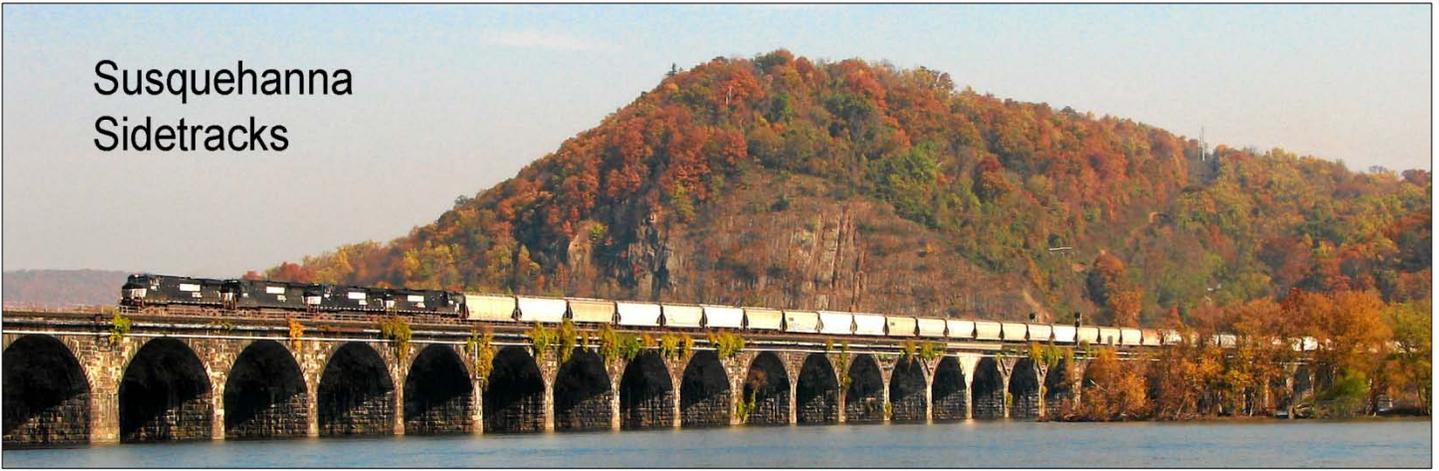


Susquehanna Sidetracks



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LSOPS A Success!!!



LSOPS session at Jeff Warner's PRR/RDG/WM South Central Region. Photo by Phil Monat.

Banner photo courtesy of Christopher Muller, SteamPhotos.com

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Division 11 Happenings

Jeff Warner

There are a few administrative developments I need to pass on to the membership this time. The BOD has voted to approve the following three items:

First, the price of receiving the newsletter via USPS mail will increase from \$4 per year to \$6 per year with this issue. This is to offset the increase in printing and mailing costs. All those that have previously paid to receive the newsletter will continue to receive it at the old price until their subscription expires.

The newsletter will continue to be free on the website.

Second, along this line, the BOD has voted to allow advertising (model railroad related) in the newsletter for the 2010 calendar year. Price will be \$25 for ½ page or \$45 for a full page FOR THE FULL YEAR. The income from the advertising will go toward the newsletter costs, with any extra to the general fund. The advertiser must provide either computer graphics or scanable copy...we will NOT do graphic design. The BOD will contact several local hobby shops, but if you know of anyone else that may wish to advertise, please contact me at jwarner@susquehannamra.org for more information.

To answer the questions that often come up regarding the costs affiliated with the newsletter, we mail one newsletter per year (the one with the ballots) to all division members. The rest are mailed only to those that have paid to receive copies. Also, we do get a small portion of member dues from the MER...at a rate of 50 cents per year per member. That really isn't even enough to cover the cost of copying and mailing the one newsletter sent to all members.

Third, The BOD also has approved the division becoming a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. More in a future newsletter as info becomes available.

The included article on LSOPS is reprinted with permission from the Dispatcher's Office (the OP SIG publication), but I wanted to include it so you could read how OP SIG President Phil Monat sees the division and the event.

Keep Saturday, June 5, 2010, open on your calendars. An event in Camp Hill is being planned.

First Lehigh / Susquehanna Operations Weekend A Success By Phil Monat (OP SIG President)

Yet another successful OPSIG operations weekend has been added to our events calendar, this one located in south/central Pennsylvania and held October 2nd and 3rd. With layouts in both Allentown and Harrisburg/York, LSOPS employed a slightly different organizational structure than other events by using two hotels, one for each cluster of layouts. Organizer Jeff Warner lessened the driving distances and made the schedule very enjoyable by concentrating guest's operations at the layouts in the city they selected. Jeff also made great use of the web by designing an attractive and informative site, and he enlisted the support of the local NMRA Division (MER Susquehanna Division 11), which allowed us to use the NMRA's extremely helpful insurance program. Other paper work and organizational items were first rate, with links and information to the layout owner's various layouts only a click away.

And what layouts to click on! Jeff secured the participation of layout owners Larry Reynolds, Jim Hertzog and Gale Smith in the Allentown (Lehigh) area, while Steven Mallery, Lew Jones, Bob Martin and Jeff himself kept the Harrisburg/York (Susquehanna) area operators busy. Most of these layouts were designed with intensive, heavy operations in mind and they have the traffic flow, operating paperwork and other essential systems well developed. Speaking of operating paperwork, OPSIG readers may remember Ray Fisher's article 'A Waybill Based Operating System' (January 2007, Vol XIII, No.1), in which he describes a way to create an entire operating system including waybills. Five of the layouts in this event use Ray's system which not only worked beautifully on all the layouts, but I continue to find is one of the clearest and most accessible systems out there.



LSOPS at Gale Smith's Lehigh Valley.
Photo by Scott Dunlap.

In the Lehigh area, guests started with Gale Smith's ambitious Lehigh Valley, an HO scale layout set between Jersey City and Wilkes Barre. Using a multi-deck design, Gale has built an impressive and complex layout that duplicates the intensive operations the LV was known for in this area. The design of the layout is a marvel of engineering and operations integration in a compact space. Lots of overhead traffic, industry switching and yard classifications keep operators busy in the mid 1960's era. The fascia signage, train instructions and operating paperwork go a long way to helping one navigate the line and Gale is well along on scenic elements. The equipment runs very smoothly (Digitrax) with the layout dispatched by verbal manual block on FRS radios. Guests were having a great time exploring the LV and didn't want to leave.



LSOPS at Jim Hertzog's Reading Shamokin Division. Photo by Scott Dunlap.

Next was Jim Hertzog's well know Reading Shamokin Division, a completely scened layout that has been feature countless times in the national press and several stories in our own DO as well. This is a large and exciting operation with all types of traffic operating over the hilly terrain between Tamaqua and Shamokin.

Mine shifters, coal drags, manifest freights, local and thru passenger traffic, and even CNJ and LV detour trains all were waiting to be run. The layout needs three sets of helpers to push the trains up the hills, and the schedule and traffic flow is very close to the prototype Reading. Jim's attention to detail with his amazing structures really puts you in the heart of anthracite country - many of the breakers are modeled after the actual buildings. His lovely scenery, a mix of green and black coal dirt, is a perfect compliment and very prototypical of the area. Set in the mid 1950's, guests ran more than a few T-1's (4-8-4) around with some mallets, but most road trains are powered by first generation diesels. Jim uses Lenz DCC for control, which runs great and the equipment performed flawlessly. The layout is dispatched using verbal manual block with FRS radios and the paperwork and train instructions continued to be perfect. With all of these attractions, it is easy to see why the Shamokin Division is so well known and such a delight to operate on.



LSOPS at Larry Reynolds' PRR Altoona Area. Photo by Scott Dunlap.

One doesn't travel to Pennsylvania without visiting The Standard Railroad Of The World, of course, so our next stop was at Larry Reynolds' PRR Altoona Area. Larry is modeling perhaps the most famous part of this famed pike – Altoona and the Horseshoe Curve. Building a four track mainline and modeling the attendant heavy stream of traffic is not something for the faint of heart, but Larry has created a truly remarkable representation of this famous prototype. The layout features the very large and busy Altoona Yard, where considerable classification takes place. In addition to the constant stream of heavy freights, the PRR's great name passenger trains all make an appearance. Larry has picked the mid 1950's to model, so the wide range of early diesels are joined by the well know PRR steam fleet – It doesn't get any better that double headed I-10's on the hill passing new E-7's on The Broadway! Almost completely scened, the layout is a joy to look at and a delight to run. Digitrax controls the mostly sound equipped locomotives, and the car-cards and paperwork are again first rate. Larry has built a large CTC machine to run the mainline and it keeps two Dispatchers quite busy during the four-hour sessions, as well as keeping the radio chatter to a minimum. This is a beautiful and very well built layout that features incredibly intense and fun operations – a good reason why Larry almost never has an open guest spot at one of his sessions!



LSOPS at Lew Jones' Berkshire Railroad. Photo by Phil Monat.

Two hours to the West, another group of LSOPS guests were having as much fun running four wonderful layouts in the Susquehanna area. Two of these are proto-freelanced efforts. Lew Jones' Berkshire Railroad is a new layout that has only recently started operations. Aided by his friends and Ray Fisher's waybill system, Lew was able to create a fun three-hour session for us that we all enjoyed even though the layout was initially not designed for such activity. The room is small enough that the single dispatcher could talk with the crews and the sole yardmaster to keep the modern equipment moving. Lew has just started scenery, but I think now that the operations bug has bitten he will soon be looking to expand his track plan!

Bob Martin's Central Pennsylvania Railroad was also open that evening, so I did not get to visit it. Friends who attended spoke glowingly of the wonderful scenery Bob has done, and of the fun and very enjoyable operating scenario he has developed. A freelanced line with very close ties with the PRR, the CPRR is set in the mid 1960's and operates a considerable amount of freight traffic, bridge route traffic and local passenger service. A Dispatcher in another room controls movements via track warrant and FRS radio, with the main yard at Yorktowne being the center of activity. Two staging yards represent the rest of the world keep the fourteen interchange points on the railroad busy. I gathered from comments at the hotel that the LSOPS guests lucky enough to visit Bob's railroad were lucky indeed.



LSOPS at Bob Martin's Central Penn Railroad. Photo by Phil Monat.

Continuing in that PRR frame of mind, next up was organizer Jeff Warner's PRR/RDG/WM South Central Region . This is a very complex terminal interchange layout featuring three different railroads. The PRR is represented by a 270' mainline run from Washington to Enola/Harrisburg, while the Reading operates on a 100' mainline from Lurgan to Reading. The Western Maryland joins this with a 180' mainline run from Baltimore to Hagerstown, which gives total mainline trackage of almost 550'. Two dispatchers control this trackage, one for the PRR (a CRT video machine) and the other for the Reading/WM (a US&S machine). Line-side signals are essential here with so many crews at so many interlocks and Jeff has done a superb job of modeling this part of the operation. This is a multi-deck design and it's again maximizes the amount of railroad one can get out of average basement. In addition, there are five large yards – Enola, Hagerstown, Baltimore PRR, Baltimore WM and Rutherford. These naturally take up much of the available room, so if you like yard operations, this layout is for you! Trains ran flawlessly and much of Jeff's fleet has sound (Digitrax). Jeff also has developed excellent Yardmaster & Operator's Guides and other documents to help both experienced and newcomers get a handle on this exciting and beautifully complex operation. I can't wait to return.



LSOPS at Steven Mallery's PRR Buffalo Line. Photo by Phil Monat.

The last layout we operated was Steven Mallery's PRR Buffalo Line, a truly delightful 1960's era representation of this difficult and challenging line. Modeling from South Williamsport up to GJ interlocking outside of Buffalo, Steven runs this as a point-to-point operations with two staging yards representing Enola and Buffalo, with additional staging in Emporium representing the PRR line to Warren and Erie. The central yard is Renovo, with the 230-foot mainline run spreading out on this double deck design. The difficult part of this line, or course, is the serious grade over Keating Summit, which Steven has modeled superbly. All trains require helpers, both up and down and often train lengths stretch to 70 cars, which means everybody is working! With 27 trains carded over the layout during a session, often two helper crews are required to keep things fluid. The entire railroad is CTC, with line side signals present at all areas and every interlock having a repeater board in case you don't happen to be able to see the modeled signal aspect. Steven is a professional NS Dispatcher who happens to currently run this section of their line, so you can bet that every single thing on the layout and the CTC machine is an accurate depiction of the prototype. Steven uses NCE, and the equipment again runs flawlessly. FRS radios are required but most often they are eerily quiet, since the signals give the crews most of the information needed. The scenery on this lovely layout is coming along very nicely with almost 2/3rd's of the layout completed. This is a truly delightful layout that features some of the most prototypical operations I have seen yet – I encourage you all to try and attend.

So that was LSOPS. Jeff Warner and his fellow layout hosts did a superb job of getting this one rolling and they greatly entertained 30 folks for a weekend. All guests I spoke with had a wonderful time and they were all asking the same thing – when will it be next year? I guess that’s the ultimate tribute – operators that can’t wait to return.

LSOPS Notes
by Jeff Warner

Despite what Phil says in the article, the real thank you for making this event a success should go to the model railroad owners (Jim Hertzog, Larry Reynolds, Gale Smith, Lew Jones, Bob Martin, and Steven Mallery) that opened their homes for this event. Also, a special thanks to those members of the “regular crews” that helped multiple owners all weekend (Bob Lyter, Ron Heiser, Chris Lee, Ray Fisher, Wayne Betty, Jim Schweitzer, Chet Fuhrman). I apologize in advance if I missed someone in this list. However, these are the people that truly made the weekend a success.

Based on the feedback I received from layout owners and guests, it is VERY LIKELY that there will be a LSOPS II in the fall of 2010. There were also several division members that took advantage of the opportunity to try their hand at operating these model railroads. Hopefully, more division members will do so in the future. I will point out that no prior experience is required for events like this (LSOPS is one of almost 20 similar events around the country), just an interest in operations. We will also consider expanding the event if there are more operating layouts interested in hosting a session.

Phil Monat and his staff at the OP SIG do a great job of promoting the operations side of the hobby. The best source for events such as this and all model railroad operations is on the OP SIG website at:

<http://www.opsig.org/>

2010 Susquehanna Division 11 events

As I mentioned in my column, I am in the process of organizing a division event on Saturday, June 5, 2010 in the Camp Hill, PA, area (clinics and open houses). LSOPS II looks likely to happen in the fall of 2010. Please send me any/all ideas for additional events/activities at jwarner@susquehannanmra.org and we’ll try to have another year of great events in the division. We are more than willing to work out the details of these events, but we do need member feedback to point us in the right direction... So, where would you like to go in 2010? Let us know!

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