



Volume 31

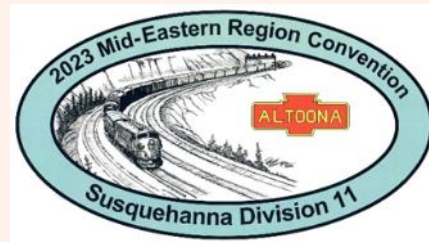
# SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS



An Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division 11  
Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA

Number 1

## Round the Curve to Altoona



The Mid-Eastern Region's annual conventions rotate throughout the MER so that each geographic area will have a nearby convention on a regular basis. The host areas are North Carolina and Southern Virginia, Washington DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Southern New Jersey. Pennsylvania is the selected area for our 2023 convention with the Susquehanna Division 11 as host. Jerry Lauchle, MMR, was appointed chairman of the Local Convention Committee (LCC) in February 2022. The previous two conventions held in Pennsylvania were in King of Prussia and in Harrisburg. We wanted to find a host city that was farther to the west, and it was not difficult to identify Altoona as an ideal place to hold this convention. A very successful MER convention was held there in 2000. In 2000, the host hotel was the Altoona Sheraton which is now called the Altoona Grand Hotel under its new management. It was again selected as the host hotel for our 2023 convention.



*continued on page 5*

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# Susquehanna/Philadelphia Division Joint Meet



**The Susquehanna Division will host the Philadelphia Division for a joint meet at the Bridgeworks Enterprise Center in Allentown, PA.**

### **Date/Time**

**Saturday, February 18, 2023  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

### **Location**

**Bridgeworks Enterprise Center  
905 Harrison Street  
Allentown, PA 18103**

# From the Superintendent's Desk

For those of you who are not aware, I have resigned as Superintendent of the Susquehanna Division. First, I would like to say thank you for the honor and privilege to serve as your Superintendent. This spring I did not intend to run again. However, since no one had stepped forward to run, I put my name into the hat for another term. That was a mistake, and I will freely admit it. My wife's condition, while stable, has not improved. Just so we're clear about it, her cancer is in stage 4. Compounded by the fact of numerous back surgeries, she is not able to walk. She has very little leg movement. While her cancer markers remain high, they have been stable.

Most days I don't get home until after 6:00. Those days represent work to home only. When I stop to see Melanie, it is at least 7:00 and there are many times it is after 8:00 until I get home. Time and worry have worn me down.

Again, I would like to say thank you for the privilege of serving as Superintendent. I will not go away. I am planning to continue attending our Division meetings, when possible. I'm also planning on attending the convention in Altoona this year and acting as a judge in the contest room.

Tim Himmelberger



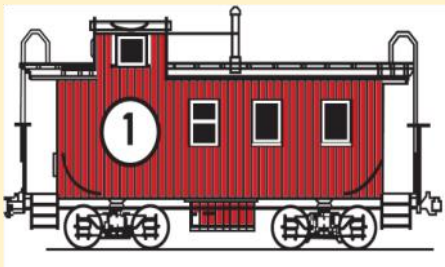
## New Jersey/Philadelphia Division Joint Meet

### **Date/Time**

Date - Saturday, January 14, 2023  
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

### **Location**

Grace Episcopal Church  
7 East Maple Ave.  
Merchantville, NJ 08109



On January 14, 2023 the New Jersey Division will be our gracious hosts for a joint meet at the Grace Episcopal Church in Merchantville, New Jersey. The time is 9:00am with doors opening at 8:30am.

For those interested, the original Merchantville train station, and now a restaurant, is located a block away on the corner of N. Center and Chestnut Streets. It was built in 1881 on a line from Pemberton to Camden, later becoming part of the PRR and PC railroads with passenger service continuing into the late 1960s.

Clinics have yet to be determined. Please check back for more details as the event draws closer.

Our Jersey hosts are always accommodating with plenty of coffee and donuts, while we naturally supply the Philly soft pretzels. In addition, there will be door prizes, a model contest, and swap tables (to reserve, contact Superintendent John Gallagher at [njdiv.super@gmail.com](mailto:njdiv.super@gmail.com)). Check out NJ Division's newsletter [Train Orders](#) for more details.



# Second Section

## Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official Newsletter of the Susquehanna Division 11  
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, 2023.

## Board of Directors

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[www.susquehannanmra.org](http://www.susquehannanmra.org)

Mid-Eastern Region website:

[www.mer-nmra.com](http://www.mer-nmra.com)

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[www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org)

## **Editor's Message**

A new year has arrived and with it the chance to improve our lives and our model railroading hobby! With this issue of *Sidetracks* the Division begins its 31st year of operation. As noted in other pages we are hosting the MER Regional Convention "Round the Curve to Altoona". We are looking forward to a great event and opportunity for our members.

This issue also marks a return to 'portrait' format. We had switched to 'landscape' format during the past year thinking it was more appropriate for viewing on a computer screen. However, there was no member reaction pro or con. Since revising submissions from portrait to landscape involved much more work, we have reverted back to there original format.

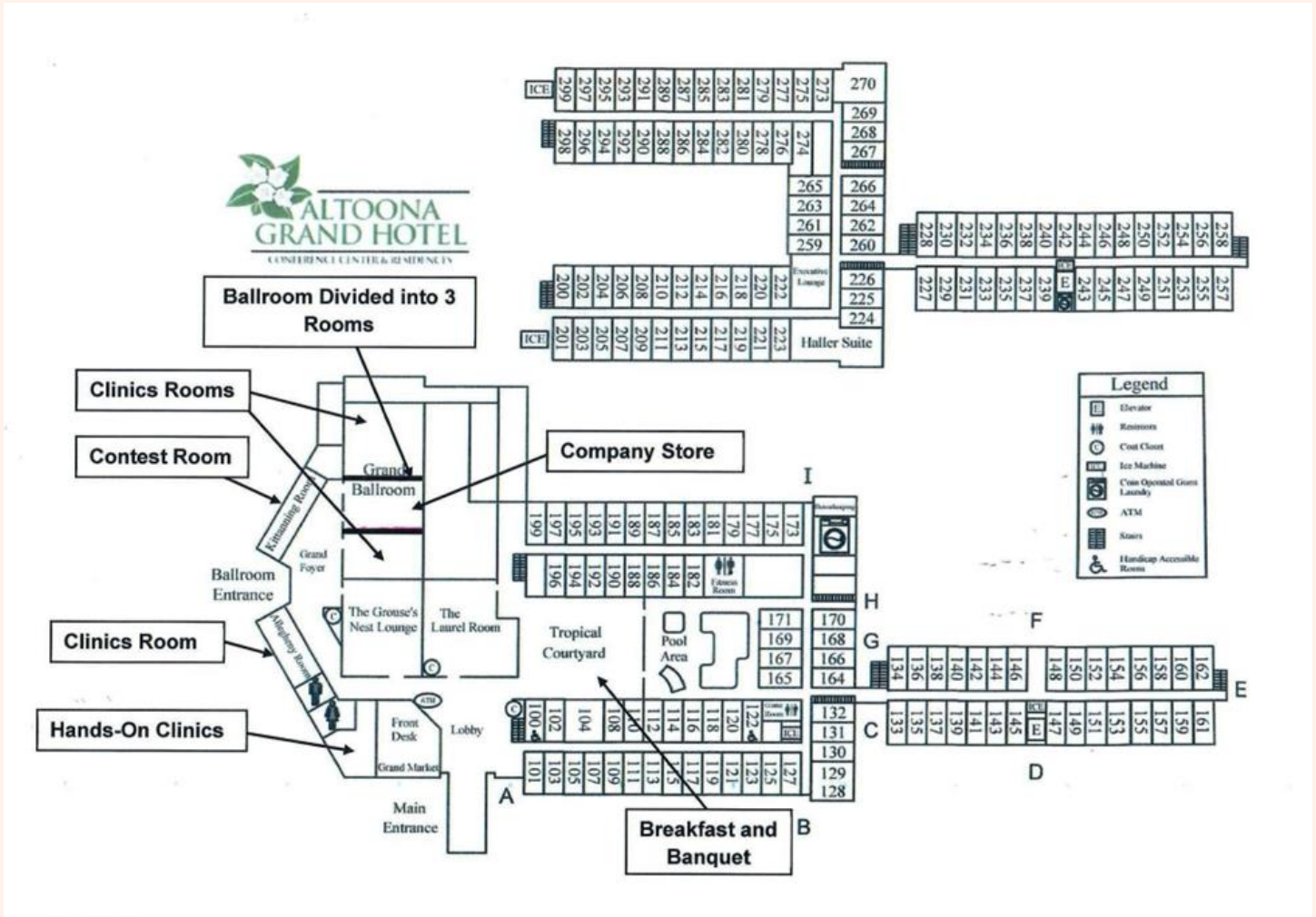
As usual, we are always looking for member submissions. They could be a feature article to just a special photo. Please consider sharing your hobby skills, experiences, etc. with fellow members by contributing to *Sidetracks*. Help to make our Division better by getting involved!

Best Wishes for a Great Year,

Rich

# Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

The hotel floorplan is shown here with convention rooms identified. Vendor tables will likely be set up in the hallways. The location for in-house layouts and modules has not yet been decided.



The following photographs show the sleeping rooms; the cost per night is currently set at \$89.00 plus taxes.



# Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)





## Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

The Grand Ballroom has dividers that allow it to be split into three rooms. The two outside rooms will be for clinics and the middle room will be for the company store. Tables will be set around the perimeter of the company store for raffle items.



The Tropical Courtyard is the breakfast area. There will be the opportunity for conferees to sign up and pre-pay for hotel-made breakfasts in the registration process.



## Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

The Saturday evening banquet will also take place in the Tropical Courtyard. Our banquet speaker will be Joe De-Francesco, CEO of the Railroaders Memorial Museum. Joe is also an NMRA member who lives in Division 11.



The contest room is shown on the right,



while a clinic room is shown on the left.

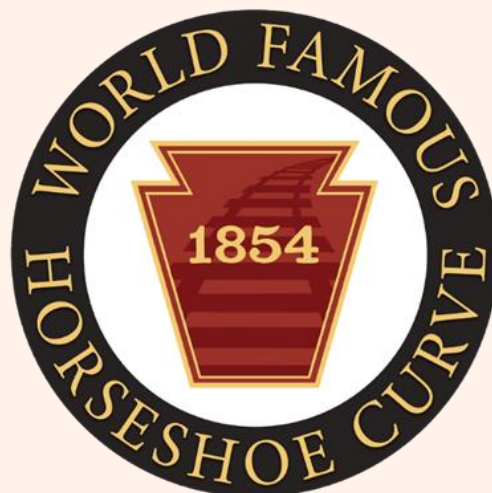


## Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

Altoona is loaded with rail-related activities including the world-famous Horseshoe Curve, the Juniata Shops (presently occupied by Norfolk Southern), and the Railroaders Memorial Museum including the Harry Bennett Memorial Roundhouse where the heralded PRR K4 Pacific no. 1361 is being restored. Joe DeFrancesco will organize a private tour of this roundhouse.



Tim Pavlic II photo



# Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)



Leo Lang photo

The following is a letter from the Railroaders Memorial Museum regarding the restoration of PRR K4 #1361.

## Dear Railroad Enthusiasts,

It is a new day at the Railroaders Memorial Museum. We have completely restructured our board of directors, brought on a new and enthusiastic staff of historians, and built partnerships with key leaders of the railroad industry. We all share a vision for the future.

Pennsylvania Railroad steam locomotive K4 1361 has a checkered thirty-year restoration history. Since running last in 1989, it has been disassembled, partially restored, moved across the Commonwealth, and then transported home to Altoona in pieces. Our new team is dedicated to concluding this restoration project that began long ago.

In late 2019, the Railroaders Memorial Museum recruited FMW Solutions to perform a detailed inspection of K4 1361, including a review of all previous restoration efforts. The primary goal of this study was to determine the integrity and reparability of the boiler. This six-month series of engineering calculations, non-destructive tests, and visual inspections resulted in the development of a detailed report outlining proposed repair methodologies. This thorough study has been accepted by the Federal Railroad Administration, which permits this long-awaited restoration project to proceed.

The Railroaders Memorial Museum intends to return K4 1361 to its early 1950s appearance—when it was in operation during its final years of commuter service. This artifact, the official steam locomotive of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, shall return to operation as a roving, immersive experience. It will serve as a useful educational tool and a valuable economic stimulant, not only for Blair County, but for other Commonwealth communities.

We invite you to join our non-profit organization. Your membership not only supports our historic sites, but sustains our restoration efforts as well. These contributions will allow *The Spirit of Altoona* to steam across the tracks of Pennsylvania with pride once again.

Sincerely,

**C. Wick Moorman**

Chairman of the Board

Railroaders Memorial Museum & World Famous Horseshoe Curve



# Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)



Just a few of the many exhibits at the museum.





## Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

Railfanning is popular in and around Altoona; for example, the rail walkway over the tracks in Altoona is shown here.



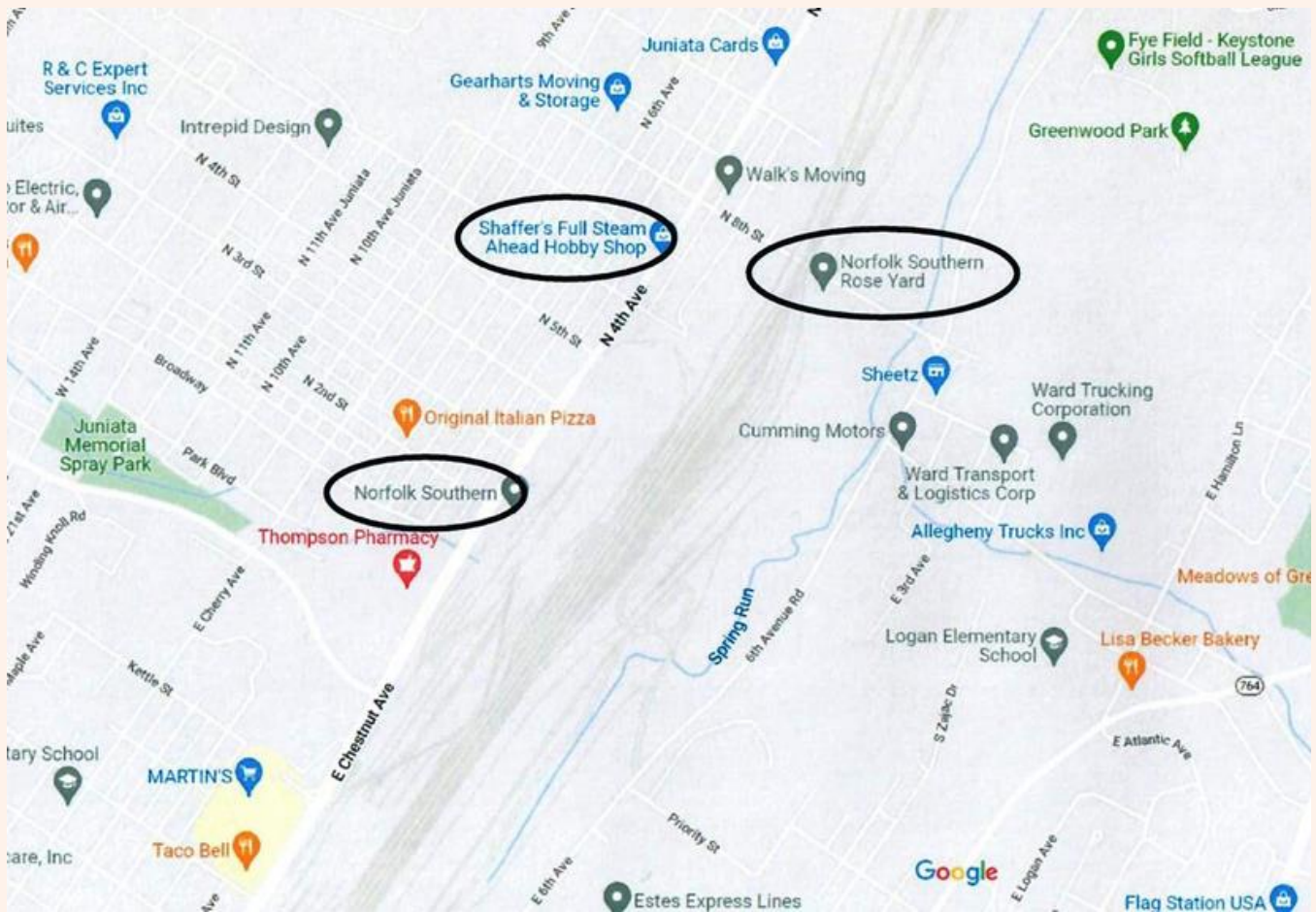
About a half-hour drive from Altoona is the Gallitzin Tunnel Park in Gallitzin.



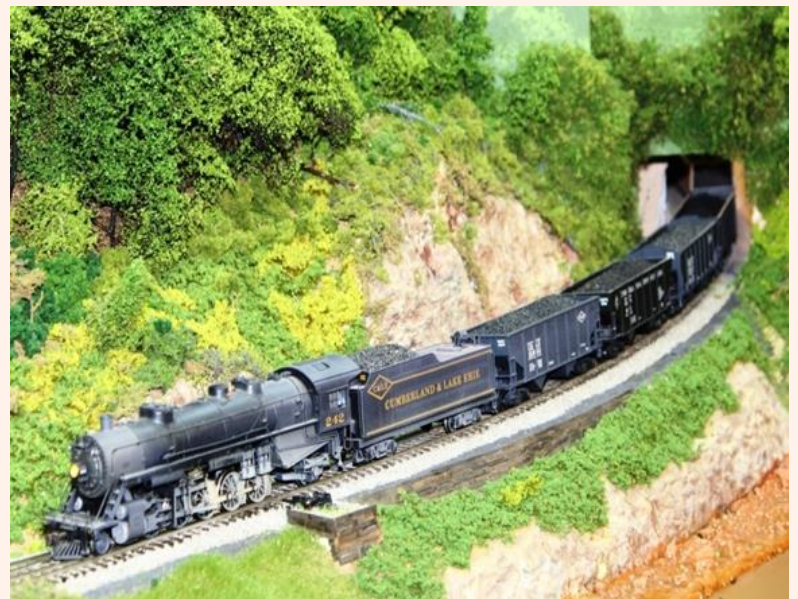


# Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

Another popular spot in Altoona is the N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge that goes over the Norfolk Southern Rose Yard.



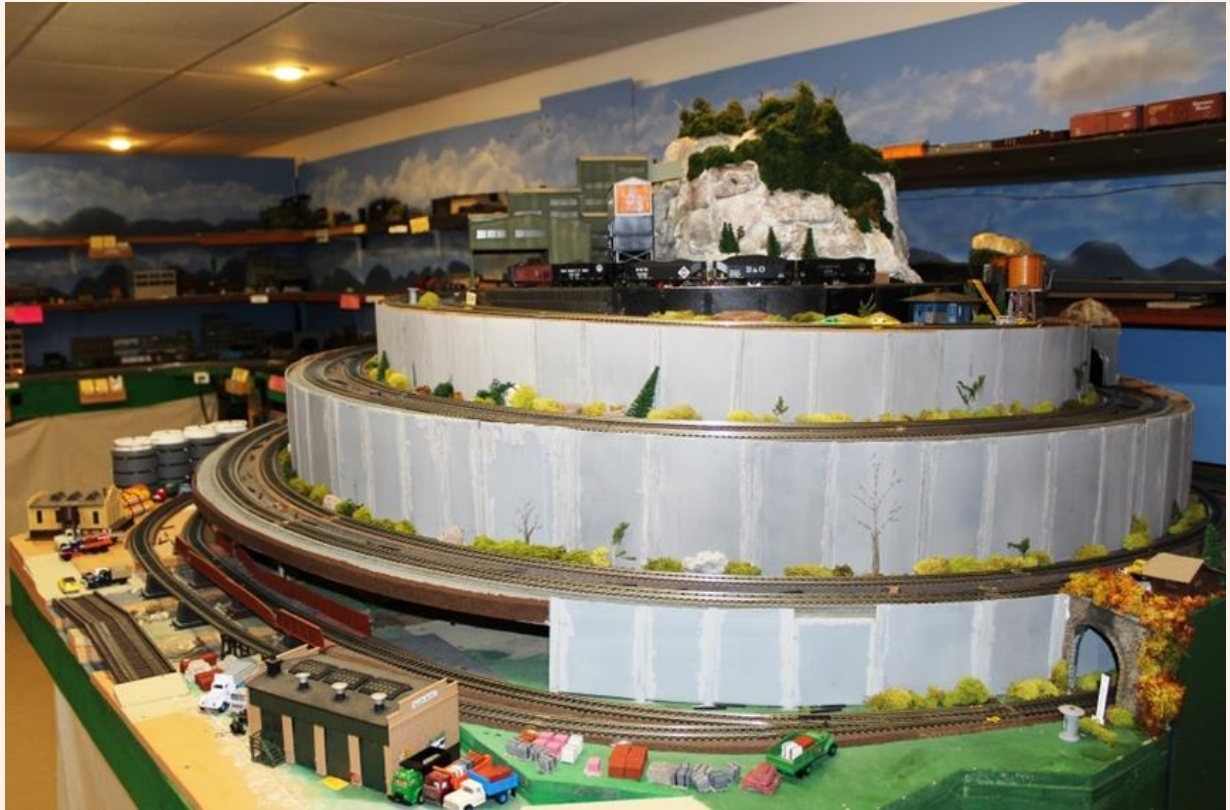
We have some layout owners within an hour's drive of the hotel who will open up their railroads for operating sessions. Dave Baker's Cumberland and Lake Erie Railroad (seen in below photos) is in Johnstown.





# Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

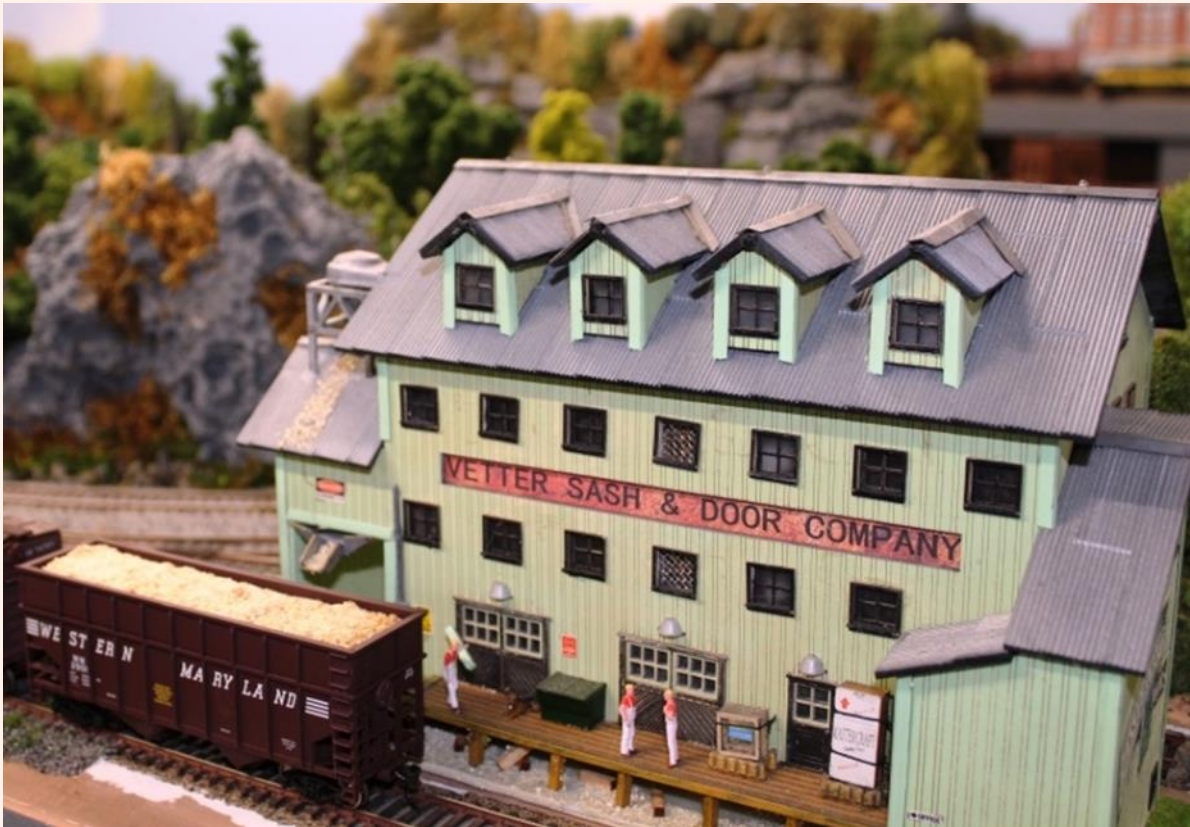
John Bennett's Baltimore & Ohio, Western Maryland, and Potomac & West Virginia Railroad layout is in nearby Windber.





## Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

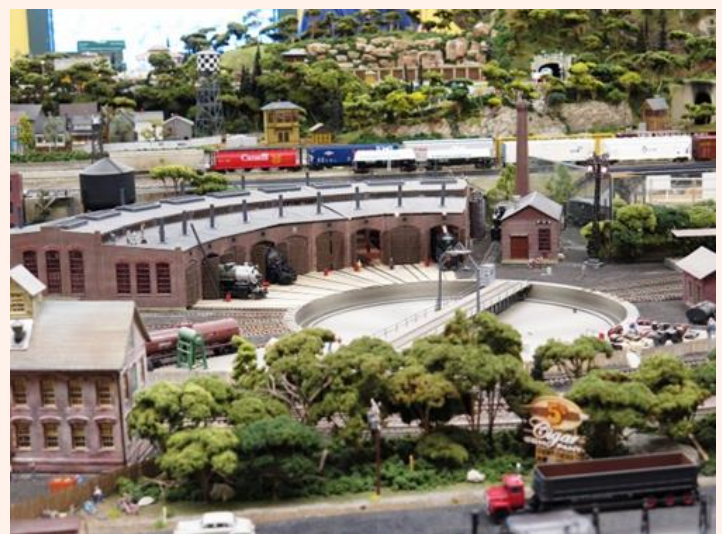
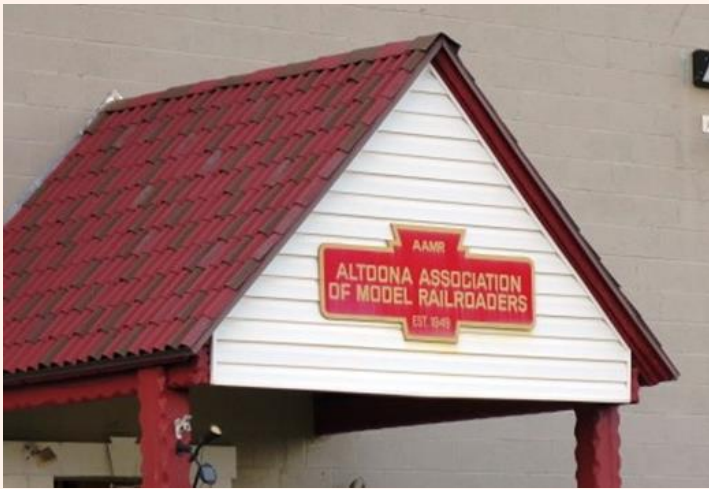
Frank Coat's Laurel Mountain Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad located in Windber will also be open for an operating session.





# Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

A really magnificent model railroad club that will be open for visits is located in Altoona – The Altoona Association of Model Railroaders. This club's layouts (N-scale, HO-scale, and O-scale) are housed in a two-story dedicated building.





## Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

There will be layouts open for visits too. Included will be the railroad being built by residents living at the Foxdale Village Retirement Center in State College.



John Kocet of State College will have his layout open as well.





## Round the Curve to Altoona (continued)

And, our layout tours coordinator, Gary Nastase, will show his railroad located in Woodbury.



In summary, we believe that the 2023 MER convention in Altoona will offer attendees first class accommodations, many informative clinics, rail attractions in and outside the city, operating sessions with experienced layout owners, a well-stocked company store, a raffle, and of course meticulously crafted models in the contest room. In future newsletters, LCC team leaders will discuss some of these activities in detail.

***Jerry Lauchle, MMR, and Chairman of the 2023 Local Convention Committee***

# Charlotte Convention Report

The Carolina Southern Convention Contest Room Results submitted by:

**Alan Mende**

MER General Contest Chair

Once again, this year's contest room was fortunate to be the host of some exceptional, high-quality models. Our host, the Carolina Southern Division provided us with a large, well-lit space which made for a quality contest experience in 2022.

A special thank-you goes out to our model contest judges. We were fortunate to have Bob Charles MMR, Brian Kampschroer, Dave Chance, and Jack Dziadul as our lead judges. Our other judges were Michele Chance, Phil Taylor, Scott Unger, Rich Colman, and Randy Foulke. I also want to thank Robert (Robby) Alvis for his help in assisting me with paperwork, taking in models, and running errands.

We had 29 models entered with 24 being entered for judging. Of the models 24 judged models, 11 received Merit Awards in 7 categories. Unfortunately, we had no entries this year in Traction or for the Chuck Hladik Memorial Award.

## **THE CONTEST WINNERS**

### **Model Contests:**

Steam— 1<sup>st</sup> place – Neal Anderson – C&NW Class H-1 4-8-4



# Charlotte Convention Report (continued)

Diesel –

1<sup>st</sup> place – Joe Walters – GP-9 No.613



Freight Car –

1<sup>st</sup> place – Kevin O'Connor – wood tank car\*



Non-Revenue Car–

1<sup>st</sup> place – Joe Walters – Boom car NE 503\*



Caboose–

1<sup>st</sup> place – John Taylor-Hall –

YM 11 bobber caboose\*





# Charlotte Convention Report (continued)

Passenger Car –

1<sup>st</sup> place – Jim Murphy – Business executive car “Vermont”\*



Structure On-Line–

1<sup>st</sup> place – John Taylor-Hall – Milwaukee Road Standard Depot



Structure Off-Line–

1<sup>st</sup> place tie –

John Pursell – small town warehouse

John Pursell – Walt’s general store



# Charlotte Convention Report (continued)

Display On-Line—

1<sup>st</sup> place – Jerry Lauchle MMR – Ore steam excavator\*



Display Off-Line—

1<sup>st</sup> place – Jim Murphy – Nighthawks Diner scene\*



## The Special Awards:

The MER also supports an array of Special Awards that complement the judged model contest.

Clyde Gerald Kitbash Award: the best kitbashed model in the model contest.

John Pursell – Walt's general store (previously pictured on page 21)

The Philadelphia New Modeler Award: given to the first-time entrant in MER model contest with the highest point score. (A cash prize and large plaque this year!)

Kevin O'Connor – wood tank car\* previously pictured on page 20)

# Charlotte Convention Report (continued)

Ray Bilodeau MER Narrow Gauge Award -

Jerry Lauchle MMR– Ore steam excavator\* (previously pictured on page 22)

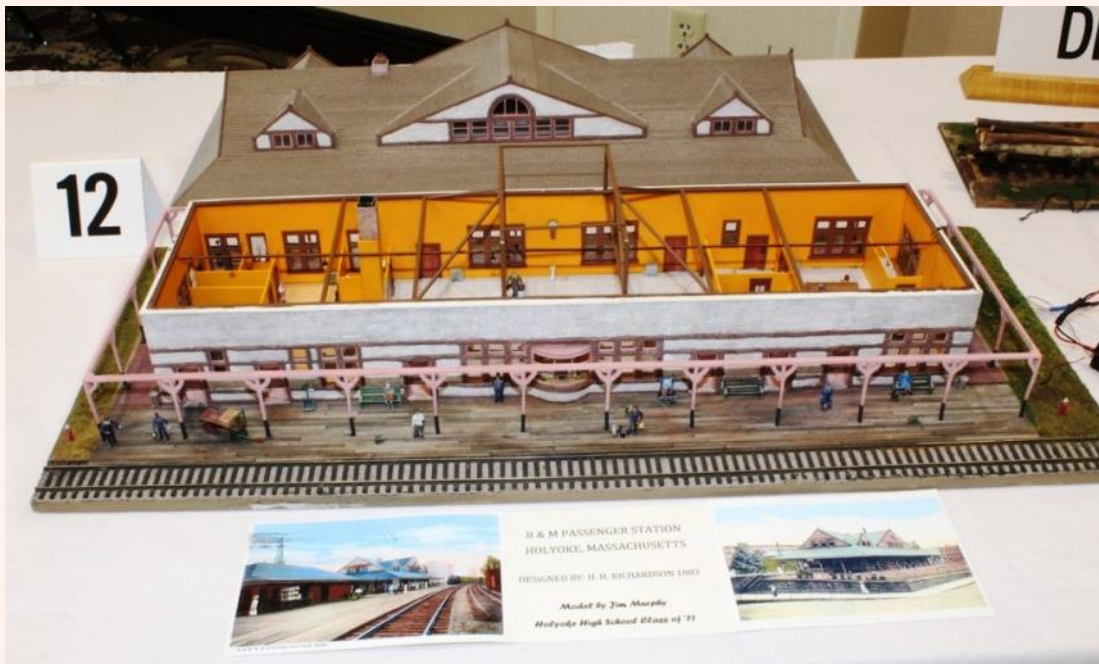
Favorite Train - chosen by popular vote

Joe Walters – Ballast train



Favorite Model - chosen by popular vote

Jim Murphy – Boston & Maine passenger station



Bob Liberman Award – sponsored by the NJ Division

Jim Murphy – Business executive car “Vermont”\* (previously pictured on page 21)



# Charlotte Convention Report (continued)

The President's Award: this year's award was for rolling stock or locomotive of a railroad in the textile industry.

Michele Chance – Lancaster & Chester boxcar



Best-in-Show: given to the entry with the highest points score in the model contest this year at 114 points! This award includes the cost of registration to next year's convention in Altoona, PA to the recipient.

Kevin O'Connor – wood tank car\* (previously pictured on page 20)

Next year's President's Award is yet to be determined. There was no model for the Chuck Hladik Memorial Award again this year.

If you have any questions about NMRA or MER contest rules, regulations, NMRA judging of models, would like to be a judge, have contest questions of any kind, complaints, suggestions, or whatever you might want to talk about, you need to contact me, Alan Mende, MER General Contest Chair at: [contests@mer-nmra.com](mailto:contests@mer-nmra.com).

\*Denotes AP Merit Award—scoring a minimum of 87.5 points.

# Charlotte Convention Favorite Modules

**Favorite Module – Z Scale**  
John Duino -- Buena Park



**Favorite Module – N Scale**  
Tom Spiggle -- Middleton



**Favorite Module – HO Scale Triple Tie**  
Steve Bienstock – Pandapas Pond

**Favorite Module – HO Scale Triple Tie**  
Tom Murray – Radford Yard





# Charlotte Convention Favorite Modules (continued)

## Favorite Module – HO Scale Triple Tie

Steve Bienstock & Jim Flynn– New River Trail Park



## Favorite Module – S Scale Double Tie

Marvin Thiel – The Swamp



## Favorite Module – S Scale Double Tie

Heidi Thiel – Farm Scene



## Favorite Module – O Scale

Rich Colton & Dennis Schlassman – Theater & Graveyard

## Susquehanna Sidetracks

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