

SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS



An Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division II,

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Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA

Number 1

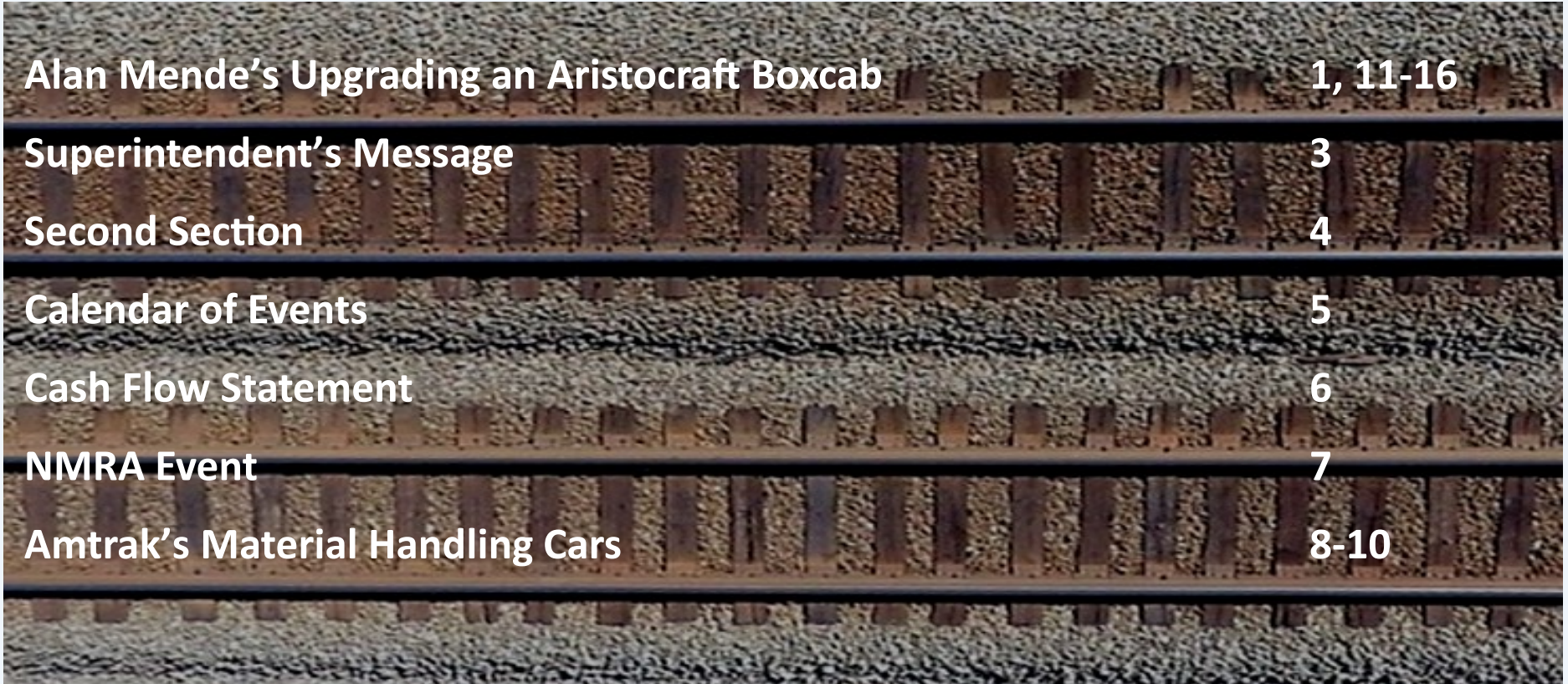
Upgrades to an Aristocraft Boxcab

Some years ago, a good friend gave me an Aristocraft boxcab model because I model the Central Railroad of New Jersey. I've kit-bashed and scratchbuilt models of CNJ engines, so I figured I'd someday update the boxcab. Well, we sold our old house, and I disassembled my small switching layout (based on the Central Division mainline as it ran through Dunellen, NJ prior to the railroad's grade separation project of 1954). I've had a lot to do in the new house and have not been able to devote much time to model railroading; that will come as soon as I've finished the basement. But there are times when I just don't feel like putting polyurethane on interior doors or putting up insulation in the garage. So I do some small scale model railroading projects.

The Aristocraft boxcab ran (after a fashion with its ancient 3-pole DC motor), but I converted to DCC a couple of years ago, so without updating the boxcab, I wouldn't be able to run it.

continued on page 11

In This Issue



Alan Mende's Upgrading an Aristocraft Boxcab	1, 11-16
Superintendent's Message	3
Second Section	4
Calendar of Events	5
Cash Flow Statement	6
NMRA Event	7
Amtrak's Material Handling Cars	8-10

Editor's Note: As you have noticed by now, Sidetracks has changed it's format from Portrait to Landscape. With more than 99% of our members reading issues on-line, it seemed appropriate to match the viewing aspect of a computer screen to that of our newsletter.

From the Superintendent's Desk

Let me start this column by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We have been busy putting together the calendar for this year. However, let me start by saying Safety First. I would strongly suggest that everyone brings a mask to every event. As of now there are no plans for wearing masks at our events, but that may change at any time. While visiting open houses it is the discretion of the host to require wearing a mask.

The first event for this year will be in Allentown, PA on February 19th. Scott Unger has been working on the program. Pat Mulrooney and Jeff Thompson have been working on the March 12th event in Lancaster, PA. There is a short article about the event on page 7.

Last year, we were invited to have a display table (promoting the NMRA) at the O Scale Narrow Gauge Convention in Harrisburg, PA. We will be returning there again this year on April 1st and 2nd. In addition to having a display table, we will be presenting some clinics at the event.

Bill Lesjak and Barry Schmitt have been working on the May 7th Columbia Railroad Day. This year the theme will be "The Pennsylvania Railroad".

On June 18th we will have an event in New Oxford, PA. Phil Peters, Don Stafford and Howard Oakes have been working on putting together program details.

In September we will again participate in the Mainline Hobby Supply Open House Tour. This event is co-sponsored by the South Mountain Division.

Wayne Betty has been working on the October LSOP, also known as 'operate till you drop' event. October 20- 23rd will be the MER Convention in Charlotte NC.

November will again be the Division-wide Open House Tour. On November 19th the Potomac Division has invited us to participate in a joint event with them in Warrenton, VA. If you are like me, you are looking forward to meeting again.

One last comment, we will need people to run for the three officer positions next spring. The positions will be: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Clerk. The current officers holding these positions will not be running again. Please consider serving your Division by running for office. Finally, let me close by encouraging each of you to work on your modeling. Our Achievement Team is looking forward to working with you to earn your next merit certificate.

Tim Himmelberger

Second Section

Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official Newsletter of the Susquehanna Division
Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
5 Hardy Court, Lancaster, PA 17602

Contributing to Susquehanna Sidetracks:

Sidetracks welcomes contributions from the Division membership. Letters, articles, photos and other items may be sent to the Editor at the e-mail address listed below or the street address above. Deadline for submission for the next issue is February 15, 2022.

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Editor's Message

With the arrival of a new year it is inevitable for changes to occur. The first change is the new 'look' of **Sidetracks** (landscape format). I relish comments about the change, so please contact me via email.

The next newsletter will feature a new column entitled "What's on My Workbench". The focus will be any current or future project you are working on or planning. The idea is to share what members are doing with others. You do not have to have a layout, just the desire to share small projects. I hope that this feature will prompt contributions to **Sidetracks**.

Lastly, I need your assistance! It has become increasing difficult for gathering articles for each newsletter. I need each member to submit articles and photos. Without your support the newsletter will suffer.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Rich Wurst

Division Calendar of Events

- February 19 – Allentown – Scott Unger
- March 12 – Lancaster – Pat Mulrooney and Jeff Thompson
- April 1 & 2 – Harrisburg – O Scale Narrow Gauge Convention
- May 7 – Columbia Railroad Day – Bill Lesjack and Barry Schmitt
- June 18 – New Oxford – Phil Peters, Don Stafford and Howard Oakes (more information to follow on speakers/clinicians, museum and layout tours)
- September – Blue Ridge Summit – Mainline Hobby Supply Open House Tour
- October – LSOP – Wayne Betty
- October 20 – 23, Charlotte, NC, MER Convention, Carolina Southern Division
- November – Division-wide Open House Tour
- November 19 – Warrenton, VA – Joint Meet with Potomac Division

Division Cash Flow Statement

National Model Railroad Association
 Mid-East Region
 Susquehanna Division #11
 Cash Flow Statement
 For July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

<u>Beginning Cash Balance- July 1, 2020</u>		\$	10,047.53
 <u>Income for the Year</u>			
Subscription Income	\$		15.00
Donation - Allentown			35.00
NMRA (MER) Membership Dues			388.00
East Broad Top RR Train Meet 7/10/21	*		<u>0.00</u>
Total Income Received			<u>438.00</u>
Total Cash Available		\$	10,485.53
 <u>Expenses for the Year</u>			
Postage	\$		67.00
Newsletter			177.20
EBT RR Tickets			840.00
Bank Svc Charge – PNC Bank			<u>24.00</u>
Total Expenses			<u>1,108.20</u>
<u>Ending Cash Balance- June 30, 2021</u>		\$	<u>9,377.33</u>
All Unrestricted			

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul F. Tice, P.A.
 Clerk/Paymaster- Susquehanna Division #11
 July 7, 2021
 York, Pennsylvania

*Note that the income for the 7/10/21 East Broad Top Railroad meet was not received until the new fiscal year of 7/1/21 to 6/30/22. Receipts and events are drastically lower during the fiscal year ended 6/30/21 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

NMRA Event

Coming Saturday, March 12th!

You will not want to miss the Susquehanna Division event at "The Crossings at Rocky Springs" Clubhouse located 54 Duncan Street, Lancaster, PA 17602. The event will start at 8:30 AM so plan to arrive on time as refreshments will be served.

Special guests presenting clinics will be:

Division member Alan Mende will present "Scratch Building Techniques".

Michael Groves, President and owner of Dwarvin Enterprises, will present "Lighting without Wiring".

And other special activities

We look forward to seeing everyone there! So mark your calendar now for March 12, 2022.



Master Modeler Alan Mende



Dwarvin Lamplighter Kit

Amtrak's Material Handling Cars

MHC-1500 Class #1567 sits on a siding in Chicago, IL. This photo was taken in 2002 by Jim Hebner.



Amtrak's Material Handling cars numbered 1400-1479 were the first cars purchased in 1986 for the use of carrying express parcels via Amtrak. The cars were finally taken out of service in 2003. The MHCs were equipped with rebuilt REA trucks built for high-speed service (maximum, 110 mph) and were custom built for that purpose. When Amtrak removed the MHCs from service they were of no use to any other private railroad. The Material Handling Cars were built using new bodies and rebuilt high-speed trucks from former express cars. The MHC cars had pass-through cabling for HEP (head end power) and usually operated on the head end of the train. The Southwest Chief (formerly the Sante Fe Super Chief) usually had four or five MHC's in a single consist.

There were two groups of MHCs:

The **1400-class** rode on secondhand trucks originally designed for Railway Express Agency reefers. In the late 1980s a part in those trucks broke and nearly caused a derailment of the Capitol Limited. Since those trucks were long out of production, Amtrak had to get the part redesigned and tested, then get a manufacturer to make it. Until that was done the cars were embargoed by all the freight railroads. Amtrak was not permitted to run them other than on the Northeast Corridor.

Once the redesigned parts were manufactured, they were retrofitted to the entire fleet of 1400-class MHCs and the cars returned to service. The **1500-class** MHCs used the same basic truck as operates under Horizon, Superliner II, Viewliner, California and Surfliner cars. By the early 1990s, some of the freight railroads claimed that the trucks, the truck center spacing, and the weight distribution of the cars caused an instability that could cause a tendency to derailment. They embargoed the cars and Amtrak was forced to replace them with baggage cars. Even after the freight railroads had banned the 1500s, Amtrak continued to operate them on Northeast Corridor mail trains without incident.

Amtrak's Material Handling Cars (cont.)

Of the two series of MHC cars (1400 Class and 1500 Class), the 1500 Class had a permanent red light on each end, with its power coming from 480 HEP. When the permanent rear red light on the 1500s worked properly, it proved easier than trying to find a portable red flashing light (FRED) for the rear end of the train.

The MHCs had been used primarily for handling bulk mail. Most of the mail Amtrak moved was periodicals (magazines and catalogs), still a strong market for the USPS. Amtrak handled less-than-carload (LCL) or less-than-truckload (LTL) palletized periodicals going to one of the more than two dozen bulk mail sorting centers. Printed magazines and catalogs would come out of printing plants in the northeast on several trains, and when the cars arrived at the mail dock in Chicago, the pallets would get repositioned into an MHC going out on Trains 3, 5, 7, or 21. Sometimes there would be a full car of mail connecting between trains, but a lot of it was sorted by forklift. The Chicago Union Station sorting was unique and truckers just wanted to handle full truckloads. Mail couldn't be mixed with other commodities, so that was hard for truckers. Amtrak made good margins on this business, but now that the mail service has ended, the USPS is paying more than it paid Amtrak.

The MHCs had HEP pass-through cabling which allowed them to be on the head end, like baggage cars, and rode on passenger-car-like trucks. Those trucks (on the 1400s) proved to be problematic, though, and when the USPS refused to guarantee the business for a long enough term to justify the cost of new equipment, Amtrak pulled out of handling mail.

Once the MHCs were sidelined, Amtrak sought a USPS commitment for future volume of business sufficient to justify the capital cost of obtaining replacement rolling stock. USPS refused, so Amtrak got out of the bulk-mail business. About the same time, USPS required its contract carriers to provide "door to door" delivery. Amtrak would have been responsible for getting the mail from the rail station to and from the post office or sorting facility, which are typically no longer located adjacent to downtown train stations. Thus, Amtrak pulled all MHC's from service in 2003.

excerpts from Utah Rails.net and George Poon



N scale model of MDC-1400 class by Con-Cor

Amtrak's Material Handling Cars (cont.)



HO scale model of MHC-1400 class #1424 by Con-Cor



HO scale model of MHC-1500 class #1550 by Walther's

Upgrades to an Aristocraft Boxcab (cont. from front page)

STEP BY STEP MODIFICATIONS

1. Disassemble model completely.
2. Disassemble powered truck. All you need are the sideframes; leave them connected to each other.
3. Make a new sideframe bracket that will mount to the top of the Stanton drive and center the sideframes on the drive axles.
4. Make the NWSL Stanton drive mounting plate from K&S 1" by .032" sheet (**See Figure 1**). I had to shim it up to get the Stanton drive even with the mounting of the dummy truck. I drilled a ½" hole in the mounting plate to accommodate the wires from the Stanton drive. By the way, I had to cut down the weight (**See Figure 2**) so the decoder (an old Atlas AH120FXLP) didn't touch the top inside surface of the carbody. A modern decoder would work just as well, but I don't know what sound the engine's 300 HP prime mover made.
5. Either purchase an unpowered Stanton drive or add wiper contacts to the original dummy truck. Note that the wipers are in contact with the insulated wheelsets and also from the rest of the body (**See Figure 3**).

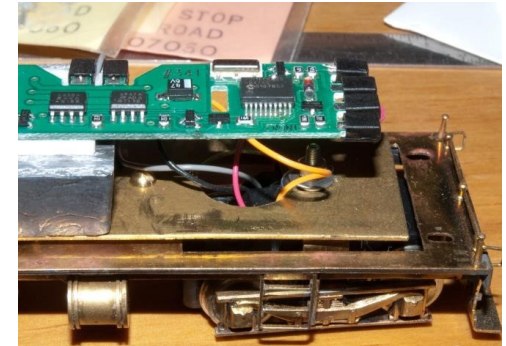


Figure 1

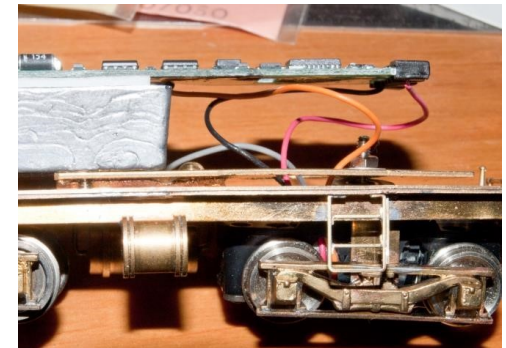


Figure 2

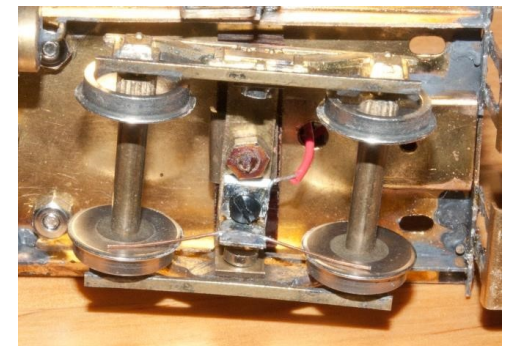


Figure 3

Upgrades to an Aristocraft Boxcab (cont.)

Adding and Revising Details

6. Remove the bell and replace with a CalScale No. 317 Squat Base Modern Bell. It needed to be modified because the prototype bell had the air ringer mechanism at an angle. I separated the bottom of the mechanism from the bell yoke and gently bent it. I added a piece of brass strip as shown in **Figure 4**.
7. Add a Custom Finishes No. W103 Whistle as shown. The heater stack on my model was missing, so I turned one of my own (**See Figure 5**).
8. I replaced the headlights with Cal-Scale No. 206 castings that I drilled out. The mounting brackets are made from K&S rectangular tubing (**See Figure 6**).



Figure 4

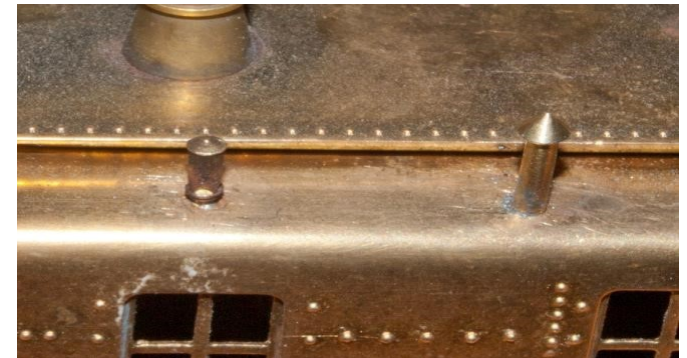


Figure 5



Figure 6

Upgrades to an Aristocraft Boxcab (cont.)

9. That “thing” below the headlight is a crude representation of a sand fill hatch and not a step. I closed off the front of it and added a cover to the top as well as a short strip of brass strip at the bottom for a flange (See Figure 7, also Figure 6).
10. The short flanged cylinder on the frame represents the brake cylinder. I replaced it with a passenger car brake cylinder from a Custom Finishes No. 312 PC Passenger Brake set. I determined it was the correct size by photo-reducing an image from **Model Railroader Cyclopedia – Volume 2; Diesel Locomotives** and comparing the Custom Finishes part to the reduced photocopy. As the cylinder comes out of the package, the brake levers are on the wrong side, so I carefully cut them off and moved them to the other side. I mounted the cylinder on a short piece of Evergreen 3/16” channel and glued the assembly in place with CA (See Figures 8 and 9).



Figure 7

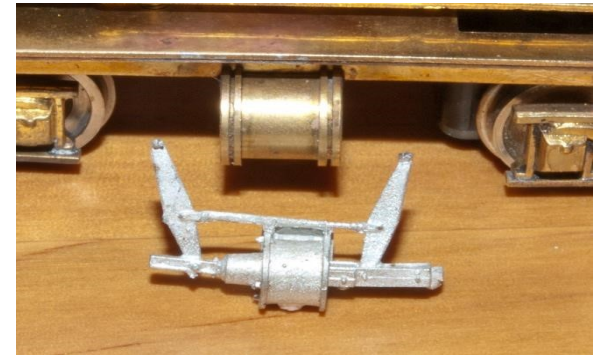


Figure 8

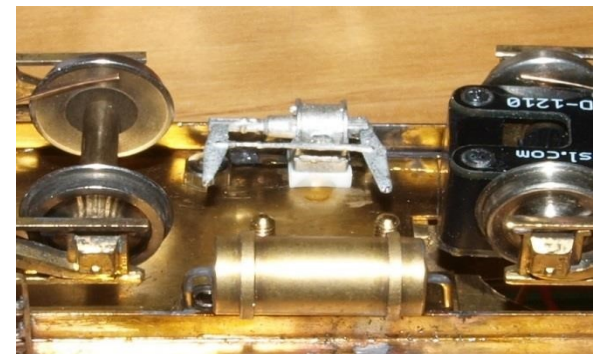


Figure 9

Upgrades to an Aristocraft Boxcab (cont.)

11. The stirrup steps below the side doors were missing on my model so I fabricated my own. They are shown in **Figure 10**.



Figure 10

Painting and Lettering

I painted the body with Tru-Color TCP-233 CNJ deep sea green and the underframe and trucks with TCP-010 black. I decaled the model with letters and numbers from an old Gingerbread Stop CNJ diesel decal set (long out of production). You could also use numbers from Doubletake Productions (formerly Raritan Bay Hobbies) CNJ-17, 2000-2005 green with stripes and the 27" high Statue of Liberty heralds from their CNJ-4, road switchers green with stripes.

The completed model is shown on the next page.

Upgrades to an Aristocraft Boxcab



Central Railroad of New Jersey boxcab No. 1000, built by an Alco/General Electric/Ingersoll-Rand consortium, gained the title of “first commercially successful diesel-electric locomotive” when CNJ put it to work on October 22, 1925. After a three-decade career, the unit was retired to the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore.

Upgrades to an Aristocraft Boxcab

Bill of Materials

Cal-Scale

317 Squat Base Modern Bell

Custom Finishes

W103 Whistle

312 PC Passenger Brake set

North Wet Short Line

39279-4 36"/110, 7'-0" WB 1210 Stanton drive

Tru-Color Paint

TCP-010 Black

TCP-233 CNJ deep sea green



article and photos by Alan Mende

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Of the National Model Railroad Association

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