



Volume 32

SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS



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

Number 2

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad

At the December Division Event in Mechanicsburg, Randy Watts' HO layout was featured on the Open House Tour. Upon visiting Randy's home a private gem was observed. Here is Randy's story in his own words.

Physical Attributes

The HO scale Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad occupies an approximately 24 by 38 foot area in the basement of our home. The average layout height is 52 inches. It is built on an open grid frame of 3/4 inch plywood ripped into 3 1/2 inch widths. Track is underlaid with 1/2 inch plywood with a Homasote roadbed. The track is Atlas, Code 83, nickel silver, and turnouts are Atlas Custom Line (in the future I would use Peco or Walthers). All track is laid on cork roadbed. The mainline run is just under 200 feet; the total amount of track is not known, but there are about 120 turnouts on the layout, controlled by ground throws.



Randy Watts at the throttle.

Work to finish the basement started in April 2001, and the first train ran around the layout in October of that year. (I subbed out the drywall, electrical and ceiling work, which probably saved a year or more in prep time.) **article continued on page 9**



Welcoming sign sponsored by all the town service organizations.



An SP bay window caboose awaits assignment to a freight consist.

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CABIN FEVER RECAP

In the previous issue of **Sidetracks**, the Model Engineering Expo & Auction event was announced for January 12-13, 2024. Jeff Burch, Webmaster for the Mid-Eastern Region and recently the Webmaster for the Altoona MER Convention, made known this special event during the December, 2023 Mechanicsburg Division Event.

Since I never had the knowledge of this organization and their yearly event, I thought it was time to check out the publicized aspects at the Expo. Cabin Fever filled several large rooms of the Lebanon, PA Expo Center. When I entered the first room I was awestruck! This room had over a hundred stationary and mobile steam engines built by modelers. Instead of live steam, the room was piped with compressed air which allowed each engine to operate indoors in a safe environment. Other rooms held the model auctions, live steam trains in several scales, remote controlled boats/ships sailing on an indoor lake, remote controlled trucks and tractor/trailers, operating excavation machines and wooden toys, games and marble machines. All of the models were exquisite in detail and workmanship. The only way to demonstrate the high level of skill would be to see what I witnessed on January 12th. Please click on this link <https://photos.app.goo.gl/FzGGEg8HCpmizpGY7> to see a awesome exhibition of modeling skills.

Pictured at right is Jeff Burch standing with his live steam locomotive at the Cabin Fever Event. Jeff was not only an exhibitor, he is responsible for taking all the wonderful photos seen on the web link.

This was the 27th edition of the Cabin Fever Event and I highly recommend that everyone experience the 'WOW' factors next January!



article and photo by Rich Wurst, cloud photos courtesy of Jeff Burch

In Memoriam

Passing of Longtime NMRA and Susquehanna Division Member FORREST LUCAS

September 5, 1944 – January 23, 2024

Forrest L. Lucas, Jr., age 79, of Johnstown, PA, passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday, January 23, after a courageous, multi-year battle with cancer. Born in Altoona on September 5, 1944 he was preceded in death by his parents Forrest L. Lucas, Sr. and Phyllis A. Lucas and brother Donald Lucas. Forrest was the loving husband of his wife Yvonne with whom he celebrated 56 wonderful years of marriage.

Forrest graduated from Altoona High School in the class of 1962 and Penn State University where he earned a degree in Electrical Engineering. He was employed by the HRB Singer Company in State College and retired from the Pene/First Energy company after 33 years of service in several supervisory positions. After retiring Forrest worked for Mountain Top Technologies and Westsylvania Heritage Group. In 2002 Forrest founded Legacy Corner Photography where he won many awards for his historical photos, special events, and family photos.



He loved driving his Corvettes and attending the Carlisle Car Shows with his family. He was very active in the Westmont High School band and football boosters while his children were in school. He served on several boards of his church where he also taught Sunday School, and served on the advisory board of the Johnstown YWCA.

Forrest was clearly a lifelong railroad aficionado. There is probably no major PRR hot spot in Pennsylvania that he had not thoroughly scouted out and photographed. That love of railroading extended to his passion for all facets of our great model railroading hobby to include his extensive collection of brass locomotives and enthusiastic involvement in both local and regional model railroad organizations.

Living in Johnstown, at the western boundary of the our NMRA Susquehanna Division, Forrest was a key leader in arranging several events in both the Johnstown and Altoona areas. He served as a principal member on our division leadership teams that managed both the 2017 and 2023 NMRA Mid-Eastern Region conventions. He personally was responsible for and managed the highly successful 2023 convention outside activities program that included the sold-out bus trips to the East Broad Top (EBT) Railroad and Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. Forrest also arranged the presentation of several outstanding clinics. And because of his location in Johnstown, he was also heavily involved in many NMRA Mid Central Region's Keystone Division activities.

Forrest was a friend to all and a man who never let his many years of extensive medical issues hold him back. He truly was a gentle, kind, and positive man, a dear personal friend, and the Master Rope Pusher.

submitted by Barry Schmitt, friend and colleague

Superintendent's Desk

As one of the news programs say, "There's good news tonight." Well, it's not evening, but I have good news anyway. After Cornwall Manor declined to have our April/May meet at their facility, I started searching for another venue. Since I'm a Jersey Central modeler and have recently completed a kitbashed model of a Central of New Jersey Railroad Class B-7s 0-6-0, I contacted Project 113 in Minersville, PA. They have restored the only Jersey Central steam locomotive in existence, their No. 113. On Saturday, May 18th, they will be firing up No. 113 to run from Minersville to a breaker, using Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern passenger cars and crew. It's all part of the first annual Minersville Community Day. Runs will begin at 10 AM and be hourly until 4 PM. We have rented the Good Will Fire Company Hall at 25 North Street, Minersville for our meet beginning at 9 AM. We will have our usual short "state of the division" meeting, followed by our Modeler's Showcase. As time permits, we will also have our Modeler's Forum. But the biggest draw will be a talk by Bob Kimmel of Project 113 on the history and restoration of their engine. Then, we can walk a couple of blocks to the Minersville station and for an 11 dollar ticket, we can ride behind an historic steam locomotive.



the real thing

On another note, it's getting close to election season. In even years, our Division holds an election for Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Chief Clerk. Both Dean Johnson and I have stated our willingness to continue to serve as Superintendent and Chief Clerk. Rich Wurst, our current Assistant Superintendent **AND** Sidetracks editor would like someone else to fill the assistant's duties. Let me tell you, it's an easy position; all you have to do is show up for quarterly board meetings, offer ideas and vote. That's all there is to it (unless I die, and I'm not planning on that). Generally, we have our board meetings on Sunday afternoons beginning at 2 PM, and if the meeting is at our house here in Grantville, you'll get lunch (I love to cook). I really need someone to step up to the plate on this. This is your Division!



my model



Alan



Second Section

Susquehanna Sidetracks

Official Newsletter of the Susquehanna Division 11
Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
655 Willow Valley Square, L-308 Lancaster,
PA 17602

Contributing to Susquehanna Sidetracks:
Sidetracks welcomes contributions from our 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. The deadline for submission for the next issue is April 15, 2024.

Officers and Directors

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Asst. Superintendent: Rich Wurst assist-super@susquehannanmra.org

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Director: Bill Lesjak blesjak@susquehannanmra.org

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Director: Ken Roth kroth@susquehannanmra.org

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Bill Lesjak showcase@susquehannanmra.org

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Rich Wurst editor@susquehannanmra.org

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Susquehanna Division website:

www.susquehannanmra.org

Mid-Eastern Region website:

www.mer-nmra.com

National Model Railroad Association

8414 Gulf View Drive, Suite A & B

Soddy Daisy, TN 37379-2200



bird's eye view of modern couplers



NS freight passing the old PRR Station (now an ice cream shop) in Columbia, PA. Photo courtesy of Gene Graber.

Upcoming Division Officer Election

Division Officer Nominations

It is now 2024. This being an even-numbered year, it's once again time to ask for nominations for our three Division Officer positions. The three officers are: Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Chief Clerk (Secretary – Treasurer). Each officer will be elected to a two-year term from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026. To be an officer, you must be a member of the NMRA, reside in the Susquehanna Division 11 area, and be at least 21 years of age. You may nominate yourself or another member you feel is qualified; however, in fairness to the individual, please verify they would be willing to serve. If we receive more than three nominees, each of you will be asked to provide a short (200 words or less) bio-sketch that will then be shared with all members in the May/June edition of *Susquehanna Sidetracks*.

The timeline for the 2024 officer voting is:

- **March 30, 2024:** Submit nominations to Alan Mende, Superintendent, either by phone at (717) 469-1047 or email at super@susquehannanmra.org. I need to know as soon as possible so that, if need be, I can actively recruit individuals to run for office.
- **April 15, 2024:** Candidate bio-sketches due either to Alan Mende by email (see above address) or USPS (306 Manada Gap Road, Grantville, PA 17028). Short bio-sketches (200 words or less) are required only if there are more than one candidate for each office. This deadline is necessary for ballot distribution in the May/June *Susquehanna Sidetracks*. Rich Wurst, Sidetracks editor, will need your submission/bio-sketch no later than April 15th so publication deadlines can be met.
- **May 1, 2024:** Ballots and nominee bio-sketches (only if we receive more than one candidate for any position) will be sent to members in the May/June edition of *Susquehanna Sidetracks*.
- **May 31, 2024:** Ballots must be returned by either email or USPS.
- **July 2024:** Election results will be published in the July/August *Susquehanna Sidetracks*. The newly elected officers will take office effective July 1st.

Please seriously consider running for a Division Officer position. Our annual programs are developed under the leadership of your Board of Directors (BOD) and all Division policies are approved by your BOD. Therefore, this is your opportunity to get involved in deciding the future direction of your NMRA Division. I know most members are very busy with job, family, hobby projects, and other community programs and therefore believe serving on our BOD would simply require too much time. On the contrary, our BOD only meets in person a few times a year – all other matters are handled by either email or phone. So once again, please give this important request your most thoughtful consideration. This is an excellent opportunity for you to have a direct say in how your division is managed, and it does not require a great deal of your valuable free time. Please give me a call or send me an email if you have questions about the elections or our BOD operations at super@susquehannanmra.org or (717) 469-1047.



Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania, April 6, 2024

The South Mountain Division and Mainline Hobby Supply will host its 8th Annual Mini Con at the Blue Ridge Fire Hall, 13063 Monterey Lane, Blue Ridge Summit, PA. Come and enjoy activities from 9 AM to 4 PM. This one-day, free event is one block north of Main Line Hobby Supply (who will offer store purchase discounts). The program will include consisting of prototype engines, modeling presentations, formal and informal clinics, modular displays, and interaction with fellow hobbyists, both experienced and beginners. There is no admission charge to this wheelchair accessible educational event. It is open to the public for the promotion of the model railroading as a hobby.

Submitted by Don Florwick, DJFlorwick@comcast.net, Phone [717-414-0660](tel:717-414-0660) for the South Mountain Division, Mid Eastern Region, <http://www.smdnmra.org/>.

NMRA Event

Save the Date!

Planning is now underway for a Division Event at the Annville Station on June 8, 2024!

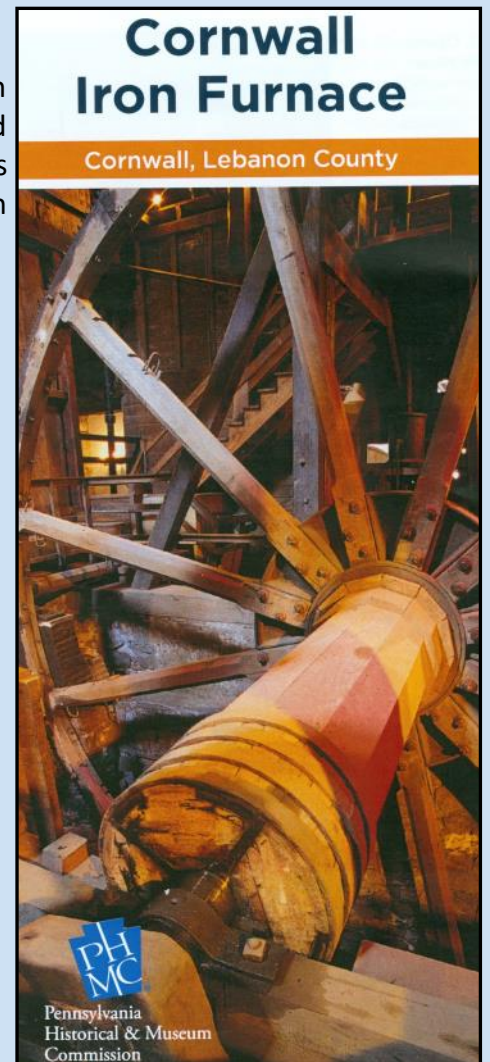
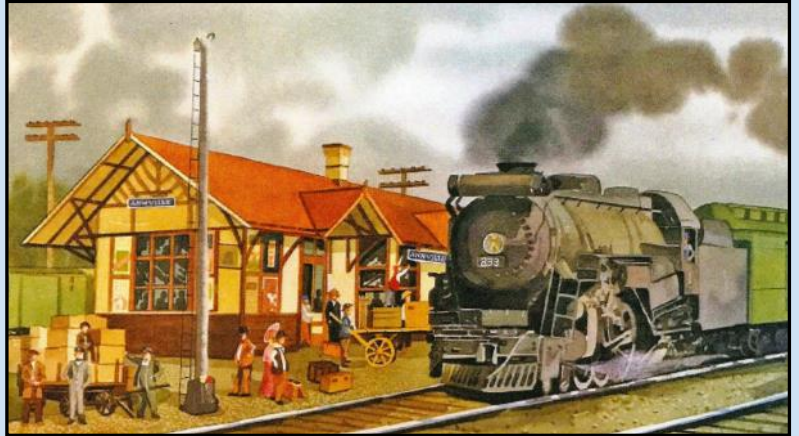
Our June Event planning is underway with the Annville, PA Railroad Station contracted as our event site. The June 8th date is also the celebration of Old Annville Day (street festival).

A wonderful location to host our Division in this restored (and relocated) train station circa 1891! Currently we are developing interesting and informative clinics including the history of the station. Of course, we will have Modeler's Showcase and Modeler's Forum then after the morning event at the station, plan a visit to nearby Cornwell Iron Furnace in Cornwall, PA., Old Annville Day and any layouts that we may be able to visit.

Future announcements will include additional details for this special event. In addition to the scheduled event presentations, there are two model railroad hobby shops in nearby Lebanon and Myerstown. These shops are Draude's Derailment and Brian's Model Trains! Additionally, the Norfolk Southern main line runs right past the Annville Station!

Be sure to save the date for this great NMRA Susquehanna Division Event!

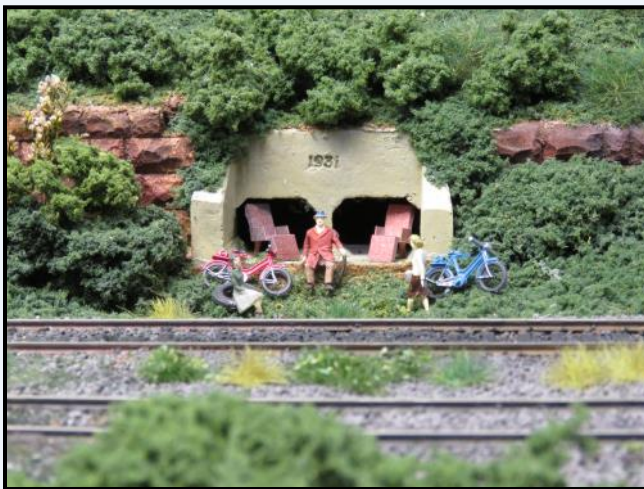
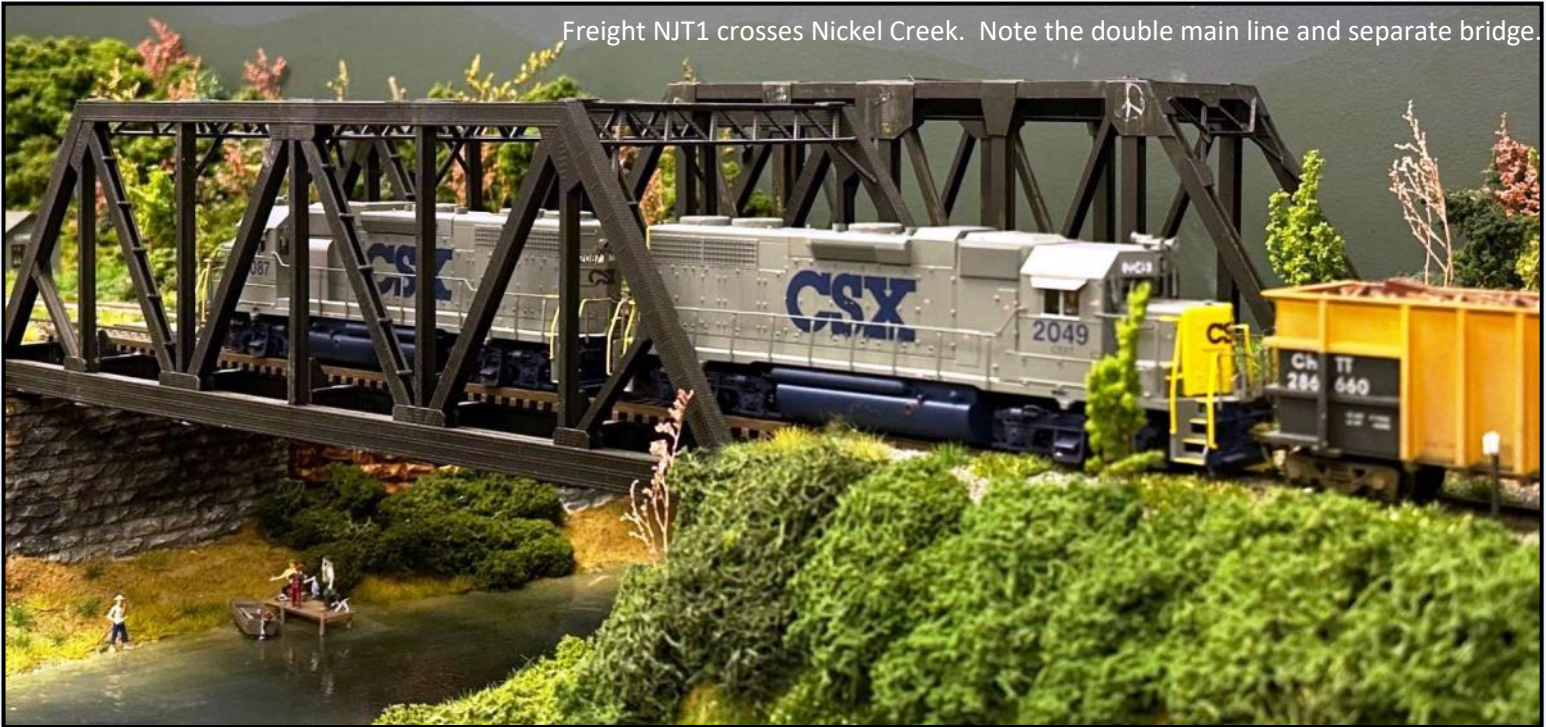
Bill Lesjak, Division Director



Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

Initially the layout was standard DC, using an Aristocraft radio walk-around throttle. About six years ago I switched to Railpro and equipped most of my locomotives with sound decoders. That system has, for my preferences, many limitations, and this year I converted to DCC. I use an NCE radio system with 10 amps capacity and five wireless cabs. All engines have sound and are equipped with capacitor packs. I have decided to standardize on Soundtraxx decoders, but still have a few locomotives with TCS decoders in use. There are typically 15 to 20 locomotives on the layout and a couple hundred cars; mainly Athearn, Intermountain, Atlas and Tangent. All cars have metal wheelsets and Kadee couplers. Motive power for the T & A is primarily B23-7s, although power from both CSX and NS is also used. Locomotives are mainly Atlas, with a few Athearn units. Barbeque skewers are used for uncoupling. There are no signals, and at the present time informal communications between crews control movements. At some point, Track Warrants will be put in place for this purpose. The layout is operated with a crew of 3 to 4 people, around once a month or so. In between I operate on my own.

Freight NJT1 crosses Nickel Creek. Note the double main line and separate bridge.



Local folks are train watching by a culvert in Blue Sulphur Springs.



freight NJ11 crossing over Sodor Creek

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

(continued))

Layout Story

The Tuscarora and Appotomac is a prototype based, freelanced short line operating between Tuscarora (near Winchester, Virginia) and Front Royal, Virginia. Much of the inspiration for the railroad comes from the book *Stations*, by Michael Flanagan. In reality, both the PRR(Cumberland Valley) and Baltimore and Ohio operated in this area; in many cases nearly parallel to each other. As such, if you study my layout carefully, you can see where portions of the two lines have been stitched together to make the current railroad. In several places abandoned rights of way are visible, including one that is a rail trail. My era is the Fall of 2000, about a year after the split of Conrail. The Tuscarora and Appotomac was created when Conrail was split and is jointly owned by CSX and Norfolk Southern. This allows the use of power from both roads. I assume the line was too small to include in Conrail's Shared Assets.



Highrailer car at Appotomac



covered hopper spotted at the loadout for Ag Processors

The layout is primarily a switching layout, although there are several through trains operated if time permits. On the north end of the railroad interchange is received from the CSX via a branch line to Brunswick, Maryland, and from the Norfolk Southern via a line to Hagerstown. NS interchange is delivered to North Yard, at a station known as South Cumbo. The CSX interchange goes to City Yard at Tuscarora, south of North Yard. Two crews handle cars in the yards, and two locals for the north end of the line are based here. At Tuscarora the T & A interchanges with the Winchester and Western.

Buffalo Forge is located about 10 miles south of Tuscarora. A large paper mill is located here, along with a publishing company and a team track. A branch line to Cedar Creek diverges here to serve a box plant, appliance warehouse and sand mining operation. At the south end of Buffalo Forge, the Silica Springs industrial track heads south to serve a large cement mill.



shoving platform on the engine track at Tuscarora



camp site near Buffalo Springs

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

(continued)

The main yard, limited engine facilities and offices of the line are located in Appotomac; a larger town about the midpoint of the mainline. Five locals that serve the south end of the railroad are based here. This area keeps two operators busy during a session. One or two transfer runs move cars between Appotomac and Tuscarora as needed.

Moving south from Appotomac the next major switching area is Willoughby. Here the T & A serves the National Canning Company, which receives and loads refrigerated cars. There is also an interchange with Unimin, a sand mining operation, and a team track.

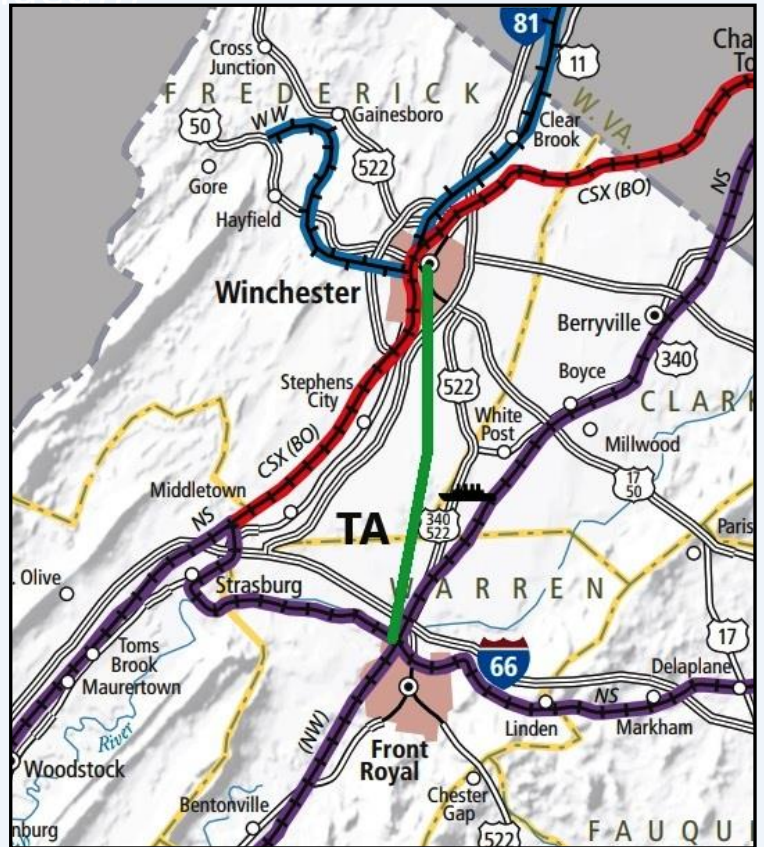
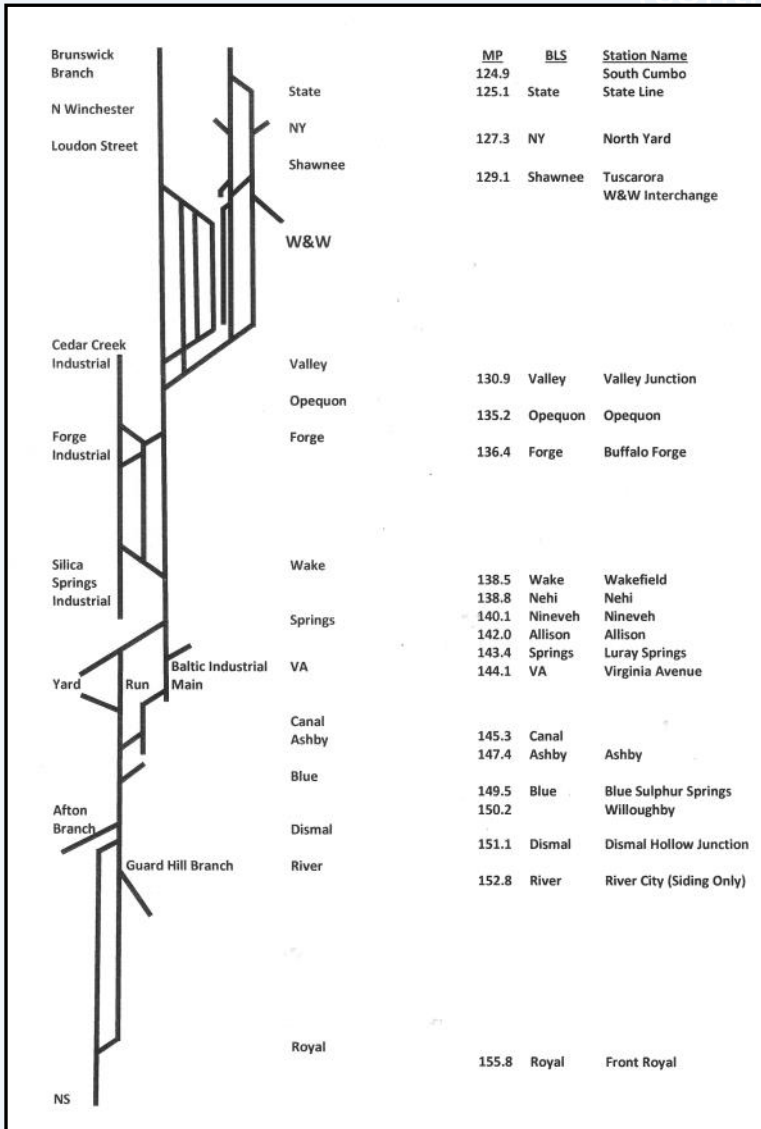
At Dismal Hollow Junction the mainline continues to Front Royal, where the line interchanges with Norfolk Southern. "Dismal" is also the start of the Afton Branch, which interchanges with the fabled Virginian & Ohio at Afton. The traffic on this branch includes a daily interchange train as well as unit grain trains and unit trains of garbage from New Jersey, destined for a land fill near Afton. The Guard Hill branch also starts at "Dismal" and runs several miles south to an abandoned quarry. This line receives unit trains of construction debris from the New York City area, using a loads in, empties out plan. The land fill is not modeled, but is represented by staging cars on the branch.

motive power with their
consists in Tuscarora Yard



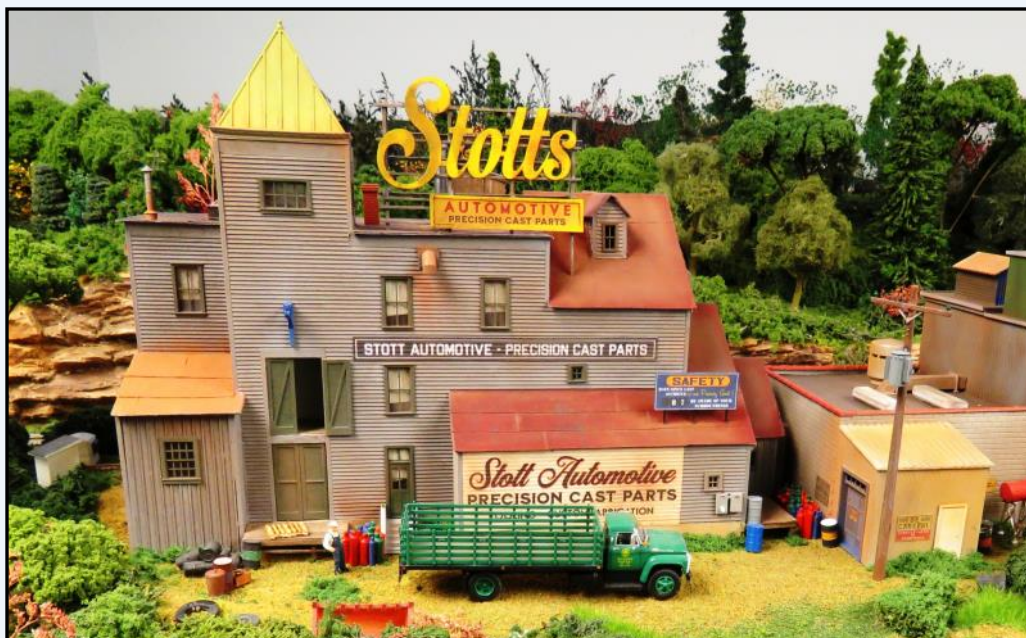
Dal Tile Plant in
Tuscarora

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)



Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad route map (in green)

Tuscarora and Appotomac Timetable

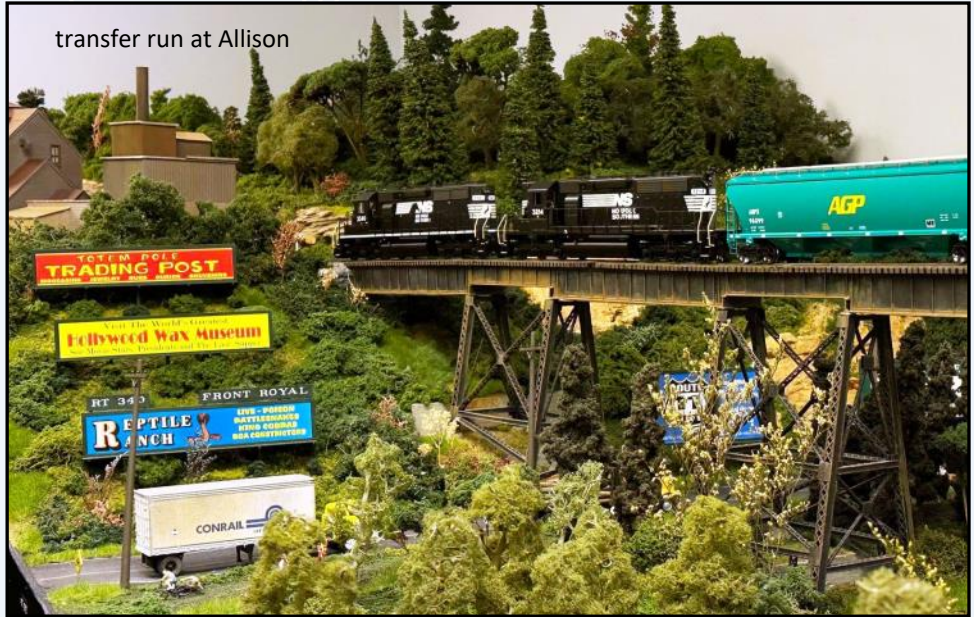


Stott's Foundry known for their precision cast parts

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

The railroad is operated as a point-to-point layout, but I did later add a connection that allows for continuous running. This is useful for layout tours; during operating sessions one end of the connection serves as the switching lead for North Yard and the other end as the Guard Hill Branch.

The CSX Brunswick Branch on the north, and the Afton Branch to the south, are three-track hidden staging tracks. Cars on the V & O interchange train are swapped on and off the railroad between sessions. The unit trains do not change consists, although I will occasionally swap power.



The interchange with the Norfolk Southern at both ends of the railroad takes place using visible trackage. Between sessions outbound cars are removed and placed on shelves, and new inbound cars are placed on the yard tracks. (Often referred to as a “fiddle” yard.) This provides variety; although the types of cars that are used are consistent, the cars themselves change frequently.

I use car cards and color coded (by station) waybills to drive the operation of the railroad. The waybill states the type of car and customer, but contains no additional information. Each station is equipped with typical car card boxes with three slots – in, hold and out. At the start of a session, I take my rolling work table (See *Railroad Model Craftsman*, February 2023) and, beginning at one end of the layout, decide which cars are to be pulled from each customer. I pull the waybill from the car card; this then becomes an order for an inbound car. After pulling the waybills for each station, I go to the car storage area and pull cars that match the waybill (or car order). I then match the car card with car and waybill, and these cars become the inbound interchange. Some cars always enter at the same point – for example Kaolin cars for the paper mill always arrive and depart on the NS at Front Royal. Other loads, such as inbound paper, can come or go via any interchange point. I can vary traffic levels by adding cards from my card file, or letting cars sit.



Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

From this point I use the car cards to make up a train list (Manifest) or switch list. As an example, the Front Royal Turn, which takes inbound cars from the interchange track at Front Royal to the yard at Appotomac, will have a Train List. This form lists each car by its initials and number, and provides the Yardmaster at Appotomac with a track assignment for each car in the train. Local trains, or switch jobs, work from switch lists. The switch list I use came from a prototype, but it is not marked as to the railroad. The list tells the crew



NJT1 passing through Willoughby

which cars are to be picked up at each industry, and gives instructions as to which cars are to be set out, and what spot they go to – for example at U. S. Silica cars are spotted on either the glass sand or filter sand loadout tracks. Instructions for the final interchange point of each car picked up are also provided on the switch list. The list is then used to classify the cars at the yard when the trains returns with its pickups. Operators do not interact with the car cards when operating their train. (I move the cards after each session to make sure they are in the right box and slot.) The paperwork is written out by hand and the staging and preparation process takes 3 to 4 hours, normally spread out over two evenings. It gives me a chance to check things out on the railroad and fix any issues, and I enjoy the time spent.

Operating sessions normally take between 3 to 5 hours. If we stop for lunch we go longer; otherwise, we play out a little sooner. We are a bunch of old guys, so we don't start too early, and we like to be home by dark.



transfer run crossing Goose Creek

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

Other Thoughts

I tend to be a “Lone Wolf” modeler, but over the past year or so have begun operations on the layout. The sessions are a lot of fun, and bring new perspectives to the layout. Many of my operators have actual railroad experience, which is quite helpful. Operations are informal and fun. We stop occasionally to tell stories, rib each other or discuss how things could be improved. I provide support and trouble shoot when needed. At most sessions I get to run the switch engine at the Cargill mill to pull and spot covered hoppers. It takes an operator several sessions to “qualify” by learning the lay of the land and the various stations and industries, along with the ins and outs of each. That is prototypical.

In terms of planning the layout I had some broad perimeters – locale (Virginia), type of line (short line in an area with industry and sand mining operations), personality (hand me down short line with basic facilities) and general goals of prototype car movement and eventual operations. I developed a plan for the location of the benchwork that maximized the use of floor space and allowed for the radius I wanted (30 inches). I then built the benchwork and installed the main-line from one end to the other. As things progressed, I tested and tweaked the main-line. That revealed to me what space I had to work with, at which point I began to determine what industries I would have and what would go where. I then roughed stuff in, played with it, and made changes based

on what I learned. I refer to this as the “Ready, Fire, Aim” approach to planning. This approach may not work for everyone, but I had experience with the layout at my prior house, and this one built on the concepts tested there.



Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

About 80% of the surface area of the railroad has been redone at least once, if not twice, in the twenty-two years it has been in operation. Several reasons are behind the continued updates. My skills have improved with time and practice, and I often look at my prior efforts and realize I could do better. The state of the art of the hobby has also expanded. There are more and better kits than there ever were, and laser cut kits and 3D printing have really added options that did not exist just a few years ago. In addition, I really enjoy designing and building, and if I did not have things to tear out and rebuild, I would likely lose interest in the hobby. (I still have quite a few cars and locos to weather so not to worry.)



Baltic Street movie house



Dispatcher's Desk

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)

I do not adhere to any absolute standards for my layout. Some of my structures are not era or location specific. I like them for what they are and how they look, or the pleasure I got out of building them. I like cabooses, and I use them even though they are not era specific. One layout I really enjoy looking at is Seth Puffer's Puffer Bridge Line; he has the same philosophy. I worked for a real railroad some years back. They required complete adherence to prototype operations – that was a job. I model railroad for the play value I get out of it.



As I tell people who come tour the layout, they are looking at one point in the layout's progression. Twenty two years gives you time to learn and develop. It did not start in its present state; it grew into it. You can not fully plan a functioning layout before you build it. You need good basic concepts, and some guard rails, but you can adjust as you go and change as you learn. Do not be discouraged by what you have not achieved, but celebrate the progress you are making. Today's modeler has the advantage of the Internet to learn and get new ideas. There is a You Tube for everything, and the resources available are amazing.

I have been model railroading for at least 65 years. One of the best layouts I ever had was an expanded "Time Saver" track plan on a piece of 1 by 12 lumber. I switched that layout for hours at a time, using Tyco cars and an Athearn F7 with fly-wheel drive and an early transistor throttle I modified for walk around control. Interchange was accomplished via a car float made from a piece of 2 by 6. There



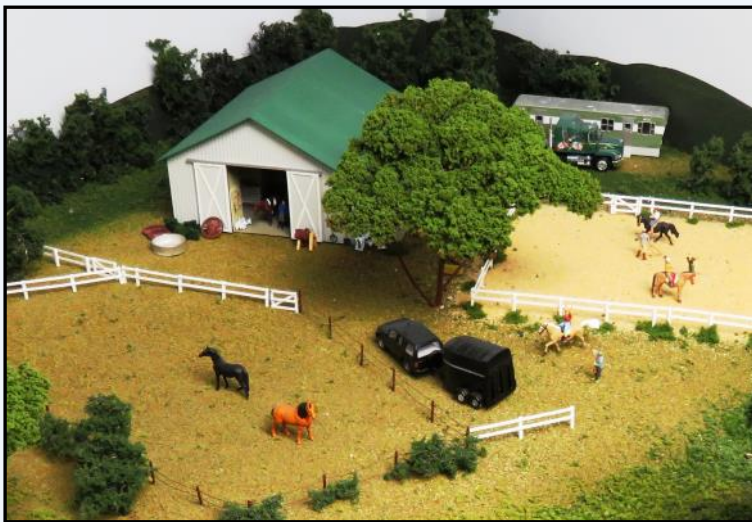
were no buildings, no scenery, no sound and no operating system or paperwork. Now I spend hours switching cars with all the things that railroad lacked. At the end of the session, I feel the same sense of satisfaction.

Randy Watts

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)



NJT1 holds the main at Appotomac

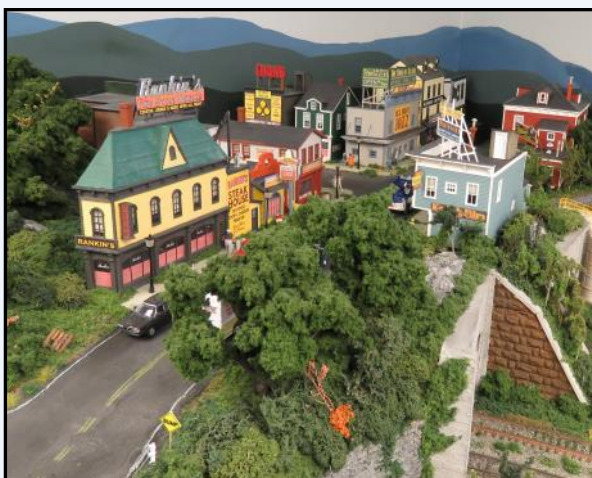


Laura's Horse Farm near Luray Springs



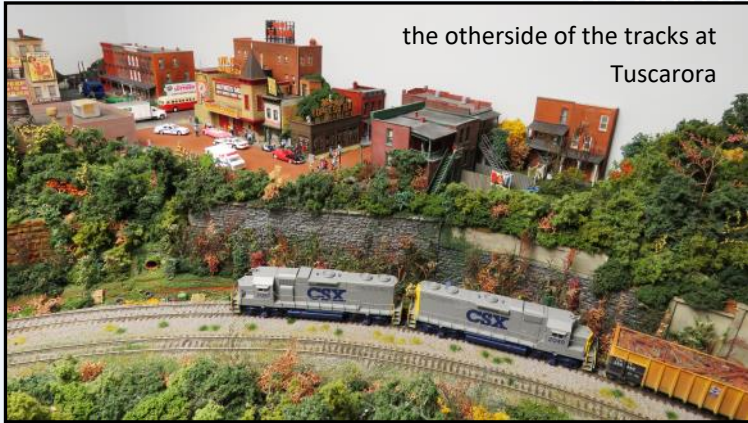
Cargill Feed Mill at Baltic

downtown
Buffalo
Forge



street scene at
Mt. Pleasant

Randy Watts' Tuscarora and Appotomac Railroad Layout (continued)



the otherside of the tracks at
Tuscarora



Baltic Street Luncheonette



team track at Buffalo Forge with paper mill in background



Bensen's Five and Dime Store in Willoughby



engine ready track at Appotomac



pulpwood loading site at Steffy's Cut



Paper Mill at Buffalo Forge

article by Randy Watts, photos courtesy Randy and Laura Watts, Steve Johnson and Rich Wurst

MER Altoona Convention Report - Part 3

Outside Excursions Report

The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad Trip, October 19, 2023

One of the premier tours at the Altoona convention was a visit to the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. Bright and early Wednesday morning the tour members assembled for the 9:30 AM departure from our convention hotel. All were ready and raring to go, for the day promised to be clear, sunny and relatively warm for the time of year. We were all looking forward to the ride behind former Chesapeake and Ohio H-6 #1307, a 2-6-6-2 heavy duty coal hauler and one of the last steamers built by Baldwin. As tour host, I dutifully counted noses to be sure exactly how many had made it. We wouldn't want to leave anyone behind later.

Our route would take us south down I-99 to Bedford, then south on US 220 to Cumberland, Maryland. The trip down featured some lovely fall scenery through the morning fog. On board were 48 MER members including NMRA President Gordy Robinson. Gordy spent much of the hour-long trip discussing the state of the NMRA today and his objectives as President.

Upon arrival at the former Western Maryland station in Cumberland, itself a landmark, there was time to visit the museum in the station, then up to track level to board our own private car for the sixteen-mile trip up the mountain to Frostburg. We departed on time at 11:15 AM. Progress was appropriately slow for the heavy slog up the hill. Our train consisted of some dozen cars, fully loaded and sold out, plus the steamer at the head and a diesel on the rear that would lead us back to Cumberland.

Our trip up the mountain was often paralleled by a rail trail serving bikers and hikers. We saw several folks on the trail who stood back waving as we passed. Our route is a section of the abandoned Western Maryland Railroad. The rail trail is a part of US Bicycle Route 50. The eastern end currently extends from Terre Haute, IN, to Washington, though I do think there are a few incomplete sections along the way. Googling US Bicycle Route 50 will give you much more information.

Our car was a former parlor car fitted with tables which facilitated lunch service as well as the beverage service readily available. A box lunch was provided shortly before our arrival at Frostburg. At the Frostburg depot we had about an hour and a half of free time planned. This allowed for many photos of the locomotives and rolling stock as well as a visit to a nearby ice cream parlor. Needless to say, that was well attended.

Our trip back to Frostburg was led by the diesel at the rear on the way up. It was resplendent in its red and white Western Maryland livery. It is a former PRR #2249, an EMD 2200 horsepower EF-22 built in 1963, now lettered as #501 of the Western Maryland.

On return to the Cumberland depot, we boarded our motor coach, counted heads to be sure all were aboard and headed back to the convention in Altoona. On the trip back President Gordy spent the trip answering questions by the members, and all enjoyed what seemed to be a very quick trip. All in all, everyone I spoke to had a great time and agreed it was a trip well worth doing.

MER Altoona Convention Report - Part 3

Outside Excursions Report



MER Altoona Convention Report - Part 3

Outside Excursions Report (continued)



article and photos courtesy of Bob Charles, MMR

MER Altoona Convention Report - Part 3

Outside Excursions Report (continued)

Trip to the East Broad Top Railroad, October 20, 2023

Fifty-four folks went on the East Broad Top bus tour from the MER convention “Around the Curve” on October 20, 2023. The schedule was precisely planned by Lee Rainey and Forrest Lucas and we managed to stick to it. I was in charge of keeping everyone moving in the right direction.

Our first stop (after the restroom) was the Rockhill Trolley Museum. Two trolleys, 355 and 163, were ready and waiting for us. With a classic “ding-ding” we were off! The trolleys run on standard gauge track which follows the old EBT Shade Gap branch right of way. We paused briefly at the site of the Rockhill iron furnace ruins.

We hopped off the trolley and boarded the 11 AM train at the Orbisonia station. The day was kind of dreary, but that just made photos of Number 16 more dramatic. The five-mile trip to Colgate Grove picnic area was smooth and comfortable in the EBT’s new coaches. There’s nothing like the sound and smell of a steam locomotive!

After the ride, we toured the shops complex with guide Steve Jackson from Friends of the EBT. Everyone got an in-depth look at the tools and machines that made the EBT go for so long. Many of the machines are operable again and even used in some restoration work. Steve also told the story of the EBT from its founding until today.

Finally, it was time for lunch! The trolley pavilion was the site and Pizza Star delivered pizzas and salad to us. It was also a great time to get to know one another.

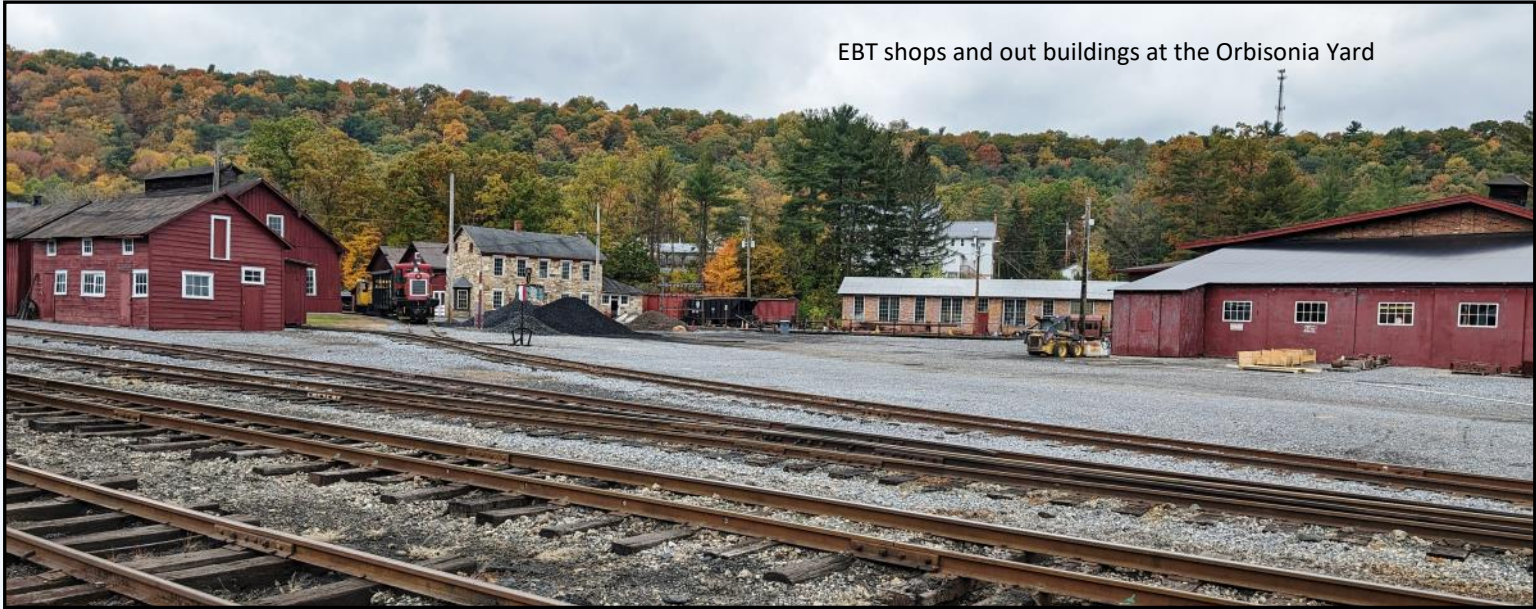
After lunch we boarded the bus and drove to the Bricktown Model Railroaders Association in Mount Union. The BMRA bought a warehouse a few years ago and have restored it for use as a museum, model railroad, and haunted house. Mount Union was the northernmost end of the EBT and its connection to the PRR.

From there, we boarded the bus for one last nap, I mean leg, of the journey. No one got lost, so I guess I did my job. It was a busy, but fun day at the East Broad Top! If you didn’t get to go, please plan to visit it this year. For more information see: eastbroadtop.com, febt.org, and rockhilltrolley.org. Bricktown Model Railroaders Association can be found on Facebook.



MER Altoona Convention Report - Part 3

Outside Excursions Report (continued)



EBT shops and out buildings at the Orbisonia Yard



EBT hoppers in foreground; coal dock in background



MER tour group riding the EBT Railroad.

MER Altoona Convention Report - Part 3

Outside Excursions Report (continued)



Steve Jackson guiding the tour group in the machine shop.



unique stub switch in Orbisonia Yard



Bricktown Model Railroad Club's reconstruction depicting the Orbisonia Yard.

MER Altoona Convention Report - Part 3

Outside Excursions Report (continued)



Trolley #355 ready for tour group boarding.



Trolley #163 viewed from Trolley #355 at the Rockhill Station.

article by Jane Clarke, photos courtesy Jane Clarke and John Swanson

NMRA's Partnership Program

Be sure to check out the savings associated with your NMRA membership. Before you make future purchases compare the discounts available from participating model railroad manufacturers.

NMRA's Partnership Program



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