



Volume 32

# SUSQUEHANNA SIDETRACKS



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

Number 3

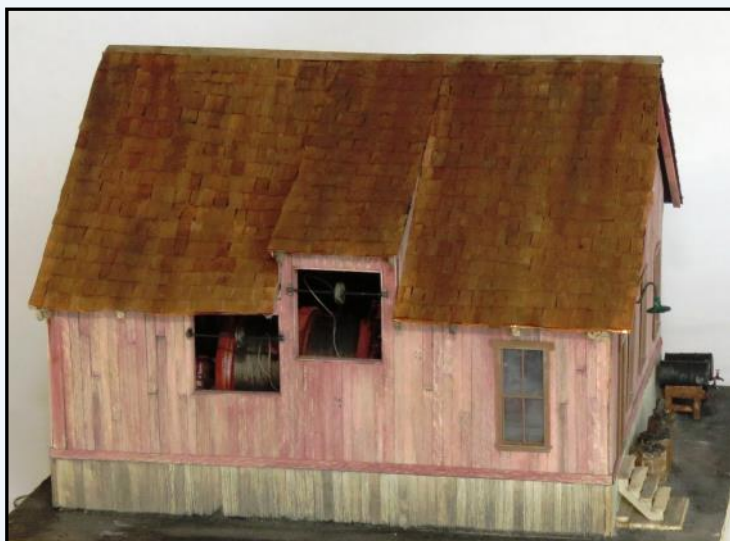
Tom O'Connor's On3 Central Grove Lumber Company layout was featured in the May/June 2023 issue of **Sidetracks**. Besides his layout, Tom is a prolific 'scratch' modeler. In the November/December 2023 issue of **Sidetracks** numerous stand-alone logging equipment was highlighted. Even after that issue Tom still had a large quantity of completed models.

In this issue we continue featuring the O scale models Tom has completed. Amazingly, Tom still has a model inventory that has yet to be seen by Division members and friends. **Sidetracks** plans to return and photograph the remaining models in Tom's scale reproduction universe.

For the present, sit back and view the master modeling skills of a true model railroader!



Tom O'Connor



ABOVE- This modest O scale structure is a 2 drum hoist house which was scratchbuilt by Tom. It is weathered to reflect harsh environment in the logging industry.



RIGHT- Once the roof is removed, one can see the extreme details constructed using Western Scale Model machinery.

article continued on page 10

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Neal Schorr photo

# In Memoriam

Passing of Longtime NMRA and Susquehanna Division Member **JOHN WISSINGER**

December 15, 1941 – February 29, 2024



John W. Wissinger, 82, passed away on Thursday, February 29, 2024, at the Wellspan Good Samaritan Hospital in Lebanon, while surrounded by his loving family. He was born on Monday, December 15, 1941, to the late Herbert J. Wissinger and Susannah Wright Wissinger in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from The University of Cincinnati, and worked at several companies as an Industrial Designer before retiring from Thetford Corporation in 2007. John had a lifelong love for model railroading and was a member of The National Model Railroad Association from which he earned recognition as a Master Model Railroader. He enjoyed traveling with his beloved wife, Kathy, to every convention and conference they could attend. John also dedicated his time to the St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Lebanon where he served as a Deacon. When he wasn't working on his model railroad or devoting time to his church, John also enjoyed playing pool and socializing at his community's clubhouse. He is survived by his wife of 7 years, Kathleen Creegan Wissinger; children Gayle Wissinger (Brian See) and Gordon Wissinger (Lisa); siblings Marilyn Ashbrook and Mildred (Jan) Palermo; sister-in-law Carolyn Wissinger; as well as several nieces and nephews. John was predeceased by his brother Alan Wissinger. Memorial and Celebration of Life Services will be held at the convenience of the family.

I always loved seeing and talking with John at NMRA conventions. He was always very friendly and also very proud of the NMRA and his Cincinnati roots. I believe he was once Superintendent of our Cincinnati Division 7, before I arrived here in March of 1977. John was MMR #99. So sorry to hear this news.

**John Burchnell, Cincinnati Division 7, MCR Webmaster**

It is sad to see the passing of John Wissinger. I believe we first met at the NMRA national convention in Long Beach in 1996. I was impressed at the time with his modeling skills and as I got to know him better after he moved to this area, I became even more impressed as he presented models in the showcase.

Prior to his arrival John had been very active in NMRA, attending most national conventions and frequently entering outstanding models and winning in the national contests. He was very active in the Pacific Southwest Region when he resided there and if memory is accurate the Mid-Central as well. He chaired a number of regional events in those regions. John brought the much-appreciated Modeler's Showcase to the Susquehanna division from his prior divisional experiences. His creativity will be missed.

**Bob Charles, MMR**

# Superintendent's Desk

As Superintendent of the Susquehanna Division of the MER/NMRA, I am happy to announce our May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meet in Minersville, PA. Beginning at 9 AM at the Good Will Fire Company Hall at 25 North Street, Minersville, we will have our usual "state of the Division" information, followed by a presentation by Bob Kimmel of Project 113 on the history and restoration of Jersey Central B-7s 0-6-0 No. 113, the only Jersey Central steam locomotive in operation. We will also have our usual Modeler's Showcase, and if time permits, we will also have our Modeler's Forum. Donuts and coffee will be provided for a donation. What follows is a description of the first annual Minersville Community Day directly from Project 113:

Railway Project 113 is pleased to announce our shuttle trips for the first ever Minersville Community Day (<https://www.facebook.com/events/1317551072251045/>) on May 18th, 2024. Powered by our steam locomotive, the trains will run to the New St. Nicholas Breaker and back. These trips are in cooperation with Reading Anthracite and Reading & Northern Railroad. Steam engine CNJ 113 will pull six trips from the Minersville station to the breaker and return. This is the first time since 1982 that the 113 will return to the coal company property, and the first time in over 90 years that a passenger train will depart northbound out of Minersville! Trips will depart on the hour starting at 10 a.m. and continuing until 3 p.m. Ticket prices are ages 4 and up \$11, 3 and under FREE with an adult. All passengers must have a ticket to ride. This ride will last around 40 minutes, with narration on board with information about the breaker and engine CNJ 113. Please arrive at the station 30 minutes before your train departs.

Tickets are available to purchase online or through the mail. For online purchase, go <https://www.rrproject113.org/2024-community-day>. You will receive a confirmation that you'll show either on your phone or printed out at Will Call to receive your tickets on the day of the event. For purchase by mail, please make out check or money order to Railway Project 113 and write on a separate sheet of paper full name, time you want to ride, and how many tickets you would like and mail to:

Your tickets will be available to pick up on the day of the event at the Will Call window.

**When: May 18th, 2024**

**Where: Minersville PA train station**

**Times: 10 AM, 11 AM, 12 noon, 1 PM, 2 PM, and 3 PM**

Parking: Schuylkill Dental Medicine at 42 East Sunbury St and the soccer fields at 538 North Delaware Ave.

Also, on the election front, we have someone willing to run for Assistant Superintendent. Chris Kier of Narvon, PA buttonholed me at our joint Susquehanna/Philly Division meet and said he'd stand for election. I am truly grateful. Information on can be found on page 6 of this issue..



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 June 15, 2024.

### Officers and Directors

**Superintendent:** Alan Mende [super@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:super@susquehannanmra.org)

**Asst. Superintendent:** Rich Wurst [assist-super@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:assist-super@susquehannanmra.org)

**Chief Clerk:** Dean Johnson [treasurer@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:treasurer@susquehannanmra.org)

**Director:** David Ellis [dellis@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:dellis@susquehannanmra.org)

**Director:** Bill Lesjak [blesjak@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:blesjak@susquehannanmra.org)

**Director:** Jim Mattern [jmattern@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:jmattern@susquehannanmra.org)

**Director:** Ken Roth [kroth@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:kroth@susquehannanmra.org)

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#### **Model Showcase Chair:**

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## Susquehanna Division:

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

### Mid-Eastern Region:

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

## National Model Railroad Association

8414 Gulf View Drive, Suite A & B

Soddy Daisy, TN 37379-2200

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

## Editor's Message

Another season has arrived with the call of outside house chores. The cold and sometimes inclement wintry weather has allowed modelers to focus on the hobby without too many distractions. Now that comfortable temperatures and sunshine have started, model railroaders frequently put the hobby on the back burner. Even though hands-on activities may diminish, a good substitute is thinking and designing layout upgrades, making needed repairs, modifying existing scenes or planning rolling stock alterations. Whatever the case, it still focuses on the model railroad hobby. Regardless of your situation, keep involved with the Division and interact with fellow modelers. These actions will not only help you increase your knowledge but also hone your talents.

On another topic, we are seeking a volunteer (s) to become assistant (s) for our newsletter **Sidetracks**. The only qualifications are familiarity with Windows PC's and a desire to help fellow hobbyists. If you are interested or want more information, please email me at:

[editor@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:editor@susquehannanmra.org) .

Rich

# Division Officer Election

According to the Division By-Laws, officers' and directors' elections must take place every two years. The election of officers and directors are staggered with directors elected during odd years and officers elected during even years. It is 2024 and the following officer positions are on the ballot:

- Division Superintendent
- Division Assistant Superintendent
- Division Chief Clerk

In the previous issue of **Sidetracks**, all nominees for office were to have submitted their name to the current Superintendent (Alan Mende) no later than April 15<sup>th</sup>. In the event more than one person for each office was nominated, written biographies would be required.

Currently, there are single nominees for each office. They are:

Division Superintendent-	Alan Mende
Division Assistant Superintendent-	Christian (Chris) Kier
Division Chief Clerk-	Dean Johnson

The ballot for Division Officers is shown below. Please submit your ballot by email to the current Chief Clerk Dean Johnson [treasurer@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:treasurer@susquehannanmra.org) *no later than Friday, May 31<sup>st</sup>. If you write in a member for office be sure the individual will accept the position if elected!*

\*\*\*\*\*

## 2024 Division Officer Ballot

Division Superintendent-      Alan Mende\_\_\_\_  
write-in\_\_\_\_\_

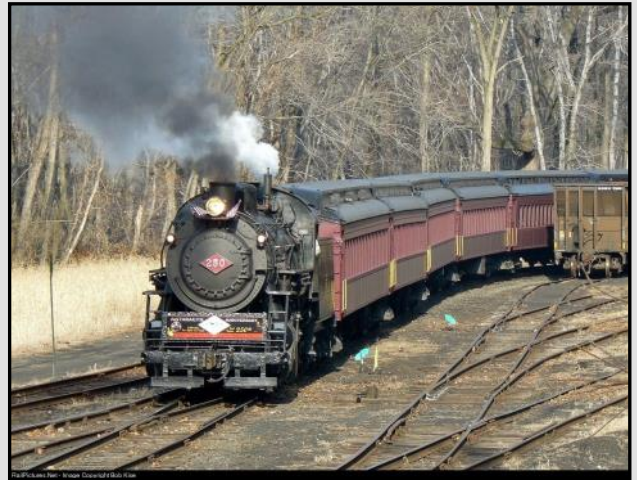
Division Assistant Superintendent-  
Christian (Chris) Kier\_\_\_\_\_  
write-in\_\_\_\_\_

Division Chief Clerk-      Dean Johnson\_\_\_\_\_  
write-in\_\_\_\_\_

# NMRA Events

The Division Event in Minersville, PA on May 18, 2024 was described in the Superintendent's Report on page 4. The photos on this page provide graphic attributes of CNJ #113. For additional background information check out this Wikipedia link:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central\\_Railroad\\_of\\_New\\_Jersey\\_113](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Railroad_of_New_Jersey_113)



photos courtesy Railroad Pictures Archives <http://trainspot.rpicturearchives.net/default.aspx>

# NMRA Events

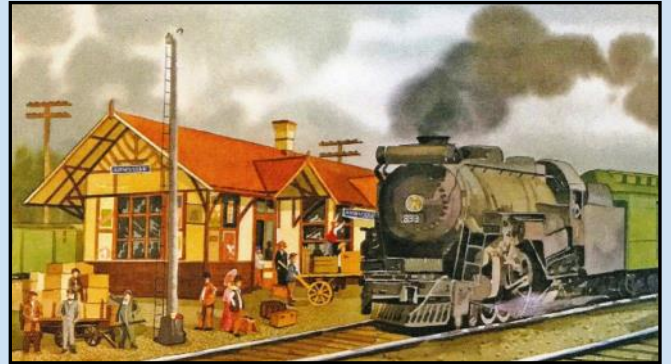
## *All Aboard for Annville!*

Annville Station that is. Saturday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> from 9 AM to 12 PM we will hold our Susquehanna Division Meeting at Annville Station located at 155 North Moyer Street, Annville, PA.

A perfect site for our group, the station was built in 1891 and is located next to the Norfolk Southern mainline. The station has an interesting story but more on that later.

Here are the details:

- Coffee & Doughnuts
- A short Division Meeting
- Modeler's Showcase
- Time permitting, Modeler's Forum
- For our first clinic we are fortunate to have as speaker Mrs. Kathleen Moe who is one of the principle people who worked to have Annville Station brought back to Annville after the station went on a journey to Cumberland County. Mrs. Moe will tell us about that journey and some of the history of the station.



Our second speaker is well known to all of us, Rich Wurst, Assistant Superintendent and Editor of Sidetracks. Rich will be educating us on the history of Poultry Cars. Besides the obvious, what's a Poultry Car? We will all find out the interesting story about how chickens used to be brought to market. Needless to say, there was a "whole lotta squawking going on"!

Following the meeting you can stay and do some train spotting or head to lunch in Annville or Lebanon. Also you can visit two local hobby shops, Draude's Derailment, 744 Cumberland St., Lebanon, PA (close at 3 PM) or Brian's Model Trains, 109 W. Main Ave., Myerstown, PA (close at 2 PM).

While you are in the area do take a trip to the Cornwall Iron Furnace located at 94 Rexmont Road, Cornwall, PA. This is the site of the only surviving intact charcoal cold blast furnace in the western hemisphere circa 1742. You will see many buildings that supported this industry that helped Pennsylvania produce one-seventh of the world's iron.

This should be an interesting and fun day, so I will see you there!

Bill Lesjak, Division Director



# NMRA Events (continued)



## Model Railroad Days at the Museum

The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania will be sponsoring Model Railroad Days throughout the month of August. This will be a new format compared to previous years of only a three-day weekend event. The Museum has not announced all the details or participating model railroad layout and vendors. The following dates are projected for this event:

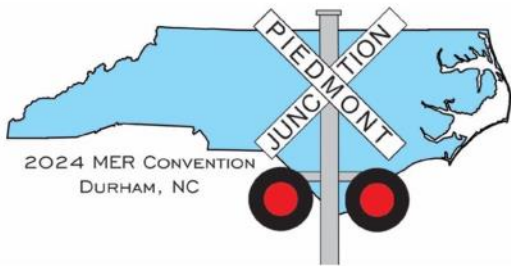
Saturday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>

Saturday, August 9<sup>th</sup>

**Saturday, August 17<sup>th</sup> Susquehanna Division 11 Event Day**

Saturday, August 24<sup>th</sup>

We are working with the Museum staff to make the August 17<sup>th</sup> as a Susquehanna Division Event date. The Museum would be the site for a regular business meeting, clinics, and 'Model Showcase'. The remainder of the day would be centered around the Museum displays, modular model railroad layouts and vendors. Further details will be forthcoming!



## Piedmont Junction

**NEW Dates ! NEW Rates!**

**October 17-20, 2024**

Raleigh - Durham Marriott at Research Triangle Park  
4700 Guardian Dr., Durham, NC 27703

**Hotel Rate is \$79 USD per night, hotel registration is open NOW! Go to convention website for the link on the "Location/Hotel" tab.**

**23 Layout Tours**

**44 Clinics**

**10 Operations Sessions**

**3 Prototype Tours**

**Model Contest, Company Store and More!**

Website: [PiedmontJunction.org](https://PiedmontJunction.org)

**Registration Opens in April**



# T-TRAK

## T-TRAK:

### One Solution for New, Inactive, or Armchair Modelers

#### What is T-Trak?

T-TRAK is a modular model railroad system that uses standards for module size, track placement, track interface, and electrical connections. The standards allow for a wide range of flexibility in design yet still maintain interoperability with all modules built per the standards.

#### What might be the appeal of T-TRAK?

T-TRAK appeals to modelers who do not have the room, tools, or money to build a layout, but want to participate in the hobby. Whether downsizing or renting, a permanent layout may not be practical. T-TRAK can appeal to modelers because of the ease of transport and set up of this form of display layout. For new modelers or families, T-TRAK can be a way to get started in the hobby of model railroading without a huge investment of time, tools, and money. Experienced modelers can try out new scenery techniques or explore N Scale, using T-TRAK. It is a relatively simple introduction to the hobby, as well as an easy way to demonstrate model railroading to the public and interact with other model railroaders.

#### So, what exactly is T-TRAK?

T-TRAK is a modular model railroad system comprised of small (starting at a around one foot square) and easy to build modules that click together. The modules are typically set up on tabletops for display, and they are simple to assemble, connect, transport, and store. While



the concept can apply to different scales, T-TRAK is based on core standards using N Scale Kato Unitrack. A small oval layout can be constructed with just four corners and two single modules. Adding more modules or interconnecting with other groups of T-TRAK modelers can create larger or more complex layouts. At large train shows layouts made up of many scale miles have been set up and operated.

# T-TRAK (continued)

## How to get started?

First of all, here are a few starting points online to explore:

- <https://www.ntrak.org/T-TRAK-Home>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGWf7zb1dSI>
- <http://ttrak.wikidot.com/>
- <https://t-trakcincy.com/>
- <https://nramcrdiv10.yolasite.com/resources/Articles/T-TRAK%20Underwood%20030616.pdf>

If the links aren't working for you, just copy the URLs into your browser.

Between COVID supply chain issues and the Russia-Ukraine War, the module kit market fell apart for a while; Baltic thin plywood was unavailable. Now, a number of companies have returned with laser cut, easy to build module kits including RSLaserKits, Osborn Models, Klawndyke's, and CMR.

## What about here in the Susquehanna Division?

While several T-TRAK groups are nearby, our division is not currently active with T-TRAK. If a few of us have an interest, we could form a T-TRAK group within the division. I would be glad to help get us started, having been active with the T-TRAK committee with my former division.

Please contact me at [dellis@susquehannanmra.org](mailto:dellis@susquehannanmra.org) if you have any interest in exploring T-TRAK, and we can discuss moving forward with a group.



article and photos by David Ellis, Susquehanna Division Director

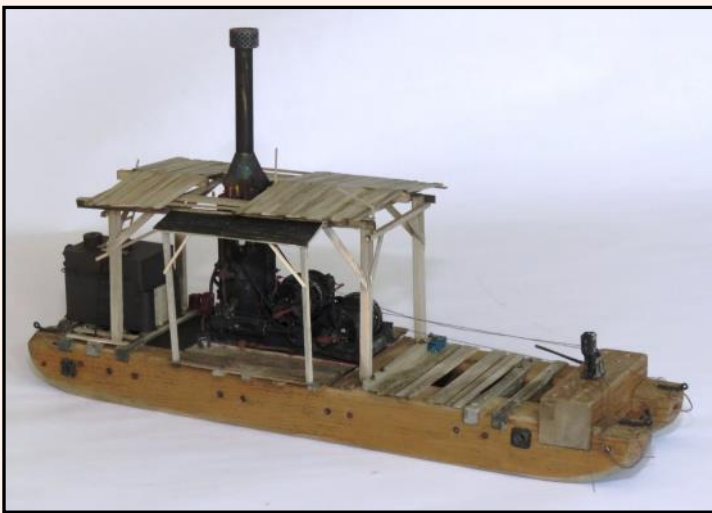
## Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



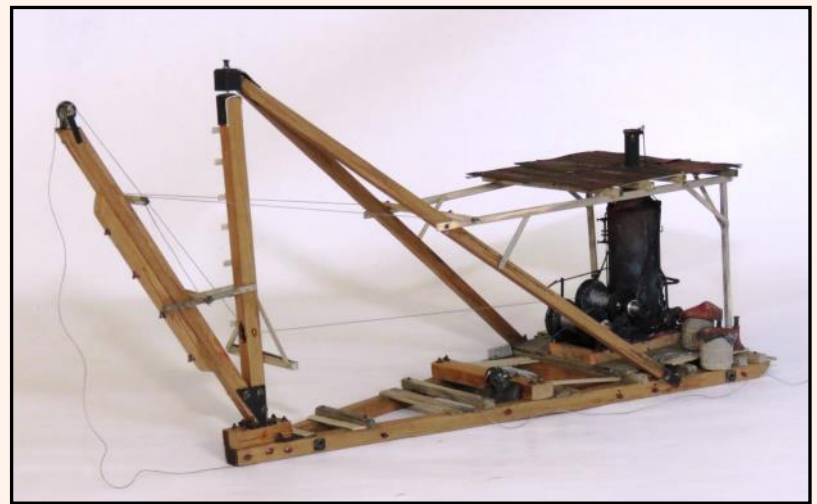
Scratchbuilt Power House which is a mate to the Hoist House depicted on page 1.



With the roof removed, the boiler, generator, steam engine, and air compressor can be seen. Detail parts are from Western Scale Models and Charlie Brommer.



This O scale scratchbuilt Willamette Loader contains Charlie Brommer parts and a Shay locomotive tank.



This unique scratchbuilt triangular-based log loader contains Charlie Brommer accessory parts.



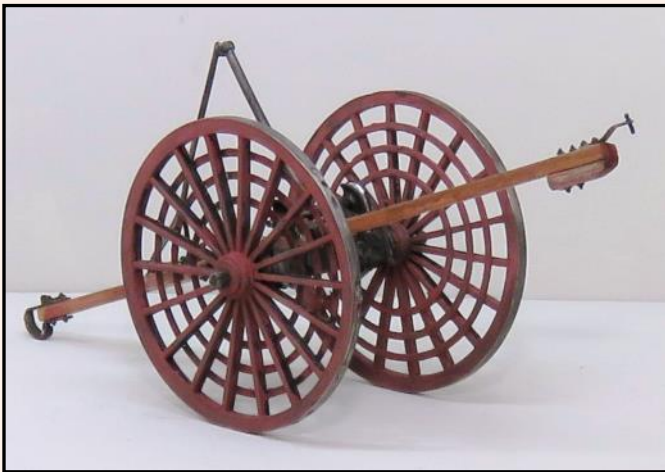
Winch operated blade Caterpillar bulldozers made from Romanian Resin kits by Wespe Models.



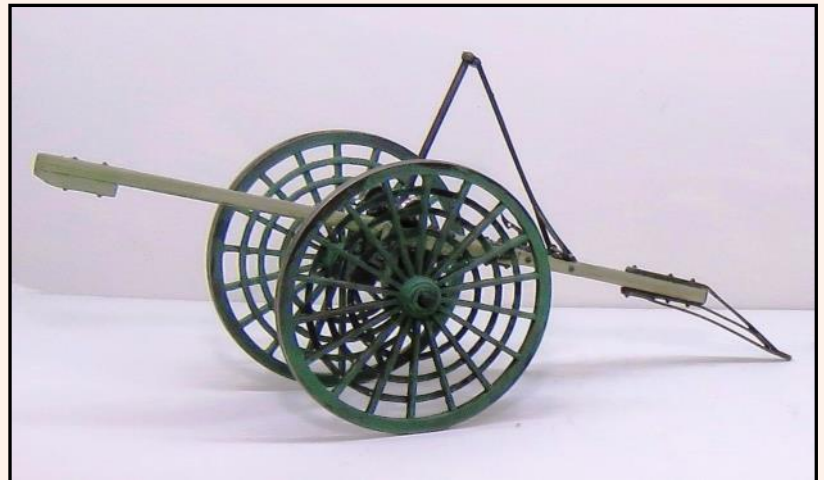
## Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



Pictured above are two Caterpillar Crawler Tractors from Charlie Brommer cast metal kits. The only difference between each machine is the paint color.

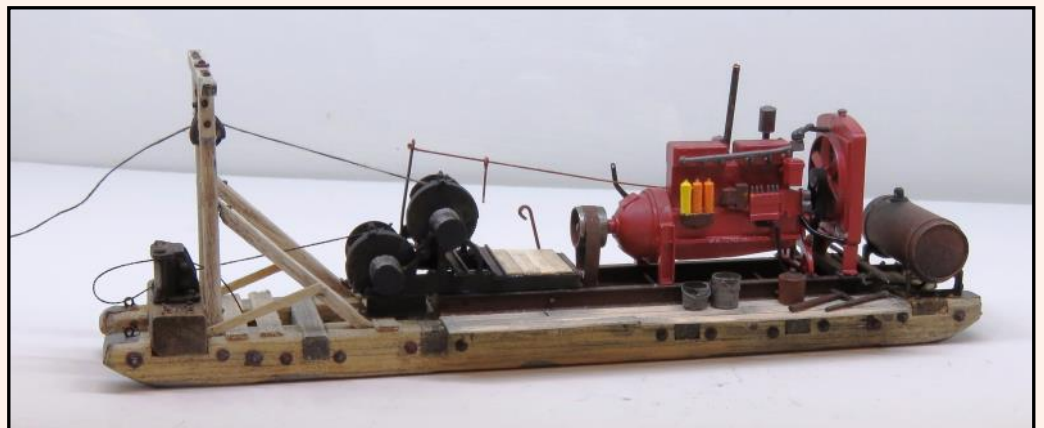


This is a large wheeled log skidder that was pulled by either a tractor or team of horses or oxen. It is a Berkshire Valley metal kit.



This is another large wheeled log skidder that was pulled by a team of horses or donkeys. It is a Berkshire Valley metal kit.

This two drum winch is powered by a water cooled diesel engine. The winch assembly is a Durango Press kit with diesel power supplied by Charlie Brommer. The remainder of the model is scratchbuilt.

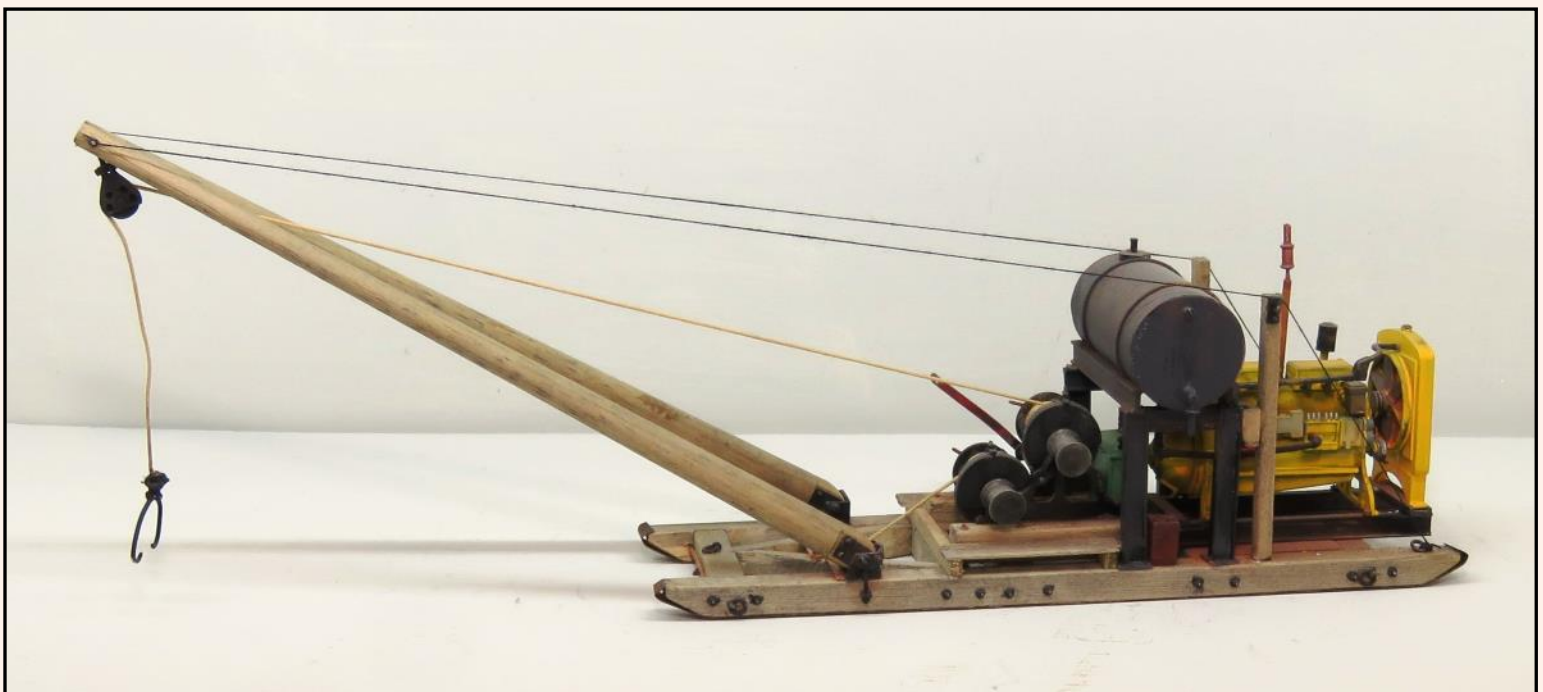
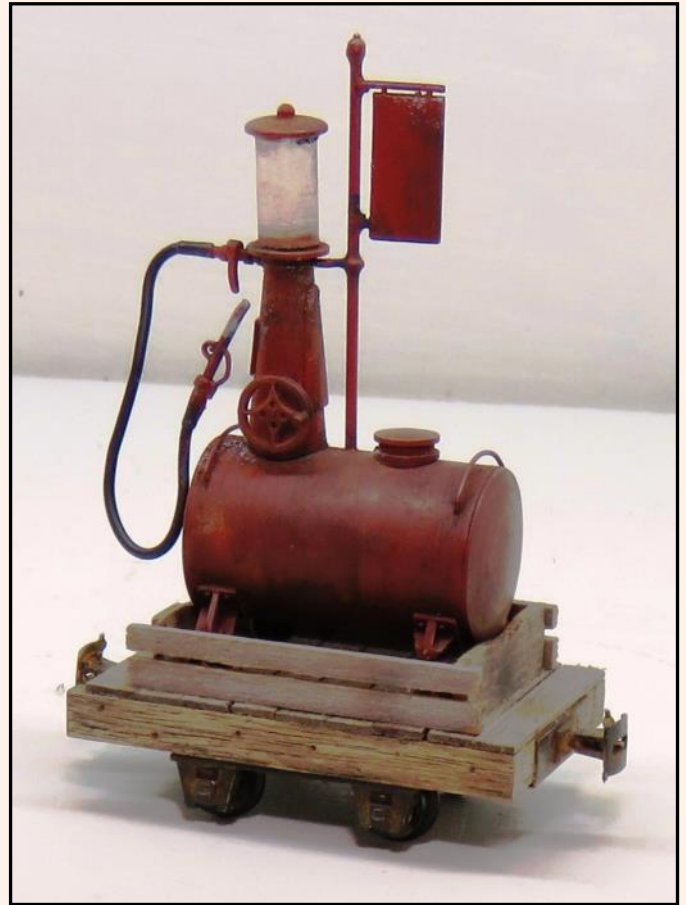


## Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



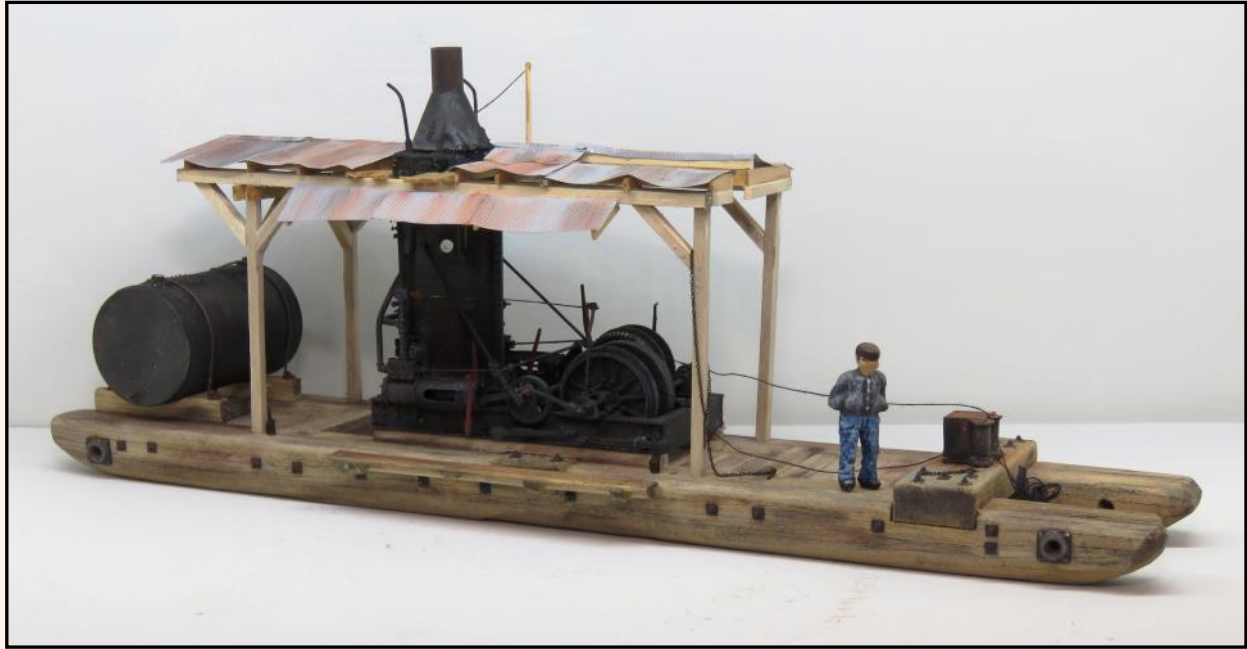
Above is a logging arch pulled by a crawler or dozer. The kit is by Weisman Scale Models.

To the right is a fuel supply railcar. The railcar is scratchbuilt with fuel tank and pump assembly from a unnamed Japanese kit.



This scratchbuilt model represents a slide-back log loader. The parallel skids sat on an empty log car. The loader boom was then used to load logs onto the empty car in front of the loader. Once the log car was loaded, the loader's winch would pull the loader onto the next empty car. The process would continue until the loader sat upon the last empty car.

## Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



This Humboldt Log Loader is scratchbuilt using detail parts from Charlie Brommer. A large boiler powers a 2 cylinder steam engine to run the winch sets..

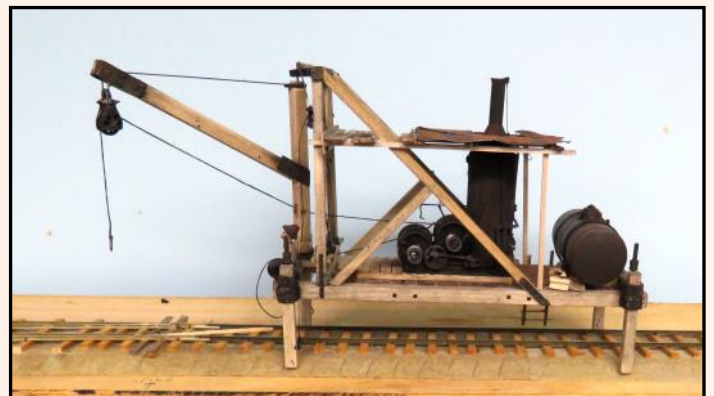


Above left- This Russell Road Grader was powered by a team of horses or mules. It enabled loggers to have improved trail roads.

Above right- This Ford-built self-propelled road grader was an improved version that didn't require animal power.

Both models are McKenzie Iron and Steel kits, which are now Wiseman Scale Models.

Pictured on the right is a Surry Parker log loader. The wood and castings are from a Tom Yorke kit (now Wiseman Scale Models) and the winch is from Charlie Brommer. This machine straddled the rails and pulled the train out from under the loader to load the next car. When finished at a site, the loader would be lowered onto a log car and moved to the next log dump.



## Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



This unique straddle lumber carrier is a MacKensie Iron & Steel kit which is now available from Wiseman Scale Models. The carrier has a Fordson tractor engine as its power source. A system of chains and sprockets/drums transferred motive power to the wheels. The powered lifting assembly allowed for picking and placing of cut lumber. These units were commonly used at lumber mills to stockpile cut lumber for storage and eventual shipment to customers.

The multiple views give a better understanding of this carrier and how it functioned.





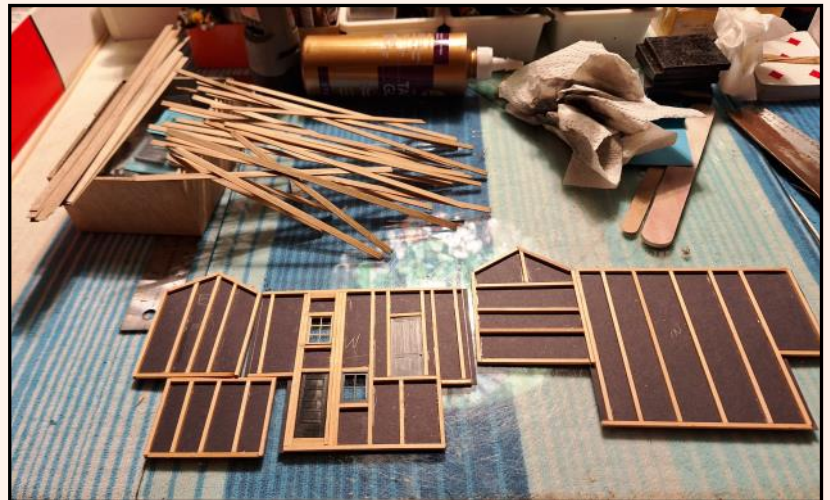
# Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



This On3 Shay locomotive was built for Tom by a Japanese modeler who became a close friend early in Tom's career. It is a highly detailed Kemptron kit with a rare left-sided steam piston driving assembly.

Currently under construction is a Quincy and Torch Lake Railroad ( 3' gauge mining shortline located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan) water tank structure. This railroad experienced brutally cold winters, necessitating large wood or coal stoves in the basement under the tank. The second floor probably housed a small shop.

The basic walls are complete. Still needed are more stain, paint, battens on two end walls, trim windows, and doors. Future plans may include interior details and a round or rectangular water tank.



The photo above is an instruction sheet from a Durango Press HO model kit. The kit box is seen on the right. Tom converted the model to O scale and scratchbuilt a modified design.



# Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



## Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



water tank photos on the last three pages are courtesy of Tom O'Connor

## Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



Frank Grill photo

Tom's close friend and master painter, Frank Grill, painted this O scale Custom NJ Brass Imports model. The Reading Company never had ALCO RS-1's but ALCO RS-3's #461 and #503 were mistakenly marked as 'RS-1' on their cab sides under their road numbers. Therefore it was only fitting to create a Reading RS-1 model.

Page 19 depicts both Reading RS-3's mentioned above. These two photos show the 'RS-1' misidentification.



Frank Grill photo

article and photos by Tom O'Connor and Rich Wurst, except where noted

# Tom O'Connor's Handcrafted Models (continued)



Reading 503

Don Ross Collection



# 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



### PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

NMRA members can log in and click on the **Benefits** tab to view the **NMRA Partnership Program**. Please patronize all of our partners for some fantastic discounts as an NMRA member!

Bespoke Rail  
CatzPaw Innovations  
CB Train Junction  
Clever Models, LLC  
Coastmans Scenic Products  
Composite Designs, Inc.  
CMR Products, LLC  
Conowingo Models  
Daylight Sales (Merchandise)  
Deepwoods Software  
Deluxe Materials  
**Diorama Hobbies\***  
Dwarvin Enterprises, Ltd  
East Coast Circuits  
Enterprise and National Car  
Rental Services  
Evan Designs  
Feight Studios  
Fusion Scale Graphics  
Gatorfoam  
Great Decals!  
Green Frog Productions  
Highways and Byways Model  
Railroad Graphics

Hot Wire Foam Factory  
K.I.S.S Method, Inc.  
LaBelle Woodworking Co.  
LARC Products  
Logic Rail Technologies  
MAC Rail  
Micro-Mark  
Mine Mount Models  
miniprints  
MRC (Model Rectifier Corp)  
Model Train Catalogue  
Modelers Decals & Paint  
Motrak Models  
Mudd Creek Models  
New Creations Victorian  
Railroad Buildings  
Nick and Nora Designs  
Northlandz  
NScale Works by Mike Holly  
**Old Depot Gallery**  
**Old West Scenery**  
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RR-CirKits

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The Old Depot Gallery  
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Weathering  
Train Installations, LLC  
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TSG Multimedia  
UGEARS  
USA Airbrush Supply/  
Badger Airbrush  
WiFi Model Railroad, LLC  
**Yelton Models\***

December 2023

## Partnership Program