



# *The* WHISTLE POST

The Official Publication of the Garden State Division of the NMRA Northeastern Region



Summer Event in Morristown, NJ, Saturday, July 22

Summer 2023

Number 166



## **Presenting a Clinic**

Whenever we have a quarterly meet, we have members presenting clinics. The time and effort put into these are representative of the commitment to volunteerism that the presenters have. They often talk about projects they have been working on and new knowledge or skills they have acquired and receive no recompense except thanks and recognition and perhaps credit toward the author's certificate in the achievement program.

Clinics tend to fall into just a few groups: prototype information (example, the recent clinics on signaling given by Dr. Scott Gothe), modeling tips and techniques (examples, Jim Walsh's clinic on Glues last year, and Tom Wortman's clinic on building resin kits), and operations and model railroading history (example, Bob Nalbhone's clinic on the Union Club's history and operations). The presenter who sets up his clinic may research actual railroad history, or chronicle the building of a particular model made to represent a particular prototype (one I remember is Chuck Diljak's water tower model of a prototype that was a multistory beer or liquor bottle - he made it from a small bottle of the real thing).

Preparing the presentation usually requires photographing the steps involved in building a model if a modeling clinic is being done. This means a fair amount of forethought, and an obsessive amount of photographing the many steps involved in producing a quality model, especially one that is scratch built or one that is made from a craftsman kit. Many photos are necessary, which are then narrowed down to the essential ones for telling the story of how the model was made. Powerpoint slides are then made to fit with the presentation and explain the photos.

Since the purpose of a clinic showing modeling is at least in part to inspire the audience to try something new, the presenter will show his or her best work and explain how it can be replicated by the members in the audience, or techniques shown that can be used on another project by them. A clinic which is informational in nature should impart new knowledge that members in the audience can put to use, such as with a signaling clinic or an operations clinic.

Many Division clinic presenters are so comfortable presenting that they take their clinics to the regional or national conventions to present. We also now have virtual regional and national conventions (NERx and NMRx) each of which are scheduled at least once a year where clinics are also presented to broader audiences, and to which some of our own GSD presenters have taken their clinics.

Clinics thus provide an important outlet for the creative process in our hobby, and are easier to prepare than an article for a magazine or other publication. I encourage anyone interested in presenting one to contact Jim Walsh, who sets up our clinic schedule.[WP](#)



## **Layouts End, Layouts Begin**

I've taken some decent photos of scenes on my layout, but the cover photo this month that was taken by a guest is one of my favorites. It well represents what I had wanted to achieve in building a layout and hosting an operating session: everyone attending (except perhaps the photographer) is occupied with their assignment and concentrating on the task at hand. Out of site would be the Dispatcher, who if not working on writing orders, would at least be listening for the next call from a tower.

Also, I'm out of site, possibly talking with the Dispatcher, or maybe grabbing a beverage, which means that I'm not needed for anything. It is always good when the owner is not needed to answer questions, troubleshoot, or fix something.

I can understand how operations are not for everyone, but when an op session is humming along as in that photo, model railroading is as satisfying for me as any model that I may build. I very rarely run my own trains, with that occurring only if short on attendees.

A successful and fun op session doesn't happen by accident either. It takes a lot of effort with construction, maintenance, scheduling, written instructions, assignments appropriate to the knowledge and abilities of the crew members, and most of all, a crew that wants to bring the vision of the owner to life.

Alas, it will be some time before I again have this satisfaction. Two days after having more than 30 people visit the afternoon of the Spring Event, I had a house fire that resulted in much smoke and water damage to the house above. Damage to the layout was primarily due to water dropping down through the floor, and therefore was much less than in other areas of the house, but it was soon realized that the layout would not survive the repairs required to the upper part of the house.

For anyone who hasn't heard the story yet, there is much more discussion of this on my layout Facebook page. In case you are wondering, there will definitely be a new layout at another location, incorporating nearly 30 years of experience gained on this layout into a new version.

Plans are already swirling in my head, and we don't even have the new basement, uh, house yet. It may take a while, but there will be more to share in the future on the next version of my PC-CNJ-Newark Terminal layout.[WP](#)



## Upcoming Events

**GSD Summer Event** Saturday July 22, Morris County Library, 30 East Hanover Avenue, Whippany, NJ. Clinics and layout open houses.

**New Jersey Division Special Summer Meet** Saturday August 5, 9 AM-12 PM Switlik Park Recreation Building, 5 Fisher Place, Hamilton, NJ 08620. See Page 11

**NMRA 2023 National Convention 2023 Texas Express** in Grapevine, TX (Dallas/Fort Worth area) August 20-26 [www.2023texasexpress.com](http://www.2023texasexpress.com)

**GSD Fall Event** Saturday September 23, Esposito Community Center at St. Christopher—St. Mary Margaret Church, 126 Midland Avenue, Staten Island, NY. SIRT related clinics are scheduled by Mark Pitanza and Chris Oliva

**NER 2023 Convention Cannonball Express**, Uniondale, NY, Columbus Day Weekend October 5-8. Hosted by the Sunrise Trail Division.  
<https://ner-conventions.org/cannonball-express/>

**MER 2023 Convention Round the Curve to Altoona** Altoona, PA, October 19-22, Altoona Grand Hotel <https://mer2023.org/index.html>

**GSD Winter Event** February 24, 2024, snow date March 2. Fulton Friendship Lodge, Park Ridge, NJ. A Make 'n Take format is being considered.

**NMRA 2024 National Convention Surfliner 2024**, August 4-11, Long Beach, CA  
<https://www.surfliner2024.org/>

**MER 2025 Convention** Sponsored by the New Jersey Division

Previous virtual events held by the NER can be found on the [NMRA's YouTube channel](#). Just look for "NERx" in the video titles.



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## On the Cover

This is a photo of an operating session on Jim Homoki's Newark Terminal layout. Everyone is busily going about their business. See Jim's comments regarding the layout on Page 2 of this issue. (Photo by Paul Tupaczewski)

**GSD website**

[www.nergsd.com](http://www.nergsd.com)

**Visit the GSD Facebook Page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/nmragsd/>



# A New Event Location in Morristown on July 22

It has been a while since we have met in the Morristown area. On July 22 the summer event will be held at the Morris County Library, which is actually located in Whippany. The doors open at 9:00 with activities running from 9:30 to 12:00 Noon. Five area layouts will be open in the afternoon. Sales tables will also be available.

Jim Walsh and Mark Moritz, MD, will present the morning clinics. From Jim, his is entitled **Enhancing Older Layout Lighting**. While many layout owners recently upgraded to LED strip lighting for overall layout lighting, Jim explains the modifications to the lighting on Joe Valentine's Erie Lackawanna layout. The basic lighting fixtures were reused and enhanced in ways that improved the lighting and the general appearance of the layout. In this clinic Jim will address some improvements to the lighting fixtures and upgrading to LED light bulbs for both fluorescent fixtures as well as party lights. In addition, he will describe a process to make party lights work with suspended ceiling tiles to resemble recessed lighting.

In Mark's clinic, **Building the Sparrows Point Lackawanna Wood Caboose Kit; Lessons Learned**, he will describe how he built three caboose kits and one scratch built caboose to model the Lackawanna wood cabooses needed for his layout. These are craftsman kits and as such were challenging to build. Mark will talk about the lessons learned from these craftsman kits.

Layouts open in the afternoon include Mark's North Jersey Mineral Rwy, the Morris Plains Model RR Club, Neil Multz's Atlantic Pacific, John Montagna's Nicholas, Fayette and Greenbrier RR, and Steve Kay's Lackawanna Terminal.

The usual refreshments, display tables, and Bring 'n Brag segment will be provided.[WP](#)



Above: Jim Walsh will discuss the subject of layout lighting and how it was upgraded on Joe Valentine's large DL&W layout.



Left: Craftsman kit caboose construction for a Lackawanna prototype will be the subject of a presentation by Mark Moritz.

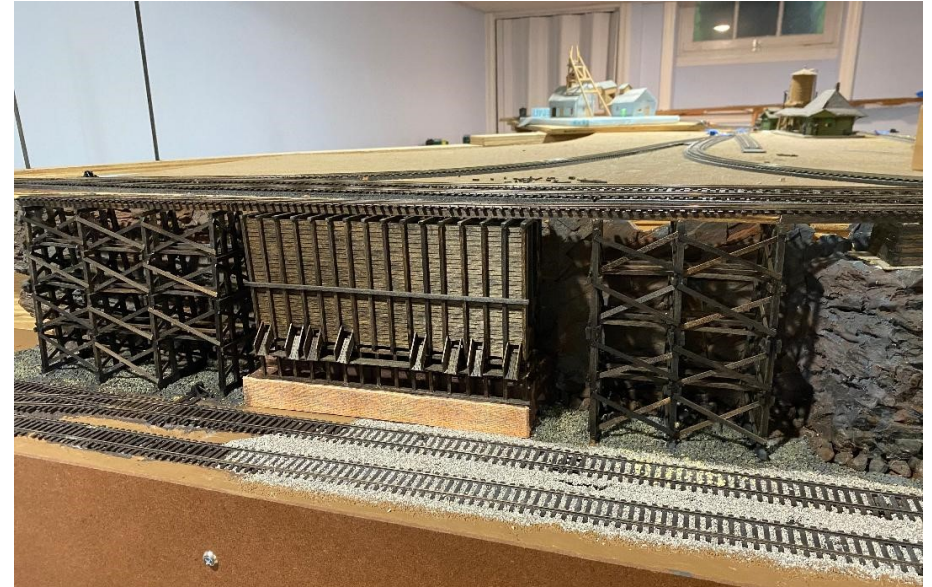
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**Above: A local freight passes by CP Pennisi on Steve Kay's Lackawanna Terminal Railway.**



**Above: Mark Moritz's North Jersey Mineral Railway is a Lackawanna-themed layout set in Morris County in the 1920s. There is a large staging yard, a helix, and about 300 feet of track. It is about 10% scenicked and is soon to have operating sessions. There is also a narrow gauge branch line, the Ferromonte Railway, with an ore transfer facility, which is pictured here.**

**Below: An overall view of the Atlantic Pacific layout of Neal Multz.**



**Below: A view of the roundhouse and turntable on the Morris Plains Model Railroad Club layout.**





# ***The Master Builder Scenery Certificate***

## ***AP Corner By Mark Moritz***

Among those certificates which require the building of a layout is the Master Builder Scenery certificate. In order to qualify for this certificate, you must build an area of a layout which is 60 square feet in O scale, 45 square feet in S scale, 32 square feet in HO scale, etc. The completed section must contain the scenic elements of terrain, structures, background, lighting, and realism/conformity for a realistic effect. The intent of this category is the prototypical rendering of the scenic elements. This category incorporates artistic skills in particular.

The various elements to be judged include:

**Terrain:** Ground and natural features (rocks, water, trees, hills, depressions) as well as manmade features (roadbed, cuts, fills, ditches, embankments, streets and roads) in the landscape. This element is worth up to 35 points in the judging.

**Structures:** Bridges, trestles, culverts, buildings, towers, power lines, signs, fences, turnout controls, signaling structures, crossing gates, shanties, turntables, etc. Structures are considered from the standpoint of prototypical suitability, placement and appearance. Quality of construction is not considered here (this is covered in the Master Builder Structures Certificate). 20 points are possible with this element.

**Background:** Treatment of wall, backdrop or ceiling to realistically depict depth, distance, horizon and sky. 25 points may be earned for this element.

**Lighting:** There are three aspects considered. Railroad cars and signals,

buildings, streets and roads, and overall effects of day and night. 20 points may be earned for this element.

**Realism/Conformity:** This is the general overall impression that the scene is a believable, miniature representation of a prototype railroad. This can score up to 25 points.

A Merit award of 87.5 points must be awarded for the features above when judged. In addition, the applicant must:

Prepare a set of photographs or video and written description describing the intended setting of the layout and the scenic details in the area being judged,

Prepare a description of the materials and methods of construction used in making the features of terrain, background and lighting,

Attach a copy of materials used above.

There is more information online at [nmra.org](http://nmra.org).

Those of us who have built layouts and finished enough square footage of scenery to qualify should consider applying for this certificate. A group of members who judge for the AP program can come to your location and assess your layout. We can help you meet the requirements by, if necessary, making suggestions how you might change or improve aspects of your layout. You need not have a prize-winning layout to earn this one. This is the "Achievement Program" not the "Over Achievement Program"! **WP**

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## **CLUB CAR**

**Garden State Model Railway Club**  
575 High Mountain Road, North Haledon, NJ 07508 [www.gsmrrclub.org](http://www.gsmrrclub.org)

**The Model Railroad Club**  
295 Jefferson Avenue, Union, NJ 07083 <http://www.themodelrailroadclub.org>

**New York Society of Model Engineers**  
341 Hoboken Road, Carlstadt, NJ 07072 [www.modelengineers.org](http://www.modelengineers.org)

**Pacific Southern Railway Club**  
26 Washington Street, Rocky Hill, NJ 08553 [www.pacificsouthern.org](http://www.pacificsouthern.org)

**Ramapo Valley Railroad Club, Allendale Community for Senior Living,**  
85 Harrenton Road, Allendale, NJ [www.ramapovalleyrailroad.com](http://www.ramapovalleyrailroad.com)

**Bound Brook Presbyterian Railroad Club (BBPRR), Bound Brook Cemetery**  
Office Building 500 Mountain Avenue, Bound Brook, NJ 08805  
[billandmartha3@verizon.net](mailto:billandmartha3@verizon.net)

**Staten Island Society of Model Railroaders, Train Club Room, 3rd Floor,**  
Staff House, Seaview Hospital, 460 Brielle Avenue, Staten Island, NY  
<http://sismrinc.tripod.com/index.html>

# OUR SPRING EVENT—ANOTHER GREAT JOINT MEET

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY JIM WALSH

Once again we gathered at the Hillsborough Municipal Building as the Garden State Division hosted a joint meet with the New Jersey Division. This is always a good time to meet with other modelers that we do not always see. To start the clinics, Joe Valentine related how he made signs for his layout. Fashioned after prototype station signs, they are large and easy to see from anywhere on his layout. Ralph DeBlasi from the NJ Division shared insight into an aspect of kit building that many of us never considered – building a kit without the actual kit. Due to technical difficulties, his electronic presentation was not available but his clinic went well due to his knowledge of the material and a good supply of parts and assemblies to pass around. In the afternoon we had the opportunity to visit some impressive layouts to complete a great day of model railroading.[WP](#)



**Above: Joe Valentine holds a lettering template for one of his signs, which is easily visible throughout the room.**



**Above: Mark Moritz thanks Ralph DeBlasi for his inspirational clinic explaining another option for building a Fine Scale Miniatures kit.**

**Right: As the meeting room fills up, everybody is ready for another great day of model railroading.**





# ON THE LEVEL — OR NOT

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY JIM WALSH

One characteristic common to many construction projects is the requirement that horizontal surfaces are level and verticals are plumb. In model railroading, our benchwork, like most construction projects, rely on our elements to be level or plumb. One reason to have level benchwork is to have a fixed reference for the risers and sub-roadbed. In building a shelf layout or one that attaches to the wall, a long level is handy to mark the level line on the wall. A simpler option would be to use a long straight edge attached to a level and a more sophisticated solution would rely on a laser level.

For operation, it helps to have a level surface for track where cars are spotted for industries and they stay where you put them. A railroad yard is also installed on a level surface with the exception being a hump yard.

Prototype railroads prefer level track because it uses less energy. For a model railroad, running on level track makes things simple but like the prototype sometimes you need to change elevation and require a grade. Grades are expressed as percent and represent the ratio of the vertical change divided by the horizontal distance. Since 8 feet (96 inches) is nearly 100 inches, a quick way to estimate the percent grade for a model railroad is by the inches of elevation change in 8 feet. For one inch in 8 feet, 1%, would ratio down to 1/8 inch per foot. If possible, construct a section of track to test the effect of various grades on your trains using a straight board with track installed. Run the train with it level and compare it to specific grades by inserting a spacer under one end of the board. This gives you the opportunity to see the grade that you prefer.



Above: Many of the levels used in home improvement projects can also be used for model railroading.

Left: The magnetic edge on this level can be useful when trying to measure or create a grade. A magnet or a small steel shim like the square nut in the photo easily attaches to the level and remains in place while making the measurement.

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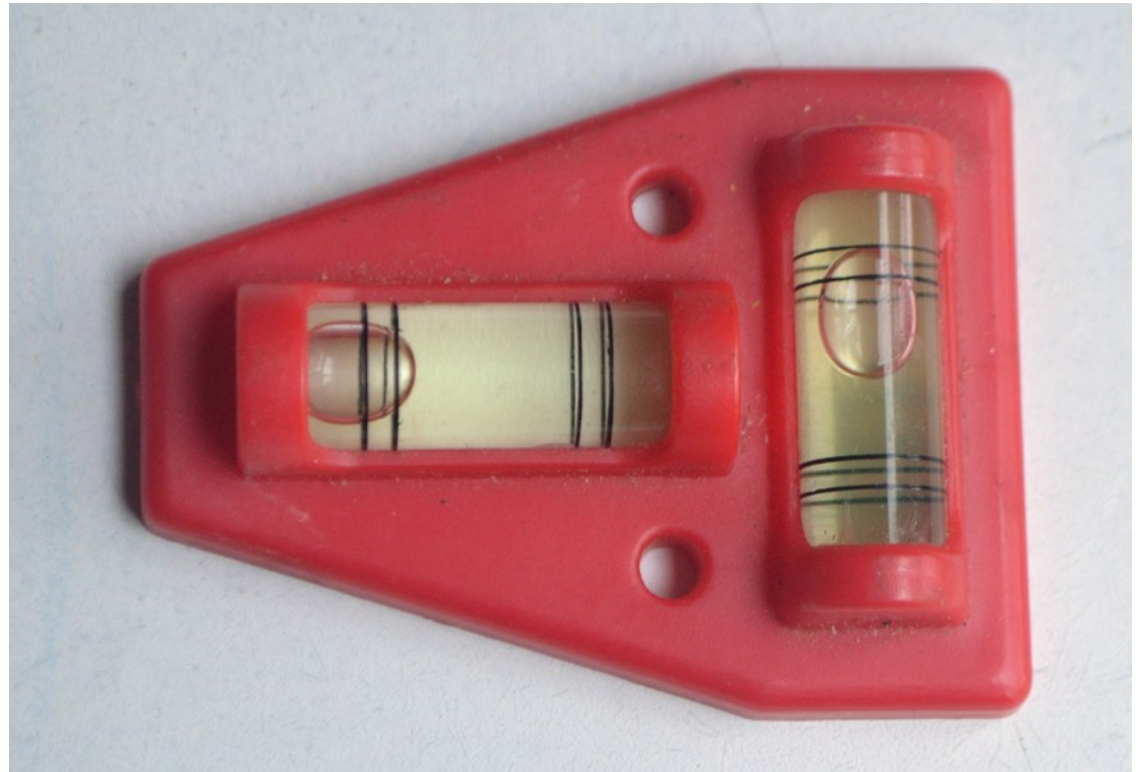


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Construction of track on a grade begins at the benchwork and from there, risers position the sub-roadbed to the height needed to maintain the grade. Although you can use a digital level in setting the level, you can also use a regular level and a shim of the correct thickness to construct the desired grade.

I was working on a layout where the desired grade was probably measured at the sub-roadbed at certain risers but when the trackwork was completed, the train struggled on the hill. Checking it with a digital level we discovered that part of the track was at a much steeper grade. The overall grade seemed right at the ends but it varied in between. For this reason it pays to be meticulous in checking that the grade stays consistent at the desired value. However at the ends of the grade you must introduce some transition to avoid vertical curve issues that can cause derailments or coupling problems. So remember to keep things level when you can and be extra careful when you must construct trackwork on grades.**WP**

**Right: Measuring about 2 1/2 inches long, this small level is used to check the level in two perpendicular directions and is useful in doing trackwork. Track is not always level lengthwise but it is usually level side-to-side.**



**Right: With this digital level it is easy to check the grade of the track or sub-roadbed and it also measures any side-to-side tilt.**



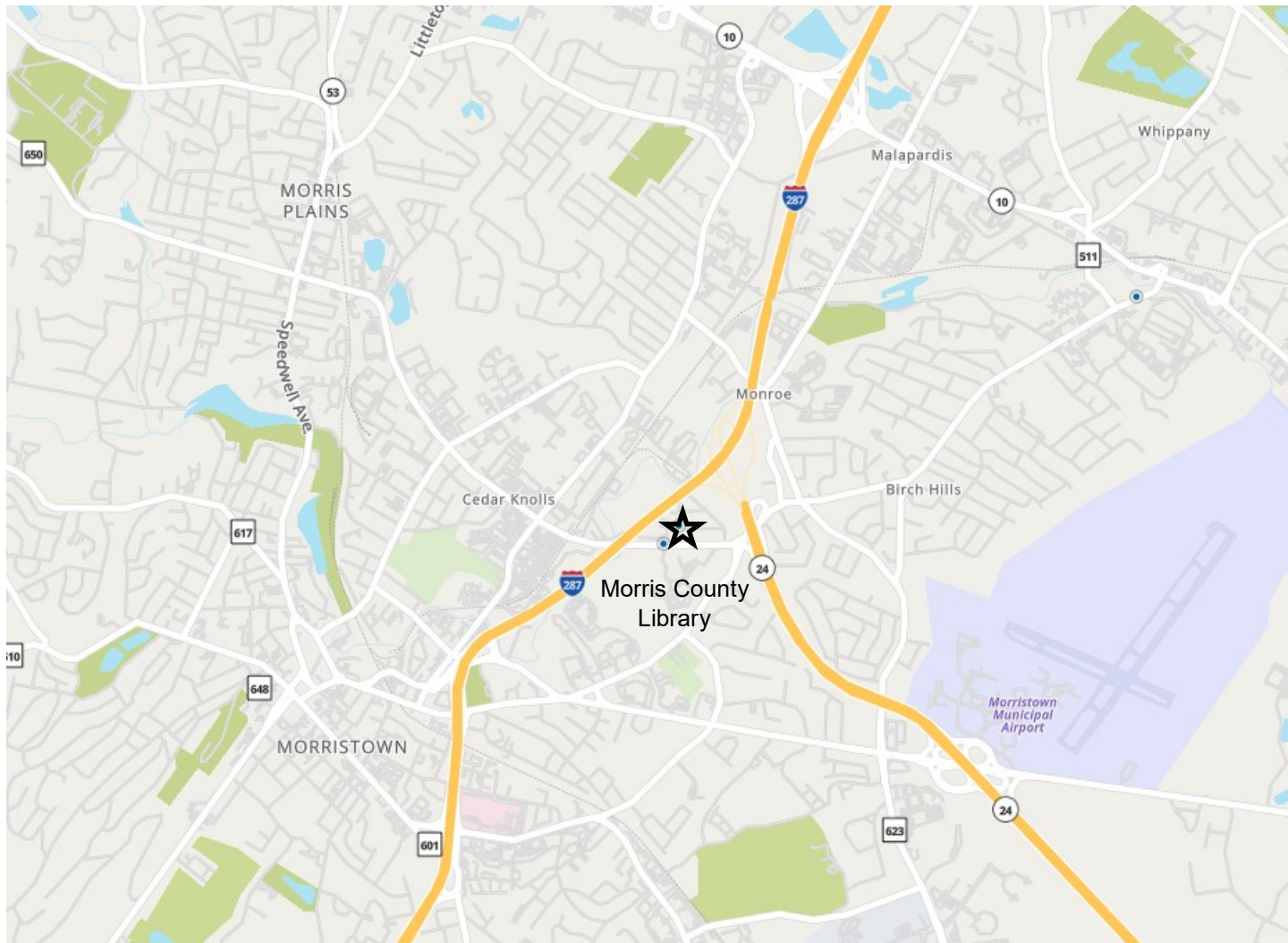
# MAP FOR THE SUMMER EVENT

## Directions:

- From Route 287 South, take Exit 36 for Ridgedale Avenue, then to East Hanover Ave.
- From Route 287 North, take Exit 36B for CR 510 West, then Ridgedale Avenue to East Hanover Avenue
- From Route 24 West, take Exit 1A, stay right onto East Hanover Ave.

**MORRIS COUNTY LIBRARY**  
**30 EAST HANOVER AVENUE**  
**WHIPPANY, NJ 07981**

**SATURDAY, JULY 22**  
**DOORS OPEN AT 9:00**  
**EVENT STARTS AT 9:30**





## NEXT DIVISION EVENT

MORRIS COUNTY LIBRARY

TIME:

9:30 AM TO 12:00 NOON

DOORS OPEN AT 9:00 AM

DATE:

SATURDAY, JULY 22

LOCATION:

30 EAST HANOVER AVENUE

WHIPPANY, NJ 07981

SEE THE MAP ON PAGE 10

COST:

DONATIONS VOLUNTARY

REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED

WEBSITE FOR MEETS:

SEE PAGE 3

[HTTPS://WWW.NERGSD.COM/](https://www.nergsd.com/)

AGENDA:

INTRODUCTION

TWO CLINICS

BRING 'N' BRAG

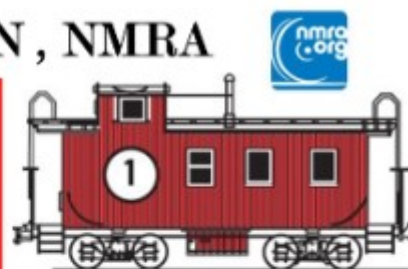
LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

LAYOUT OPEN HOUSES

## Special NJ Division Meet August 5th, 2023

This is a reminder about the NJ Division's special meet on August 5th at the Switlik Park facility. The NJ Division has the Switlik facility for the entire day so the program will vary somewhat from the usual format. There will be multiple clinics, a popular vote modeling contest and AP judging of models. In addition there will be a model showcase for you to show off and briefly tell us about your project. The tentative scheduling is having the meet formally begin at 10:00 AM, break for lunch around noon, and then continue into the afternoon. Some local layouts may be open for few hours in the afternoon but the meeting at Switlik should conclude between 3:00 and 4:00 PM. You can forward any questions to Mike Prokop's email at njwrr@aol.com. Thanks and we look forward to seeing you in August.

NEW JERSEY DIVISION, NMRA



AUGUST 5TH, 2023

Switlik Park

Hamilton, NJ

9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Switlik Park Recreation Center

5 Fisher Place, Hamilton, NJ 08620

Special Guest Speaker John Kilbride

“Trackside Along the Camden & Amboy Railroad”

Clinics—White Elephant Sales—AP Judging

Popular Vote Contest—Model Showcase Table—Raffle and Door Prizes

Free Table—Guest Speaker—Open Layouts

Free Admission with \$2 Lunch but please RSVP to

Mike Prokop with “special” in the subject to: njwrr@aol.com

## AT THE THROTTLE

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Director

Ed Bush

Please welcome our two new

Directors, Scott and Ed

Any of the above officials may

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## ABOUT THE WHISTLE POST

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Jim Walsh

Deadlines for submissions to the Whistle Post are four weeks prior to the next Division event, as announced in the prior Whistle Post.

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John Montagna's HO scale Nicholas, Fayette and Greenbrier RR will also be open the afternoon of July 22. John's layout depicts the West Virginia mining branch that was jointly operated by the C&O and NYC. This 42 ft x 24 ft around-the-walls layout is set in the mid 1950's steam to diesel transition era. Operations include the branch line with its two interchanges plus the C&O mainline through the New River Gorge.

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