



Easy Utility Light Poles

Kevin Dill
Photos by author

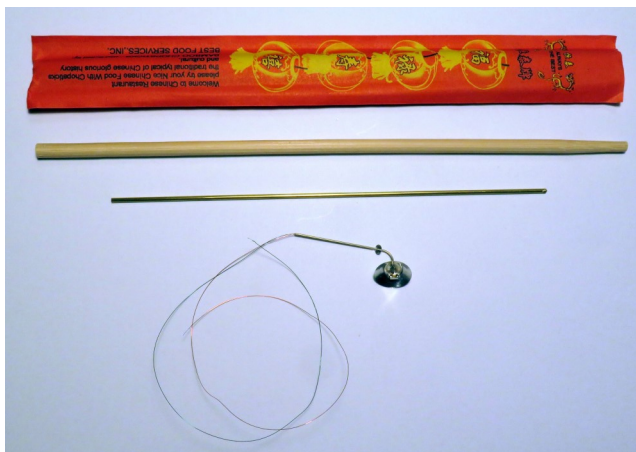
I was looking for a quick solution (first mistake) for a depot parking lot light. There are very few options available pre-made, or so I thought, until I ran across Woodland Scenics Just Plug system. They have a light on a simulated wood pole and it looked decent. I purchased two of them and connected them to my 3.2V voltage regulator. After putting it in place, it looked obviously fake to me, and I figured I could do better. My big issue was finding a tapered pole. Fast forward a few weeks and my family and I were going into a noodle place for dinner, and I saw a chop stick in the parking lot- AHAAA! It was round, tapered and over 8 inches long. In O scale, it was perfect! After dinner I liberated a few extra packages and had 8 light poles.

These are very smooth, so I roughened them up by scoring the length with a razor saw. I was very aggressive since many poles are quite old and cracked. Then I cut a shallow angle into the tip, removing about 1/4 inch. This is done on real poles to prevent water and snow from accumulating on the top and causing more rapid decay. Then the fine "hairs" were sanded off and they were stained. I used several stains since they vary so much in color in real life. I made numerous color variations, and used mahogany oil-based wood stain, India ink in a few different concentrations, Hunter-



line stains (Driftwood, Creosote, Light Blue Gray). On a few others, I used brown watercolor pens over the gray from the India ink. This last combination seemed most satisfying with the color blend. Driftwood alone was another good option for a moderately aged pole. After they were dry, I cut the bottom off to make the overall length 7 inches.

I wanted a hooded light, and I found these from a vendor I met at a train show in Chicago, and who has an internet site on Ebay (contact info is at the end). I purchased LED lights on a single curve goose neck with a round shade, and they have a very long wire harness of 34 gauge wire, which is coated with solderable insulation. For the conduit running up the pole, I used 1/16 inch x 0.014 brass tube. These come in 12 inch pieces, so I cut them to 6 inches. The diameter of the light tube fit perfectly into brass tubing, so I ran the leads down a 6 inch length of brass tube, and used CA to glue the light tube in. Once that was set, I bent the tube 90 degrees, then painted the brass tube, light tube and shade a medium gray. Once dry, I glued the entire assembly to the dry light pole, 1 inch from the top. The light has a shroud at the base to simulate an electrical cover, and that was glued over the end of the brass tube. This is not a perfect electrical box, but from a few feet away it can't be seen very well. After everything was dry, I used a Dremel with a fine etching bit to make a groove in the bottom of the pole that would be hidden on the scenery. This allows the wire to be protected as the pole



The basic parts— chop sticks, brass rod and LED light.



View from the Cab President Jay Manning

First and foremost, a huge congratulations and THANK YOU to Kevin Dill for the tremendous effort he put into the last printed edition of THE FUSSEE, and the expanded electronic version of the THE FUSSEE. The advantages we discussed at the Annual Gen-

eral Membership meeting in May could have not been more clearly demonstrated. The added space available makes it a more valuable communications and learning tool for the Thousand Lakes Region.

As we head into the fall and winter seasons (train show time) I hope all who attended conventions, workshops and clinics are bringing lessons learned home and sharing them. Watching web sites, it is obvious that many new products, new ideas, and new techniques are showing up almost daily. Also, unfortunately there is also information out there that manufacturers are closing down, tariffs may affect prices, product availability may be limited to advance purchases, and prices seem to rise everyday on the common things needed to support the hobby.

The Thousand Lakes Region has two major issues on its plate heading into the upcoming fall Board Meeting. The leadership needs input from everybody in order to meet the two issues. First, "How to use the TLR treasury to promote the growth of the Region through growth of the hobby." This topic generated lots of input and discussion at the AGM, it being agreed that folks would go home and discuss this issue at Division level and provide input to the Board. The TLR created a Grant Program over five years ago to assist Divisions. Sporadically, the Divisions have applied for grants to aid in getting before the public and nearly all of them have been granted by the Board. The grant program has no really defined purposes for which a grant can be requested, it has guidelines on grant amounts. I request Divisions meet and discuss this topic so that the Board has membership input for the fall meeting---all ideas are welcome. Some thought was

given at the AGM to such things as subsidizing a portion of a members AGM registration fee; making monetary wards in the Contest Room; subsidizing Division travel to conventions and train shows. The Board needs your input. The Board members are stewards of the TLR treasury, NOT guardians of the vault.

The second major issue is contest room participation. The number of entries is DWINDLING rapidly. The two fold purpose of the Contest Room is to recognize member's skill in various categories of the hobby, AND provide an opportunity for all to learn. During my tenure as a member of the TLR the number of entries in the contest room has steadily declined. The contest room is designed to be a learning experience for the modeler. With several members now comfortable talking about evaluating entries within the established system for evaluations, "the curtain has been rolled back" the contest room is a science, not science fiction. I encourage all members of the TLR to continue to develop there modeling skills, the contest room is a check point along that way. I realize that we live in the "take it out of the box, put it on the layout, smile and say how nice it looks" era. This causes the loss of the opportunity to gain the great feeling of achievement when a contemporary recognizes your outstanding effort. In 2019, the TLR will do another joint convention with our neighbors to the East. An excellent opportunity is on the horizon to have your efforts evaluated, and to learn. The TLR needs to be fully represented in that Contest Room.

Fall and winter provide excellent opportunities to take the model railroading hobby to the public. There are traveling layouts and switching layouts within the Region. Growth of the hobby is fostered by taking advantage of all opportunities to get before the public. I realize that finding opportunities takes work, but as the Dakota Southeaster Division has learned, they are there. I encourage each Division in the TLR to get out in front of the public.

Again thank you Kevin for taking the Thousand Lakes Region into the digital age.

Jay

Publishing Deadlines

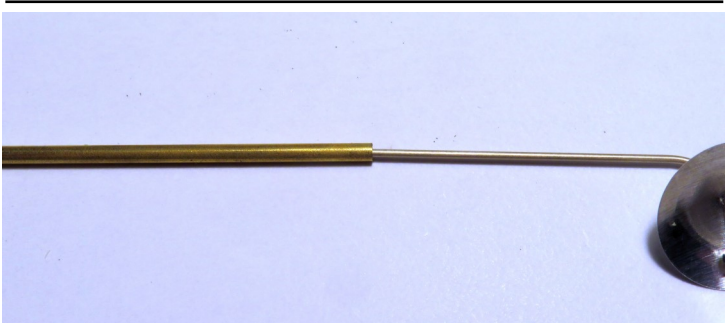
<u>Publishing Date</u>	<u>Submission Deadline</u>
March 1 Edition	February 1
July 1 Edition	June 1
September 1 Edition	August 1
December 1 Edition	November 1



From top to bottom– unmodified, Timberline creosote stain, mahogany oil stain, Timberline Driftwood followed by brown water color pen. The bottom three are textured.



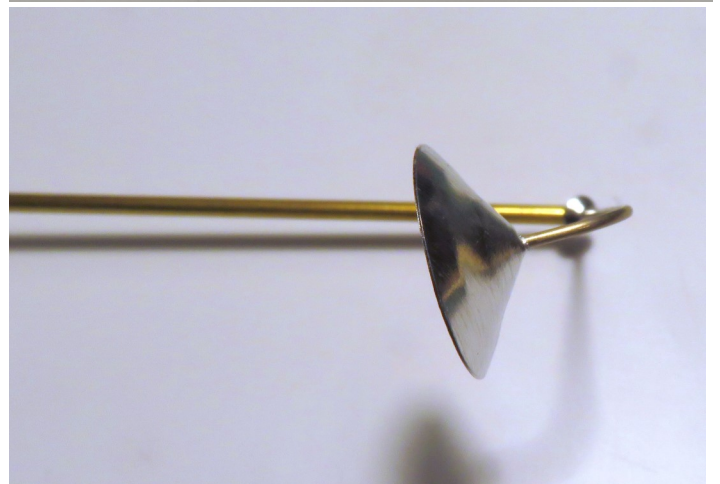
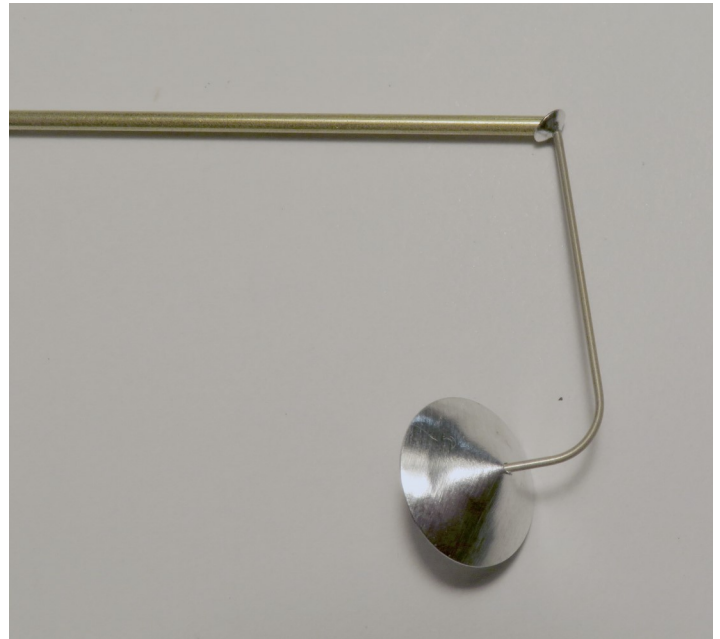
The tip has been cut down and angled.



The light post fits perfectly into the brass tubing..

is inserted into the layout.

The chop stick is ¼ inch diameter at the base, so I drilled a suitable hole in the scenery, ran the wires through (careful, these are 34 gauge) and then pushed the pole into the scenery until it was the height that I wanted. For me, 20 scale feet seemed a good height (5 inches). I connected the wire to my 3 Volt voltage regulator (also from Big-Windy) and discov-



Top photo– bend the light post 90 degrees. The base cap is in place over the tube end.

Bottom– Make sure to make your bend square. This can be twisted gently to square the light to the tube.

ered that it was too bright and white to seem realistic. I applied some clear orange Tamiya paint on the light, but that made it too orange. I tried cleaning the paint off and the light stopped working (yes, I was doing this with it still in the scenery, sigh...). After removing the light, I found that I had broken the wire attached to the LED. After some very painful soldering, I was able to reconnect this. After experimenting (OFF the layout) I found that some parchment colored paper cut just a little larger than the LED would dim it down enough, and provide enough yellow, to make it look good. This was glued in place on the LED with white glue.

After replacing it in the scenery, I placed some shrubbery around the base, and now have a very nice light. This first one took about 45 minutes to make, but I made 5 more in under 30 minutes (not including paint drying time). The total cost was around \$9.00 apiece, compared to \$12-13 for the commercial product. Most of the cost was the light (\$7.50). Also, there are alternatives to using a chop stick for a pole- a dowel or commercial poles are available. However, they don't include dinner!



Parts:
LED Light-
 Ebay seller– Big-windy
 Phone-708-279-7623
 Email-
 advantage@ameritech.net

Chopsticks
Hunterline stains
 Creosote
 Light blue gray
 Driftwood
Oil based Mahogany stain
Copic Sketch watercolor
pens

Light Walnut
 Cool Gray
 Dark Suntan
 Sepia
Brass tube 1/16 x 0.14
CA Glue
Parchment colored paper
White glue

The light and brass tube have been painted, and glued with CA to the pole. Afterward, the base was notched (not visible) and it was placed into the scene.

MWR-TLR 2019 CONVENTION

Mark your calendar for May 17-19 2019! We will be having a joint convention with the Midwest Region in Lacrosse Wisconsin, at the Days Inn Lacrosse. Our room rate is \$67 per night for reservations. Call [608\) 783-1000](tel:6087831000). Clinics, Layout tours, Rail and non-rail tours are in the planning stage, as things become finalized, they will be posted on the web site.

Since the Fusee is now electronic, please be sure that your email address is updated with the NMRA or on the TLR web site, so you get all the updates on the convention as they become available.

40th Annual Spud Valley Hobby Show

Sunday, October 21, 2018

Admission: \$5.00 ♦ Large and small operating model Railroads
(under 12 free with paid adult)

Delta by Marriott ♦ Vendors selling farm toys, plastic models, model railroad items, die cast vehicles, old toys, railroad collectibles and more
(Formerly Ramada Plaza Suites)

Crystal Ballroom ♦ Door prizes
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Call Don—701-234-9351 or email spudvalley@hotmail.com

7th Annual Model Railroad Show & Sale

Sponsored by



Sunday, October 28, 2018

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Franklin County Convention Center,
 Hwy 3 West, Hampton, Iowa**
 Admission \$5.00 (Ages 10 & under Free with paid adult)

**For More Information Call (641) 456-1998 or
 Email: eastsidetrains@gmail.com**

A WEEK IN KANSAS CITY

By Art Suel

Wow, what a week it was at the National Model Railroad Association Annual Convention in Kansas City Missouri. It was a week of great clinics, model railroad tours, catching up with old friends and great food. I will describe what I did and if you were not there, you missed out on.

After arriving in Kansas City Saturday night for the NMRA national convention, I picked up my registration packet and started to figure out what clinics to go to in between layout tours. When I got to my room in the Westin, I could not believe the view, Union Station and the railroad lines could be seen clearly. The other side of the hotel had views of the pool or office buildings. Very nice room as during down times I could railfan from the comfort of a chair. See photos 1 and 2.

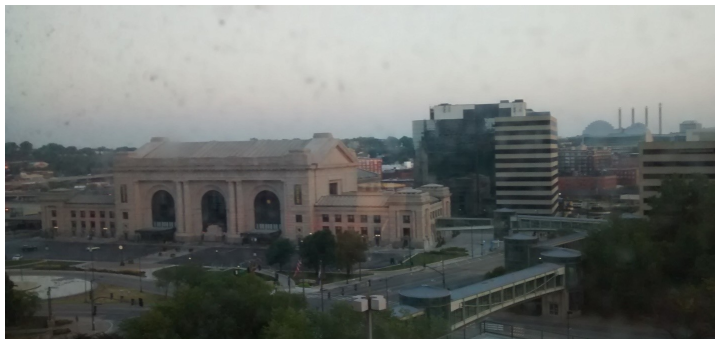


Photo 1



Photo 2

Sunday morning, I arose, grabbed breakfast in the room. No, it wasn't room service but what I brought to cut down costs. My experience is hotel breakfasts are priced too high. I took the skyway to Union Station across the street from the Westin hotel. Kansas City Union Station has been restored and is a beautiful example of American railroad stations. In the station, there is a permanent exhibit of model railroading. There is a layout in every scale except "S". Then it was out to the pedestrian bridge over the main lines of the BNSF and UP railroads. That morning there was about 50 railfans present and the railroads did not

disappoint. A train came thru about every 10 minutes in either direction on both railroads. Intermodals and coal trains were the predominate trains.



Photo 3

In the afternoon I checked in my silent auction items and headed out to the Harry S Truman Presidential Library and Museum. Finished Sunday night with a meal at Jack Stack Barbecue in the old freight house across the tracks from Union Station and a clinic. The clinic was Steve McMullen's "Incorporating Potato Farming and Shipping on a Model Railway". McMullen presentation included the history of potato farming, the various structures and scenery needed to model this agriculture and railway theme. McMullen grew up in Carlton county in New Brunswick Canada a major potato growing area in North America.

Monday morning went on my first layout tour, The Night-hawk, which consists of one model railroad and a live steam railroad. First up was the Greater Kansas City Model Railroad Club. The club layout was a mushroom with the upper level on the outside and utilizing a duck under to get to the lower levels inside the mushroom. The club layout was the Brush Creek and Western, which is a fictitious Midwest bridge route. Photo 4 and 5 The live steam railroad was in the same building and was a loop around the park. Club members were giving rides to people around a 2-mile loop.



Photo 4



Photo 5

In the afternoon I went to 3 clinics. The Art of Soldering which gave me many tips on how to solder correctly. The clinician David Carlton, who in his real job is a quality control engineer for the defense department checking work by contractors. Leslie Eaton, MMR gave the next two clinics. Her first was "Getting down and dirty with Weathering" which she went thru her tips and tools she uses. Many of her tools come from Sally Beauty Supply such as toe nail brushes and make up cleaning sponges. Her other clinic was "Tips and Tricks for Scratch building and Kit bashing". She recommends scalpels over #11 exacta knives. Another tip is when you need a small file to clean up windows to take a nail file and cut it to fit in the window. Dinner was at Jack Stack Barbeque and it was very good.

Tuesday was a day of tours. In the morning, I took the Missouri-ian which had two model railroads on it. First stop was at Howard Gillespies HO Seaboard Coast Line. He is modeling the SCL in the Tampa Florida area just after the merger of the Seaboard Coast Line and Atlantic Coast Lines. He is just starting the scenery phase, but his track work is excellent and smooth running. The last stop for the morning was at Ken Jenkins Ho Rock Island, Clay Center line. He is modeling the Rock Island from Kansas City to Belleville Missouri. Majority of the scenery is in and many grain elevators on the railroad with no two alike. Photo 6 and 7



Photo 6



Photo 7

After a quick bite at the hotel, it was off on the OMG tour Second Section. Three model railroads on this bus tour. First stop was at Bret Oberholzer's N scale MKT, St Louis Subdivision. His model railroad is the MKT from Sedalia Missouri to St Louis Missouri in 1984. Photo 8 & 9



Photo 8



Photo 9

Next, we visited the Frisco Railway, Northern Division of Rich McClellan HO scale model railroad. Time period for his Frisco is 1980. Area depicted is from Springfield Mo. To Kansas City Mo. Photo 10



Photo 10

Final model railroad on this tour and for the day was Eric Goodman's HO scale Santa Fe, Emporia Division. His railroad runs from Argentine yard to Emporia Kansas and time is 1995. Scenery was about 50% complete but like all model railroads I had seen so far, it was smooth running and well designed. Photo 11



Photo 11

Wednesday morning was spent attending clinics at the hotel. First up was "Modular Structures" by John Lowrance, MMR. He emphasized how with modular structure elements to create unique structures. Next was a clinic on "Intermodal" by Rich Mahaney. First this was like a primer on the history of intermodal and I learned a lot how this type of carload developed and became an integral part of railroading. On a side note, I found that Rich Mahaney will be attending the La Crosse Joint Convention next year in May and I urge you to take in his clinics. He has a list of around 25 clinics he gives at various conventions each year.

My final clinic of the morning was another Mahaney clinic, "Selecting Industries". In this clinic, he stresses you need to ask the questions that real railroads do to increase their loads in and out of the communities they serve.

In the afternoon I took the model railroad tour, the "Golden

Rocket". There were three model railroads on this tour. Larry Alfred's SP, ATSF, D&RGW and RGS in O and On3 scales. This is two separate layouts in one common space. Photo 12



Photo 12

Next was the N scale (I call it the normal scale when chatting with HO scale friends) Buffalo and Pittsburgh of Jon Percy. His is a fictitious regional railroad set in New York and Pennsylvania around 1988. The railroad has most of the structures and scenery completed. Photos 13 and 14



Photo 13



Photo 14

Final model railroad on the tour belonged to Jack Rosenfield HO scale New York, New Haven and Hartford. This is a free-lanced version of the New Haven as he remembers it growing up. Area covered is Westchester County, New York to Grand Central Terminal. Photo 15 and 16



Photo 15



Photo 16

Thursday morning, I started the day with Cody Grivno new presentation on Modeling Your Hometown. In this clinic, he goes through the process of how he decided what to model from Crookston Minnesota on his new model railroad. With his collection of pictures, he gives the audience views of the structures he intends to model.

Then I went to Dr. Nick Muff clinic on the topic of Kansas City Union Station in HO scale. Dr Muff spent 68 months constructing this model. From building the molds that were used to cast the wall to the 246 LEDs in each of the three chandeliers in the lobby it was an eye-opening presentation on what it takes to build a highly detailed station. The finished model measured just over six feet. He even modeled the two basements and constructed his model railroad fascia, so visitors can see that too!

The afternoon was spent on my final model railroad tour the "Sunnyland". First up was Dale Phetteplace's HO scale Western Maryland. This layout is set in Maryland and West Virginia in the mid 50's. Photo 17 & 18



Photo 17



Photo 18

The bus tour continued to the HO scale Piper Valley Railroad of Joe Robertson. This model railroad is named after the creek near the farm he grew up on southern Missouri. Fully scenic with a fall motif. Photo 19 and 20



Photo 19



Photo 20

Final stop was Fran and Miles Hale, of Woodland Scenics fame. Their Layout was the Kansas City Southern in On30 scale. This layout featured the West Bottoms area of Kansas City. Large buildings which overshadows the rolling stock and locomotives. Photos 21 and 22.



Photo 21

Friday ended with a dinner at the 801 Chophouse with my three friends from around the country. Photo 23



Photo 23



Photo 22

With this stop it was back to the hotel. My tours of model railroads were over, and it was very enjoyable. When I see what others have done, it energizes me to get back to my own model railroad, The Credit River and Western.

Friday morning started with me picking up my settlement check at the silent auction. It was a nice size check and the good news was that all 20 lots I entered Sunday sold, so I was not bringing back any item to Minnesota. On my way to the National Train show, I had time for one clinic that morning. It was a clinic on "Awesome Awnings" by Howard R. Garner, MMR. I learned how to use a computer to print awnings on cardstock and how to cast awnings for curved windows. Now was time to take the free street car up Main Street to the Convention Center Bartle's Hall for the train show.

I wandered around the show with my wish list noting where the best price was. Once I made the rounds, I started to make purchases. One of the great things about the train show is that manufacturers are there with their displays especially of up coming models. Another interesting facet is the many modular layouts. This year some of the Minnesota Free-Mo modules were present and the Green River Valley n scale modular club layout came to the show.

Saturday, I paid for my half of the room and took in two more clinics before heading home at 10:30 am. The first clinic was by Rich Mahaney and covered the topic "Quick Industries for your layout". Simple additions such as a team track or an unloading ramp can add operations to your model railroad.

Finally, I sat in on Mike Brusky clinic, realistic Barb Wire Fence. He pointed out that you need fencing such as barb wire to keep critters (cattle) off your rail and how it can be modeled realistically and economically. After this, I got in the car and pointed it north on Interstate 35 for home.

Minneapolis & Northland



Railroad Company

I enjoy model railroading and want to share my experiences with you! You can see my build of kits, how-to's, painting information and much more on my internet blog. Check out <http://mnrailroadcab100.blogspot.com>.

Lester Breuer, MMR

JMRI– An Introduction

Jared Seliger

Photos by Author

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article is for informational purposes only. The author bears no responsibility for any issues encountered by incorporating the topics presented into your layout.

It has become difficult to pick up a model railroad publication or look at a model railroad website without reading an article or editorial about how to attract new, younger modelers to this wonderful hobby. Admittedly, I do not have new or unique approaches that have not already been tried to recruit new members. However, I do believe that the responsibility resides on all of us who have a passion for model railroading to promote and showcase our hobby. One area that I have found to spark an interest in people with limited knowledge of the hobby is technology. I particularly enjoy showing off my layout and make a concerted effort to showcase and explain all of the technology that has been integrated into the hobby. The response is usually something like: “wow, I had no idea model railroading was so technological.”

When I have guests visiting my layout, I always am sure to show them the Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI) software. In my opinion, this software is one of the most significant implementations for the hobby because it provides opportunities to take full advantage of DCC operations. I have two main uses for JMRI: reading and programming configurable variables (CVs) and layout control.

When I first started using DCC several years ago, the steepest learning curve I faced was the complexity of changing CVs. I have had numerous discussions on this topic with fellow modelers and they shared similar challenges. Several of the people who I talked to stated they rarely changed the default DCC locomotive decoder address of “03” because of fears of making a mistake and disabling their locomotive(s). Minimally, every modeler should change the decoder address of each locomotive to a unique value to take full advantage of DCC operations. Changing CV addresses using a hand throttle can be very challenging for novice railroaders. Using JMRI makes the process of changing CVs much more convenient because of the visual interface the user has with each CV.

The use of JMRI software is similar no matter what DCC

system you are using, however connecting the DCC system to JMRI does vary depending on what DCC manufacturer you are using. On my layout, I use the Digitrax Super Chief DCC system (5amp booster) and that is what I will describe in this section. To use JMRI with the Digitrax system, minimally you need to have: 1). A Digitrax PR3 plus connected to the command station via Loconet cable (this includes the power supply and USB cable); 2). A computer running JMRI (<http://jmri.sourceforge.net/>); and 3). A programming track isolated from the layout (see figure 1). The PR3 connected to a power source can be used for stand-alone programming, however I have read Internet forums stating that some users have had difficulty reading some sound decoders when it is not connected to a command station. As a rule, I always keep my command station connected to my PR3 via a Loconet cable.

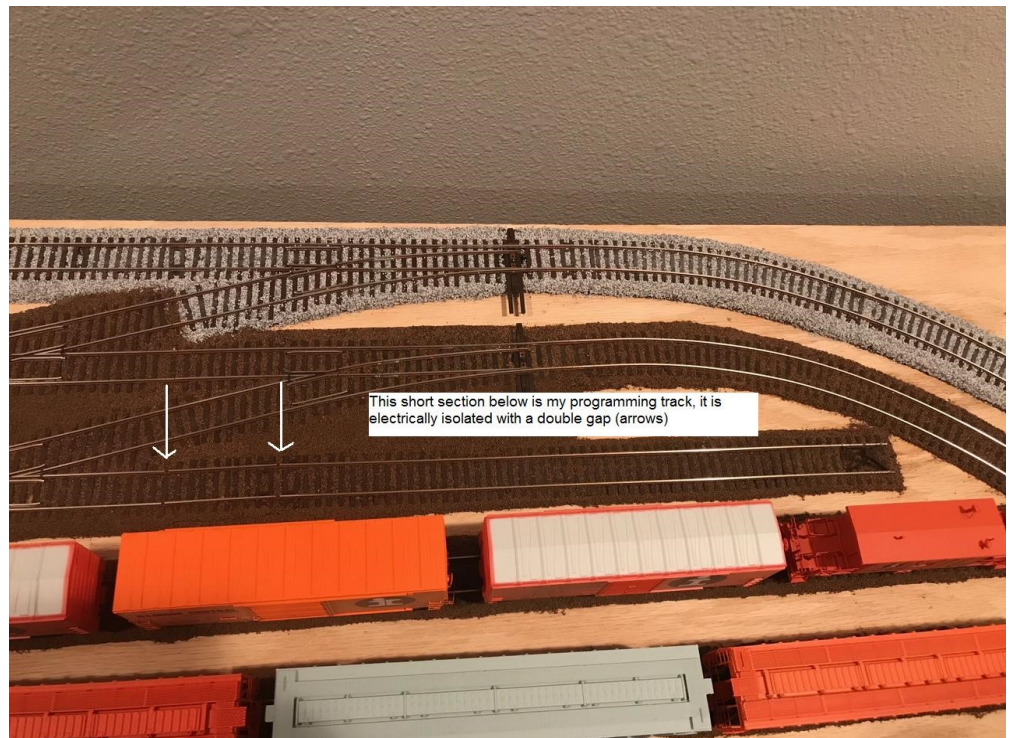


Figure 1- The programming track is incorporated into the yard, but is electrically isolated– note the gaps indicated by the white arrows.

Each new locomotive I purchase is analyzed through my JMRI software before being operated on the layout. This actually serves two purposes: first, JMRI maintains a roster of locomotives you have making future changes easier because a history of that locomotive’s decoder exists; and second, I change the decoder’s address from the default “03” (see figure 2). During this initial analysis, I also explore the locomotive’s speed steps, function assignment, and sound levels.

Other uses of JMRI that I find to be much easier than changing the decoder values with a hand throttle include speed-matching locomotives and changing sound levels. With several recent purchases of Athearn Genesis locomotives, I found the out-of-the-box volume to be much too high for the small room I run my layout in. Using JMRI allows me to adjust the sound levels using a slider bar making the adjustment. Similarly, I like

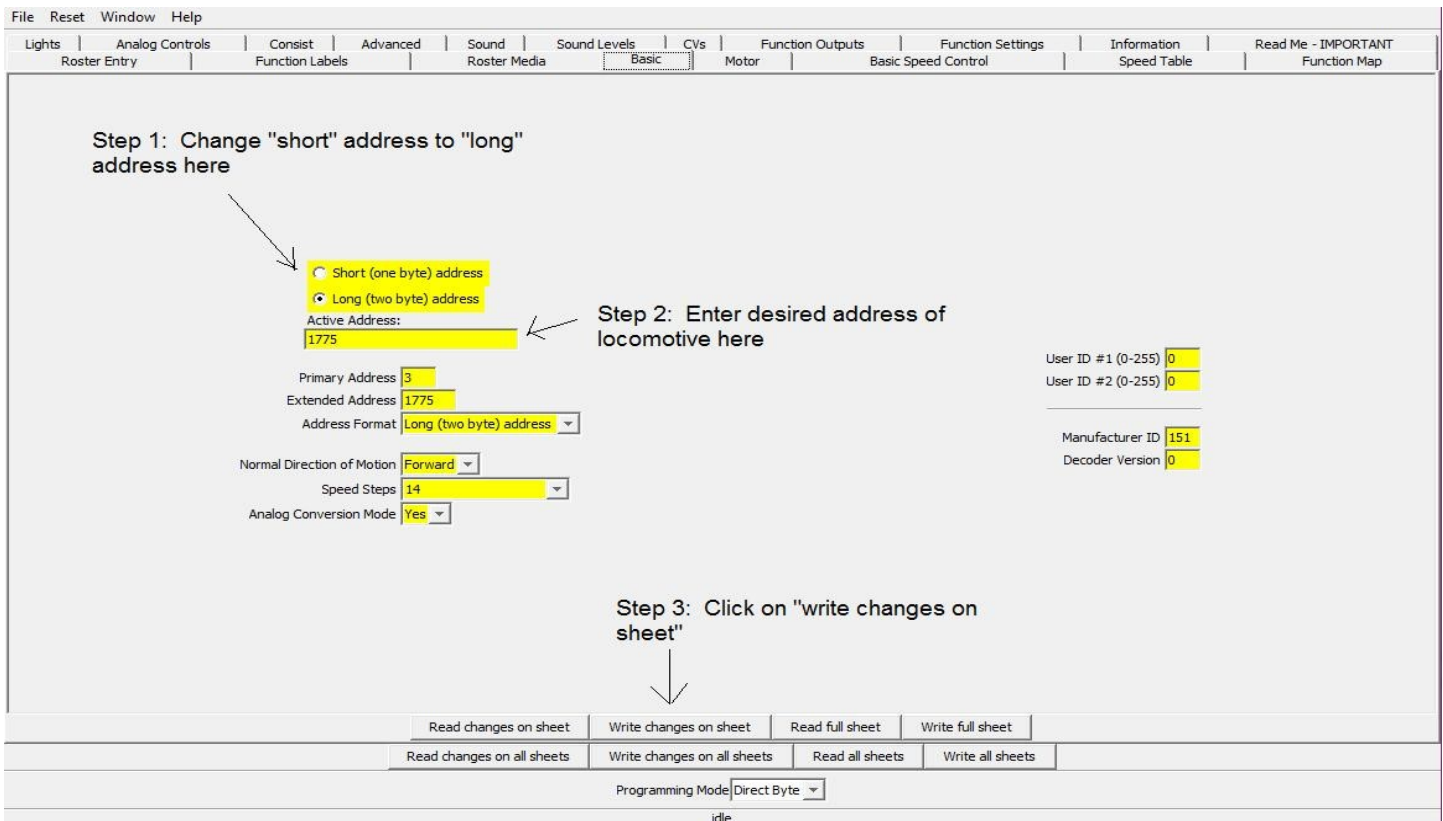


Figure 2- By clicking on the "Long address" button, you can enter the locomotive number rather than relying on the default number. This will allow a much greater of locomotives to be run at one time. It also makes identification of your engines much easier.

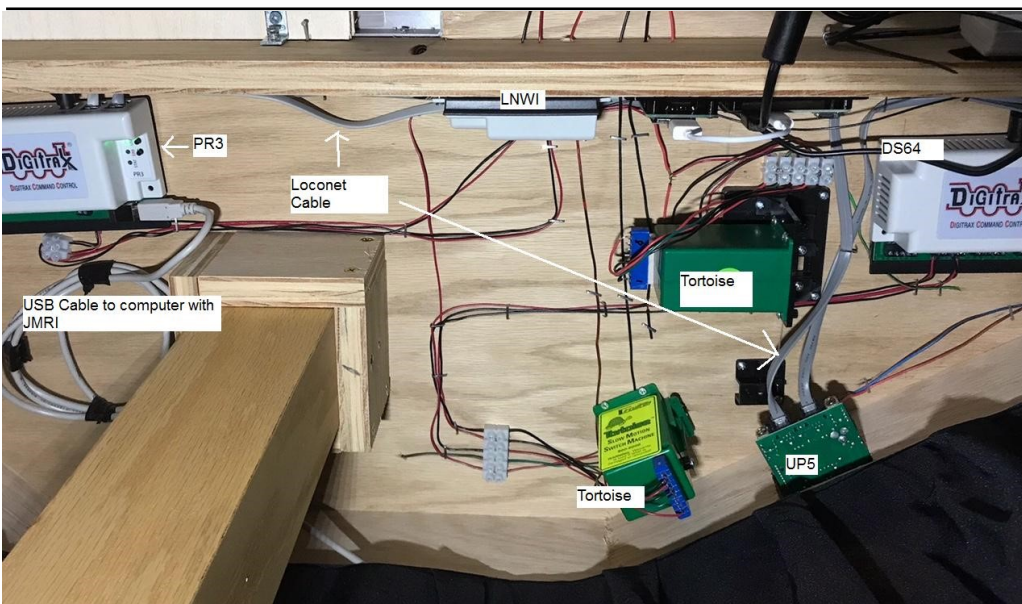


Figure 3- The authors model railroad uses JMRI to control switch machines as well as modifying DCC CV's. See the text for a full description.

motives and throw turnouts. I have my layout wired so that all of my Tortoise switch machines are connected to a Digitrax DS64 and connected to the PR3 via Loconet (see figure 3). If your turnouts are controlled by toggle switches rather than a decoder (e.g., DS64), you cannot control them using JMRI.

In my opinion, one of the most creative features of JMRI is the ability to connect your smart device (e.g., smartphone or tablet) wirelessly and run trains using the "WiThrottle" application. You can get WiThrottle from the app store and run a demo version for free. I only have the demo version and it allows you to have complete throttle control and function buttons all on your smart device

having 2-3 locomotive lashups running on my layout and I am easily able to adjust the speed tables using JMRI to ensure a smooth running consist.

The final aspect of using the JMRI, and the feature that really showcases the use of technology in model railroading, is running the layout with the software. Since my PR3 is connected to the command station, I am able to use JMRI to run loco-

(see figure 4). I love showing guests to my layout how trains can be run wirelessly. This is also a nice perk if you do not have radio throttles on your layout because you can use your wireless smart device throttle if you need to be at a section of your layout where your tethered throttle will not reach.

I have only covered the tip of the iceberg of what JMRI can do your layout operations. Since this software is free, I encourage

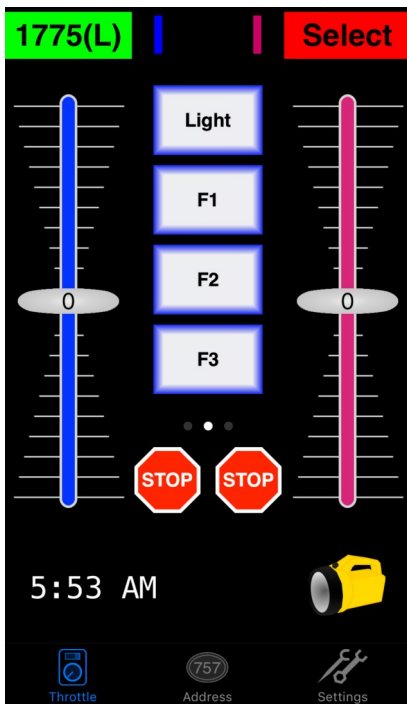


Figure 4- This is a screen shot of the JMRI app installed on the authors phone. This allows multiple people to be in op sessions without everyone needing their own controller.

everyone to explore trying it on your layout. Depending on what DCC system you use, it might take a few dollars to purchase the components necessary to get connected. I do have several videos on YouTube that describe JMRI use, including a demonstration on the WiThrottle (YouTube: ck7813).

NEW MEMBERS IN THOUSAND LAKES REGION

By Art Suel Secretary / Membership Chair TLR

Please welcome the following model railroaders to the organization.

Bob	Gilbert	Stillwater	MN
Daniel	Romo	Eden Prairie	MN
David	Wellington	Saint Paul	MN
Garry	Sykora	Walnut Grove	MN
Gary	Larson	Minnetonka	MN
George	Fischer	Bloomington	MN
Glen	Olson	Eagan	MN
Jim	Hogenson	White Bear Lake	MN
Mark	Schreier	Minnetonka	MN
Kirk	Juergens	Bloomington	MN
Kyle	Soat	Lennox	SD
Logan	Helms	Harrisburg	SD
Wayne	Kerslake	Sioux Falls	SD
John	Gutsch	Colfax	WI

Master Builder – Motive Power

By

John Hotvet, MMR

Master Builder – Motive Power is one of two Achievement certificates that can be earned in the equipment category.

The Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) form, which can be found on the NMRA website, lists the various requirements that must be completed for the Master Builder – Motive Power certificate.

Basically, the modeler must complete three pieces of locomotives or self-propelled equipment and earn a Merit Award for each one. In addition, at least one of the three must be scratch-built. The items that must be scratch-built are listed on the Statement of Qualifications.

This certificate is easy to explain, but it is the second

rarest one to be awarded in the TLR behind the Master Builder – Prototype Modeler certificate.

The models must be judged in an NMRA contest or by a panel appointed by the Region AP Chair in order to receive the Merit Awards.

Once the three models have been judged and the SOQ filled out with all the appropriate signatures, send it to me for review and further processing.

When the layout came down

By Paul Ullrich

I did the unthinkable. I tore down my layout this winter. I'm sorry to report that I hadn't used it in years.

It was a small U-shaped layout (6'X10') in the laundry room of my basement. I even managed to add a second level with a reversing loop accessible by a 4% grade and a draw-bridge, plus two small rail yards, all in O gauge. I had also crammed every Lionel operating accessory I could pack in that space.

Its construction was an impressive feat of engineering, but operating it was like running a roller coaster inside a pinball machine. It was also very difficult to operate. There were too many switches and buttons, and keeping track of them was not an enjoyable chore.

I enjoy running trains on my portable layouts at train shows, but those layouts are simple loops. I also enjoy the interaction with the public, especially with the children. Compared to that, struggling to operate my crowded little layout in solitude in my basement had no appeal for me.

I also enjoy building much more than operating, and once it was finished, I lost interest. The layout gathered dust, and cobwebs. Spiders were seen along the layout. Next to the O gauge figures, they looked as large as cocker spaniels. Spiders make lousy model railroaders. I tried to interest them in joining the NMRA, but none of them were interested.

Last November I started tearing it down. First I removed the accessories and the structures. They were much dirtier than I imagined. The dust had adhered to the plastic, and I had to scrub it off with dishwashing liquid and a toothbrush. Next came the wiring. This was the most difficult and tedious part of the layout to assemble, but it was the easiest to remove. It took about an hour to

take it all down.

I had a friend who expressed interest in taking the layout off my hands, so I left the track on the layout. He couldn't take it right away, as he was spending the winter in California, so I agreed to store it in my garage until the spring, despite my wife's warning that his wife probably wouldn't let him have it.



I'm still involved in model railroading, even though I don't have a layout. I'm still inventorying (and cleaning) the leftover equipment! Some of the stuff (especially the track) will be sold at local train shows. I still have my trains, and my portable layout, and right now, that's good



The layout in its former glory. Note the clothesline in the foreground.

Taking apart the tables weren't difficult, as I had bolted everything together. The worst part was dragging it up the stairs. The U-shaped layout had three sections. The two main sections were 4'x6' with a small 2'x2' section connecting them.

Getting the first section up was an arduous chore that took well over an hour. The second section, which had the second level, was impossible. I simply didn't have the strength to lug it up the stairs, so removed the second level. I used aquarium gravel as ballast, so much of it was shaken loose that the basement floor looked like a quarry.

It took several sweepings, mopping and vacuuming to get rid of all of the gravel, dust, dirt and grit. We used the space underneath the layout as a catch-all for all sorts of things that we had forgotten about. There was a Christmas tree stand which we hadn't used since we bought an artificial tree for 20 years ago. That, and may other unused treasures, went to Goodwill.

Spring arrived, and just as my wife predicted, my friend's wife wouldn't let him take my layout. I removed the track and prepared to take it to the landfill site.

The city's free giveaway weekend was coming up. This is a semi-annual event where you leave stuff you don't want on the curb with a sign that read "free". My wife said that rather than dragging the layout 20 miles to the landfill site and paying a dumping fee, I should put the layout on the curb. I put the layout on the curb, along with a broken bicycle and a busted dehumidifier. The bike and the dehumidifier went in an hour. The layout stayed there all weekend.

It occurred to me that it would be far easier, cheaper and faster to disassemble what was left. It took me just two hours to break it all apart. Technically, I still have the layout. It's just in pieces. I stocked the lumber between the joists in the garage and placed the plywood on top of some risers I use to store equipment. I have enough lumber and hardware to last me a lifetime.

Machinist Blocks

Lester Breuer, MMR

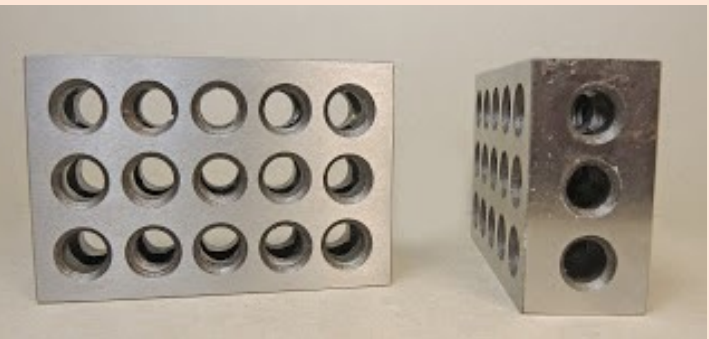
Note— Les was unable to write an original article for this issue but he graciously agreed to allow us to use his internet blog article you see here. For more articles, visit his internet blog, <http://mnrailroadcab100.blogspot.com>.

During two of my college years I worked in a machine shop to help pay college expenses. While working in the machine shop I used tools that I could use to improve my modeling. The caliper and micrometer were two measuring tools I used there that I have written about on this blog (see the labels **caliper** or **tools**). Another valuable tool I found to assist my modeling was machinist blocks. The machinist block is a tool that will help you keep model freight cars and structures and other projects square. I want to share with you several types of machinist blocks I have in my collection that help me and may help you in your modeling projects.



1 2 3 Machinist blocks and custom-made machinist blocks

If you and I do an internet search for machinist blocks and look at images, the most common machinist blocks I find are called 1 2 3 machinist blocks. The precision milled, ground parallel, flat, square and hardened blocks are useful for setup work. The holes can be used to bolt them together to form custom shapes. The 1 2 3 blocks are available from various vendors. I purchased my pair of 1 2 3 blocks, 1"x2"x3", from a tool vendor at a railroad show. I use these blocks mostly to help keep projects such as model structures square during assembly. The blocks have some weight to them so I also use them for a weight when called for.



1 2 3 Machinist Blocks

For freight car assembly, the machinist blocks I use frequently are called angle plate blocks. In my tool drawer I have the following three sizes: 1"x1", 2"x2" and

3"x3" that I purchased from MicroMark.



Angle plate machine blocks

I use angle plates to keep the car body "basic box" square when building a resin flat car kit. I make the "box" by gluing an end to a side to create a "L" and repeat the process for the other end and side. The two "L" units are glued together to create the basic car body box. I use the angle plates to keep the "L" square while glue is applied. I clamp one of the resin sides to the 2"x2" angle plate and use a second one to support the car body end against it to form the "L". The small 1"x1" is used on the inside to support both the side and end.

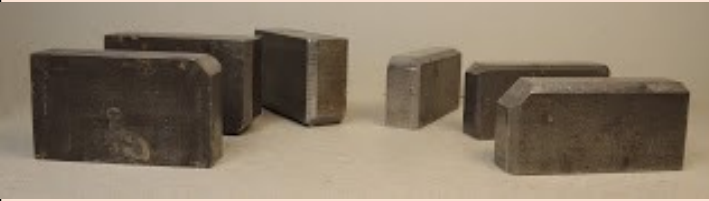


Machinist blocks used to create an "L" shaped section of wall.

The angle plates work well; however, I had a custom set of machinist blocks made for me that I like even better and use to assemble ever freight car I build. The blocks were made in two sizes: a small block 1/2"x7/8"x2" and a large block 5/8"x1-1/8"x2." The special features of the custom made blocks are size and chamfered edges. The blocks were machined for me by my friend Gary Wildung; therefore, I call them the "Gary blocks."

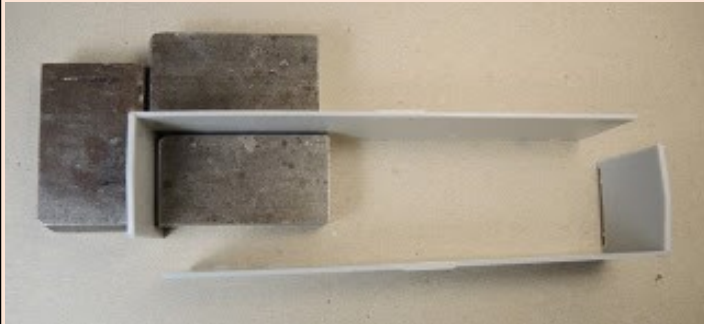
I use the Gary blocks, as the angle plate blocks, to build the car body basic box for a freight car build. In the photos you can see the Gary blocks have several chamfered edges. The chamfered edge allows them to be placed in a square corner to which glue is applied without

the machine block getting glue on it and attaching itself.



Custom-made "Gary" blocks. Note the chamfered, or angled, edge to allow gluing.

The Gary blocks, placed in a vertical position, or the small 1'x1" angle block can be used inside the completed car body basic box to install a baffle.



Custom Gary Blocks in use.

The machinist blocks I have described above should sit on a flat surface when being used. In the machine shop the machinist blocks were used on a "surface plate" made from granite. Of course, this type of surface plate is cost prohibitive and does not work well on a model workbench. After a search for a good substitute, I decided a piece of plate glass obtained from a local glass company was my best option. I had the glass company cut the plate glass to the size I wanted for my workbench. I keep a gray sheet of cardboard, from a photo framing mat found at an art supply store, under the plate glass to enable me to see kit parts laid on it easily. The plate glass is also easy to clean as you can easily scrape off the glue that collects on it with a single edge razor blade (SERB). The plate glass can be etched if cutting directly on it when using a knife or a SERB so I keep a small healing cutting mat in one corner to cut on.

If you do not have machinist blocks in your collection of modeling tools, I urge you to give them a try. The machinist blocks act as extra hands to hold the resin car ends and sides together square when applying the glue. I am guessing you, as I, will soon be convinced of their value in your tool drawer.

Region Round-up

No. 1 Northern Division

Ian Plett, Supt.

September 29 & 30 2018 the No1 Northern HO Free-mo Group will be setting up the Modules at the Manitoba Mega Train again this year. We will probably have the largest layout at the show. The Manitoba Mega Train Show will be held at the Red River Exhibition Ground on the west side of Winnipeg, mb.

Minnesota River Valley Division

Terry Davis, Supt.

The Minnesota River Valley Division continues to work on the HO modelrailroad of the Milwaukee Road Heritage Center in Montevideo. To help, contact Supt. Terry Davis at ptdavis@hutchtel.net to learn about the next work session. Also, members will gather at a member's home in Montevideo on 9:15 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 22, for an operating session on a two-level GN/RI model railroad that is mostly scenicked. Contact Terry for information. For more about the MRVD, visit the Facebook site: West Central Modelers.

Model Railroad-related events in and around the TLR 2018

Sept 15	Twin Cities Model Railroad Club, Education Building, MN State Fairgrounds 9-3
Oct 13-14	West Wisconsin Railroad Club Annual Show, Eau Claire Indoor Sport Center 3456 Craig Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701 Sat 10-4, Sun 10-3
Oct 20	Newport Train Club Train Show, Woodbury High School, Woodbury, MN 9-2
Oct 21	39th Annual Spud Valley Hobby Show, Delta by Marriott, Fargo, ND 9-3
Oct 28	North Central Iowa Model Railroad Club Show, Franklin County Conv. Center, Hwy 3 West, Hampton IA Sunday 9-3
Nov 3	Prairie Lakes Division Train Show, Kossuth County Fairgrounds, Algona, IA,
Nov 3-4	Great Train Show, Canterbury Park, Shakopee, MN, Sat/Sun 10-4
Nov 10	Granite City Train Show, River's Edge Conv. Center, 10m 4th Ave S, St. Cloud, MN, Sat/Sun 9-3
Nov 10-11	TrainFest, WI State Fair Park, Milwaukee, WI,

2019

Mar 15-16	Twin Cities Division Spring Modeler's Retreat Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church of Plymouth. 12235 Old Rockford Rd, Plymouth, MN 55441
May 17-19	TLR/Midwest Division Combined Convention, LaCrosse, WI
July 7-13	NMRA National Convention, Salt Lake City, UT

Thoughts from the Pickle Barrel

Kevin Dill, Editor

OK, maybe green was a bit too much, but let's enjoy COLOR! With the new look, every member will get every edition. As such, the Fusee is about what you can provide to me for content. Next issue I will run an article on writing articles. It's not as intimidating or hard as you think. Start with a one page article on something simple and put a photo or two with it. We all have things we have done or experienced that we can share. I have a bad habit of forgetting that there are people starting out in the hobby all the time, so we need basic information articles and how to's for every experience level.

Art Suel will be sharing his first article (besides the Board Minutes) about his trip to the NMRA National Convention in Kansas City. This is a good example of a nice article about a trip or experience to share with someone.

One big thing to think about is what President Jay Manning put in his From the Cab article. The TLR has money in the bank and we need ideas on how to spend it on the membership. There are grants available to the divisions, but other ideas are important. Do you want the TLR to pay for someone special to come to a Convention? Do you want a Modeling with the Masters event at each convention so that you can actually build something while a MMR helps? Would a portion of each convention registration be paid by the TLR be a benefit? There are

many options and ideas. Send them to Jay at Ches-sie@manningperry.com.

Finally, I want to thank all the people that have sent me articles for you to enjoy. Tom Gasior, Lester Breuer, MMR, John Hotvet, MMR, Jared Seliger and Paul Ullrich have been my people to lean on. After you go to well many times though, it goes dry. Let's take the pressure off them and send me some stuff!

Happy Rails, Kevin

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