

WHEEL REPORT

WINTER VOL. 20/21 No.2



south mountain division



smdnmra.org

WINTER ZOOM MEETINGS

South Mountain Division MER NMRA is inviting MEMBERS ONLY to scheduled Zoom meetings...

Topic: SMD NMRA December Membership Meeting

Time: Dec 13, 2020; 01:30 PM Eastern Time (*US and Canada*)

Contact the Division by email to request detailed information on how to join this meeting.

SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com

Topic: SMD NMRA January Membership Meeting

Time: Jan 10, 2021; 01:30 PM Eastern Time (*US and Canada*)

Contact the Division by email to request detailed information on how to join this meeting.

SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com

Topic: SMD NMRA February Membership Meeting

Time: Feb 14, 2021; 01:30 PM Eastern Time (*US and Canada*)

Contact the Division by email to request detailed information on how to join this meeting.

SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com

On the cover: A Lehigh Valley RS-3 rolls past a row of homes west of Phillipsburg, NJ on, SMD member, John Pursell's HO scale 12 x 28" layout. Based in the 1950's, the layout depicts the bridge crossings over the Delaware River between Easton, PA and Phillipsburg, NJ. John's layout is around-the-walls construction, using L-girder and plywood, set at a height of 53", and operated with MRC DCC. The back drop is painted hardboard and scenery is on foam with a glue shell. Photograph contributed by John Purcell.

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

SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com.

2020/21 submission deadlines:

Spring 2021.....February 15

Fall 2021.....August 15

Winter 2021/22.....November 15

SMD Officers 2020/21

Superintendent:

Jerry Skeim

Assistant Superintendent:

Alex Polimeni

Clerk:

Harvey Heyser III

Paymaster:

Ray Price

Division Achievement Coordinator:

Jane Clarke

SMD Advisory Committee:

Pete Clarke

Don Florwick

Bob Johnson

Wheel Report Editor:

Tom Fedor

Webmaster - smdnmra.org:

Tom Fedor

To reach Division officials please email us at:

SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com



From the Super's Desk

Friends,

Just a quick word here on the title of this column. I feel that Alex put his mark on the position of Superintendent in our division and that, in no small way, is due to his ability to convey His conversations, thoughts and the information he presented while writing this column.

His desk might have been "Cluttered" but his writing was not. I feel that I have some large shoes to fill and it is my hope to be able to maintain the standard that he set. So the title of this column has been modified to reflect the change.

I'm excited to see how the coming year will stack up. One thing is for sure, it will present some different challenges.

So here's my pitch for the coming months:

As we are all aware the Covid-19 Pandemic is far from being in our rear view mirror and that means that the virtual world is where we are going to dwell for the foreseeable future. My hope is that I can entice a number of you to step up and share your layouts, your modeling skills. Or perhaps you have a clinic that you can share with all of us at the conclusion of our meetings. If you are willing please contact me through the SMD Gmail account at southmountaindiv@gmail.com.

If you are hesitant due to lack of technical knowledge, again, please email us at our SMD Gmail account we will do our best to provide you with any assistance you may need to participate.

As we come to the end of the year. I hope your Thanksgiving was wonderful and that the upcoming holiday season is filled with all the blessings that you and your family hope for.

Jerry Skeim, Superintendent



Rich Randall has been working on an O scale [All-Nation Model Trains](#) cast aluminum EMD NW2 switcher model for his Milwaukee Road at Avery, ID, layout. The unit is pictured at the St. Maries plywood mill where it is slated to become the dedicated switcher. It sports a nice all-brass, modernized chassis with a Pittman motor, along with dual-drive sprung trucks. Rich painted it and installed a Tsunami II sound decoder, speaker, TCS KA-2 keep-alive, [Shapeways spark arrestors](#), partial cab interior with a crew, electrical pick-up wipers, and LED headlights. Rich reports that it runs very well but still needs weathering.



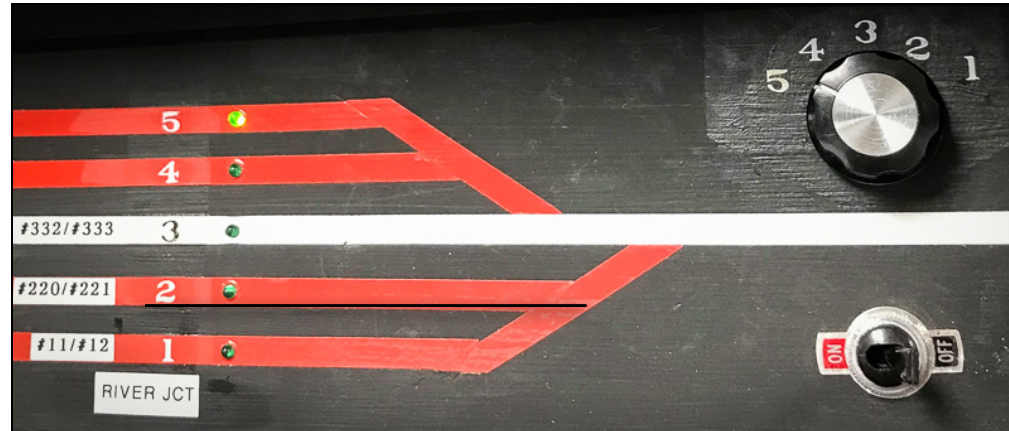
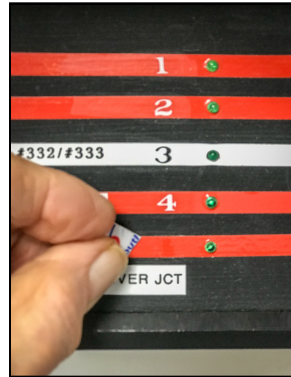
Popping into my layout room the other day with no real purpose in mind, I spied a note on one of my staging yard switch panels. The note was reminding me to relabel the panel to clear up an inconsistency between adjacent yard panels. I have three staging yards (right) along one wall of my layout room stacked one above the other and the 4 yard panels for the



three staging yards are similar for each yard. Each panel has a rotary switch to choose the proper staging track. This makes picking a staging track pretty straight forward for my operating crews at the Pittsburgh & South Pennsylvania (P&SP) RR.



So why the note? It seems that for some reason unbeknown to me, I labeled this panel for the middle yard, Wheeling Staging, showing yard track #1 on the wall side of the shelf, whereas the other two yards had track #1 as the first track on the isle side of the shelf.



This inconsistency had not caused major problems but it had caused confusion from time to time if an operator failed to look at the yard panel track diagram before picking their track with the rotary switch, hence the note to self to fix it someday.

I try to remove inconsistencies from my railroad's infrastructure when I see they create confusion. Operators are busy enough minding their schedule and deciding whether they have authority to make their movement.

Making the change was rather easy. I used a piece of an old credit card to remove the dry transfer labeling (top, left) from the track and rotary switch

areas and I repainted (bottom, left) the rotary switch area.

I waited a day to let the new paint around the rotary switch area dry. The dry transfers were applied and then over sprayed with dull cote (center) to protect them. Total time to make the change; about two hours of puttering around. Another inconsistency was cleared from the P&SP.

With no railroad of my own, I participate by assisting my friends who do have layouts. I'm ever grateful for being included in the operating sessions and enjoy contributing in whatever ways I can. The pandemic has brought this home. With no operating sessions, how do I stay involved and connected? By continuing to do as I've done all along. I have my shop.



I have my tools, my imagination and my skills. Having projects from my friend's layouts in the works on my bench allows me to feel connected. When operating sessions resume once again, I'll have something to show for my time in isolation. Here are a number of the projects I'm currently involved in.



The passenger cars are O scale items for Jay Beckham's railroad. Jay discovered 13 ancient [Walthers](#) passenger cars at a flea market for cheap.

The kits had never been completed and were badly deteriorated. Especially the wood parts. I offered to do what I could to resurrect the old cars, flea market finds being of interest to me. It took a bit of doing to figure out how to disassemble the cars as they were pinned together. Jay wanted the roofs removable. To that end the stamped steel sides had to be



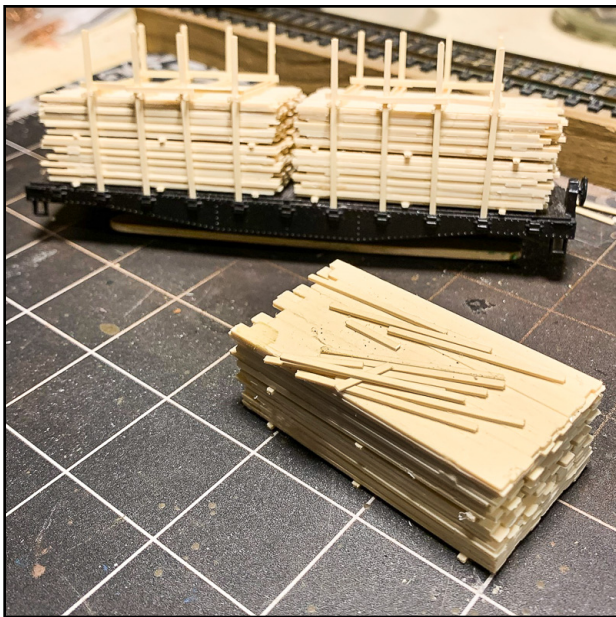
reinforced by soldering brass channel just below the top edge. The most difficult part however, is restoring the deteriorated wood. I've been using wood putty to fill in the shrinkage in the grain and will probably work with painters tape to simulate tar paper.

The monster soldering iron is on loan from Bob Winkler. Bob was a plumber in a past life. He loaned me the iron with the comment that he hadn't used it in 50 years and didn't expect he'd be needing it in the near future. Turns out it's ideal for the job.

Disassembling the car was problem. I couldn't figure a way to remove the screws that held the roof to the car ends without drilling through the floor. Then, on close inspection I discovered two pins in the cast ends which held the ends in alignment with the floor. Removal of the pins allowed the floor to be slid to the side allowing access to the screws. Essentially the entire car was held together with pins. The stamped sides being attached to both the roof and floor with pins.



I'd always admired the open flat car lumber load as featured on [John Allen's Gorre & Daphetid](#). When [Owl Mountain Models](#) brought out their version of such a load I thought it would be worth a try. Bob Winkler has a sawmill in the town of Coryville on his Central Maryland RR. So far the mill has been shipping their lumber in box cars and ties in gondolas. Now they can begin shipping lumber on flat cars. The load is modular,

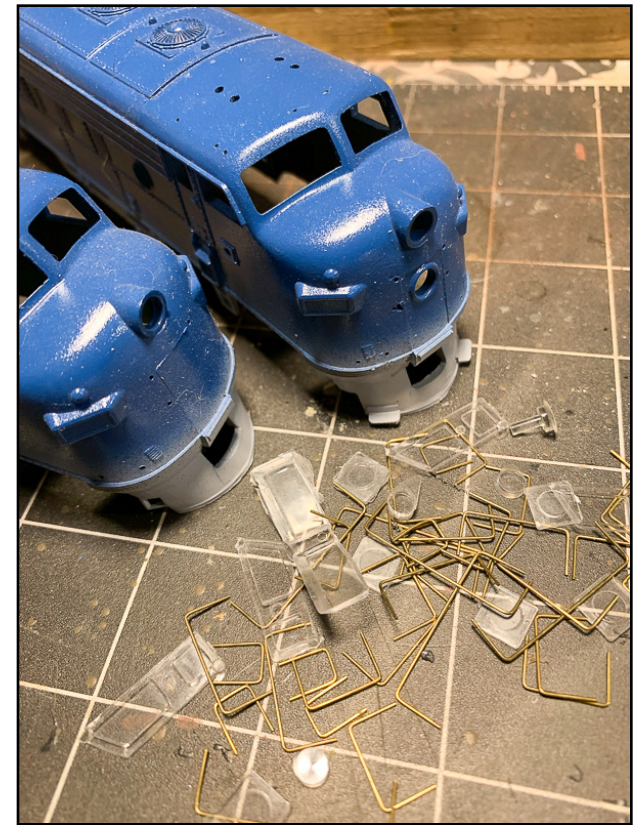


in that it can be constructed in several variations. It can also be built so as to fit several different applications and be removable. I constructed this one to fit the Athearn 40' 'blue box' flat. It still needs to be painted and given a wash to help the individual boards to stand out. A simple fun build that will add a great deal to the layout.



Bill Reynolds needed a turntable for turning helper engines on his last layout. I had tried to modify an Atlas turntable to do the job but the mechanism wasn't up to the task. Bill had a kit however, for a turntable that would be ideal for the job. Never having built a turntable before, I volunteered for the task. It appears to be an interesting kit. The pit is to be constructed of several layers of plywood. Different diameters of pit opening and thickness of wood being used to create the step for the ring rail. I haven't begun this project yet but am looking forward to it.

Bob Winkler has a set of locomotives he set up with a pair of old AHM FT cab unit bodies. I'm not sure what the chassis are but they run



beautifully. They've always irritated me though as the wheel base is wrong for the FT. To that end, I decided to fit out a pair of F7 shells to replace the FT shells. The stirrups on the pilot of one shell were broken. Rather than attempt a repair of the stirrups I thought it would be interesting to install steps on the pilot of one of the locomotives. Both will be fitted with [Walthers "diesel dress-up" kits](#). Unfortunately, I have to strip these shells once more as I didn't get my mix right when spraying the Scalecoat blue and it developed a case of orange peel.

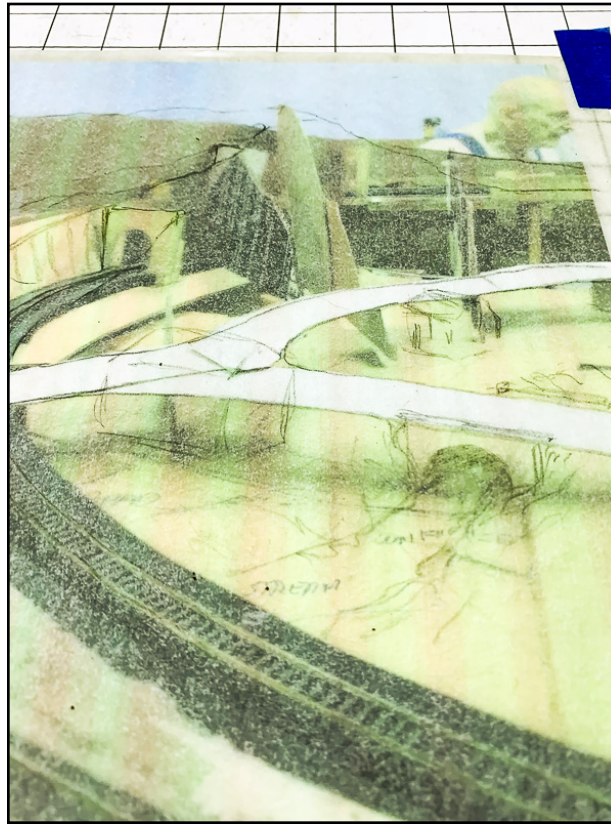


The NW-2 is another project awaiting attention in the spray booth. It will be painted and lettered for Bob Winkler's "Central Maryland". Bob has a thing for EMD switchers. The handrails are his handiwork and are essentially scratch built as the locomotive shell had none.



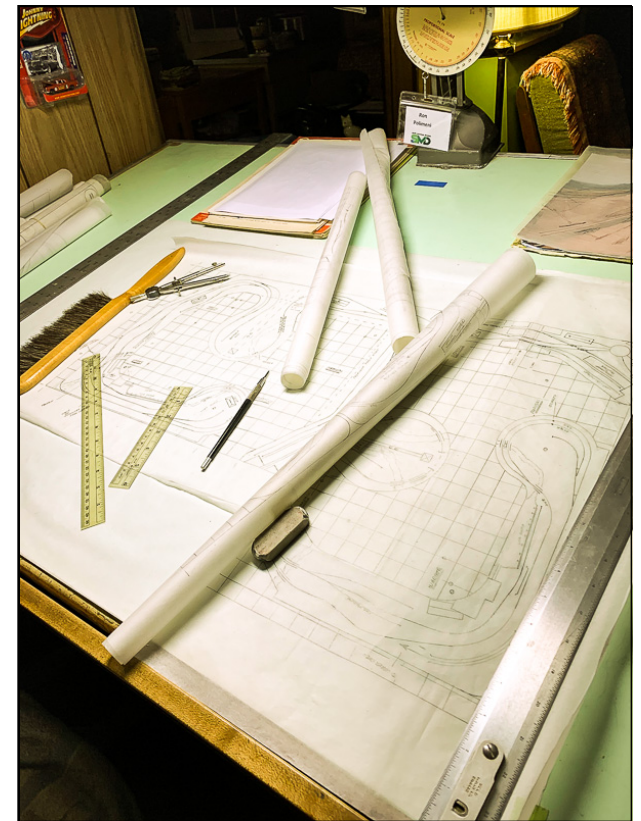
Alex has expressed an interest for some time in building a layout based on a "spaghetti western" theme. Think Clint Eastwood and [John Olson's 'Mescal Lines'](#). To that end I've turned over my MDC 'old time' equipment to him. At present I'm working on his caboose roster. Adjusting coupler height on the bobber cabooses is proving to be a bit of a project.

And then there's my drawing board.



Currently I'm working on visualizations for the scenery on the turn-back loop by the entrance to Don Florwick's P&SP Railroad. I took some pics when last I was there before the pandemic struck. We had mocked up some ideas using cardboard. I'm using the pics as a guide in developing the scenery ideas. The sketches will eventually be filled in with colored pencil.

Track planning is a hobby within the hobby for me. Superintendent Jerry Skeim is in the process of constructing a large, double deck On30 layout. Jerry and I have enjoyed working together as crew during operating sessions. Talking trains, one thing led to another and Jerry asked if I could offer some thoughts on his project. Beware what you ask for.



Suffice to say, I'm busy. Despite not having a railroad of my own, I'm able to stay involved, active, and connected in the hobby through my friends.

Mark your calendar. Jay Beckham is having an open house at his Berkeley Springs, WV, O scale, 2-rail layout on 12 December from 1 to 5 PM. A mask and physical distancing are required to visit his 60' x 30' layout, based on the Pennsylvania Railroad. The layout operates with NCE DCC and C/MRI CTC signaling.



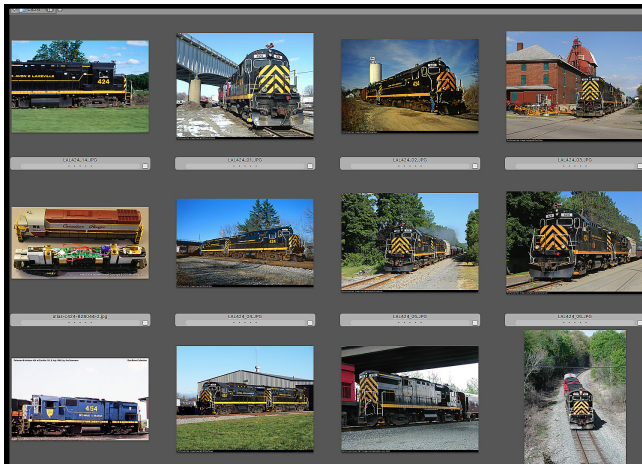
Jay and his crew have done a lot of work this year. Find Jay online at jaysoscalelayout.blogspot.com and see more of the recent progress on his layout at the [SMD Facebook page](#). If you plan to visit, private message [Jay on Facebook](#) with your name, scale you model, and city where you live. Or send an email to the SMD at southmountaindiv@gmail.com and we will put you in touch with Jay.



This summer I finally completed detailing and upgrading my Atlas Classic HO scale C-424 Phase 2 Locomotive, modeled after the [Livonia Avon & Lakeville's \(LA&L\)](#) diesel number 424.

[Atlas Model Railroad Company](#) released the model in 2006 with a list price of \$109.95 for the DC version. I ordered mine through a local hobby shop with plans to detail and install DCC.

Why did I choose this model from an obscure [short line](#) in western New York state? I worked for the LA&L for 3 weekends in the summer of 1990 until my college course work load prevented me from spending my Saturday's on their track gang. I believe I even had a cab ride in number 424.



In addition to a Sound Traxx decoder, I used many images sourced from the internet (left) to place the following details.

- Modified fuel tanks
- Exhaust stack
- Rear view mirrors
- Sun visors

- Air intake shields
- Sand hatch
- Snow plows
- Windshield wipers
- Wheel slip detectors
- Speed recorder
- Chain/chain guide
- Radio antenna
- Bell
- Fuel filter
- Air horns
- Working front/rear ditch lights

Fourteen years later, this locomotive was now unassembled on my workbench. Atlas's version was a close replica, but due to industry practices at the time the manufacturer created models that generally adhered to the specific "Phase" (in my case phase 2), so not everything was a match. Some minor body work and painting were necessary to address a couple of obvious details that stand out on the real locomotive, making it a distinctive piece of LA&L equipment. Additionally, the Classic series were not plumbed for sound. I had to have the rear weight milled, drilled, and filed to fit a speaker.

Is my model an exact duplicate of the prototype? Not quite. There are things that would require extensive body work which I didn't feel I could successfully achieve.