations and cash, lots of cash, but they didn't. Then suddenly, the convention was at hand...

After breakfast on the Southwest Chief, I arrived, went to the convention hotel, checked in, and picked up my registration materials. I sat down in the lobby next to the registration table to review the official timetable and begin the planning I should have done months before. I hear my name and it's SMD member Jane Clarke. Her husband Pete soon joins us. They tell me that a layout tour they are taking on Tuesday has openings. So, I went to the tour table and got a ticket for the same tour and a ticket for a Thursday tour as well. These tours were by motor coach and would visit three layouts in five hours.



Pete Clarke, Kansas City. (Richard Lind)

Following this, I went to the ballroom level and into the special interest group room. There, I bought a new [OPSIG](#) book: *A Compendium of Model Railroad Operations*. I wasn't going to spend money, but I couldn't pass this one up.

Richard's take aways...

- **The NMRA National doesn't cost you much more than transportation, lodging, and the basic registration if you don't sign up for the activities that cost extra.**
- **If you want to go on tours, closely monitor the convention website. Those slots go fast! When tours of layouts featured in NMRA Magazine are posted, get your reservation in right away.**
- **Don't worry about scheduling clinics. Each clinic is offered multiple times during the week. You can use the daily planner in the back of the official timetable to fit them in around your tours.**
- **Plan to attend a future convention and put it on your calendar now!**

For the rest of the day, I went to clinics. All told, I attended 22. I could have attended more if only I had gotten up and had breakfast earlier, and could stay up later. I went to the Layout Design Bootcamp. Advanced Static

Grass was sold out, but some of us were allowed to "audit" the clinic. I'm glad I did. The proprietor of [Scenic Express](#) presented that clinic and some other proprietors presented clinics as well. A [SoundTraxx](#) sales rep talked up the Tsunami2 decoder. The CEO of [Dimensional Modeling Concepts](#) presented a clinic on easily creating barbed wire fence models using their product. Have you ever heard of Jojoba lubricant? Chemically, it's almost identical to sperm whale oil and used to lubricate weapons and machinery, among other things. The proprietor of [Aero-Car Hobby Lubricants](#) gave a clinic on lubricating locomotives and was selling the lube at the [National Train Show](#).

I didn't intend to go to the banquet – they are expensive. However they practically begged me to buy a banquet ticket at the last minute. The keynote speaker was to be Tony Koester. So I bought one, ate well, and had a good time. In fact, the whole convention was a good time.

Will I do this again? Sure, but maybe not every one. Next year it will be in Salt Lake City. In 2020, it will be in St. Louis. Then in 2022 it will be in the UK [<https://www.nmra.org/conventions> -Ed.]. I will definitely go to the NMRA convention in the UK if I am able.

[Richard Lind is a former SMD member, Wheel Report editor and recent transplant to New Mexico. -Ed.]

- **Hagerstown Model Railroad Museum**
Shows: September 8, & November 24, 2018.
Time: 9 AM to 2 PM.
Address: Washington County Agricultural Education Center, 7313 Sharpsburg Pike, Sharpsburg, MD 21782.
Web: antietamstation.com
- **Cumberland Valley Model Railroad Club**
Openhouse: September 15, 2018.
Time: 11 AM to 4 PM.
Address: 440 Nelson Street, Chambersburg, PA 17201.
Web: cvmrrc.com
- **DCNRHS Picnic/RR presentations**
Picnic: September 8, 2018.
Time: 9 AM.
Presentations: October 19, & November 16, 2018
All Times: 8 PM
Address: Various. See website.
Web: dcnrhs.org
- **Mainline Hobby Supply**
Openhouse: September 15 & 16, 2018.
Address: 15066 Buchanan Trail East, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214.
Web: mainlinehobby.com
- **Waynesboro Model Railroad Club**
Openhouse: TBD
Address: 3291 Waynescastle Road, Greencastle, PA 17225.
Web: waynesboromrrc.com
- **Frederick County Society of Model Engineers**
Openhouse: September 16, 2018.
Time: 1 PM to 4 PM.
Address: 423 East Patrick Street, Frederick, MD 21701.
Web: facebook.com/Frederick-County-Society-of-Model-Engineers-Fcsme-266885386669323/
- **Mid-Atlantic RPM 2018**
Meet: September 21 & 22, 2018
Address: DoubleTree by Hilton Baltimore - BWI Airport, 890 Elkridge Landing Road, Linthicum, Maryland, 21090.
Web: marpm.org
- **Bunker Hill Train Club**
Show: September 29, 2018.
Time: 10 AM to 3 PM.
Address: Ranson Civic Center, 431 West 2nd Avenue, Ranson, WV 26438.
Web: bunkerhilltrainclub.org
- **MER NMRA Convention**
Convention: October 4, 5, 6, & 7, 2018.
Address: Hilton Washington DC/Rockville Hotel & Executive Meeting Center, 1750 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852.
Web: potomac-nmra.org/MER2018/Main/index.html
- **Brunswick (MD) Railroad Days**
Festival: October 6 & 7, 2018.
Time: 10 AM to 5 PM.
Address: Square Corner Park, Brunswick, MD 21716.
Web: brunswickrailroaddays.org
- **Great Scale Model Train Show**
Shows: October 27 & 28, 2018.
Times: Sat: 9 AM to 5 PM; Sun: 10 AM to 4 PM.
Address: Maryland State Fair Grounds, Cow Palace, 2200 York Rd. Timonium, MD 21093.
Web: gsmts.com
- **Model Railroad Open House**
Openings: November 2018[*Posted in October-Ed.*].
Time: Various.
Address: Various.
Web: modelrailroadopenhouse.com
- **Golden Spike Enterprises**
Show: November 4, 2018.
Time: Unknown
Montgomery County Agricultural Fairgrounds, 501 Perry Pkwy, Gaithersburg, MD 20877.
Web: gserr.com
- **Winchester Model Railroad Club Open House & Show**
Open house: November 10, 2018.
Time: 10 AM to 1 PM.
Address: 430 N. Cameron St., Winchester, VA
Train Show: November 10, 2018.
Time: 7:30 AM to 2 PM.
Address: 215 E. Cork St., Winchester, VA
Web: wmrrc.org/web/index.php

[If you don't see your activity listed, please send future press releases to tjedor@gmail.com -Ed.]



JAMES RIVER RAILS
Operations Weekend
October 19 – 21, 2018

- Choose up to 4 operating sessions over 3 days on layouts located in the Richmond and South-Central Virginia area
- Model scenery including West Coast, Great Plains, and East Coast
- Train movements via TT/TO, CTC, sequence schedule, and more
- Operations ranging from mainline "fast paced and disciplined" to branch line "relaxed"
- All layouts DCC controlled – throttles will be provided
- Something for everyone!
- Advanced registration required

For More Information and Registration:
www.jamesriverrails.org

- **B&O Railroad Museum**, Baltimore, MD.
Phone: (410) 752-2490
Web: www.borail.org
 - Restoration facility tour, September 19, November 4.
 - "Calling All Scouts!" October 20.
 - Monthly, themed train rides; some require advanced ticketing, see website ASAP for popular November and December runs.
 - For more events, see website.
- **Chesapeake & Allegheny Live Steamers**, Baltimore, MD.
Phone: (410) 448-0730
Web: www.calslivesteam.org
Web: www.facebook.com/CALSteamers/
 - Ops - Monthly, second Sunday, April - November.
 - For more details, see websites.
- **DCNRHS**, Washington, DC.
Phone: (703) 273-8440
Web: www.dcnrhs.org
 - The Steamboat Special, October 18.
 - Tidewater Traveler-Garden Sense, October 28.
 - For more events, see website.
- **Ma & Pa Railroad Heritage Village**, Airville, PA.
Phone: (717) 927-9565
Web: www.maandparailroad.com
 - Railroad heritage day, September 22.
 - Fall Leaf excursions, October 1, 13, 14, 20, & 21.
 - For more events, see website.

- **National Capitol Trolley Museum**, Colesville, MD.
Phone: (301) 384-6088
Web: www.dctrolley.org
 - Cavalcade of Streetcars, September 16.
 - Pumpkin Trolley Fest, October 20, 21, 27, & 28.
 - For more events, see website.
- **Rockhill Trolley Museum**, Rockhill Furnace, PA.
Phone: (814) 447-9576 *weekends*
Phone: (610) 428-7200 *weekdays*
Web: www.rockhilltrolley.org
 - Grandparents weekend, September 8 & 9.
 - Fall Festival of Trolleys, October 6.
 - Polar Bear Express, November 23, 24, & 30.
 - For more events, see website.
- **Potomac Eagle**, Romney, WV.
Phone: (304) 424-0736
Web: www.potomaceagle.com
 - For more events, see website.
- **Steam Into History**, New Freedom, PA.
Phone: (717) 942-2370
Web: www.steamintohistory.com
 - PRR Railfan Day September 22.
 - Pennsylvania Cowboy Weekend, October 6 & 7.
 - For more events, see website.
- **Strasburg Railroad**, Ronks, PA.
Phone: (866) 725-9666
Web: www.strasburgrailroad.com
 - Day out w/Thomas, September 15-23, & November 16-18.
 - For more events, see website.

- **Walkersville Southern Railroad**, Walkersville, MD.
Phone: (301) 898-0899
Web: www.wsr.org
 - Excursions run Saturday & Sunday, during October.
 - For more events, see website.
- **Western Maryland Scenic Railroad**, Cumberland, MD.
Phone: 1-800-872-4650, x105.
Web: www.wmsr.com
 - #1309 restoration updates <<https://westernmarylandscenicrailroad.blogspot.com/>> - *Ed.*
 - For more events, see website.

[Highlights are posted below each listing. Call or visit on the web for comprehensive, up to date schedules and ticketing information. -Ed.]



Amtrak's west bound Capitol Limited departs Harpers Ferry, WV. (Tom Fedor)