

# WHEEL REPORT

SPRING VOL. 19/20 NO.3



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**Spring SMD Meetings**

**2 PM to 5 PM**

March 8, 2020, Jay Beckham, Berkeley Springs, WV

April 18, 2020, MINI CONVENTION at Blue Ridge Summit, PA

May 17, 2020, Steve King, Fayetteville, PA

•Versions of the *Wheel Report* posted on the SMD web page contain no maps or street addresses. Please contact the Division at [SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com](mailto:SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com) for directions.

**On the cover:** E.B.T. locomotive #15 is pictured at Colgate Grove in 2010. Announced in February, a nonprofit foundation has purchased the East Broad Top Railroad from the Kovalchick family. A press release on [eastbroadtop.com](http://eastbroadtop.com) states the new EBT Foundation Inc., led by Brad Esposito, David Brightbill, Lawrence Biemiller, and Stephen Lane, with backers Wick Moorman, Henry Posner III, and Bennett Levin, will immediately begin work to overhaul track and equipment and to stabilize the Rockhill Furnace complex. Esposito will be the general manager. Advisors include Linn Moedinger and Rod Case. The Kovalchick Family is on the board of the new nonprofit.

New management is encouraging all who wish to support restoration efforts to connect with the [Friends of the East Broad Top \(FEBT\)](#). Volunteers should look to the FEBT, named a close partner in the release, if they want to work on equipment and infrastructure.

Photo by Pete Clarke.

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](mailto:SouthMountainDiv@gmail.com).

**2020/21 submission deadlines:**

Fall 2020.....August 15

Winter 2020/21.....November 15

Spring 2021.....February 15

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**What:**

- [Mainline Hobby Supply](#) presents: **The SMD Spring Mini Convention.**

**When:**

- **Saturday, April 18, 2020.**
- **Doors open to the public from 9:00 am. to 4:00 pm.** *Doors open for set up at 7:00 AM (vendors, modular layouts, clinicians ONLY).*

**Where:**

- [Blue Ridge Mountain Fire Co., located at 13063 Monterey Lane, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214.](#) This venue is directly across the road from Mainline Hobby. Attendees can park, free, to the north side of the fire hall nearest the convention entrance.

**For a good time, be part of the Mini-Con!**

Join your fellow SMD members in a day of great fun and fellowship. And, oh by the way, spread the joy of model railroading. Saturday April 18 2020, with the support of Mainline Hobby Supply, we will again host the very popular Mini-convention. New members might not know and old members might have forgotten, our format for the event, so allow me a quick review.

**Informal clinics; morning:** Hopefully 10 folks (**You!**) will volunteer to give one from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM and repeat it again from 11:00 AM to 12:00 noon. Not a formal presentation, just talk about a model railroading topic that's of interest to you. Bring what you

need to have as examples or visual aids. But remember, no projectors, no loudspeakers. It's just you, talking to the attendees as they walk past your table. The guests are free to stay and talk with you for as long as they like, or move on when they choose. So, don't think of it as a speech, don't think of it as public speaking. It's just you, talking to another interested model railroader, and maybe another will join in.

Note that officially you have an hour break from 10:00 to 11:00 AM. That's to allow you to get a snack, visit the restroom, look around to see what other clinics are happening.

Then, hopefully, we get 10 other members to give 10 other clinics from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM and again from 12:00 noon to 1:00 PM.

We want 20 informal clinics (two groups of 10), so there's plenty of room for you.

Join in with SMD members and friends like:

- Dennis Blank, Jr. (Lighting SD40-2's with LED's)
- Bob Johnson (Rolling stock tune up for reliable operations)
- Jerry Skeim (Structures & modeling water)
- Andrew Dodge (Building a retirement model railroad)
- Ken Kime (How to make molds and castings for making hopper cars.)
- Don Florwick (TBD)
- Bill Reynolds (TBD)
- Gary Nastase (Roadbed and ballasting)
- Bob Geldmacher (Making pine trees)

- Bob Morningstar (Make your own current keeper)
- John Madden (DCC++)
- Dave Thalman (Weathering & loading coal hoppers)
- Ron Polimeni (Budget model railroading)
- Harvey Heyser (Layout design)
- Lee Rainey (TBD)
- Jane Clarke (TBD)
- John Glaab (Working on brass locomotives)
- John King (Modify Kadee couplers to be more user friendly)
- Dotti Polimeni (Painting Downtown Deco hydrocal kits)
- Frank Benenati, Dave Sweeney and Tom Fedor (MARRS modules).

I can hear you saying, "Come on Pete. Look at that list. You must not need me." **Wrong.** We have space for you. More important, Like Uncle Sam says, "I want you!" And the members and guests who will come to the Mini want to see you and learn about the topic that interests you. Many on my list would be happy to give their spot to you, the new guy or gal. We have room for you. Can I make that any clearer?

I can hear you saying, "But I don't know what to do." You may recall me writing this in the past, or saying it at a monthly meeting. "Just bring a model and work on it." I really mean it. No-one seems to believe it, but it's been done and it's very popular.

**Make and take clinics:** At 10:00 AM we will also have two “Make and take” clinics. Jeff Grove of [Carolina Craftsman Kits](#) will again donate a group of (small, easy) craftsman kits and Mainline will again donate (small, easy) styrene (plastic) [DPM - 36000 - modular learning kit](#). Just like last year we’ll encourage young people by giving them priority on the make & take sign up lists. Also, another way you can help is by bringing tools to loan for these clinics. X-Acto knives, glue, and, well, look for a list of items once our build leaders (Brian Greenawalt, David Sweeney, and Tom Fedor) have had time to think about it.

**Modular layouts:** We hope to have a modular layout or two set up and running during the morning as well. I’m having better luck this year, and have gotten “probably” from two (Steve Sherrill and Wayne Betty). But we still can use more. So please contact me (Pete Clarke) if you are aware of a modular group and have contact information for that group. Email me at [ebtmx5@aol.com](mailto:ebtmx5@aol.com) or call 301-253-4913.

Speaking of layouts, Brian Wolfe of Mainline Hobby Supply will have his layout open to tour during the Mini-Con.

**Clubs and Societies:** This would be a great opportunity to promote your club or historical society! So far, none have signed up. Please contact me to reserve your table at [ebtmx5@aol.com](mailto:ebtmx5@aol.com) or call 301-253-4913.

**For sale:** There will be some vendors there with model railroad stuff for sale. [Carolina Craftsman Kits](#), [Dwarvin Enterprises](#) (Fiber optic system of lights) and Bob Van Zant (HO locomotives and misc. stuff) have all signed up and we are waiting to hear back from more. And of course, you can, and should, **carefully** walk across the street to [Mainline Hobby Supply](#). Tell them thanks for supporting this event by making a purchase, and while you are talking to them, say “Thanks for sponsoring the Mini” out loud.

**Raffle:** Again this year we will purchase a \$150 gift certificate from Mainline and sell raffle tickets (\$10 each) through the morning. Also, [HobbyTown USA - Frederick](#) (Richard Benjamin) has donated a \$50 gift certificate that we will give as a door prize. Both of these will happen at 1:00 PM.

**Formal clinics:** Also, at 1:00 PM we convert from informal to formal clinics. We hope to have a speaker from the [Mid-Eastern Region \(MER\)](#) tell us of the plans for the MER’s annual fall convention. Alex Polimeni will speak on Model railroading as game design, and noted historian and author Lee Rainey will speak on “Shortline Operating Patterns: What to Consider in Designing a Schedule.”

**Food:** We will have food and beverages on site. This will also be handled by SMD members.

The Mini-Con is almost here. We still need you to make it happen. Please contact me and offer

to help. Mostly we need folks to give informal clinics. Everyone who’s done one of these clinics has had a great time. If you have questions, I’d be happy to talk with you about it. There are other things you can do, we’ll need extension cords, tools for the make & take clinics, help at the registration desk, morning set up and afternoon clean up. Just can’t do any of those? Attend, and then tell others about it.

**Follow the SMD blog for Mini-Con updates at [southmountaindivision.wordpress.com](http://southmountaindivision.wordpress.com).**





Harvey Heyser

## Re-Inventing the Wheel?

### Part one.

*For this article, I have used the term “informal operating systems” to differentiate less structured approaches from prototype-based operating systems.*

*Steve King has used the term “fun run,” but I feel that term, while easily understandable, does an injustice to both approaches to operations. Those interested in prototype-based operations would not participate if they were not having “fun,” and those, who prefer a more relaxed experience, still want to learn about how the prototype does things. Consequently, I find the term “informal operating systems” more useful and less pejorative. (At the recent NMRA National Convention in Salt Lake City, there was a clinic titled “Operations without the Aggravation.” I find that also an effective way to label less formal approaches.)*

Over the years, we have all been harangued by articles and clinics touting the benefits of prototype-based operating systems (TT/TO, track warrants, etc.). The main reason given is that prototype railroads have developed, tested, and refined these systems for many years in the

real world, addressing the many situations that come up when operating a railroad. Why would anyone want to re-invent that wheel? Clearly, developing an operating system is not a simple task. Why not use a system already developed and tested?

While this argument is very convincing, it ignores an important fact – prototype operations are very different from model railroad operations. First, prototype railroads are businesses; model railroads are part of our hobby. Second, prototype railroading can be deadly serious; model railroading is supposed to be fun. Third, prototype railroaders are trained professionals; model railroaders are, for the most part, interested, sometimes informed amateurs. Whatever system of operations we choose, whether prototype-based or other, must address these differences.

### The goals for prototype-based versus informal model railroad operating systems:

Prototype-based operating systems:

- a. To experience operating the model railroad as closely as possible to the way we might experience operating the prototype,
- b. To have an enjoyable and challenging experience with people knowledgeable about railroads,
- c. To meet the session’s challenges with the tools developed by prototype railroads, and

- d. To replicate the work prototype railroads do. (Creativity is not OK.)

Informal operating systems:

- a. To experience the model railroad in a railroad-like fashion,
- b. To have an enjoyable and relaxing experience with other people interested in railroads,
- c. To pretend we are professional railroaders (somewhat like re-enactors) and, from that effort, to learn things about prototype railroading, and
- d. To find solutions to the situations that come up without having to make efforts that are too much like work. (Creativity is fine.)

While these two sets of goals are not completely different, the emphasis certainly is different between them. Those differences greatly affect the operating system appropriate for a given model railroad. It may have been designed for prototype-based operations, and then again, it may not have been. Crew members may be interested in the challenges of prototype-based operations, or they may be more interested in a relaxing, enjoyable time spent with friends and acquaintances. The prototype being modeled may be a heavily trafficked mainline, or it could be a backwoods branch with two trains a day. Each of these sets of circumstances warrants a “custom” approach.

Prototype railroads understand that fact and address different situations with rules customized for each region and each operating district. “One size fits all” does not work for the prototype; unsurprisingly, that approach does not work for all model railroads either.

**Problems with prototype based operating systems:** Crews not interested in prototype-based operating systems have voiced numerous complaints. The following are some of the characteristics of prototype-based operations that superintendents might want to avoid:

- Too much paperwork: During the often hectic flow of the session, it is often impossible to find time to read, much less deal with, a sheaf of papers, especially when the piece of information needed is buried where it cannot be found easily.
- Hard-to read paperwork: The effort to make keep instructions and information easy to handle, often results in making them unreadable except with a magnifying glass. Also handwritten entries on forms are often illegible.
- Rule books – too much to remember.
- Clearances: Written clearances are an example of excess paperwork.
- In-depth pre-session introductory material and long verbal orientations – again too much to remember.

- Timetables, clocks and fast time: Crews want to watch their trains, not the clock (too much like work). Besides, a timetable is not easy to read while trying to run a train.
- Reporting requirements: Having to pick up the phone or radio every few minutes can be quite distracting.
- Complicated train instructions: Brevity and simplicity should be the main goal. Crews should be able to find what they need to do easily.
- Train orders written in “railroad English:” Prototype railroaders would understand; model railroad crews might not.
- Car forwarding information: Whether car cards, switch lists, or other systems are used, there is often much more information than needed. Also, carrying a large stack of cards around is always a challenge.

Undoubtedly, there are other problems crews might have with prototype-based operating systems, but the above list will suffice for now. (As will be discussed below, some of these items are essential for running a railroad.)

**Problems with informal operating systems:**

After considering the numerous problems common to prototype operating systems, it is tempting to conclude that, by adopting an informal operating system, we can address all those issues and eliminate the things to which crews might object.

However, informal systems come with their own set of problems – a couple of them major. 1) By adopting informal procedures, we have essentially discarded the administrative organization that works so well for managing prototype traffic.

2) Crews may not have the information and directions they need to do their jobs. Between these two problems, it is almost certain that difficulties will arise. The following are some of the potentially maddening situations that develop when using informal operating systems:

- A. Sessions degenerate into confusion: This is perhaps the most serious criticism of the Mother, may I? operating system. Crews (sometimes behaving like spoiled children) all cry out for the host’s attention at the same time. As the number of problems encountered multiplies, the volume of cries increases. The host has far too much to deal with; the session becomes a confused mess.
- B. Situations get resolved without taking into account the railroad’s overall objectives: This problem arises when crews take it upon themselves to resolve a conflict by gentlemen’s agreement – such as the problem of too many trains in one location. The resolution may be quite creative; it may be quite satisfying. But, if the through freight gets held up by the local, that resolution is not the right one.

Worst of all, the crews involved miss an opportunity to experience how the prototype might resolve a similar problem.

- C. Crews blithely unaware of anything but their own train: That might work on a backwoods branch or a one-train-a-day shortline, but when more than one train is running, crews need to be aware of other trains and to coordinate their efforts with those of other crews. (This issue also comes into play when crews have to share aisle space.)
- D. Operating systems that do not address all aspects of operating the railroad: For instance, some layout owners consider having a car card system to be the same as having an operating system. That approach does not consider traffic management, and the car cards lack much of the information crews need to do their jobs. Crews have no sense of time, no information about other trains, no understanding of the superiority of trains, and no authority to use a specific track (in fact, no instructions about which track their train should be on). Confusion reigns. Of necessity, figuring out how to do a given job becomes the primary effort for the session. Enjoyment comes in a distant second.

The result of these situations can be an atmosphere of “chaos,” an atmosphere not conducive to having a relaxing, enjoyable time. Because crews do not have the information they need to do their jobs, they feel uncomfortable. They cannot enjoy themselves – the main reason for adopting informal operations in the first place.

**What have we learned?** Prototype-based operating systems come with quite a few rules and procedures: things that crews looking for a relaxed operating experience might object to. Adopting an informal operating system seems like a good way to avoid those objections. But informal systems often cast aside the organization needed to run a model railroad and often fail to give crews information needed to do their jobs. The result can be chaotic, quite the opposite of the relaxing, enjoyable experience desired.

Adopting an informal operating system does not have to degenerate into chaos if some effort is put in place to establish basic organizing principles and to give crews the information they need to do their jobs.

Part two of this article will endeavor to discover ways to correct the deficiencies of informal operating systems and will open discussion of the enjoyment possible when adopting such informal systems.



Alex Polimeni

## Blame the Brass Clutter from the Super's desk

They say time flies when you're having fun... and while I'm of the opinion time flies no matter what, I can say with certainty that I have had fun.

Looking ahead, I remain both excited and optimistic about the Division's future. While the officer positions are vital to SMDs structure as an organization, it's \*you\*, the membership, who keep this train under steam (or maybe pantograph, if you're one of those electric guys.)

You are the folks who open your homes to the membership, who make our unflinchingly robust attendance happen, and who come together to put on the best model train show (not swap meet!) in the area every single year. Believe me, I try to keep the meetings short- but you guys just \*care\* about SMD so darn much, you won't stop talking business!

Although I'm not running for re-election, I won't be going anywhere, either. I will be available to help the next Super learn the ropes, and would be happy to serve on the advisory committee if asked to. Regardless, for those of you considering running, I just want to say: the Division and I have your back. You've all certainly had mine.



Jane Clarke

Thank you to those who contacted me about their aspirations in the Achievement Program (AP). I look forward to presenting your awards! Several of you are ready to have your scenery judged. This takes some coordination to get (preferably) three judges together. I appreciate your patience.

This time I will focus on the requirements for Model Railroad Engineer–Electrical.

**To qualify for the Model Railroad Engineer–Electrical certificate, you must:**

A. Construct and demonstrate on your own or club layout, the satisfactory operation of an electrical control system on a model railroad capable of simultaneous and independent control of two mainline trains in both directions, and containing at least:

1. Simultaneous and independent control of two mainline trains. This can be as simple as a single track main with sidings. This means that as long as you can cut power to the sidings individually, you can run one train, park it on a siding while you run another, then park it and run the first again. This meets the requirement.

2. For conventional DC wiring (non-command-control), five electrical blocks that can be controlled independently. For command control wiring (DCC, TMCC, and others), sufficient gaps and switches to maintain polarity, phase if needed, and troubleshooting.
3. One mainline passing siding.
4. One reversing loop, wye, turntable, or transfer table.
5. One yard with a minimum of three tracks and a switching lead independent of the main line. ("Independent" means that you are able to operate the locomotive switching the yard and the lead on a separate powerpack without interfering with mainline operations.)
6. Facilities for the storing of at least two unused motive power units. Don't make this harder than it is - these are just sections of track (usually spurs) that you can cut power to independent of the main.
7. One power supply with protective devices (short indicator or circuit breaker) to ensure safe operation. You don't have to build this yourself; you just have to have one in your control system. You can use a commercial supply that has these features, modify a commercial supply to add these features, or even build it yourself - but only if you REALLY know what you're doing.

B. Wire and demonstrate the electrical operation of at least three of the following items:

1. Turnout. Wiring up the simplest powered turnout from your hobby store will satisfy this requirement.
2. Crossing. Most commercial crossings come pre-wired. Just set one up so that you can run trains through on both tracks.
3. Crossover
4. Double Crossover
5. Slip Switch (*single or double*)
6. Gauge Separation Turnout
7. Double Junction Turnout
8. Three Way Turnout
9. Gauntlet Turnout
10. Spring Switch
11. Operating Switch in Overhead Wire

Note: Don't make the requirements in parts B or C any harder than they have to be. You do not have to scratchbuild any of these; you just have to show that you can make them work electrically. Of course, if you want to go to the effort of building them yourself, you may learn many new skills in the process! The whole point of these requirements is for you to demonstrate a variety of skills.



C. Wire and demonstrate the electrical operation of at least three of the following items:

1. Electrical turnout position indication on a control panel or at trackside for a minimum of four turnouts. (Remember that many commercial switch machines have electrical terminals to allow you to do this easily.)
2. Track occupancy indication on a control panel or at trackside for a minimum of five blocks.
3. Cab control, making provision for the connection of at least two power supplies to a minimum of five blocks as the trains progress. (This means that your layout has at least five blocks, each of which can be controlled by one of two power supplies. The five blocks DO NOT have to be in a row along the same stretch of track.)
4. Engine terminal, including an electrically powered turntable or transfer table, a minimum of three stall tracks, and at least two blocked storage sections for parking locomotives outside the stall area. (This means you need to have a total of five tracks (three inside an engine house or roundhouse, and two outside), that you can cut power independently to store motive power).
5. Two turnout junctions with electrical interlocking and protecting trackside signals. (This is simply a turnout with electrical protection to prevent a train from going through a turnout that is set against it. Again, the electrical terminals on a switch machine, combined with a couple of insulated rail joiners, make this a fairly easy project.)
6. High Frequency Lighting (This is an old term for Constant Lighting.)
7. Electronic throttle with inertia and braking provisions. (This requirement could be combined with requirement A-6, above.)
8. Grade crossing with electrically actuated warning indication. (You don't have to design or build the circuitry for this yourself. There are a number of commercial components available that you can just wire up to meet this requirement. Or you can use commercial plans that appear in magazines from time to time. Or you can do it from scratch.)
9. Two-way block signaling with automatic train detection for at least five blocks. (See remarks under #8).
10. Operating overhead wire, using either pantographs, trolley poles, or both for current collection. (Any traction fans out there?)
11. Installation of an advanced electronic and/or computer control for the model railroad.
12. Design, installation, and operation of animated mechanical and/or electrical displays. This doesn't have to be a huge animated display - think about small eye-catching displays like animated industries or signs. Put a carousel in the local park or chase lights on the marquee at the Bijou.
13. Design, installation, and operation of mechanical and/or electrical layout lighting displays. (This means lights which illuminate the layout, as opposed to lighted things on the layout. For example, lighting which simulates the change from day to dusk to night)
14. Installation of a command control receiver. Modifications or additions to the device's wiring are required. Installing a plug-equipped decoder into a manufactured prewired socket is not sufficient.
15. Installation of a command control throttle buss line around a layout capable of handling at least two throttles at three or more separate locations.

**Part C...** (Continued on page 3)

**Part C...** (Continued from page 2)

*Commercially assembled complete units are not acceptable in the items below:*

16. Construction and installation of a sound system. This does not have to be an on-board sound system; it could be an under-the-layout system.
17. Construction and installation of a signaling system.
18. Development and installation of a CTC system.
19. Installation and operation of an on-board video system.
20. Computer generated block detection information.
21. Hardwired or stored control program (i.e. computer) for operation of the railroad.
22. Development and demonstration of a computer-to-railroad interface.
23. Other. (Examples of 'other' includes flashing warning lights on locomotives, or end-of-train devices on cabooses, etc.)

Please note that operating third rail (center or outside) or overhead wire powered layouts may be considered for ALL aspects of the AP. Also note that the use of advanced power supplies, train control, track wiring, and track control methods shall not be restricted by the definitions in the minimum requirements listed above.

These items may not appear to be equal in difficulty - they aren't meant to be. They are meant to provide a wide variety of things that people may have done that they can get credit for.

D. Prepare a schematic drawing of the propulsion circuitry of the model railroad in part (A) showing the gaps, blocks, feeders, speed and direction control, electrical switches, and power supplies.

Note that this requirement includes ONLY the propulsion circuitry. It is not required to include the wiring for electrical turnout control, signal systems, building lighting, etc. You do not need to include the details for parts of the diagram which are repeated. If a number of parts are wired in the same way, it sufficient to draw one section in detail and indicate other locations with rectangles.

E. Prepare schematic drawings identifying the wiring and components of the six items under parts (B) and (C).

For the sake of clarity, these schematics should probably be separate from the propulsion circuitry schematic in part (D), above. If you already have one over-all schematic of the layout, you might want to consider making multiple copies and going over the applicable lines with a highlighter for each feature.

Note that this is just turning in the kind of documentation that you should be preparing for your layout anyway. It will make trouble shooting much easier in a couple of years when you've forgotten how it all went together!

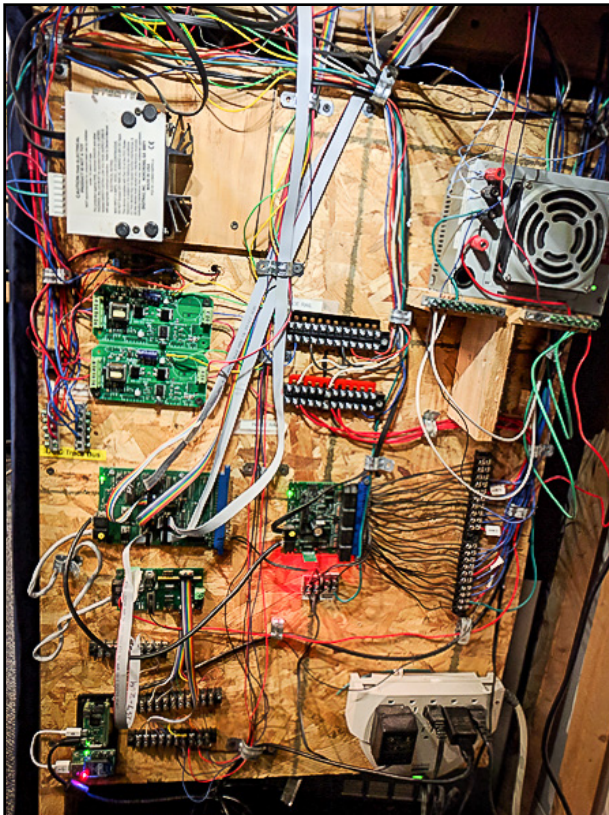
F. You must submit a Statement of Qualification (see below) which includes the following:

1. The track plan for the layout used in part (A).
2. A description of each of the features used in parts (B) and (C), including:
  - a. A description of the item.
  - b. The methods of construction.
  - c. Identification of commercial components used.
3. Schematic drawings as required in parts (D) and (E).
4. The signed Witness Certification form, showing that each of the above items are operational and meet all applicable NMRA standards.

Notice that there is no requirement for Merit Judging in this certificate. The presence and operation of the required features must be verified by a witness (the Region AP Manager, or their designee), but they do not have to achieve a minimum score.

### Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical certificate recipients in the South Mountain Division:

Robert Beecher, Robert Johnson, and Robert Morningstar have received the Electrical certificate. I guess you must be named Robert to get this! I must say that Bob Morningstar's wiring is the neatest I have ever seen (see photo below of his DCC and Power Supply Component board). It didn't need to be this clean, but it sure helped me figure out what was going on.



As the division AP Chair, my job is to encourage participation in the program, answer your questions, and help with your paperwork, if necessary. You can contact me at: [jjclarke57@gmail.com](mailto:jjclarke57@gmail.com) or 301-253-4913.

#### General Forms

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

#### Requirements

<https://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/education/achievement/pdf/2006-ap-regs.pdf>

#### Checklist

<https://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/education/achievement/pdf/2006-ap-checklist.pdf>

#### AP Overview

**Eleven AP certificates are available in these four functional areas:**

- 1. Railroad Equipment:** [Motive Power](#), [Cars](#)
- 2. Settings:** [Structures](#), [Scenery](#), [Prototype Models](#)
- 3. Engineering and Operation:** [Civil](#), [Electrical](#), [Chief Dispatcher](#)
- 4. Service to the Hobby:** [Official](#), [Volunteer](#), [Author](#)

Once you have earned seven certificates, with at least one in each functional area, you will become a Master Model Railroader. You can find more information and all the forms you need at [nmra.org](http://nmra.org).

#### MER to publish achievement program article series in *The Local* newsletters.

From [Jack Dziadul](#)

We are pleased to announce a series of eleven articles that address each of the Achievement Program categories that lead to the Master Model Railroader designation. [President Kurt Thompson, MMR](#), in the May-June 2019 issue of *The Local*, announced a goal of increasing MER Master Model Railroaders by 75% in celebration of our 75th anniversary in 2021. This target number is 105 by the October 2021 convention.

Eleven different MER Master Model Railroaders will write the series. There will be plenty of inspiration in a timely manner to get MMR aspirants kick-started along their way to meeting President Thompson's MMR challenge for our 75th anniversary celebration.

See the first two articles in this series on pages 33 (by Martin Brechbiel) and 41 (Kurt Thompson, MMR.) of *The Local* in the March-April 2020 edition.

I recently completed a model of a diner for which I wanted to have a round sign on a pole. My problem was, how to make a round sign without attempting to cut it from sheet styrene. I figured I could possibly hack out a roughly circular shape from styrene and then file it into a disc but that didn't really seem practical nor did a sliver of PVC pipe which would then have to be filled in.

On my daily walk I happened to look down as I came up to Capon Bridge's big green bridge and there were several bottle caps laying in the gravel. Miller Light bottle caps to be precise. And they were undamaged by a bottle opener. Twist-offs perhaps. A light went on and I picked them up. Back at my model bench a check of the scale rule proved them to be approx. 8' in diameter in 1/87th. Good enough.

As the pics show, the knurled apron of the cap can be sawn off in a vise. It is necessary though to put a spacer within the cap in order not to pinch the



Ron's "Corkys Diner" is a former Bachmann trolley with a bottle cap sign. The caps were secured in a vise while the apron was removed. (Photography by Dotti Caldwell)



saw blade. The cap must be rotated as one cuts through it so as not to cut into the spacer.

When two bottle caps have been so prepared, a notch for the pole is filed in the lip and they can then be joined back to back using a wood or styrene filler piece. The seam between the halves can be covered with a strip of styrene or filled with putty or both. For lettering I used dry transfers, as I don't as yet have the capability of making my own decals. Learning to print decals will be yet another project. Never a shortage of things to learn and/or do in this hobby.

The diner was bashed from an old Bachmann trolley. A skirt was made from styrene board and batten sheet. The steps are wood bits with commercial railings. The doors are Tichy castings. Caboose stove pipes, bits of wire, Microscale Industries Kristal Klear windows and a kitchen shed from the scrap box complete the structure. Paint and finish was done by my pal Dotti.



LOOK SOUTH IN 2020

# CAROLINA SPECIAL REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN



LOOK SOUTH IN 2020

Crowne Plaza Charlotte, Executive Park  
CHARLOTTE, NC

## OCTOBER 15-18

### Convention activities will include:

- A wide selection of model railroading clinics, including nationally recognized names.
- Tour the North Carolina Transportation Museum back shop & other non-public areas.
- Tour of the Southeastern Narrow Gauge and Shortline Museum.
- Tour of Wade's Train World in Brookford (layout maintained by the CSD).
- HO, S, and N scale operating layouts at the convention hotel.
- Home layout tours, including The Piedmont & Western and NYC Piney Fork Branch, which were both featured in *Model Railroader*.
- Operating sessions.

**START THE REGISTRATION PROCESS AT THIS LINK:**

<http://carolinasouthern.org>



**The Carolina Southern Division is proud  
to host the MER 2020 Convention.**

- **Potomac Division MiniCon**

Convention: April 4, 2020.

Time: 9 AM to 4 PM.

Address: St. Matthews United Methodist Church  
8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, VA 22003.

Web: [potomac-nmra.org](http://potomac-nmra.org)

- **Bunker Hill Train Club Show**

Show: April 4, 2020.

Time: 10 AM to 3 PM.

Address: 431 W. Second Ave., Ranson, WV  
25438.

Web: [bunkerhilltrainclub.com](http://bunkerhilltrainclub.com)

- **Roundhouse Model Train Show**

Show: April 4 & 5, 2020.

Times: Sat: 10 AM to 4 PM; Sun: 11 AM to 4 PM.

Address: B&O Railroad Museum, Baldwin  
Roundhouse, 901 W Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD  
21223.

Web: [trainshow.com/roundhouse/](http://trainshow.com/roundhouse/)

- **SMD Mini Convention**

Convention: April 18, 2020.

Time: 9 AM to 4 PM.

Address: Blue Ridge Mountain Fire Co.,  
3063 Monterey Ln, Blue Ridge Summit, PA  
17214.

Web: [smdnmra.org](http://smdnmra.org)

- **Great Scale Model Train Show**

Shows: May 2 & 3, 2020.

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](http://gsmts.com)