



Volume 31

SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS



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

Number 2



RW-5 freight from Reading to Wilmington rolls through Birdsboro, PA.



RW-5 crosses First Avenue in Birdsboro, PA.

In this issue of **Sidetracks**, Gary Latshaw's HO layout is featured. Gary is a retired Reading Company employee who served in various areas of responsibility for the operation of the railroad. So it is no surprise that Gary decided to model the Reading system. His Reading Company—Wilmington and Northern Branch layout represents actual locations along the branch lines of the Reading railroad.

While visiting the layout for this feature, Gary shared a wealth of railroad adventures.

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MER Convention Seeks Clinicians

Greetings,

I am the Clinic Chair for the 2023 MER Regional Convention in Altoona, PA. The [2023 Round the Curve to Altoona Convention](#) will be hosted by our Susquehanna Division 11. I'd like to extend a warm welcome and invitation to you and any other Division members who would like to present a clinic at our 18-22 October Convention. As you know, Altoona was the heart of the Pennsylvania Railroad during the heyday of American railroading. The Convention will provide visits to historic railroad facilities, sites, attractions, and provide educational experiences for all attendees.

For those who have never presented at a regional convention you can earn 4 points toward the Author Achievement Program. This could be the first step on the path to achieving MMR status. We welcome any topic associated with model railroading or prototype railroading that is related to our model railroading hobby.

As currently structured, our clinic program will offer 50+ clinic slots over the four-day convention. A clinic slot is based on 45–50 minutes for a presentation, 10-15 minutes for Q&A, and 30 minutes for setup, tear down, and break time between clinics.

Each of our 3 clinic rooms will have a full audio/visual setup, tables for model displays or other support material, and a convention clinic team member who will introduce the clinician and provide any assistance needed during the presentation.

If you are interested in presenting a clinic, please contact me by phone or email. I look forward to welcoming you and other members to Altoona in October.

Best Regards,

Barry Schmitt

717-877-1810

sbschmitt@comcast.net

From the Superintendent's Desk

So here goes a new chapter in my model railroading hobby. After due consideration, I decided to run for Susquehanna Division 11 Superintendent. It's similar to when I was the president of our local Model A Ford and Studebaker clubs – no one else wanted the position. But after reading NMRA President Gordy Robinson's column in the January 2023 issue of the *NMRA Magazine*, I decided I've been a follower for too long. Most of you know me as that crazy guy who likes to scratch build HO scale steam locomotives in brass. That requires organization (though anyone looking at my work space would see that at times I'm quite *disorganized*).

Being a president of a car club was easy – one meeting a year for each club. As the new super, I'm not out to change the world, but I think the Division can be more active – not just going to interesting places, but also helping others improve their skills. Some time ago, I was "volunteered" to be the training officer to guide new clinicians in presenting their topics more effectively. And since that time, no one has asked for help. But the Division has quite a few members who have given clinics on the local, regional, and national levels. So I'm asking you to let everyone know that you can help a newbie, and not just how to give a clinic. We all have our ways of getting a particular job done – adding DCC to an engine, wiring a signal system, making scenery, etc. I would like to see in future issues of *Susquehanna Sidetracks* a listing of members who would be willing to help with any particular skill they are proficient at. (I'll be calling you for help installing sound decoders in steam engines.) In the near future I'll be meeting with our Division directors to chart a course for the rest of 2023 and (hopefully) beyond. But I'm new at this, so please be patient with me. If there's something I'm doing that you don't think is a good idea, let me know. We're in this together.

Alan Mende



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 April 15, 2023.

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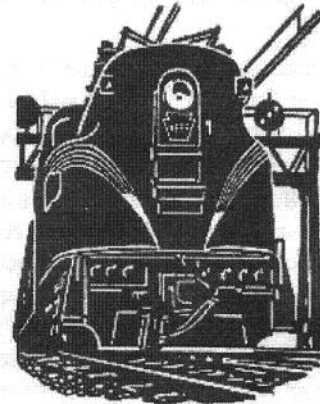


 ★ Editor's Message
 ★ Fellow Modelers,
 ★ As you look over this page you can see the vacant
 ★ positions that exist in our Division. As elected and
 ★ appointed officers work preparing activities for
 ★ our members it is extremely difficult without more
 ★ help. With the coming 'Round the Curve' MER
 ★ Convention in October we need members to step
 ★ forward and offer their assistance. This Division
 ★ needs your help!
 ★ Please consider volunteering by contacting any of
 ★ the officers listed on this page.
 ★ We are looking forward to your email!
 ★ Rich
 ★
 ★*****

Thirty Fifth Annual Harrisburg

RAILROAD SHOW & COLLECTORS MARKET

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



The Scottish Rite Harrisburg
2701 N. 3rd Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Conveniently located just south of I-81 in Harrisburg, PA. From either direction, use exit 66 off I-81, then go south (down river) on Front Street 1.4 miles. Turn left on Division St., go four blocks and turn right on Fourth Street. The Complex is on the right with a large parking lot. Parking is also available in the lot on Third St. For a map, Google "Scottish Rite Harrisburg".

- Railroadiana
- Model Railroad Items
- Books, Videos, Apparel
- Snack Bar
- Train Layouts
- Test Track

HARRIS TOWER WILL BE OPEN THIS DAY. SEE BACK FOR DETAILS

SPONSORED BY THE HARRISBURG CHAPTER, NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. (a non-profit educational organization)

Donation at the Door: \$5.00 Children under 12: FREE

Vendor Information: _____ Date _____

Name _____ Types of items sold _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (D) _____ (N) _____ e-mail _____

_____ (#) 8' Tables @ \$25.00 each = \$ _____

_____ (#) Additional admissions = \$ _____

Note: Each table includes two admissions.
Make check to Harrisburg Chapter, NRHS.

Total Enclosed = \$ _____ Wall space _____ Electricity _____

Information and Table Reservations: Mark Irvin, 3814 Leyland Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

Telephone: 717-343-7182 (For table confirmation, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.)

Website: <http://harrisburgnrhs.org>

E/mail address: irvinwepfer@msn.com

Harrisburg Chapter NRHS will not be responsible for lost, stolen or damaged items or any accidents of any kind.

NOTICE: All vendors are responsible for collecting 6% PA Sales Tax. State law requires that all vendors have a temporary or permanent PA Sales Tax License.

Non-NMRA Event (continued)

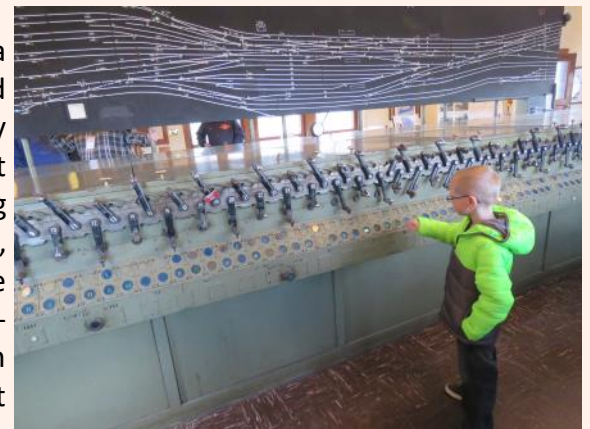
ONE OF A KIND INTERACTIVE EXHIBIT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Located in downtown Harrisburg at the corner of 7th and Walnut Streets (across from The Forum), Harris Tower Railroad Museum will be open for visits on March 11, 2023. The Museum is a railroad control tower built by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1929 to control all train movements through downtown Harrisburg, PA. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the tower once controlled the switches and signals that routed more than 100 passenger trains a day through the Central Pennsylvania area. The tower was used by the PRR, the Penn Central Railroad and Amtrak until closing in 1991. Upon closing, the Harrisburg Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society purchased the building and began the process of restoration.



Following an extensive restoration project spanning more than 15 years and thousands of dollars and volunteer hours, Harris Tower opened to the public as a living history and interpretive rail museum in 2008. The centerpiece of the exhibit is the tower's interlocking machine and model board, both of which are fully operable. Visitors to Harris Tower can actually operate the levers of the interlocking machine and observe the illuminated model board and follow the simulated train movements, exactly as it was done decades ago. The interlocking machine and model board have been linked to a computer simulation that is programmed with the actual Pennsylvania Railroad train schedules from the early 1940's. It is then up to the visitor to throw the proper levers to route the trains to their correct destinations. In this way, rather than simply viewing a static display, visitors to Harris Tower can actually operate the equipment and experience for themselves what it would have been like to work for the Pennsylvania Railroad in its heyday. To the best of our knowledge, **there is no other exhibit like Harris Railroad Switch Tower anywhere in the world.**

The tower lies adjacent to very active railroad lines, making Harris a perfect vantage point for youngsters and railroad buffs to view and photograph numerous Norfolk Southern and Amtrak trains each day from a safe location, regardless of the weather. Admission is free, but donations to benefit the Chapter's educational programs and on-going preservation initiatives are welcome. Souvenir T-shirts, coffee mugs, railroad prints and other items are sold at the tower to benefit the chapter. From the train show at the Scottish Rite Entertainment Complex, return to Division Street and turn right. Proceed to N. Seventh Street and turn right. Continue on N. Seventh to the next traffic light at Maclay St. and turn left. Proceed to next light and turn right on N.



Cameron (Burger King on the right). Continue approximately one mile to Market Street and turn right. Immediately after the next overhead bridge (railroad), turn right on Fifth St., then right at the light on Walnut. Harris Tower is directly ahead; the parking lot is just past the Tower on the right. When you are ready to leave, turn right from the parking lot to exit. For a schedule of times when Harris is open during 2023 or for additional information or for group visits visit www.harristower.org or contact the Harrisburg Chapter of the NRHS at 717-232-6221 or by e-mail at HarrisTower@verizon.net.

Non-NMRA Event

The Virginia Museum of Transportation is proud to announce a partnership with the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania to exhibit the Norfolk & Western class J No. 611 for a limited time during the winter months of early



Ira Silverman Collection,

With admission to the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, weather and conditions permitting, guests can safely view No. 611 among the historic locomotives and rolling stock in the Museum's train yard. We ask that, while visiting No. 611 and the Museum's collection, please refrain from climbing on any equipment and obey all posted signage.

This collaboration continues the long-standing history between the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Norfolk & Western that began in 1900. The Pennsylvania Railroad began purchasing Norfolk & Western stock in 1900 and, by 1964, owned about one third of the Norfolk & Western stock.



The Virginia Museum of Transportation would like to thank the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania for hosting class J No. 611 at this time and the Strasburg Railroad for their continued partnership.

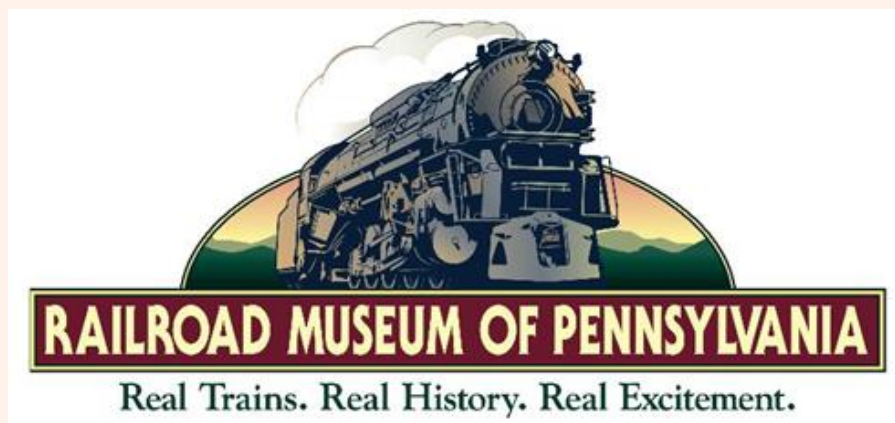
Non-NMRA Event (continued)



Ira Silverman

To visit the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania and see No. 611 on exhibit, hours and admission information can be found [here](#). 2023 is starting another exciting year for No. 611. Stay tuned for updates via [official channels](#).

The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania is home to a world-class collection of about 100 historic locomotives and railroad cars, a vast research library and archives, a working restoration shop, education programs, special events and exhibits and a Museum store.



A Smithsonian Affiliate, the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania is one of 24 historic sites and museums administered by the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission as part of the Pennsylvania Trails of History®, with the active support of the nonprofit



RAILS TO PITTSBURGH 2023

RAILS TO PITTSBURGH 2023 Mid Central NMRA Regional Convention! May 4-7, 2023

**EVERYTHING YOU WANT IN A GREAT CONVENTION, AND MORE!
Clinics – Tours – Contests – Non-Rail Activities – Layout Tours
Banquet – White Elephant Tables – Door Prizes – Railfanning**

Our convention hotel, the Doubletree by Hilton at Cranberry is conveniently located within easy access to the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Interstate-79 just north of Pittsburgh. You can visit the city, see Station Square, ride the Duquesne or Monongahela Inclines, railfan and enjoy the area. You are just 15 minutes from Norfolk Southern Mainline and 20 minutes from CSX Mainline.

Here are some of the **POTENTIAL** activities available at the **RAILS TO PITTSBURGH** Convention!

A Variety of Rail Tours

Steel Industry History
The Bridges of Pittsburgh
Port Authority Light Rail Shops
The Pennsylvania Trolley Museum
Allegheny Valley Railroad and Yard

Excellent Clinics

Western Pennsylvania Railroads
Steel and Other Industries
Operations: Real and Simulated
Modern Railroad Practices
Modeling Structures, Rolling Stock and Scenery

Non-Rail Tours and Clinics

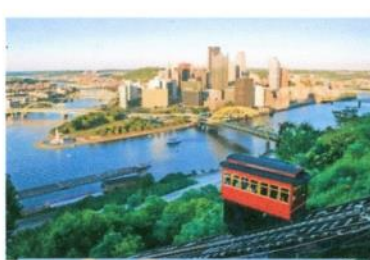
Pittsburgh Glass Factory Tour,
Card making, Jewelry,

Local Attractions

Carnegie Science Center – National Aviary
Heinz History Center – Duquesne Incline
Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium
Phipps Conservatory – The Andy Warhol Museum

Railfanning

NS & CSX Mainline Action
W & LE & Union Railroad
Variety of Local Short lines



For more information, check our website frequently for updates: www.keystonedivision.org

NMRA Event

Susquehanna Division 11 Event

Saturday May 20, 2023

Walkersville Southern Railroad Steam Day

34 West Pennsylvania Ave

Walkersville, MD 21793

<https://www.wsrr.org>

301-898-0899

Fare: Seniors 55+ and Children 2-12 \$18.00; Adult \$22.00

9:00 AM - Meet & Greet with Refreshments, tour grounds and museum

11:00 AM – Steam Train Departs

12:10 PM - Lunch on your own, a list of area restaurants will be provided

There are 3 model railroad stores you can visit on your way home.



There are several nearby tourist railroads operating steam this year. It's time for Division 11 to ride a steam train! Luck has it that this railroad is running steam on the day we scheduled the event May 20. There will be two open flat cars behind the steamer, plus several enclosed cars and a caboose (caboose available when not privately reserved). The train is handicapped accessible, just mention that when reserving your tickets. **Departure is 11 AM.** Note that you may not want to wear your Sunday best because the steam locomotive can shower a little coal dust and water at times. Baseball type hats and glasses are recommended.

Daytime excursions- **Reservations Strongly Recommended at** – <https://www.wsrr.org>

Go to Tickets/Calendar; Select Your Train Ride (May, Steam Train Rides); Click May 20 on Calendar

Fare: Seniors 55+ and Children 2-12 \$18.00; Adult \$22.00

You must reserve and purchase your own tickets. Advance online tickets can generally be purchased up to one-hour before an event. For online ticket purchases, your confirmation e-mail is your receipt.

Be sure to also check your junk/spam folders for your confirmation email

When you arrive at the railroad, simply check in at the ticket office, and your tickets will be waiting for you under your name.

Directions

From Harrisburg: Follow US-15 South into Maryland. Continue traveling south past Thurmont, MD for approximately 10.5 miles and turn left with care onto Biggs Ford Rd. Travel 2.2 miles to the station.



NMRA Event (continued)

Onsite Activities

Before departure there will be an opportunity to view/visit the unique railroad equipment onsite. Outside the museum is the Maintenance Shop where the WSRR mechanics base their repair work; and the Engine Shed which houses the WSRR rolling stock engines. Additional rolling stock that has been or is in the process of being restored is stationed on nearby tracks.

Be sure to tour the **museum** (10:30-3:30) which has several artifacts, displays of local railroad history and a small gift area. Special emphasis is given to the Walkersville Southern Railroad and its predecessors, including the Pennsylvania Railroad. The brick building that houses the museum was originally the Walkersville Ice and Power Company. Displays include: Velocipede pump car from the late 1800s, 1903 locomotive demonstrator, front of Baldwin Switcher from the 1940s, tools used for track work and much more. Ira Silverman Collection, Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania

Next to the museum is the **Catoctin Central Model Railroad** built and operated by the Frederick County Society of Model Engineers. Founded in 1966, the Club's unusual 70-foot, six-door Chesapeake and Ohio horse car houses a 56-foot HO scale layout. The Catoctin Central Railroad is a fictional railroad that crosses Frederick County and the Catoctin Mountains, where it connects with the HOn3 scale Catoctin Mountain Lines. After 50 years in Frederick, the club car moved to its new location at the Walkersville Southern Railroad on 21 July, 2022.



The historic railroad station across the street was constructed in about 1880 by the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) and originally served as a ticket office that offered Adams Express mail service and telegraph service. A tool shed, also constructed by PPR stored a Velocipede pump car that provided local workers transportation up and down the tracks for the purpose of making repairs. The train station now serves passengers of the Walkersville Southern Railroad.



NMRA Event (continued)

A little history....

The railway line between Walkersville and Frederick was built between 1869 and 1872 as part of the Pennsylvania Railroad Frederick Secondary. The line ran from Columbia, Pennsylvania, through York and Hanover, into Maryland, running through Taneytown, Keymar, Woodsboro, Walkersville, and finally into Frederick. For decades there was a thriving business on the rails as dairy farmers sent milk and eggs to market, and local residents rode the train into Frederick for the day or perhaps north to the "big cities."



In 1968 when the Pennsylvania Railroad merged with the New York Central, the line was part of the resulting Penn Central Railroad. In 1972, Hurricane Agnes hit the Frederick area hard. The resulting flood completely washed out the bridge over the Monocacy River, severing the rail line two miles south of Walkersville. The entire line was put up for sale. The State of Maryland purchased the portion of the line within its borders, only utilizing the section north of Walkersville. For 20 years, the six-mile line between Walkersville and Frederick was out of service.

From 1991 through 1993, Walkersville Southern volunteers cleared the right-of-way of brush and debris. In 1993, the Maryland Department of Transportation chose Walkersville Southern as the operator of the Walkersville-Frederick line. Rebuilding began immediately.

In 1995, Walkersville Southern began reconstruction of the Monocacy River bridge. Limited excursions were run in 1995 while the work progressed. With the completion of the project in March 1996, the first trains in more than 20 years crossed the Monocacy River. The 1998 season marked the first time in more than 25 years that trains had run to Route 26, the current terminus of the line.

Dan Cupper photo

In 2009, the State of Maryland granted access to three more miles of track north of the existing station. Work began immediately to upgrade the track, and we currently run limited operations north out of Walkersville on this rail.

We hope to see you there on Saturday May 20 and be ready to get steamed!

Questions: Don Stafford 301-752-3629; Howard Oakes 717-424-6165



Gary Latshaw's Reading Company—W & NB

1. What is the name of your layout?

Reading Company - Wilmington & Northern Branch

2. What scale is your layout?

It is HO scale.

3. Does your layout have a specific era and/or location?

Loosely based on the W&N branch of the Reading Company that ran from Birdsboro, PA on the Reading mainline to Wilmington, DE. The time period is late summer 1953.

Reading class RS-4 #866 (Fairbanks Morse H-24-66 Trainmaster) sits on the Ready Track next to the Sand House at the Wilmington Engine Terminal.



A group of Reading hoppers sit in the yard in front of the Lukins Steel plant in Coatesville.

Gary Latshaw's Reading Company—W & NB (continued)

4. What are the overall dimensions of your layout?

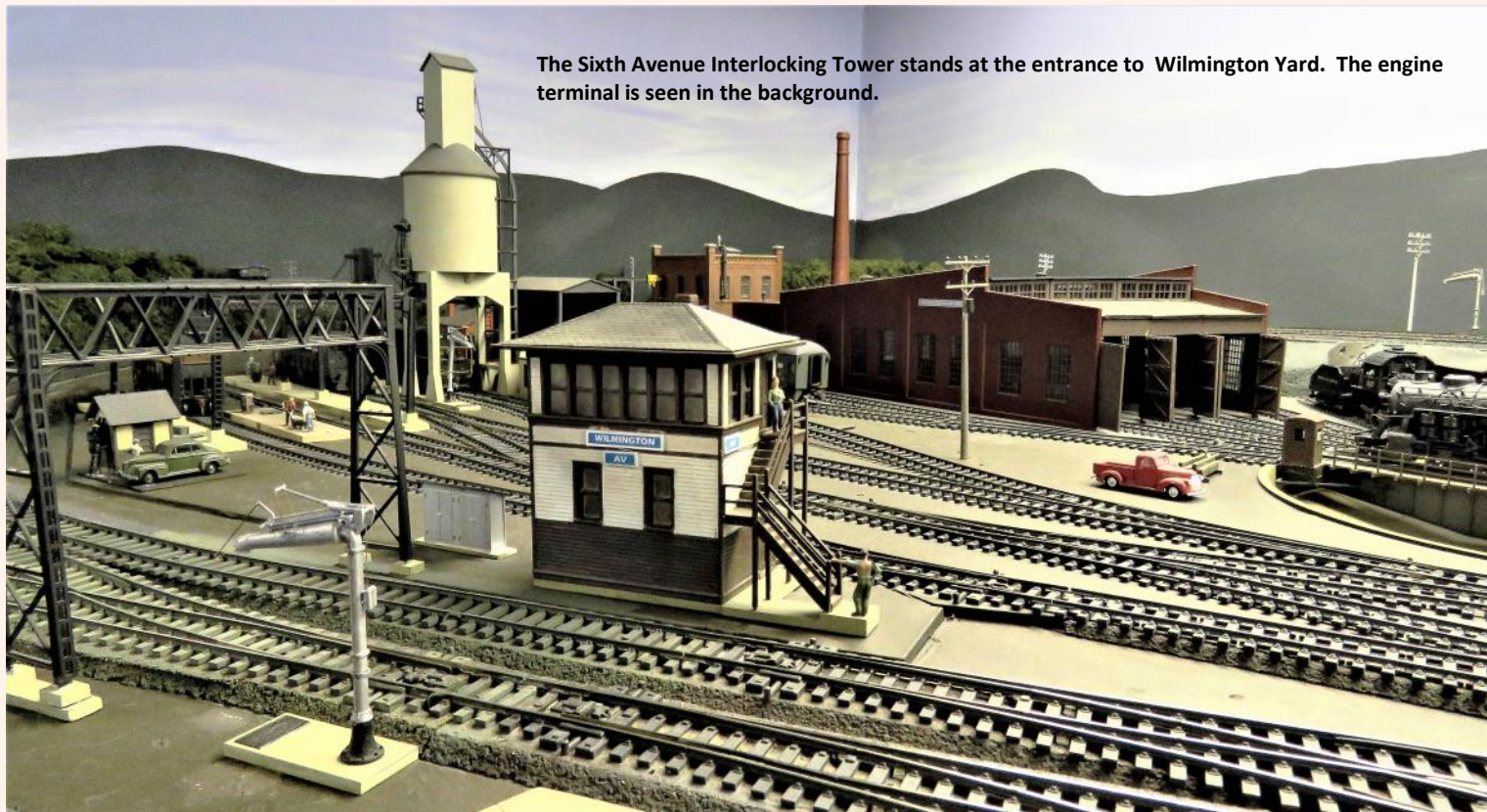
The layout is a "C" shape. Sixteen feet across the back, ten feet on one leg and twelve feet on the other.

5. By what means and brand of equipment do you control the layout?

Control is DCC using an "NCE Power Cab"

6. When did you first begin construction of the layout?

New addition to the house was completed in the late 90's. That provided the space and construction on the layout started shortly after that.



The Sixth Avenue Interlocking Tower stands at the entrance to Wilmington Yard. The engine terminal is seen in the background.



The tool car for the Wilmington Relief Train sits next to the Power Plant and Engine House in Wilmington. The Reading always called their wreck train a Relief Train because it relieved blockages on the right of way.

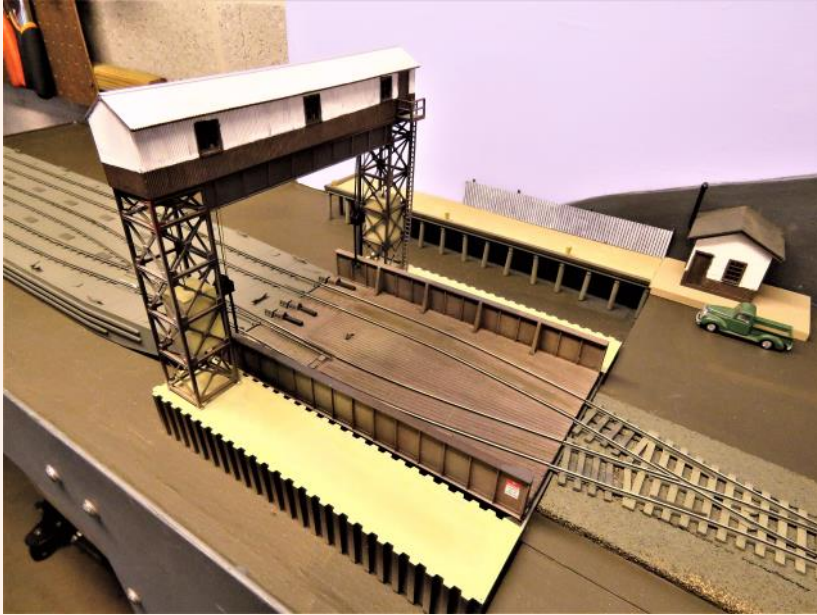
Gary Latshaw's Reading Company—W & NB (continued)

7. Do you sponsor Operating Sessions on the layout?

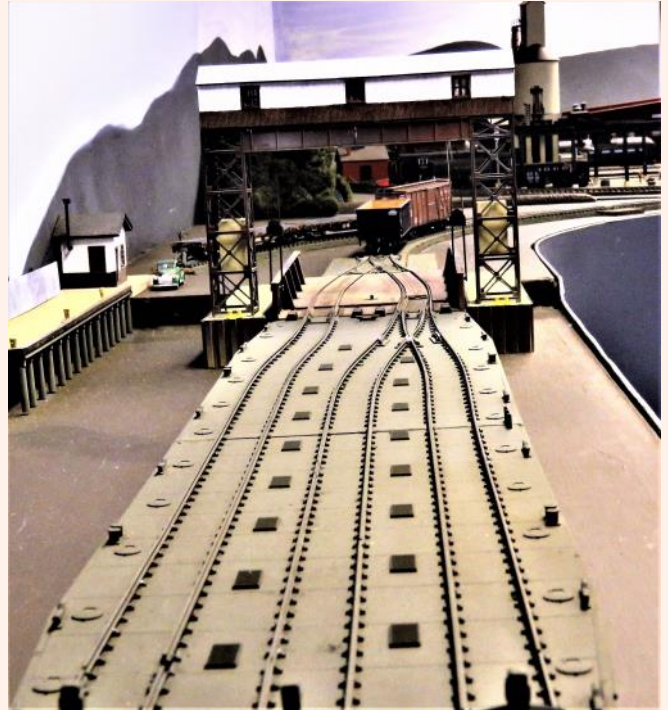
The layout was designed and built for one man operation that does not lend itself to multiple person operation.

8. Do you have track plan diagram for the layout?

The layout has grown over the years and the original drawings are outdated and long since lost.



This is the float bridge at Pigeon Point. Reading had this car float operation at Pigeon Point, a short distance from Wilmington, DE. A Reading Company tugboat moved car floats between Pigeon Point and Carney's Point on the Jersey side of the river.



The view from the car float waiting for cars to be loaded at Pigeon Point.



This is the Wilmington Engine House. Diesels are being worked on inside while a Reading I-10sa (2-8-0) is being turned on the table. A Reading B-7a (0-6-0) camel-back switcher sits in the background.

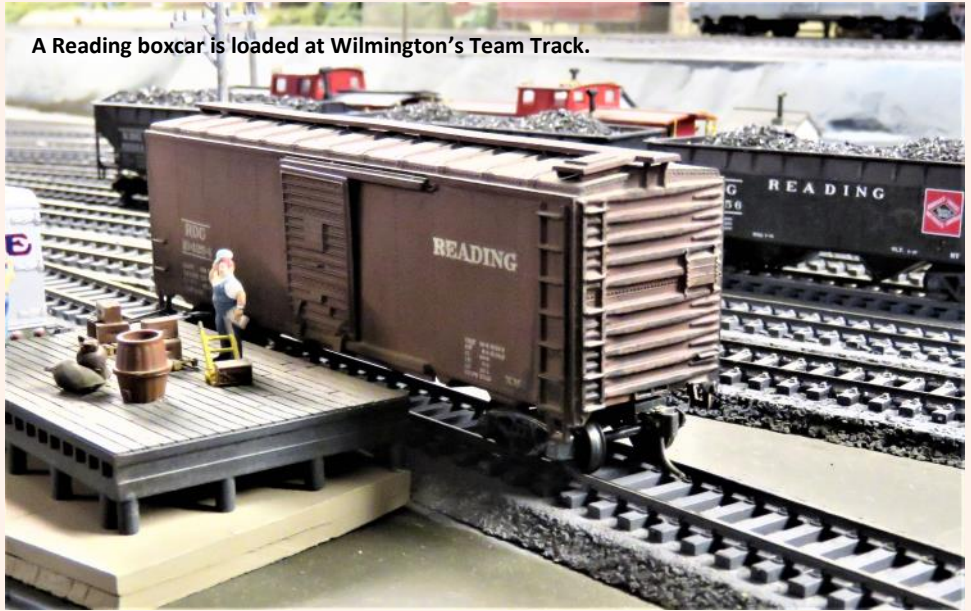


The layout was originally wired for DC Block operation. Using DPDT toggle switches the layout can change from DC operation to DCC operation. This allows the use of either old DC engines or newer DCC motive power. The rest of the layout wiring did not change.

Gary Latshaw's Reading Company—W & NB (continued)

9. What type of track?

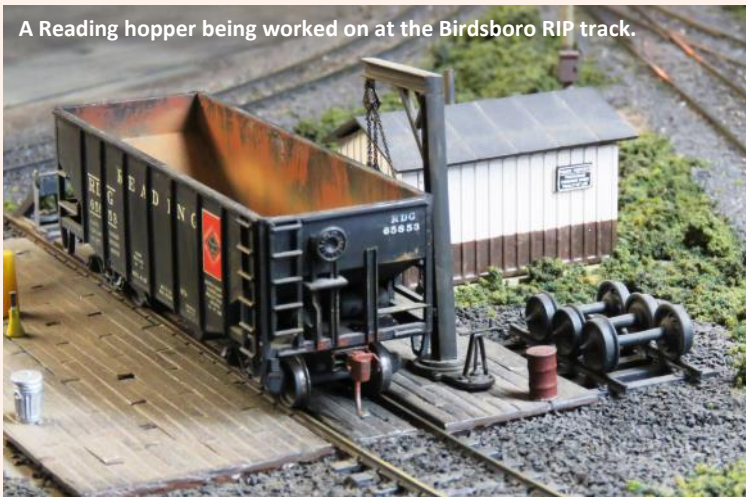
PECO flex track and switches are used throughout. Code 75 more closely matches the size of the track used on the prototype W&N branch.



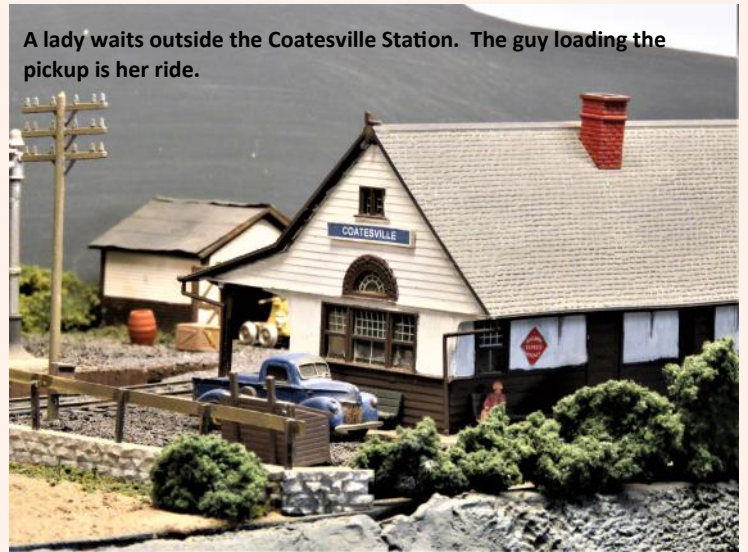
A Reading boxcar is loaded at Wilmington's Team Track.

10. If you were to brag about your layout what would you describe as its outstanding feature(s)?

An EXCEL spreadsheet is used to generate a switch list that assigns a new spotting location for each car every time the spreadsheet is recalculated. This means that almost every car must be moved during each operating session.



A Reading hopper being worked on at the Birdsboro RIP track.



A lady waits outside the Coatesville Station. The guy loading the pickup is her ride.



The Birdsboro Steel Corporation yard and adjacent Reading Company Freight Station are seen in Birdsboro.

The goods manufactured in Birdsboro were transported by rail. Later the freight started to be shipped by trucks. Most structures on the layout are kitbashed to fit a given need.



Gary Latshaw's Reading Company—W & NB (continued)

11. How many engines and rolling stock run on your layout? What brands of engines pull your trains?

I have 10 engines that can run on the layout, though typically I use 3 road switcher engines, 2 diesel switchers, a 2-8-0 brass steam, and an 0-6-0 camelback switcher. The engines are assigned using the random selection feature on the spreadsheet.

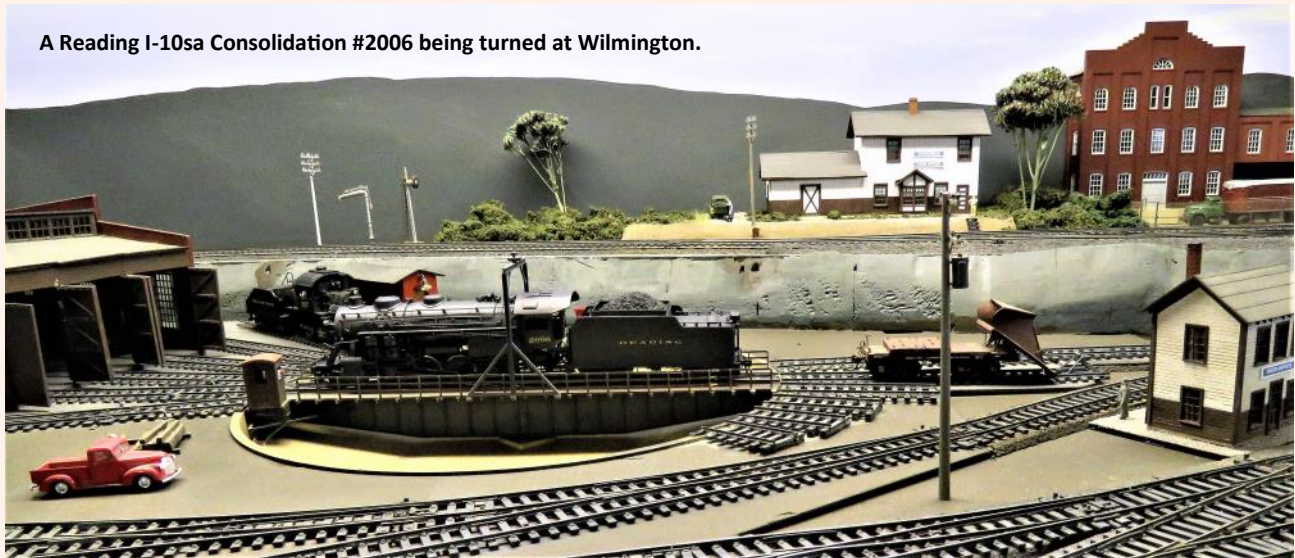
The road switcher engines are ATLAS. One yard switcher is ATLAS, the other is Broadway. The 2-8-0 is a GEM Brass, circa unknown and the camelback is a MANTUA.

The rolling stock is comprised of 50 cars and/or non-revenue equipment. They come from various manufactures and vintages. All are equipped with KADEE couplers, metal wheel sets and weighted to NMRA standards. One car is an ATERN that was purchased in 1961. The details on it are a little crude but for \$1.50, who can complain.

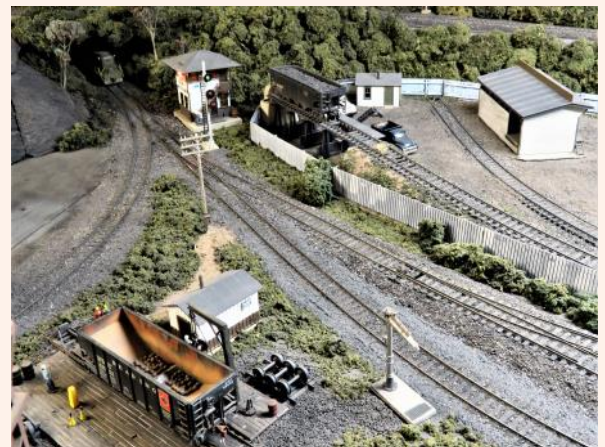
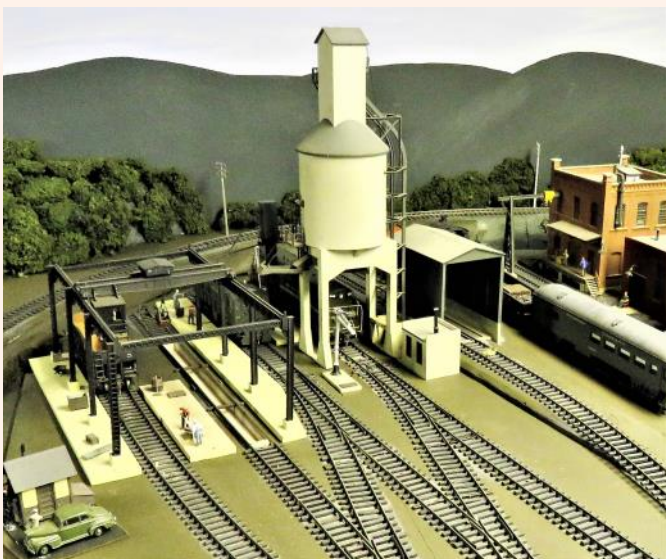
A Reading B-7a camelback switcher #1327 sits in front of the Oil House at Wilmington. The Oil House made from left over parts from other kits.



A Reading I-10sa Consolidation #2006 being turned at Wilmington.

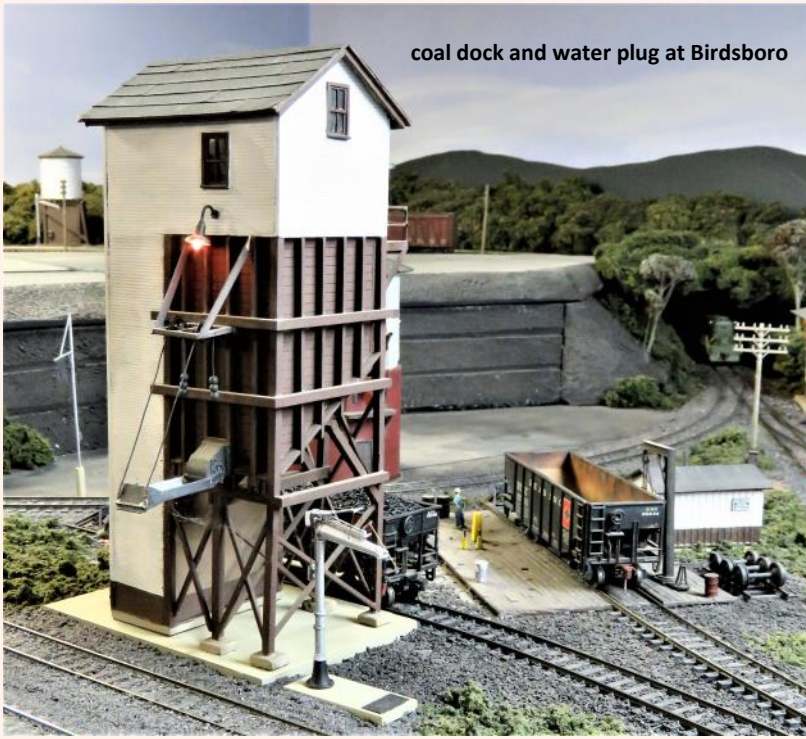


The Wilmington Engine Terminal with inbound inspection tracks on the left, ready tracks in the middle and coal dock and relief train on the right.

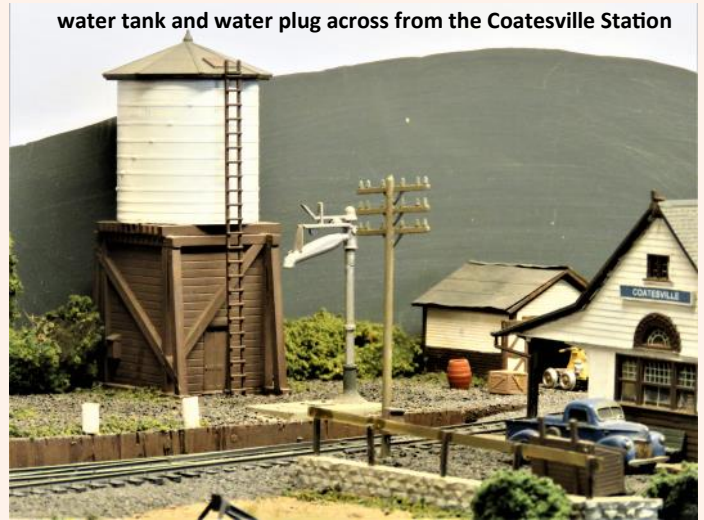


Merritt Lumber was a major customer for the Reading. The wood shed and coal trestle are seen in the top right. BO Tower, where W&N branches off of the mainline, is in the top left with Birdsboro RIP track in the lower left.

Gary Latshaw's Reading Company—W & NB (continued)



coal dock and water plug at Birdsboro



water tank and water plug across from the Coatesville Station



Elverson Tower controlled the interlocking where a branch that ran to the town of St. Peters was located.



The Wilmington Station sits across from the freight yard and engine terminal. The station platform was scratch-built and an old Heljan kit was used for the station.



The Birdsboro team track is located next to the freight station. An occasional hopper unloads on the team track, hence the wheeled conveyor.



Business Car #10 is spotted on the team track in Wilmington. A big shot must be in town.



Box cars are being unloaded at the Birdsboro team track.

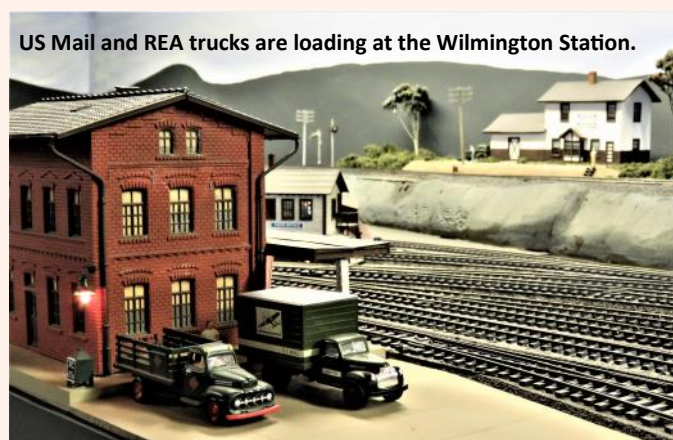
Gary Latshaw's Reading Company—W & NB (continued)



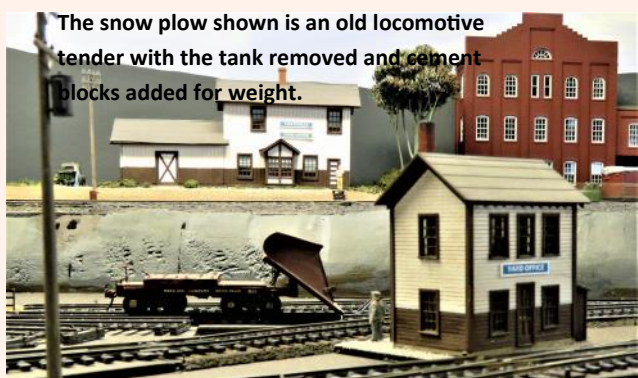
Reading I-10sa #2006 (2-8-0) sits on the turntable at Wilmington.
The engine is a GEM brass model custom painted and equipped with DCC sound .



A Reading gondola is being loaded in the Birdsboro Steel Corporation Yard. A box car sits at the Reading Freight Station in the background.



US Mail and REA trucks are loading at the Wilmington Station.



The snow plow shown is an old locomotive tender with the tank removed and cement blocks added for weight.



The shanty for the crossing guard is getting a fresh coat of paint.



Pictured below is a freight transfer operation at the Maryland Avenue Yard.

photos by Rich Wurst

Restored EBT Mikado Headlines Operating Steam at MER Convention

Steam fans will feel especially at home at this year’s MER convention, “Round the Curve to Altoona”, October 19-22, 2023. In addition to the chance to enjoy the handsome 2-6-0 on the nearby Everett Railroad, the convention will offer a bus tour to ride behind Western Maryland Scenic’s 2-6-6-2. There will also be special behind-the-curtain tours of the restoration shop in Altoona that is bringing PRR K4s #1361 back to life. And capping these opportunities will be the convention tour to ride behind East Broad Top 2-8-2 #16, returned to service this year for the first time since 1956.

The East Broad Top Railroad, located forty miles east of Altoona, was among the first railroads in the country to experiment with an enticing but unproven idea – a narrow-gauge line – and it lived to become the last narrow-gauge common carrier east of the Rocky Mountains. Today its route is the oldest surviving narrow-gauge track anywhere in the U.S. And with its high-performance locomotives, home-built steel car fleet, and innovative system for handling standard-gauge cars, it laid claim during its later life to the title of the most modern narrow gauge in the country.



Photo of #16 by Matthew Malkiewicz, February 2023, courtesy of East Broad Top Railroad

MER 'Round the Curve' Convention News (continued)

Mikado #16 came to the EBT from the Baldwin Locomotive Works in 1916 (easy to remember!) At the time of its construction and for almost a decade afterwards, #16 and its two younger siblings were the largest and most powerful narrow-gauge engines built for service in the United States up to that time. This mighty three-foot freight hauler operated until the final weeks of the East Broad Top's common carrier era, but has been out of service since 1956 – until this year! Newly restored by the non-profit EBT Foundation, which acquired most of the EBT in 2020, #16 is back in operation for excursions.

Our tour will be Friday, October 20. Our modern, restroom-equipped, 54-passenger motor coach will leave the convention hotel at 8:15 am for Rockhill, home of the EBT. At 9:45 we are booked to start our railfanning at the Rockhill Trolley Museum, riding a vintage trolley through the wild and scenic Blacklog Narrows and past the remains of old iron smelting furnaces.

The trolley will unload us near the boarding area for the East Broad Top train, including our reserved coach, pulled by steaming, smoking #16. A one-hour roundtrip will take us north to the wye at Colgate Grove, where we will turn and head back to Orbisonia and an hour-long narrated walking tour of the historic shops and roundhouse. This remarkably intact facility has been described by the Smithsonian as the best-preserved example of a 1900-era industrial site anywhere in the country.

After lunch on-site (included in the fare), we'll board our bus for a stop at the huge HO/HOn3 layout of the Bricktown Model Railroad Club. The layout represents the PRR from Horseshoe Curve to Mount Union, as well as the full EBT. We'll be back at the convention hotel by 4:15 pm.

Preregistration is required for the day's activities. The all-inclusive price – tickets, lunch, motor coach – is \$99. Seats are limited, so watch <https://www.mer2023.org/> for sign-up information.



MER 'Round the Curve' Spotlight—PRR K4 #1361 Update

PRR 1361 NEWS:

News about ex-PRR 1361 (in parts) in Altoona is scant, but thanks to a report by Dan Cupper, we have an update. The first new Belpaire steam-locomotive firebox built in Altoona in 76 years is taking shape at the Railroaders Memorial Museum workshop. The last such work was completed in 1946, when the PRR built 25 T1-class streamlined 4-4-4-4 passenger engines in its shops in Altoona. Those locomotives, along with 27 T1s built by Baldwin Locomotive Works, were supposed to replace the road's 425



Ira Silverman Collection, Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania

member K4s fleet, but instead were themselves quickly replaced by diesels, starting in 1947. No. 1361 is undergoing a \$2.6 million restoration to return it to running condition. One of the obstacles is that the original mechanical specifications drawn up by PRR in 1914—do not meet present-day federal pressure-vessel safety standards. The museum hired engineering firm FMW Solutions to design and build a new firebox that's visually identical, but with thicker steel and other modifications that simplify and strengthen the component.

The thickness of the steel used for the firebox was increased from 3/8" to 7/16." While not appearing to be much of an increase, the steel now meets federal standards. The profile of the squared-off Belpaire firebox top will be retained. Used on thousands of PRR locomotives of many classes, the odd shape added to the cost and complexity of No. 1361's restoration, including press-brake work to gently bend the side plates to meet the dimensions of the squared top. FMW used a computer program named Solidworks to precisely engineer the wrapper side sheets to conform to the round third boiler course and the squared top. Another modification is the use of a Flannery stay-bolt pattern instead of the original PRR design to improve maintenance. The outer shell of the firebox will be disassembled and heat-treated, and then it will be reassembled with rivets in the area where it meets the round third boiler course. That will involve some 250 to 300 rivets. Once the outer structure is complete, the dimensions of the inner firebox, including the crown sheet, will be created in computer-aided design, according to FMW.



Dan Cupper photo

The outer wrapper work is expected to cost \$150,000 of the total firebox work amount of \$400,000. The Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society contributed to the work more than \$100,000, which was matched by an anonymous donor. Another donation of \$200,000 brought the total to \$400,000. Boiler and running gear work will take place in 2023.

article courtesy of the Harrisburg Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society

MER 'Round the Curve' Convention Contest

2023 MER Convention Contest

The 2023 MER Convention, **Round the Curve to Altoona**, will feature both judged and popular vote contests that are part of all MER conventions. There will also be Special Awards including the President's Award and others.

The contest room at the hotel will contain all the contest activities. The room will be open for contest entries on Thursday evening and on Friday:

- 9 am – noon
- 1 pm – 5 pm
- 7 pm – 9 pm

NOTE: For security reasons, those visiting the contest rooms are asked not to bring large purses/bags, shoulder bags, backpacks, camera bags, or things of that nature into the room. Thank you for your cooperation.

Judging will begin at 9 am on Saturday and continue until 4 pm with a break for lunch at noon. The Contest room will close at 4 pm on Saturday. Entry owners are to pick up their entries between 9 pm and 11 pm following the Convention Banquet. Arrangements for entry pick up on Sunday morning can be made with the Contest Chairman Alan Mende contest@mer-nmra.com on an individual basis, but all entries must be retrieved by 11 am, Sunday, October 22.

Judges will assemble in a clinic room (TBD) with the Contest Chairman at 9 pm on Friday for orientation. They should report to the contest room on Saturday by 8:30 AM to start judging the entered models.

The MER allows NMRA and Region officials who wish to help judge the model contest to do so and still enter models in the contest. Those who judge and enter models must, however, recuse themselves from judging the entire category in which they have entered a model.

Any questions? Please e-mail the Contest Chair Alan Mende or speak with one of our contest staff members. The staff will be available in the Contest Room during the Convention. Any persons wishing to serve as an Apprentice Judge should contact the Contest Chair as early as possible and plan on spending the day judging with several of the judging teams.

MER 'Round the Curve' Convention Contest (continued)

JUDGED MODEL CATEGORIES

- Steam Locomotives
- Diesel Locomotives
- Traction Power
- Revenue Freight Cars
- Passenger Cars
- Non-revenue Equipment
- On-line Structure
- Off-line Structure
- On-line Display/Diorama
- Off-line Display/Diorama
- Modules

Model submitted for judging at the MER Convention in Charlotte, NC last October.



Plaques will be awarded for first place in each model category. Second and third place awards will be awarded a certificate. The model winning the Best of Show Award allows other models in that category to move up one place for a 1st place plaque. If your model scores 87.5 points or greater, it will earn a merit award from the Achievement Program. For more information on the AP, contact the MER AP Manager or your Division AP Coordinator.

POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTESTS

There are two popular vote model contests which will be judged by convention attendees through a paper balloting method:

- Favorite Train Award
- Favorite Model Award

The winners in each category will receive a plaque for their modeling efforts.

The contest room will be open during judging on Saturday for convention attendees to pick up their popular vote ballots and make their selections. Please be quiet during these times so as not to disturb the contest judges who will be hard at work. Ballots must be returned to the Contest room by 4 pm on Saturday to be included in the official count.

MER 'Round the Curve' Convention Contest (continued)

UNJUDGED MODELS AND DISPLAYS

Members who wish to display models or dioramas that are not entered in any of the contests above may bring them to the Contest Room. They will be displayed depending upon space available. This is a first-come, first-served service. The Contest Chair will make the final determination as to when there is no more space for additional displays. They will be displayed on tables specially set aside for non-contest items.

CONTEST RULES

Our model contest rules are short and to the point! We follow the basic NMRA National Contest Rules. Visit their site for a more detailed explanation of all these rules, and to download the forms needed to enter all the contests; if you need help or forms, contact Alan Mende, MER Contest Chair (contests@mer-nmra.com)

Here is a summary of some of the basic rules:

Entrants must be current members of the NMRA.

Contest entrants cannot be professional model builders, i.e. derive over 50% one's income from constructing models.

Each model must be accompanied by the official [NMRA Entry Form #901](#), filled out and signed by the entrant. In addition, model entries must have a filled out [Judges Score Sheet #902](#). Modules should use [NMRA Entry Form #901b](#). Writeable Entry Forms and Judges Score Sheets are available from the MER website (<https://mer-nmra.com/judge.html>). Go to the website by clicking on the above links, download the forms, fill them out as a Word document, print, and bring them with you to the Contest Room at the Convention.

You may enter the contest by proxy. Whoever submits an entry for someone else, however, must present the owner/builder's NMRA membership number.

Models that have won a 1st place in any prior National or Regional contest cannot be entered in the same category at this contest.

There are no restrictions on the number of models entered by a member.

For those modelers who wish to have their work evaluated for the Achievement Program only, your models will be evaluated when the model contest is judged.

Models that have achieved a Merit Award in regional or national competitions are ineligible for another Merit Award. Models achieving a Merit Award on the local level are eligible for regional and national Merit Awards.

MER 'Round the Curve' Convention Contest (continued)

SPECIAL AWARDS

The following special awards are sponsored by the NMRA and various Divisions and private groups and will be made to selected entries in the judged categories:

THE BEST IN SHOW AWARD is given to the model that scores the highest point total in the judged model contest. ! In addition to the plaque, this award also provides free registration to next year's MER convention.

THE PRESIDENT'S AWARD for 2023 will be chosen by MER Scott Unger and given for any structure or rolling stock related to maintenance of way. This can include former passenger cars turned in to rider cars for track crews, old boxcars used as tool cars, cranes, boom cars, wheel cars, plows and spreaders, ballast hoppers, speeder and tool sheds; the list is almost endless. Let's see lots of entries this year.

THE CLYDE GERALD AWARD is sponsored by the MER and named for the late Clyde Gerald, former MER Business Manager and longtime modeler. It is awarded to the kit-bashed model which scores highest in the judged model contest. Be sure to check the definition of kit-bashed for this award.

THE BOB LIBERMAN MEMORIAL AWARD is given for the model freight, passenger, caboose, or MOW car that would, in the opinion of the awarding committee, be the one that Bob Liberman would choose as the best detailed car in the contest. The award includes a plaque and \$100 Gift Card/Certificate to Hobby Store of choice.

THE PHILADELPHIA DIVISION NEW MODELER AWARD rewards excellence in model building by first time entrants in the MER judged model contest. The highest score achieved by a new modeler is awarded a plaque and a cash prize of \$25.

THE CHUCK HLADIK MEMORIAL AWARD, sponsored by the James River Division (JRD), this year will be awarded for ventilated boxcar that ran on a railroad in the south. All questions regarding eligibility should be directed to JRD's Contest co-chair Shannon Crabtree at stctigers@gmail.com AND copied to the JRD Superintendent at superintendent@jrdnmra.org.

THE RAY BILODEAU NARROW GAUGE AWARD is also privately sponsored by a group of narrow gauge modelers, and encourages building models depicting aspects of narrow gauge railroading.

THE "GREAT DECALS!" AWARD is an award for an excellent model that includes a "Great Decals!" product in its construction and/or finishing achieving the highest judged score in lettering and finish for a model that employs a product demonstrated to be from Great Decals that also receives a Merit Award. This award is worth not only a plaque, but a cash prize of \$30.

MER 'Round the Curve' Convention Contest (continued)

THE FAVORITE TRAIN AWARD, sponsored by the Tidewater Division, is a popular vote award and will be included on the Popular Vote ballot. Yes, members who can find their way to the contest room and fill out a ballot get to choose the winner.

THE FAVORITE MODEL AWARD is another popular vote award and will also be included on the Popular Vote ballot. Yes, those same members who can find their way to the contest room and fill out a ballot get to choose their favorite model.

Below are some models submitted for judging at the MER Charlotte Convention October 2022.



NMRA membership has its benefits!

Your NMRA membership entitles you to all these benefits and more, plus the fellowship and assistance of nearly 19,000 members across the globe.

Partnership Program

We've partnered with model railroad manufacturers who've agreed to give NMRA members discounts...some as much as 40%! To see the current listing, visit the Partnership Page on our website.

- www.nmra.org/Membership/Member Home/Benefits/Partnership

Model Railroad Directory

Use this to contact other NMRA members for a layout tour, to talk trains, or join an op session! Includes maps, descriptions, photos, videos and more.

- www.nmra.org/Membership/Member Home/Model RR Directory

Conventions - National and Regional

The annual National convention runs one week and usually features over 100 clinics, over 50 layout tours, and dozens of prototype tours. The National Train Show runs for the final three days of the convention. Regional conventions vary in duration from two to five days. Many feature prototype and layout tours, plus clinics and other activities.

- www.nmra.org/convention
- www.nmra.org/regions/ for Region and Division website URLs

Achievement Program (AP)

The AP helps modelers get more out of the hobby by providing an incentive to learn and master the skills necessary. Those who've completed the AP receive Master Model Railroader (MMR) certification.

- www.nmra.org/education/achievement-program
- Email Achievement Program Director Frank Koch: achiev@nmra.org
- Contact your Region or Division Achievement Program Manager (see www.nmra.org/regions/ for Region and Division website URLs)

Online Video Library

The Members Only section of www.nmra.org features dozens of helpful "how-to" videos produced by professional video companies, as well as over 150 hour-long videos of clinics presented at National conventions.

- Log in to www.nmra.org as a member, click on "Benefits," then "Member Video Library"

Special Access to Places and People

As a member, you'll have access to all kinds of railroad locations you'd never otherwise see. National and Regional conventions will often tour prototype facilities that are never open to the public. You'll also be able to see top-of-the-line model railroads and spend time talking with some of the most famous personalities in model railroading today.

- www.nmra.org/Conventions
- www.nmra.org/Regions

Membership in the California State Railroad Museum's Library

Every NMRA member is a member of the CSRM Library, and can take advantage of the many resources of one of the world's largest railroad libraries.

NMRA Magazine

NMRA Magazine is the monthly publication of the NMRA, and features news about the organization and its Regions and Divisions, along with modeling articles, product conformance reviews, and other information. Because the subscription rate/postage depends on where you live, check www.nmra.org for your rate.

To subscribe:

- Email HQ: hq@nmra.org
- Write HQ: P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384
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- To contribute articles, see info in the masthead of the magazine

NMRA Online Archives

Over 10,000 photographs, slides, plans, drawings, erection elevations, paint schemes, and more, with additional scans being added all the time. High resolution files are available for download at a discount to members.

- www.nmra.org, click "Online Archives" at the top of the page

Liability Insurance for Meets and Shows

This insurance covers liability claims for all U.S. and Canadian Region, Division, and NMRA SIG-sponsored events up to a specific limit of liability provided for in the policy. (For clarity and assurance of coverage, we prefer that SIG events be co-sponsored by National, a Region, or a Division.) Please see our website for important details.

- www.nmra.org/national/insurance/insurance.html
- Email Headquarters: hq@nmra.org

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- www.nmra.org/regions/100Club/100Club.html
- Email: hq@nmra.org

And many more benefits, including:

- Modeling With the Masters
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- Standards and Conformance
- Local Divisions
- Howell Day Museum
- Pike Registry
- Standards Gages and turnout templates

The NMRA advances the worldwide scale model railroading community through education and standards as well as advocacy and fellowship.



We make it even more fun!



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Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official publication of the Susquehanna Division 11
Of the National Model Railroad Association

5 Hardy Court, Lancaster, PA 17602

