The Whistle Post

The official newsletter of the

Garden State Division

Northeastern Region • National Model Railroad Association, Incorporated
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From the Director

I'm sure that by now most of our members have seen THE WORLD'S GREATEST HOBBY program running in the model press. This was started by the Morel Railroad Industry Association in conjunction with Publishers and Manufacturers to draw attention to our wonderful hobby. This may seem self serving to the above mentioned folks but without the industry doing this, not much was being put before the public about our hobby. Sure, many clubs have open houses and commercial shows and swap meets are also presenting the hobby. It seems obvious to me that we are all well served to participate too. It can only help promote the hobby, thereby increasing the overall benefit to us all.

On this note, I am asking our members to offer their assistance wherever possible and to join in the program. The Garden State Division of the NMRA will be participating in upcoming Greenberg Shows at the EXPO center in Edison. At these shows August 10-11, November 233-24 and next March 15-16, we will have a display which will include Don Jennings' switching layout. We will also be offering an article to the local news media promoting the NMRA and our participation at the Greenberg Shows. We will be "HELPING" the public better understand model railroading and how they can better enjoy THE WORLD'S GREATEST HOBBY. It is my hope that the general public, our hobby and the NMRA will be well served by our participation.

On another track, Mel Ponton has taken the bull by the horns and is working to bring life to the ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM (AP) in the GSD. He has asked our members to drop him a line (mponton@pdt.net) and let him know of your interest in the AP. We will be having a model contest at our Annual Meeting in January. That meeting is not yet schedules or located, but we are looking for a place near the center of the GSD. Any ideas, please let me know (owenwrr@aol.com). So let's get those contest models ready. Even if you do not feel you want to compete in the contest, you can certainly bring some models to show. Many a model builder has gained the necessary qualification for AP certificates without entering a contest. Those who have done work and would like to have if looked at for AP, let Mel know.

On another track again, or should I say another Island. NMRA members from Richmond County, NY (Staten Island) have petitioned the NER to move back into the GSD. Their petition will be acted on at the NER BOD meeting at the NER Convention in Syracuse 27-29, 2002. I encourage Staten Islanders who are interested in this to make it to the Salt City Express 2002, NER Convention.

The SALT CITY EXPRESS 2003 has an excellent web page (http://home.twcny.rr.com/raillfan/Cnynmra%20folder/Cnynmra/ convention home.html) Or you can access it starting at (www.nmra.org) and working your way through all the great stuff that can be found at this web site and (http://pages.cthome.net/kenmay/NERHOME.HTML).

Some interest was expressed in holding an NER Convention here in the GSD. A tentative date for Spring 2003 was open, but not enough interest was expressed to pull it off by then. We still would like to hold a regional convention, but will aim for a later date. A partial planning committee is in place and we are looking for more to join this effort. It would be good if the GSD has a good showing at the Syracuse convention in September. We already have several members who regularly attend conventions but more would be great. If you haven't been, you can't imagine what a great time you're missing.

Happy Rails, Tom Matthews (owenwrr@aol.com)

So, What happened?

Wasn't there supposed to be an issue of the *Whistle Post* in April? There should have been one but, well, there just wasn't enough of anything to put in it to justify the printing costs and postage. So, I used my discretion and combined the April issue with the July issue. Obviously, this is not an ideal situation but it works to the overall benefit of the membership.

The Division, while up and running, is not running as well as we would like it to. Most of the effort is being put out by the officers and what we need is a bunch of the rank and file members to step up and offer to help out with some of the work. At the top of the list is people who would be willing to help organize, host, run, or just brainstorm activities that we can do in the Division for the members of the Division. Doing your own thing in your basement is all well and good. But you can get more out of your efforts by sharing them with someone else or helping someone else enjoy the hobby as much as you do. That is what the Garden State Division and the whole NMRA are all about. They provide a means for you to meet other people who enjoy the hobby you enjoy and give you all a means to share and learn from each other.

Another way you can help out and share your enjoyment of the hobby is by writing an article for the *Whistle Post*. Many of us have considerable experience or talent that we can share with other members in our hobby. Many of the people I talk to have the same problems and questions that I have. Sharing the solutions or experiences that you've had in the hobby can help people in ways that you may never be able to imagine. Many model railroaders work alone in their basements trying to figure out building, wiring, or other problems and a simple discussion of a similar problem by someone else and how they handled it can be a great help. You don't need to worry that you may not be a professional writer, I surely am not a professional writer by any standard. If you have an idea or an article you'd like to send in I would appreciate it and so would the readers of the *Whistle Post*. I currently use MicroSoft Word '97 and Word Perfect 8 to produce the *Whistle Post*. . A 3¼" floppy disk or a printed out copy of your article will help me a great deal. I look forward to hearing from you and thanks for your help! Ed.

N Scale Corner by Rich Brown

As I mentioned in the last issue, I'd like to stir the pot a little about the subject of DCC. Is it for you?

If you talk to a few people who operate N scale layouts, you can get some strong reactions such as; "No way! I've got 46 locomotives, and it would cost me a fortune to convert." "What's the point?" Or, "I'm running a layout with DCC, and it's the greatest thing since sliced bread."

No matter what your opinion is, you will find that DCC is becoming more common in the hobby. For example, many of the new locomotives are being sold either with an "installed decoder" optrion, or "DCC ready", i.e. a place to plugin a decoder if desired. Less expensive systems are on the market. Atlas now has a Lenz based system at a reasonable price.

If you are reading this, it's ten to one that you are familiar with most of this already, and if you fall into the category of the first person with a big home layout and those 46 locomotives, you really would have a financial burden adding those decoders to all those engines. If you have a smaller, less complex railroad, or are just in the planning stage, it might be wise to really think about going the DCC route before things get out of hand and you find yourself with 46 locomotives too!

Try to observe a DCC railroad in operation. For example, you might notice two switch engines operating in close proximity in the yard while a road engine also backs down a nearby lead. No more artificial block toggles to worry about. Track voltage stays constant. Car lights don't chage brightness as locos are accelerated or slowed down. Reverse loops are still necessarry, but reverse loop modules eliminare this problem.

There are of course disadvantages to all this. Installing decoders in older engines calls for either skill or money to pay some expert to do it. Don't believe that story that you can just hook up two wires to the track and your worries will be over. Dirty track can be even more problematic with DCC.

The point is, if you arre thinking about this, make sure you study and plan before you start. Get a book like *Digital Command Control* by Ames, Friberg, and Loizeaux who are members of the NMRA DCC Working group. It's a terrific book, and will help you get started on the right foot.

Finally, if you are the guy who says, "I'm out of my element, (or my mind) when it comes to electricity", don't feel that DCC will add any additional burden to you distate for Ohm's law.
(I still don't know how it works). Commnets? Send them to me at: sanonja@nji.com .
[Several years ago the N scalers at The Model Railroad Club in Union decided to go to DCC. They have a excellent growing layout which is expanding through a helix to an elevated level. Here you have a situation where there are about twenty different members with maybe a total of eighty or more locomotives among them. They form a valuable resource within the Division for anyone who is modeling in N scale and considering going DCC. They're a valuable resource for anything N scale. You can get more information on The Model Railroad Club at their web site: WWW.TMRCI.ORG Ed.]

Directory of Clubs
in the Garden State Division

This directory is provided to let our membership know the activities and other opportunities that are available to them in the Garden State Division. It is by no means a complete list. If a club or activity has been left off this list, please send us the name, location, and a contact so that we can include it.

Note: New mailing address

Garden State Central Model Railroad Club
P.O. Box 121 Oakhurst, NJ 07755
(732) 775 0881 gsc_webmstr@hotmail.com

I would appreciate copies of club calendars so that they can be published in the *Whistle Post* for GSD members.

The Achievement Program

by Mel Ponton

Since this is my first appearance before the membership, perhaps an introduction would be appropriate. My name is Mel (short for Melbourne) Ponton. I live near Bloomsbury, NJ, a small town located at exit 7 on Route 78. I have been a member of the NMRA since December, 1997. I joined NER and the GSD in January of this year and accepted Tom Matthews' invitation to be the AP coordinator for the new GSD in March.

There is a certain irony associated with this offer and acceptance, however. The fact is, I have never participated in the Achievement Program in any way, shape or form up to this time. Oh, I have harbored intentions to do so since I first learned of it. I just haven't done anything about it – including becoming familiar with the requirements of the Program. Therefore, it seemed that the first thing I needed to do was to learn what the program was all about and this is what I have found.

There are 11 achievement categories in which a model railroader may demonstrate skill and obtain recognition. They are:

- **Master Builder - Motive Power** – you know, engines, the things that pull the cars (railroad of course) from place to place,
- **Master Builder - Cars** – the things that get pulled from place to place and, in real life, earn the money needed to keep the railroad in business,
- **Master Builder - Structures** – yep, buildings – everything from the lowliest outbuilding to the loftiest skyscraper,
- **Master Builder - Scenery** – the stuff that your trains run over, under, around and through,
- **Master Builder - Prototype Models** – building a model of something that exists in the real world and actually looks like it,
- **Model Railroad Engineer – Civil** – track work, planning and installing it,
- **Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical** – using electricity to bring your model to life,.
- **Chief Dispatcher** – this involves operating a model as it would be if it were a real, commercial enterprise and includes putting cars together to form trains and delivering them to their intended destinations,
- **Association Official** – serving in elected NMRA office(s) at the national, regional and/or divisional organizations one of which must be at the national level,
- **Association Volunteer** – serving the association in either an elected, appointed or purely voluntary capacity,
- **Model Railroad Author** – this award involves accumulating points based on how much you write (a page is about 1200 words) and where it is published.

But I learned more than this. I learned that, apparently, many if not most of us tend to make more of it than there is to make. That is, we read more into the requirements than was intended. We disqualify ourselves before we even make an attempt and relegate ourselves to the role of spectator rather than participant.

In subsequent articles we will look at each of the certificates in greater detail. You will see that planning your modeling activities with the requirements of each of them in mind will allow you to progress toward their acquisition as an almost unavoidable consequence of your modeling activities. We will develop a checklist of things to include in your layout plans and construction activities that virtually assure that all the pieces will be in place to satisfy the certification requirements. But before we do that, we will take a look at the award that most of you are **probably qualified to receive already - The Golden Spike Award**. That will be will be the topic of the next article in this series.

In the meantime, if I can do anything to assist you in your AP efforts don't hesitate to write. If I can do it, I will. If I don't know the answer, I probably know where to go to get it. And, if I don't know, I'll find out. There is a tremendous amount of willing and eager support available through the NMRA and its membership.

[Mel can be reached for comment at: mponton@ptd.net]

Garden State Division Timetable

The purpose of the timetable is allow the Clubs and other organizations in the general area of the Garden State Division to post their activities for the benefit of our membership. Acceptance of postings is at the discretion of the editors.

There are no activities planned as of this date!

List of new subscribers

Joseph Hopmeyer 125 Kingsley Way Freehold, NJ 07728

There's room for more!

New subscribers will be listed in each issue of the *Whistle Post*.

The following article I think of as more of a lab report on a project so I can replicate it again later if I desire. I am experimenting with a digital camera to supply supporting images. I have been a member of the Ramapo Valley Railroad Club in Ho-Ho-Kus for nearly 30 years and an active model railroader for nearly 45 years. The club has provided me a supportive environment to expand my skills. I strive for a layout quality model that complements the railroad model scene and not a stand alone contest quality model. Enjoyment is still the motivation. Let me know what you think about this article and what other information you may need. Tom Casey

Body Work (continued from last issue)

Arched Roof Version, DL&W 2035 - 2109

7. Modify the baggage car doors to resemble those Lackawanna doors, which were similar to the Athearn doors. The Lackawanna's 8-foot door had 3 panels with three large windows and the 6-foot door had two panels with one large window and two smaller windows. This was simply accomplished by removing window mullions and panel partitions from the Athearn doors. (Other style doors were also used on these cars and may also be modeled for variation.) In later years, the outer windows in both these doors were eliminated (plated over) leaving only the center window in each door. This can be easily modeled by continuing the above process and filling in the outer windows with sheet styrene pieces cut to fit. Even later the paneled doors were replaced with smooth side doors with even smaller center windows. To model this later style the entire door could be removed and replaced with a door made from sheet styrene.

8. Using plans for this car, center the car side assembly on the plan to determine how much to remove from the car end side assemblies. (Alternatively additional material could have been removed before the center portion was re-assembled. Which ever matches the plans and the arch roof assembly better.)

9. Attach these car end side assemblies to the center side wall assembly after having sized them according to the car plan.

10. Size the ends to fit. Adding material to the underside of the roof end will fill in the gap above the car ends and the arch roof. Alternatively, this gap could be covered later by the effective continuation of the letter board panel over the end doors.

11. While the car body and roof could be glued together at this point to create a unified car body and roof assembly like the original Athearn baggage car, consider keeping these as a separate pieces at this time to ease future masking and painting.

12. For some reason the Athearn Baggage Car does not have any end doors. Create an end door assembly using a pair of end doors from an Eastern Car Works kit. As this door is too narrow to fill the entire opening in the car body's end, cut a piece of sheet styrene to fit the notch inside the car body behind the door location. After test fitting the door, (mine was slightly too tall and needed to be filed down to fit) glue it to the styrene backing plate. Cut thin styrene strips to act as doorframes and to provide the additional width necessary to fill the door opening.

13. As none of the prototype photographs showed these cars equipped with diaphragms, none were installed. This surprised me, as I plan to use these cars on a model of the Lackawanna's Phoebe Snow where I would have expected these cars to be equipped with diaphragms. If I find any pictures of these cars with diaphragms, I will retrofit them to the model

Underframe Work:

Kit bashing an Athearn Underframe

1. To shorten the underframe cut across the underframe parallel to and on the side towards the car's center at the cross braces, which connect the car's center sill to its side sill.

2. While the truck centers should be 8 feet 3 inches in from the car's corner posts, the Athearn underframe's without modification results in the Spectrum truck center being 8 feet 6 inches in from the car's corner post. For a scale 3 inches difference, I chose not to modify the Athearn underframe's ends. Also this leaves a little more room for the body mounting of the Coupler and Air Hose assembles. The resultant truck center separation is roughly 44 feet, which compares favorably to the prototype's 44'2".

3. Both ends of the Athearn Baggage Car

underframe are different to match the different car body ends. The brake end is squared off and the other end is angled. The underframe ends match the Athearn car body ends: one squared off and the other angled. Since both ends of this Lackawanna baggage/express cars are squared off and have brake wheels, either the angled end of the underframe could be squared off to match the other or two squared off end sections from two different baggage car underframes could be used. I chose to square off the angled end from the same underframe, rather than cut up another underframe.

4. In order for the cross braces to be positioned according to the car plan, roughly a scale 3 feet 6 inches of the underframe brace had to be removed between the truck center and the triangular cross. This length was removed from the section of the underframe where there is a gap in the sloping center sill to allow for the swing of Athearn's 6-wheel truck. The shorter 4-wheeled truck used under this car does not need as much clearance space. This still leaves a small gap in the center-sills, which I may fill in depending on the effect on the car's minimum turning radius.

5. File down the underframe's truck mounting boss to the height of the cross member. This lowers the car body when the Spectrum 4 wheel passenger trucks (from their New York Central Coaches and/or Combines) are used. (The center truck-mounting pin on the Spectrum truck fits into the truck swivel (pivot) hole in the Athearn underframe. The height of the truck's center mounting pin was filed down with the Spectrum retaining clip pressed down to the inside of the Athearn underframe. The truck's retaining screw is still used to hold the truck in place.) (After I had completed this step, I purchased at a swap meet brass trucks with much better detail. I used some scrape sprue plastic to plug the truck center pin swivel hole, drilled and taped a new mounting hole and attached these trucks with 2-56 screws. I'll continue to describe what I did using the Spectrum trucks, as they are readily available.)

6. Once the two shortened end sections of the underframe were re-joined and test fit into the car body, the missing center portion was constructed out of sheet styrene to match the Athearn underframe. A quarter inch square notch was cut into the upper flange of both end underframe assemblies. New upper side sills were then cut to fit and installed. This staggering of joints in the underframe's floor and upper side sills results in a stronger underframe. Once the side sills and the floor are glued into the underframe gap, the mid-section center sills are cut to fit and installed. These center sills are cut a shade too high and then, once glued into place, sanded down on a flat surface. This removes any variations in their depth and results in a smooth joint with their adjacent pieces. To do this sanding I place the sand paper on a flat surface, add a few drops of water and then sand the piece by moving it on the sand paper. The water lifts the plastic fines out of the sandpaper preventing it from clogging up the grit as rapidly as it would if it were dry. Also wiping it with a tissue easily cleans the sandpaper.

Roof Work:

Modifying the Model Die-Casting Harriman 60-foot Passenger Car Roof

1. Fill in the vents mounting holes in the roof. I used sprues from Kadee #5 coupler box set, which fits, tightly into the holes in the roof. I used the bind end of numbered drill bits to determine the diameter necessary to fill the holes, drilled the hole up to a #44 bit and then used a numbered drill bit gauge to size the sprues down to fit a #43 hole the holes. I then ACCed the holes from the inside and quickly plugged them with the sprues. Once dry the excess sprue was cut off and sanded down to the roof. Any remaining gaps were filled using ACC, letting it dry and wet sanding until there was no evidence of the gaps. The ACC fills gaps well as it flows into them almost as easily as water, dries hard and sands easily.

2. As no roof details show in any photos other than the roof vents, progressively wet sand (smooth) all details off of the roof (including the drip strip along the roof's edge) with 240, 320, 400, and 600 grit wet & dry sand paper to leave a smooth featureless surface.

3. The MDC arch roof has a lengthwise tab under its sides, which aligns roof into the car body. The top sides of the MDC cars are thinner than the top of the car body we have just created out of the Athearn car. Reduce the thickness of this tab and the car body sides so that when the roof is fit the outer edges of both the roof and the car body side match. However this process alone will not be enough to permit the roof to fit within the car body. The roof's width is too wide and needs to be reduced.

4. Since the roof is roughly three scale inches to wide to fit the Athearn car body, the roof must be cut down its centerline to reduce its width to fit the car body. I used a razor saw blade to make this cut. Once the edges of this cut were smoothed, a good fit was achieved and the roof reassembled.

5. Position and drill holes for new roof vents spaced according to the diagram (either 3 or 4 per side not the original 7). Note that the roof vents on either side of the car are not directly opposite each other but offset half the distance between the spacing of the original seven vents. As viewed from above this results in a staggering of the roof vents not otherwise apparent from side views. This puzzled me for some time. While photos showed some cars with no roof vents, others showed three or four of the original 7 Harriman style roof vents remaining in later years. It was not until saw an overhead video of a train with one of these cars that I realized that the original 14 roof vents were halved with 3 on one side and 4 on the other. However, I have not been able to determine from photos a pattern as to which side had 3 vent and which had 4. Based on observations from photos when viewed with the 8-foot door to the left, most had 4 roof vents. When viewed with the 6-foot door to the left, most had 3 roof vents. However exceptions to both were also observed. I suspect that there was no set pattern.

6. Install the style and number of roof vents to model the prototype of your choice. Photos show two styles of roof vents used on these cars. Those that were apparently used the most appear to be like Detail Associate's Harriman Style Roof Vents. The other style used are similar to those modeled by Bethlehem Car Works for use on their arch roof Reading / CNJ coaches. These later vents do not show up in later photos. Perhaps they were removed all together to create the cars that later on had no roof vents.

7. Photos also show some cars with rain gutters (guides) on the roofs over the doors and other without. As such I did not add them to the arch roof but left them on the clerestory roof.

[This article will be continued in the next issue]

The Whistle Post
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