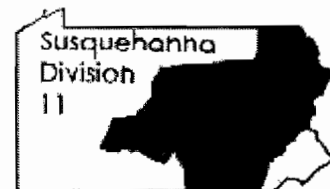

Susquehanna Sidetracks



Serving the Susquehanna Valley, MER, NMRA, Inc.

**Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division 11
of the Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association**

**November 2001
Volume 9, Number 3**

November is Model Railroad month! As a way to help promote our great hobby and to get more people involved, many area clubs will be holding open houses during this month. Help show your support for these clubs and our hobby and take your family and friends to their open houses. Have you thought about what you can do to introduce new people to your hobby? How about bringing a friend or family member to our Division meet in November? Or maybe you can open up your home layout so the people in your neighborhood can visit and see what our hobby has to offer? Let's all try to do our part to promote our hobby.

November Meet - Date Changed to the 10th

Do to a scheduling conflict with the host, the November Division meet has been moved to Saturday the 10th. We have added 2 clinics as well. We hope to see all of you on the 10th. For more information and directions, please see page 3.

Division Web Site Update

Have you had a change to visit the new Division web site? If not, please take a minute and check it out. The address is moosevalley.org/nmra/index.htm Mel Agne, the webmaster, has been hard at work making some major design changes. Please let Mel or Scott Turner know that you have stopped by. If you have any suggestions on information that you would like to see on the site, let them know as well.

Division 11 Dues Increase

Do to the rise in postage and other costs, Division 11 dues will increase \$1 per year to \$3. This increase will take effect on January 1, 2002.

Next MER Convention

The next MER convention, called Richmond Rails 2002, will be held in Richmond, VA June 6-9, 2002. For more information, check out the Richmond Rails web site at richmondrails.homestead.com and an upcoming issue of the LOCAL.

Down the Tracks

Stiegel Valley MR Club
Open House
230 S. Charlotte St, Manheim
November 25, 2001 - 1 to 4 PM
Contact: Ed Bookman
717-299-0687

Hudson Model Railroad Club
Open House
97 Martin St., Wilkes Barre
2nd floor – Polish Club
November 23-25, 2001
Noon to 5 PM
Contact: Dave Schmidt
570-457-0498

Miniature Railroad Club
of York Open House and
Railroad Show
381 Wheatfield St., York
November 25, 2001 1 to 5 PM

Greenberg's Train Show
Fort Washington Expo Center
December 8-9, 2001
www.greenbergshows.com

Great Scale Model Train Show
Timonium, MD
January 26-27, 2002
www.gsmts.com
Contact: Howard Zane
410-730-1036

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Submissions: The Susquehanna Sidetracks welcomes any model railroad or railroad related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc.

Next Issue: February 2002. Deadline for submissions is January 31, 2002.

Super's Corner:

Greetings, as I am writing this, we finished the Dutch Station Convention. While some things did not go right, for the most part, it was pretty successful. I want to publicly thank some of our Division members who worked above and beyond; Mel Agne, who supervised both our Division website and the convention one. They both were great additions for information to get out. Jim Atkinson, at the Hotel, made sure everything ran smoothly. Scott Turner, kept the Clinics rolling along smoothly, adding the touch of signage to the rooms, arranging for the excellent and varied door prizes, and also helped on a fan trip. Jack and Lydia Mellinger, who kept the registration table rolling right along, and also his record keeping, anything you need to know, it's there. My wife, Vicki, who made the arrangements for the excellent food at the Banquet, also designing the logo for our shirts. My daughter, Tara for also helping to design the logo, and arranging for youth activities that were not used, at least we tried. Alan Frame for working on the door prizes with Scott, and getting the essentials for the Convention. Bruce Allison, Clarence Nissley, Bill Fraley, Bob Martin, Jim Atkinson, and Mel Agne for opening up their home layouts for visitors. I had the pleasure of helping to operate Jim's layout, and the visitors were great. Terry Nesbit, who brought the Division modules to show and run, also arranging some side trips to a quarry and a monorail operation,. At our banquet, we had the pleasure to present Brian Reilly his Golden Spike award. It was great to see a young person interested in the hobby. I also want to thank all of the Division members who came to the convention and volunteered to help. I can see we have many active members. I know I probably missed someone again, if so Please let me know and I will correct it in the next newsletter.

On another note, I was informed by the Mid East Region V.P. that our by-laws are not in conformance with the others. We need to get into line. I will be asking some of our senior, middle and younger members to sit down and check out one I have received from the MER as a guideline, and see how it would work for us, or improvise on it.

I hope to see you at Bob Martin's house in November. We will have a short meeting early on so we can concentrate on having fun, running trains. I know that November is Model Railroading Month, let's see if we can be good ambassadors for the hobby, let people know we are out there, and visit some of the open houses if possible. We may come away with some ideas for our own layouts. Until later, Happy Holidays and keep those trains running.

Brian Brandt

Next Division 11 Meet

November 10, 2001, 12-? PM

Location: Central Pennsylvania Railroad - 45 W. Locust Lane, York, PA 17402 717-848-3640

Bob Martin will host a Susquehanna Division Meet on November 10, 2001. After a *short* business meeting at 1 PM, members *and their guests* will be invited to operate the CPRR. There will be a minimum of five "jobs" available for your operating pleasure(?). Sign up for the "job" of your choice (first come-first served) after you become a little familiar with the railroad. One "job" requires an engineer and brakeman; the rest only an engineer although brakeman can be used. No through trains will be scheduled (easier for visitors).

In addition, Bob will present two "mini" clinics: distressing gondola's and making pine tree's out of furnace filter's. You are encouraged to bring along a gondola and try your hand at Bob's destroying - oops - distressing technique (which is nothing new, simply an overly warm soldering pencil carefully (ha!) applied to the plastic).

The operating session will last as long as there are folks to operate the railroad. Bob sez the 10th is also a regularly scheduled CPRR operating night so everybody is invited to stay and operate with the regular crew during the evening. MMR Charlie Potter is a regular member of the CPRR operating crew and will try to get there early enough for you to pick his brain before the evening session starts. If you stay, Bob will feed you supper; probably hot dogs (depends on Carole-the real boss), but hey, the price is right!

The schedule for the meet is:

Noon 'til 1	get acquainted with each other and the CPRR
1 P.M.	<i>short</i> business meeting
1:30-'til ?	operation of the CPRR & mini clinics
5:30 (approx.)	supper
evening	monthly CPRR operating session

DIRECTIONS:

From Route 30:

Turn north on to N. George St (left if eastbound & right if westbound); go about 1 & 7/10 miles to Longview (on left across from Hayshire Plaza); left on Longview to stop sign (Locust Lane); right on W. Locust Lane; third house on left at red caboose mailbox. Go round right side of house and enter through screen porch.

From I 83:

Exit 24 (old exit 11); turn left if southbound or right if northbound; go about 9/10 mile to signal light at "T" intersection (George St); right on N. George St for about 9/10 mile; just before top of hill turn right on to W. Locust Lane. Third house on right at red caboose mailbox. Go round right side of house and enter through screen porch.

Park in Bob's driveway or along the north side of the road (same side as the house) along fence in front of Bob's or one house west at 55 (Bob's son).

CAUTION: WHEN LEAVING, NO LEFT TURN ONTO GEORGE ST FROM LOCUST LANE. GO TO LONGVIEW (ABOUT 200' WEST) AND TAKE LONGVIEW TO GEORGE ST). RIGHT TURN FROM LOCUST LANE ON TO GEORGE ST IS OK.

Comments from Your Assistant Superintendent:

As we approach the Holiday season, Division 11 has a successful convention behind us. It was a lot of work from many people but was fun at the same time. From the favorable comments received afterwards, we know it came off well. There were some glitches, as might be expected, but none were major. Unlike some conventions where the hotel was less than acceptable, the Eden performed excellently. And we cleared a few dollars too, for 11's treasury.

As quickly as I can, as AP Chairman, I will see that everybody that deserves them will get credit for the Volunteer credits they earned working the convention. This includes those that had layouts open. On that subject, I had quite a few visitors to my Baltimore & Western that Sunday. Those of us operating the layout had an interesting five hours as my guests looked the B&W over and conversed with us. I understand other layout operators had good experiences too.

This proves we have a viable, active organization and we want to see you at the meetings. Our new Editor, Scott Turner, is determined to get SIDETRACKS out in a timely fashion, with ample notice of future meetings. You should be able to fit 11's meetings into your schedules. We plan to add some clinics to our meetings as well. If you have something you'd like to learn about or tell others about in this great and diversified hobby of ours, let your officers know. We'll try to arrange it.

Do you have an interesting model railroad story, critique of a product, helpful hint? If you do, pass it on to your Editor, Scott, to put in SIDETRACKS.

We are fortunate to have a terrific model train show reasonably close to us in the form of the Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium, MD [editors comment – they can be found on the internet at www.gsmts.com for more information, show dates, directions, and vendor listings] (that's just north of Baltimore in the Maryland State Fair Grounds) just off I83. Those of you that have attended one or more of these shows knows just how extensive they are. If you haven't, plan on one. The next ones are January 26-27, 2002 and March 23-24, 2002. Besides tons of regular 'stuff' on display for sale, there are many specialty items there, that aren't advertised as much if at all. It adds up to hours of enjoyment for any serious modeler.

See you at Bob Martin's in November.

Jim Atkinson

Introduction to Model Railroading for grades K through 5

As a way to introduce new people to our great hobby and to reach out to the youth in our community, our own division member, Alan Mende, will be running an Introduction to Model Railroading sessions for grades K through 5 at South Hanover Elementary School in Union Deposit. These sessions will run on Wednesdays, starting on January 23rd through February 13th from 3:45 PM to 4:45 PM. The sessions will be broken out as follows:

- Session 1 -- Introduction showing examples of different scales, Kalmbach hand-outs, and a video.
- Session 2 -- Talk about rolling stock and build a freight car.
- Session 3 -- Talk about scenery, including structures, and build a tree.
- Session 4 -- Set up the modular layout and wrap-up.

During the 4th session, Terry Nesbit will be displaying our Division's module for the students to view and operate.

THE RIGHT TOOL by Jim Atkinson

I've lived with the motto "Any job worth doing is worth doing right". In model building this translates to include having the right tools and techniques to do get the desired results. I've learned a lot about tool usage and techniques over a forty year period as a modeler and 27 years as a journeyman machinist. As a modeler, I've built, kitbashed, and scratch built numerous wood, plastic, and metal models, and built both small layouts and a large layout.

Maybe my suggestions can make your model or layout building easier or better for you.

First of all for your modeling efforts, I suggest a well lighted and dedicated work area. A white work surface makes it easier to see those small dark parts. Enclosing the sides and back helps to keep those pesky little parts from jumping overboard into oblivion. A convenient 120v AC outlet is handy for power tools. Parts cabinets with small drawers help to hold and organize all the parts you need and accumulate. Shelves are good for larger items; especially, paint bottles. I find a power supply permanently mounted at my bench very handy to check powered models. A two foot length of track is useful to check locomotives (along with the power supply) and rolling stock for rolling characteristics and coupler height. A rubber pad such as a piece of foam or an old computer mouse pad makes a nice cushioned surface to lay equipment on while working on it. A small bench vise permanently mounted to one side of the bench is quite handy. I also arrange my tools on the back board. The organization helps to locate tools as I need them.

For normal kit and scratch building I have the following tools: Measuring devices including a modelers metal and plastic scales, small square, NMR track gage, and vernier calipers to measure drills-wire-sheet stock. Basic hand tools are: X-acto knife and scapel for cutting and for scribing plastic, jewelers screw drivers assortment in slot and phillips style, jewelers pliers in needle nose-flat nose-round nose styles for holding and bending, diagonal cutters for cutting wire and hard items, Xuron track cutters for nice clean cuts on soft metals, scissors for cutting decals and shim stock, tweezers in regular and cross-lock style for holding small parts and decaling, a set of jewelers files and riffler files for fine filing and filing in tight places, 6" files in smooth and rough cut in flat-half round, and round styles for the large jobs like cleaning up cast freight car frames, a sharp point scribe for locating decals and small parts, a jewelers hammer, a razor saw with several blades of different tooth pitches and a mitre box to hold the parts as you saw them, a pin vise and small drills (#60-#80) to drill and to enlarge holes, model clamps to hold parts together as the glue sets (I prefer ones using rubber bands for adjustable but steady tension), a multi-meter is essential to trace electrical problems-check polarities-etc. A few basic power tools for model work include a Dremel tool with a variety of cutting bits-grinding wheels-etc, and a 30 watt soldering pencil with solder and paste flux. A paint bottle opener (from Micro-Mark) is handy for stubborn jar lids. However a little vaseline on the jar's threads can alleviate this problem before hand. Make some form of bottle holder to prevent spillage as you work from open bottles. A simple decal soaking dish can be made from a small plastic box painted dark green on the outside. Some of the normal size shop tools that come in handy for model work on a regular basis are: standard pliers, pipe pliers, hack saw, an assortment of 12" files, 12 oz. hammer, assorted screw drivers, small to medium size open end wrenches, an electric drill motor and drill bits to 1/2". Shop power tools that I find necessary include a drill press, a pedestal grinder with grinding wheel and wire brush, and a small table saw.

Painting requires an air brush with an air supply for the best finishing results. The spray area should be ventilated. I recommend only high quality brushes (camel or fox hair) in a variety of sizes for the hand work. Always steady your hand on something solid when hand painting to maintain straight steady strokes and use an appropriate size brush for the job. Use good quality model paints, no thick paints. I prefer Floquil for rolling stock and water base artist Liquitex or Badger for structures.

Soldering can be light model work or heavier standard jobs like soldering code 16 wires together. For the light work I like a 30 watt soldering pencil, 1/16" solder, and paste flux. A soldering gun works well on the heavier jobs. For best results the iron has to be HOT. Prepare the surfaces to be soldered. They must be bare metal and put a touch of flux on the surfaces to be soldered. Hold the parts together in the position you want them in. Sometimes pre-tinning the items to be solder helps the process too. Touch the iron to the solder, melting a small quantity unto the iron's tip. Then touch the iron to the parts to be soldered. The solder should run quickly onto the parts. Remove the iron and let the solder set. Your finished joint should be smooth, shiny, and strong. A cold soldered joint is rough, dull looking, and probably weak.

Layout construction requires the big tools such as: a table saw, a hand held power rip saw, a drill motor to 3/8" capacity and drills to 1/2" with 3/8" shanks and wood bits to 1", a hand wood saw, carpenters square, carpenters level, 3' ruler, tape measure, a battery powered screw driver is handy, hand held power sander, wrenches to tighten the bolts, carpenters hammer, hand held power jig saw, and large C-clamps (up to 6").

There are several styles of layout bench construction. Use the one you prefer, but screw, bolt, and glue it together. Do not nail it. Nails can come loose or cause wood to split. Use quality lumber for all bench work and track base. It won't shrink or warp as cheap lumber is prone to doing. When designing the bench work consider the number of legs and the underside height. A minimum number of legs and a decent height to give you underside clearance is best, unless you enjoy being a human pretzel in an uncomfortable place. You will find yourself under there a lot. It should be as accessible as possible. I recommend putting a 120v AC circuit permanently under the bench work with receptacles and lights. Being able to see under there and plug in electric tools easily is a plus. I built a low rider chair with rollers out of an old kitchen chair for under the bench work. It actually made the work comfortable.

Keep your trackwork smooth and kink free in both the horizontal and vertical planes. Kinks are trouble. Check your tracks gage especially at turnouts with an NMRA track gage, and adjust if necessary. I've found it necessary to add an inside guard rail on a curve sometimes.

When you get to the wiring, keep it neat and run the wires in bundles parallel to the benchwork as much as possible and leave a little slack at each end to protect them from damage. Color code and number your circuits/wires for easier maintenance and make wiring diagrams for future reference. For track power, code 16 wire is good and much cheaper than "model" wire. A 500' spool of code 16 wire is under \$15 and it is available in many colors. Wire strippers are handy for for this "house" size wire. Code 26 telephone wire is fine for Tortoise switch machine circuitry, building lighting, and signal circuits. If you can find the 26 paired telephone cable, you get 52 distinctly color coded wires. I found this cable wire very handy on my B&W.

Suggestions on car building: Make sure your couplers work freely and are the proper height (both knuckle and pin). Trucks need to sit flat on all wheels and have some free play in all directions. Wheels need to meet NMRA standards for profile and gage. Many kits come with out of gage wheels. Personally, I replace all plastic wheels with metal wheels. Metal wheels definitely improve operation. Cars should meet NMRA weight specifications. For HO they are 1 oz. plus 1/2 oz. for every inch of car. Getting all of your rolling stock to these specifications should eliminate a lot of operating problems.

Glues are a vital part of model building. Years ago, our limited choices were Elmer's white glue, Ambroid, and Walthers Goo basically. Today I prefer super glue (hardware store variety works fine for me). Super glue works on almost all materials and sets rapidly, all positive attributes for model building. Use it in a ventilated area - it's toxic. For layout scenery, I've used gallons of white glue (thinned in some cases). It is strong and reasonably priced. Tenax 7R works very nicely on plastics. Carpenters glue is my favorite for gluing bench work such as L-girders. It's quite strong. I also like it for assembling wood models. Contact cement is

handy for putting small details such as people on the layout. For body filling, I've found Squadron green putty works nicely.

SAFETY: Always practice safety when using tools. If you think it's not safe don't do it. Tools show no mercy to your body, especially power tools, and it often happens when you know better. Be safe not sorry. If you're using any chemicals (paints, epoxies, glues) ventilate the area rather than subject yourself to a future lung problem.

If you can add to these ideas, and you probably can, I'm listening. Remember model railroading is fun - especially if it's done right.

Comments from Bob Martin, MER Executive Convention Committee Chairman

A big THANK YOU for the hard work and effort put forth by Brian Brandt and the Dutch Station Committee for a great MER convention. Despite some unexpected obstacles, the committee persevered and put on a great convention.

Editor's Notes:

I would like to thank those of you that have given me some great positive feedback about the newsletter. I would like to hear from the rest of the Division members as well. If you have something that you would like to include in an upcoming newsletter, please send it to me. I am always looking for new articles about anything railroad or model railroad related. Maybe you have some special "trick" that you would like to share with your fellow Division members? Maybe you would like to talk about your new railroad you are building or just update people on changes to your current railroad? Or how about reviewing the latest engine, rolling stock, or structure that has just been released? Please keep in mind, that any article that is used in the newsletter counts towards the Author AP certificate.

Did you have a chance to join us in Lancaster for the Dutch Station convention? If you didn't, you missed a fun convention. While we did have a few "glitches" and a few things we could have done better, I thought it went very well. It was a good learning experience for me, as well as for the other members on the convention committee and I enjoyed every minute of it. Thanks to the Division members that did help out and those that open up their home or club layouts for people to visit. I would encourage everyone to attend a Regional convention. While everything at the convention might not interest you, I am sure something will catch your interest. I always learn something new at the conventions and I look forward to just spending time with fellow modelers and listening to what they have to say. It is also a great way to meet new people. Start making plans now to attend the convention in Richmond, VA in June.

I hope you can join us on November 10th for the division meet at Bob Martin's Central Pennsylvania Railroad. We have two clinics scheduled and it also gives you a chance to operate Bob's railroad. I and the rest of the division officers would like to hear from you with suggestions on what you would like to do for upcoming division meets. If you would like to host one at your railroad, please let us know. Do you have a clinic that you would like to give or maybe you just have some suggestions on things that you would like to learn? We would like to hear from you as well. We would like to include a clinic or two at each of our division meets, so any suggestions or help in this area would be greatly appreciated.

Scott Turner

Consumer warning Life-Like P2K Steam

Below is a letter I sent to Life-Like customer service on Thursday 10/18/2001. As of today I still do not have the repair parts or replacement engine. Please keep this letter in mind before you purchase one of Life-Like's new \$450.00 Heritage 2-8-8-2 locomotives or any other Heritage series loco. They currently have a backlog of broken 0-8-0s and 2-8-8-2s to repair for current warranty service. They have NO REPAIRMAN or REPLACEMENT LOCOS to honor their manufacturer's warranty. They will, however, send the necessary parts so you can do the repairs yourself. This will probably void their warranty for further repairs if you mess the loco up attempting to do the repairs.

On 10/15/2001 I spoke to a Brenda at Life-Like about my newly purchased, BROKEN, undec 2-8-8-2. The eccentric crank on the rear engineer's driver set was broken and I called about having it repaired. I also explained that no documentation or parts came with the loco, including the registration card. I had purchased the loco on 10/13/2001 at the Great Scale Train Show at Timonium, Md. Fairgrounds. I was told that "Life-Like no longer had a repair person and that there was no-one able to repair the loco at this time". I then asked for a replacement loco and was told that there were none available. Brenda then suggested that she could send me the parts and documentation if I would like to do the repairs myself.

I reluctantly agreed since the only alternative was to "send the loco in and when/if a new repair person is hired it will be repaired in the order it was received in regards to the other repairs that were waiting". I saw no other alternative since there was no idea if, or when a repair person would be hired. I need the complete rear driver and side rod linkage and assembly, plus the entire packet of paperwork that would come with this particular locomotive.

I was told that the parts would be sent that day. Today is Sunday 10/21/2001 and the parts have still not arrived to enable me to do this repair. I understand that Life-Like is a busy place but I spent almost \$400.00 for this BROKEN, brand-new locomotive. and I cannot enjoy it. My wife is not pleased that I bought a BROKEN locomotive and I am sorry to admit that I did not check the sealed locomotive box before I paid for it.

I have previously purchased 2 of the 0-8-0 Heritage locomotives and both of those had missing parts as well. Since these parts were not essential to the loco's operation, I dismissed the missing pieces. I am now very leery about purchasing any more locos from the Heritage series since there appears to be a problem with quality control and a bigger problem getting these very expensive locomotives repaired/replaced.

I am a modeler with 40 years in the hobby and this incident reminds me of the days when Life-Like was a company that real modelers shunned like the plague due to poor quality products and non-existent service. I could also understand the delay if I lived on the West Coast or Hawaii. I live less than a 2-hour drive from Baltimore in Shermans Dale, Pa.. I could very easily drive from my home to Life-Like's offices in Baltimore in less than the time I spent on hold waiting to speak to a Life-Like service rep.

Since the vendor was an out-of-state dealer at the show and I did not get a business card from them, I am forced to deal with Life-Like directly since I cannot return the loco to the dealer. At this time I am very unhappy and if I do not see the repair parts in my mailbox today 10/19 when I get home from work, I am going to post my complaint on as many model railroading mailing lists as I belong to. I cannot see my friends buying defective equipment from a company that will not replace them or does not have the capability to repair them. I respectfully request that you expedite the shipment of these needed parts ASAP. It will be a long time before I purchase or recommend a Life-Like locomotive.

I understand my responsibility to examine my purchases before I buy but vendors at shows do not permit you to open a sealed box before you buy them.

Respectfully,
Nick Kulp

Editor's Note: This letter was posted on several internet discussion groups and is reproduced here for your information. It does not reflect the views and opinions of the Editor, NMRA, or the Susquehanna Division.