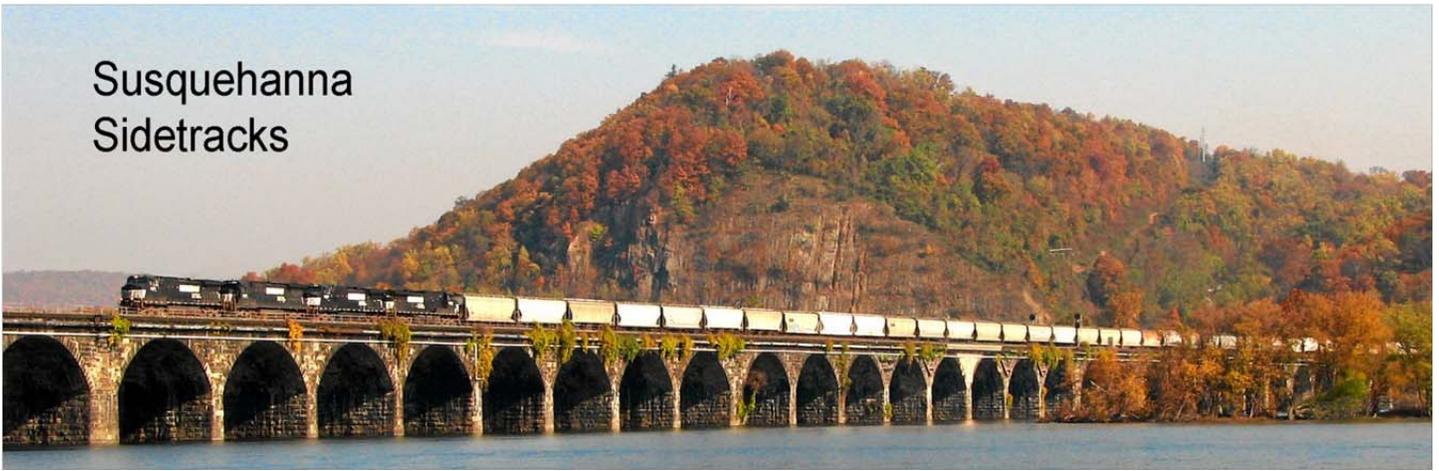


Susquehanna Sidetracks



Official Publication of the Susquehanna Division 11 of the Mid-Eastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association
<http://www.susquehannamra.org> April 2011 Volume 19 Issue 1

2011 Division Events

There are currently 3 events scheduled for 2011. We are in the process of scheduling 2 more. Details for the two October events are not yet available.

Saturday, May 21, 2011, at 9:30 AM. The division will meet at the Milanof-Schock Library in Mount Joy, PA. There will be 2 morning clinics with 4 afternoon open houses.



One of the May 21 open houses will be Chuck Whary's model railroad, pictured to the left. More information on the May 21st event, including directions to the Milanof-Schock Library, can be found starting on page 3 of this newsletter.

Photo by Chuck Whary

Friday, Sept 30, 2011 and Saturday, October 1, 2011. LSOPS 3 will take place in the Harrisburg and Allentown areas.

Saturday, October 22, 2011. The division will visit the Reading Railroad Heritage Museum and the Reading Society of Model Engineers.

Banner photo courtesy of Christopher Muller, SteamPhotos.com.

Susquehanna Sidetracks

<http://www.susquehannamra.org>

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Division 11 Happenings

Well, another year of division events is upon us. We are going to the Lancaster area for the first time in quite some time, so I hope those of you in that area can attend the May 21 event.

There is an open call for Susquehanna Division 11 Directors on page 3 of this newsletter. The only requirement is that you must be a current NMRA member residing in our division. I need to have a list of candidates available for publication in the next newsletter, which will be mailed to all division members in late May. This is an excellent way to have a say in how this division operates and only requires an hour or so of your time per year.

The BOD unanimously approved advertising for another year in Susquehanna Sidetracks. We have one old and one new ad this month. PLEASE let these hobby shops know you saw their ads in our newsletter. Support them as they are helping to support us (advertising money goes to offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter).

I also want to mention two convention dates. The NMRA National Convention is July 3-9 in Sacramento, CA, and the MER Regional Convention is October 27-30 in Cary, NC. More information for these can be found on the NMRA and MER websites...plus there are direct links on our website.

Many of you are aware of Jerry Britton's excellent PRR website (<http://kc.pennsyr.com>). Well, Jerry has branched out into a relatively new world of model railroad social networking with his new site (<http://myrailroad.net>). Jerry invites any of you that are interested to try out the site. This website is NOT affiliated with the NMRA, and is open to anyone interested in joining.

One of the pages on the division website lists "other events" in or near our division, but NOT sponsored by our division or the NMRA. If you know of an open house (your local club?), train show, or other model railroading event of interest to division members, please let me know and I'll post the information so other division members are aware of the happenings around our division.

Jeff Warner

Saturday, May 21, 2011 Clinics/Open Houses

The division will meet on Saturday, May 21, 2011 at 9:30 AM at the Milanof Schock Library in Mount Joy, PA. Directions to the library are located on the next page. The library opens at 9:00 AM, so do not arrive before that time. Clinics start at 9:30 AM.

We will have two clinics presented in the morning. The first will be "From The West Side Freight Line to the High Line Park - New York City's Amazing New Park" by noted New York rail-marine historian and modeler (and division member) Ron Parisi. The second will be by Dave Methlie. Dave is the builder of the HO scale Stoney Creek Railroad that was featured in a series of article by Model Railroader in 2006. Dave has several other layouts that have been featured in MR.

After a break for lunch, there will be four afternoon open houses in the Lancaster area. Three of these are open for the division for the first time. Pictures and descriptions of the model railroads can be found on pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter.

Directions to the open houses will be available at the morning clinics, or can be obtained directly from Jeff Warner via e-mail one week before the event.

This event is open to the public (so bring your friends!!!), and you do NOT need to RSVP.

Continued on page 4

Division Director Nominations

It's once again time to ask for nominations for the four director positions. Each will be elected for a two year term from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2013. To be a director, you must be a member of the NMRA, reside in the Susquehanna Division 11, and be at least twenty one (21) years of age. You MAY nominate yourself or another person you feel is qualified.

Over the past few years, we have conducted all of our business via e-mail, so attending division meets is NOT a requirement for being a director. Directors have one vote each on any division business and provide valuable input when planning division events.

If you are interested in being a director, please contact me at jwarner@susquehannanmra.org or (717) 932-9929 between 10 AM and 9 PM. If we have more than 4 candidates, I will ask all nominees for a brief (under 200 word) bio-sketch that will be printed in the next newsletter for each candidate.

**Directions to the
Milanof-Schock Library
1184 Anderson Ferry Road
Mount Joy, PA 17552**
Saturday, May 21, 2011, 9:30 AM

From the East – Lancaster, Reading, etc.

PA 283 to the Manheim/Mount Joy (PA 772) Exit
Turn left onto Manheim/Mount Joy Road
Follow the Manheim/Mount Joy Road into Mount Joy.
The fourth red light is Main Street or PA 230
Go Straight at the light – you are now on New Haven Street.
It will cross over the Amtrak Harrisburg Main line,
Continue on New Haven to the T intersection.
Turn Right onto Marietta Ave (PA 772)
The road will make a sharp bend to the Left –
The next intersection is School Lane –
Turn right onto School Lane and immediately left into the Milanof Schock Library parking lot.

From the West – Middletown, Harrisburg, etc.

PA 283 East to the Manheim/Mount Joy (PA 772) Exit
Turn right onto the Manheim/Mount Joy Road
Follow the Manheim/Mount Joy Road into Mount Joy.
The fourth red light is Main Street or PA 230
Go Straight at the light – you are now on New Haven Street.
It will cross over the Amtrak Harrisburg Main line,
Continue on New Haven to the T intersection.
Turn Right onto Marietta Ave (PA 772)
The road will make a sharp bend to the Left –
The next intersection is School Lane –
Turn right onto School Lane and immediately left into the Milanof Schock Library parking lot.

Chuck Whary's Model Railroad



The layout is a free standing island (10' x 24'), free-lance HO railroad based in the 1940s on the PRR. The layout features a scratch built coal transfer building (photo on page 1) and an 18 stall roundhouse. The layout is controlled by a Digitrax DCC system. Be sure to check out Chuck

benchwork and wiring. Scenery is 100% complete.

Photo by Chuck Whary

Mike Hartlett's Model Railroad



The layout is a free-lance HO gauge railroad with a steel mill and coal theme. There is scenery on about 75% of the layout.

The layout is controlled by a Digitrax DCC radio system. It is set up for operating sessions with the dispatcher and yard panels controlled by JMRI's Panel Pro program.

The layout is L shaped. The long side is 20' by

40' and the L leg is 20' by 18'. There are two levels connected by a helix.

Photo by Mike Hartlett

Wayne Betty's Lancaster and Atlantic Railroad

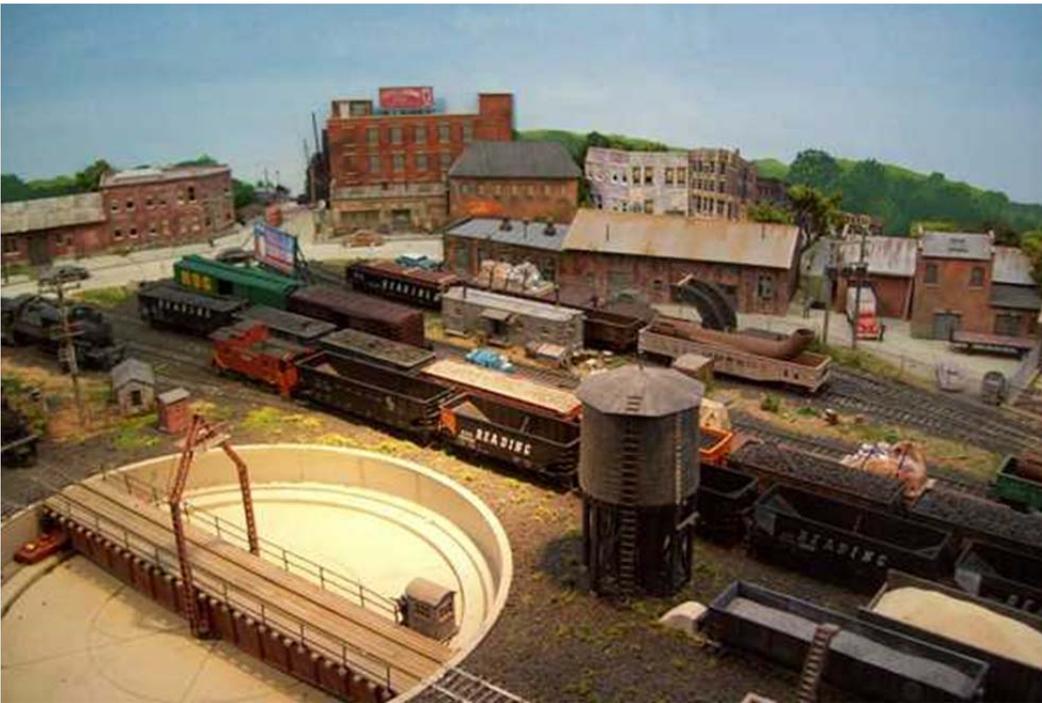


The HO scale layout is under construction and is about 60% built. The setting is January 31, 1968 (the last day of the PRR). The location is central PA between Enola, PA, and Lancaster PA. Control is Digitrax DCC, with JMRI interface for dispatching. Currently, the layout is 17' by 33' with two primary levels. No scenery or catenary yet, but what is built is all

operational.

Photo by Wayne Betty

Stiegel Valley Model Railroad (Manheim Club)



The Stiegel Valley Model Railroad represents the Reading and Columbia branch of the Reading Railroad (including Dillerville Yard, Lancaster Junction, and Manheim) set in the 1940's and 1950's. Also modeled is the Mount Hope branch running north from Manheim to a connection with the Cornwall Railroad at

Mount Hope. HO Scale, Digitrax DCC.

Photo by SVMR Club.

A Case for Helpers

by Jim Hertzog
photos by Mike Rinkunas



I clearly remember as a kid growing up in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, during the 1960's, the continuous rail traffic on the close by East Penn branch of the Reading Railroad. The double tracked mainline was only 200 feet from our small downtown backyard. The constant sounding of air horns for the numerous grade crossings in town afforded me the time to race trackside to watch the passing procession. Occasionally, a westbound freight would offer an

interesting sight of one or more diesels pushing against the caboose. While not the norm, it was indeed fascinating to observe. These heavier tonnage trains needed the extra help to climb the .8% grade out of Allentown that ran through Emmaus and continued west to Macungie and Alburkis.

In 1970, a family vacation through the mid-west produced an interesting sight I had never before encountered. While passing through Oklahoma I found myself alongside a rural single track mainline and a stopped Kansas City Southern freight. The lengthy train not only had three bright white diesels on the point and three on the rear as helpers, but three diesels were placed somewhere near the middle. The nine SD-40's proclaimed in giant red KCS letters for all to witness that this was indeed Kansas City Southern territory. This was my introduction to mid train helpers. Although my father stopped the car along the highway for a few minutes, I never did observe the train getting underway, but it must have looked pretty impressive. I later learned that the KCS preferred running extremely long and heavy trains (as opposed to short more frequent trains) and what I saw was a train preparing to assault the steep Rich Mountain grade deep in the Ouachita Mountains.

In 1973, I headed off to Lock Haven State College in Lock Haven, PA, to spend 4 years majoring in secondary education and minoring in railfanning. The campus was a railfan's dream with the Penn Central's Buffalo line running through the center of town and along the east edge of the campus. Since freshmen were not allowed to have cars on campus, I had to wait until my sophomore year to expand my railfan jaunts north to Renovo and east to Williamsport. However, the most exciting trips were occasional weekend jaunts to the Altoona area. Sitting trackside near MG tower, Benny, or even on a hillside on the approach to Horseshoe Curve, provided many a sight to behold. (Just try doing that today.) The trains were frequent and varied. The westbound trains naturally received helpers in Altoona, but some of the eastbounds dropping downgrade even had engines on the rear to provide additional braking. This

was especially true on the coal trains. However, the sight of ten high horsepower locomotives pulling and pushing the westbound iron ore trains really drove home the real reason and need for helper service into my mind.



It did not take me long to realize that the introduction of helper locomotives added a modeling element that I desired for any future layout designs. The seed had been planted in my youth and blossomed after college. Although I did not have the space or resources to model the PRR around Altoona, I was drawn to the smaller anthracite

railroads like the Reading, the Jersey Central, and the Lehigh & New England. When I designed and built my first sincere train layout in 1980, it was patterned after the Lehigh & New England's western 32 mile foray into the anthracite fields around Tamaqua. It was perfect for a lone wolf modeler like me. Just like the prototype, I was able to incorporate the modest use of helpers from Lizard Creek Junction to Pen Argyl. Following the example set by the LNE, I would use either a single RS-2 or an ex-PRR L-1 Mikado as a helper that was dispatched to run light from eastern staging (Pen Argyl) to Lizard Creek Junction. Here, the engine would tie onto the caboose and shove the eastbound coal train. Of course this was all pre-Digital Command Control, so one throttle did all the running. Toggle switches killed the track power until the train was ready to proceed.

My current layout was designed after the Reading's Shamokin Division Mahanoy and Shamokin Branch during the steam to diesel transition period of the 1950's. The trackplan supports three distinct helper districts. The first is a westbound climb out of Tamaqua to Buck Mountain where the climb crests at Mahanoy Tunnel. The grade averages around 1.4% and is 45 feet in length. In order to keep the smoke down and the city fathers happy, most assigned helpers out of Tamaqua are diesels. The western-most helper district is the eastbound shove from Shamokin up the Locust Summit. The grade averages around 1.6% and is similar in length to the Tamaqua run with both steam and diesels sharing helper duties.

The major grade and the reason for the layouts original design is the noteworthy Locust Summit grade. I dedicated 65 feet of layout trackage to represent this six mile section of the prototype. On the Reading, the westbound grade reached a formidable

2.6%. I tried to achieve this as well on the layout. Like the prototype, I chose to model the hamlet of Gordon as the base for helper operations. Toward the end of steam service, the Reading's famous T-1's were found to congregate at Gordon for use in helper and mine service. Currently my roster has five T-1's in active service. The models from PCM/Broadway Limited have been heaven sent for Reading modelers. It is a rare operating session that does not have at least one T-1 in helper service. The eastbound grade out of Gordon, while not as severe, exceeded 1% and occasionally rates helpers as well. During an op session a handful of eastbound trains also receive a helper for the short climb up to Saint Nicholas. Even yard engines have been pressed into service when no other engine was available.

I have found that running helpers has introduced a unique element into my operation sessions. While some trains could make it up the steep grades without any assistance, several actually do need the assistance of helper engines. It is fun to watch a Reading class K-1 2-10-2 lead a coal extra with only 18 cars crawl up the Locust Summit grade with T-1 shoving on the rear. Just like its prototypical counterpart, the train would have stalled on the grade without a helper.

Modeler railroaders can always learn from the prototype. Steep grades, tight curvatures, high tonnages, and the fight against gravity all produced bona fide operating headaches. Although our battles are in a miniature form, they can still add drama to an op session. The addition and removal of helpers all take time and steam helpers need to occasionally take on water as well. These factors all work to slow a session down. The widespread use of digital command control has enabled the use of helper operation like never before. Watching separate engine crews working together to tackle gravity and nature in miniature form can provide hours of enjoyment. Why not consider a case for helpers the next time you power up the layout?





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