

THE BRASS POUNDER



**Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Division 12, Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association**

Volume 21 Number 2

February 2021

Division Coming Events

(See [CSD Website](#) for
further details)

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED
for inventory and
moving
preparations at
Brookford
Community Center
1700 South Center
Street, Hickory, NC**

**Saturdays during
February
10:00am – 2:00pm**

**Email to volunteer
on link to the right**

Superintendent's Corner

By Alan Hardee

Happy February, or at least I think it's February. NC Governor Cooper has extended our current restrictions until Feb. 28th. So, with that, Carolina Southern Division will not have a large in person meeting this month. Our members' health and welfare are important to us to survive these difficult times. The good news is that a vaccine is now available and will slowly make its way to everyone. We still have a few opportunities for small groups to work together.

Brookford still needs help to inventory the room and layout for a possible move to a local museum. CSD hosted the final run and open house at Brookford in January. We had 6 division members present and 67 visitors come through to see the layout. Too bad we cannot get that much response every month. A BIG Thank You goes out to Gil for all the years of hard work that he has put in since the beginning of this project. Thanks also to Ed and Keith for stepping up recently to give Gil a hand. We still need your help during February. Please see the details from Gil and volunteer for a Saturday to help. I have already sent in my email to wadestraintown@carolinasouthern.org to volunteer for a couple of shifts. Hope to see you there as well.

I have confirmed, as of now at least, that the Train Show at the WNC Ag Center in Fletcher is still on for February 26th and 27th. Show times are Noon to 7pm on Friday and 9 am to 5 pm on Saturday. I have also heard unconfirmed rumors that the Hickory Train Show in April will be a 2 day show this year. Let us hope this is a good sign for things to come in the future.

UPCOMING AREA TRAIN EVENTS

**31st Annual Asheville
Model Train Show**
**Western NC Agricultural
Center**
**761 Boylston Hwy
Fletcher, NC 28732**
Friday, Feb 26, 2021
Noon to 7:00pm
Saturday Feb 27, 2021
9:00am – 5:00pm

**Columbia, SC Model
Train Show**
Jamil Shrine Temple
206 Jamil Road
Columbia, SC 29210
Saturday, March 27
9:00am – 3:00pm

**19th Annual NC Railroad
Expo**
Hickory Metro Center
1960 13th Ave Drive SE
Hickory, NC 28602
Friday, April 9th
12:00 – 7:00pm and
Saturday, April 10th
9:00am – 4:00pm

**COVID-19
PRECAUTIONS IN
EFFECT AT ALL EVENTS.
STAY SAFE AND
HEALTHY.**

Editor's Notes

By Ed Gumphrey

So, it's February already. Where did January go? If not for the final run at Brookford last month, I would have very little to report on Division activities. In normal times I'd be recording the results of our annual meeting and elections and writing about a flurry of upcoming Division activity. From my email traffic and social media posts it's pretty clear to me that some Division members are a bit melancholy. Certainly, we all long for a return to normal activities.

I have spent a good deal of my time reflecting on my plans for finally building a model railroad for myself. I've also spent time researching a bridge project I'm going to do for Ed Smith's railroad. If all goes according to plan, you'll be able to see that in a future edition of the newsletter.

On the bright side, you'll notice the banner to the left is now filled with three dates for coming train shows. Maybe things are finally returning to normal. It's time for a happy face.



Also, **CONGRATULATIONS** to David Myers for earning his Golden Spike Award.

I'll close with one more appeal for volunteers. In addition to Superintendent Alan Hardee's call, you'll see in the report from Gil Brauch, MMR that we still need some help closing out our 35+ year project at Brookford. Please help if you can.

Oh, yeah, and let me hear from you about your projects.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

I target the 1st of each month for publication. Please submit articles for publication by the 27th of each month.

The preferred format is MS Word, but I can convert most other formats.

For questions and help, email me at editor@carolinasouthern.org

Train Town Now Closed

Division Volunteers Still Needed

Gil Brauch, MMR - Project Manager

The “Final Run at Brookford” was held for Wade’s Train Town on January 9, 2021. Approximately 67 persons, many of them first time visitors, came to enjoy the layout and celebrate its over 35 years. Six CSD members assisted in hosting the open house at the Brookford Community Center. Kim Ingle, Wade Warren’s daughter, also attended along with several members of her family. This was a bitter-sweet occasion as we took some time to admire the skills and tenacity of a fellow railroad modeler and recall the impact that he and the layout had on the local community.



Kim Ingle (center), and members of her family capture images of her father’s work and recall memories during the ‘Final Run at Brookford’ for Wade’s Train Town on January 9, 2021.

After the open house Kim Ingle, Alan Hardee, and fellow Board Members Larry Paffrath and Ed Smith, along with other members of the Division, met with representatives of a well-known local museum to discuss possible relocation of the layout to their site. We believe the discussions were frank and open and are looking forward to the leadership of that organization extending an invitation to relocate. Following that meeting, Ed Smith, Keith Iritski, and I shut down the room after removing all the external signs to the layout.



Keith Iritski (right) and Ed Smith remove the Train Town sign from its location at the western entrance to the Brookford Community Center, where it had been for over 30 years, following the 'Last Run at Brookford' of Wade's Train Town on January 9, 2021.

But it is not over yet! It is now time to prepare things for the eventuality of a relocation and that will take a concerted effort by members of the CSD to pull it off. The first step is to figure out exactly what is in the room so that we can decide what will be moved and what will be appropriately disposed of. This needs to be done even if the relocation is delayed or not approved. To do this, we will be scheduling some work sessions – mostly on Saturday – for a few workers at a time (no more than four) can count and sort through the various nooks and crannies of the room to discover the 'treasures' that are there and catalog them. Ed Smith and I will be heading up this part of the project, which will be on each Saturday during February. We will begin at 10 am and work for 3-4 hours beginning on February 6th. Check your calendars and email us at wadestrainatown@carolinasouthern.org with the day you would like to volunteer. We will take the first three volunteers for each day. We ask that you give this serious consideration because it will take more than two or three persons to pull off this whole project. If we get enough volunteers, the burden on each person will be much, much lighter.

Here's hoping we can all work together to help preserve this 'heritage layout' to further promote our "World's Greatest Hobby"™.

DIVISION AND REGIONAL NEWS

By Ed Gumphrey

The Carolina Southern Division didn't hold a formal meeting in January. There was a bit of an informal meeting on Saturday, January 9th, starting the day of The Final Run at Brookford. The previous report from Project Manager Gil Brauch, MMR, summarizes those activities and highlights our challenge going forward to prepare for a future move. More information will be forthcoming as negotiations are completed.

Shortly after publishing last month's newsletter, I received the good news from Neal Anderson, MMR and Division AP Chairman that David Myers has earned his Golden Spike Award. Congratulations to David on this accomplishment.

January also marked continuing social media posts from Scott Perry and Seth Gartner's NYC Piney Fork Branch.

Scott is back in Fort Mill. He quickly set his shop back up and has constructed benchwork for a future switching layout based on a Georgia shortline in the current era. You'll get to see more of Scott's great models in future issues – he has generously volunteered to return to his role as a contributing author.

Seth Gartner posted some great pictures and construction tips for vehicle weathering. They add a realistic detail to scenes on his Piney Fork Branch. If you're not keeping tabs on Scott's Piney Fork Facebook page, I highly encourage you to do so. It's full of gems.



Scott Perry has his workbench set up now that he's back in Fort Mill.
Photo from Facebook Post.



Seth Gartner's kit-building and weathering skills yielded this gem on his NYC Piney Fork Branch. Photo from Facebook Post.

The next train show is in Fletcher at the Western NC Agricultural Center on February 26th and 27th. Hopefully coronavirus will abate enough for the event to avoid being cancelled – and stay safe for those in attendance. As of publication date, the show is still listed on the Agricultural Center's Calendar.


WNC MODEL RAILROADERS
ASHEVILLE, NC


31st Annual Asheville Model Train Show



Western NC Agricultural Center

Friday, Feb 26, 2021 Noon to 7:00pm
Saturday Feb 27, 2021 9:00am – 5:00pm

UPCOMING CONVENTION NEWS

By Ed Gumphrey

There are two relatively nearby NMRA Regional Conventions on the calendar for 2021.

- The first is our neighboring Southeast Region (SER) Convention in Greenville, SC and has been rescheduled from June to September. Make your plans for September 9-12 and get more details at www.swamprabbitexpress.org
- The second is our own Mideast Region (MER) Convention in Baltimore, MD. Make your plans for next October 21-24 and get more details at <https://mtclarejct.com/>

FIRST UP:



Greenville, SC
September 9 – 12, 2021

Information at:

www.swamprabbitexpress.org



FOLLOWED BY:



MOUNT CLARE JUNCTION
MER 2021 - BALTIMORE, MD

Information at:

<https://mtclarejct.com/>

OCTOBER 21-24, 2021

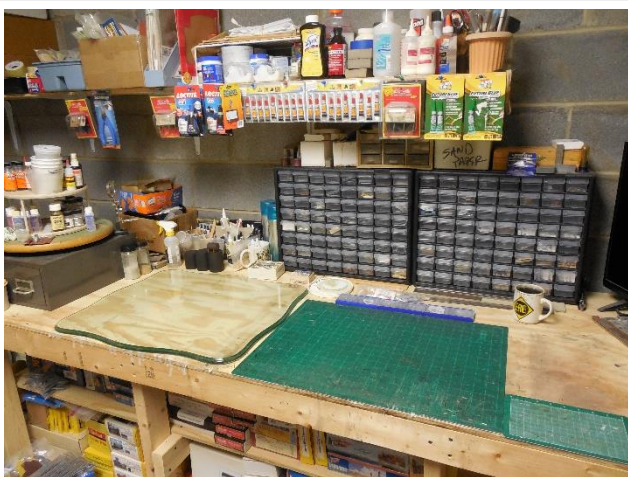


THINNING THE HERD

By Ed Smith

Boy, I can't believe January is already gone. Time sure flies. As model railroading goes, last year was almost a total loss when it comes to my layout. First, Covid-19 cancelled all plans on work sessions on my upper deck. Then, back problems shut me down from August on. I was relegated to sitting at my work bench for half of the year. Hopefully, now after surgery and with recovery and rehab, I'll be able to work on the layout soon. Work sessions will have to wait until we conquer Covid-19.

All that being said, I was sitting at my work bench, having completed the scratch build project that I chronicled here for the last 5 months, and something caught my eye. I had a clean work area! No wood, styrene, glues, paints, or tools on my bench (pic 1). That hasn't happened in a long time. Although refreshing, I sat at the bench pondering what to do next. I had the answer literally at my feet (pic 2). Like most model railroaders, I've collected way too many kits. From basic styrene structures to elaborate craftsman kits. Now was the time to thin the herd and build some of these projects that I've put off way too long. But, what to build?



Pic 1: A clean workbench invites a new project.



Pic 2: A plethora of kits under the workbench.

The decision was really easy. The scratch build project had me working in an area East of Hancock, NY, on my railroad. Going West, across the river, is the town of Hancock. I have already laid track for the station area (pic 3). I have many photos of the station and one aerial shot, circa 1960's, showing the station location, plus a freight station and a coal elevator (pic 4). This is the perfect place to use some of those kits. I purchased a craftsman kit of the Erie Hancock

station, manufactured by Stella Scale Models, a few years ago at a train show. This kit would set the scene. Next, I found two kits that closely replicated the other structures. The Lunde Coal elevator by [Monroe Models](#) and the Center Hall Depot by [Laser-Art Structures](#) (pic 5). All three are laser-cut wood kits of varying difficulty.



Pic 3: Track is in place at Hancock on the lower level, awaiting planned structures.



Pic 4: An aerial view of Hancock shows the three prototype structures.



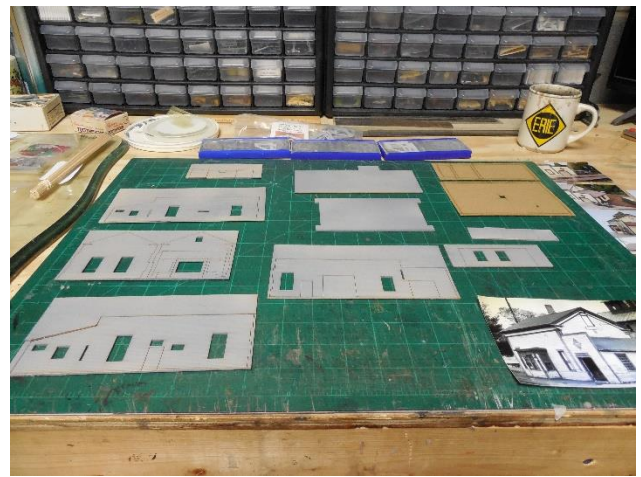
Pic 5: These three laser-cut craftsman kits will provide the basis for the train station, freight station, and coal elevator at Hancock.

The Erie Station: All the steps that I describe will basically be repeated for all three laser kits. First, I read the instructions pamphlets cover to cover (I know, hard to believe a man would do this, but that's how we model railroaders roll). This helps you acclimate yourself to all of the parts. I always check to make sure all parts are present. Some of these kits are pretty old and at first, I didn't know if the manufacturers were still in business if I had a problem. A brief internet search showed that Stella Scale Models is no longer around, but the other two are still in business, as the links show. Back to kit building – I laid out all the wood sides (pic 6) and then primed all

wood parts, on both sides, using Krylon Gray primer (pic 7). Painting both sides prevents moisture absorption. I painted the trim wood red, black, and cream color, using acrylics to match the Erie RR paint scheme. Using wood glue, I glued the wall sections together and added trim (pic 8). After the glue dried, I painted the walls a dull white, using a mixture of acrylic White and Camel. While the paint dried, I prepared the Tichy windows and doors by painting them red and green, once again, Erie's scheme (pic 9). The windows and doors were installed and the peel and stick shingles applied row by row (pic 10). Finally, all of the building's trim and the chimney were added (pic 11). The final touch was adding a foam core base, signage, and heavily weathering the structure to represent post WWII maintenance conditions (pic 12). Note: since all three of these structures are laser cut wood, I use Pan Pastels for weathering. The wood is porous and will accept and hold the pastels.



Pic 6: Kit pieces laid out along with instructions and reference photos help familiarize you with the task ahead and verify everything is ready..



Pic 7: Laser-cut wall and part panels are primed on both sides. Priming the wood helps prevent problems with warping due to humidity.



Pic 8: Basic structure is assembled and some trim installed.



Pic 9: Window castings and trim strips are pre-painted and ready for assembly.



Pic 10: Windows are installed along with peel-and-stick shingles.



Pic 11: The other side of the station includes a bay for the station master's ticket sales.



Pic 12: Weathered and mounted on a foam core base, the Erie station is ready for placement on the layout and final addition of details.

The Freight Station: As stated before, the preparation steps are the same. After priming and painting the sides, they are glued and clamped together (pic 13). The windows and doors have been installed. These pieces are peel and stick laser cut wood. The roof was installed and shingles applied (pic 14). When applying shingles, horizontal reference lines ½" apart, should be drawn to keep the shingle rows straight. Once again, foam core board was added for a foundation and Pan Pastels were applied (pic 15).



Pic 13: Freight house walls and platform are assembled and the peel-and-stick windows and doors installed.



Pic 14: Peel-and-stick shingles have been applied to the roof panels. Rubber bands were used to hold the panels in place while glue dried.



Pic 15: The completed freight house is mounted on a foam core board and ready for its position on the layout.

The Coal Elevator: The laser cut pieces were trimmed off their sheets and primed. The base structures were squared and glued together. A coat of acrylic Burnt Umber was applied to the sides. The wood trim, doors, and windows were painted. After drying, the peel and stick pieces were applied (pic 16). The coal chutes and weights are also laser cut wood. The chutes are bent to the desired shape, painted, weathered with a rust color, and installed. Thread and small wood pieces make up the counter weight assembly (pic 17). The overhang roof was added and peel and stick shingles applied. Also, foam core board was used again for foundation (pic 18). Instead of using supplied shingles on the main roof, I used cloth tape, painted flat black, to represent tar paper and closely represent the roof in the aerial picture. The unit was weathered. The last detail is a bucket conveyor that will be added next to the steps, from the tracks to the top of the building (pic 19).



Pic 16: Following basic assembly, acrylic paint was applied to the sides of the coal elevator.



Pic 17: Coal chutes were bent to shape and installation begins with thread and counterweights.



Pic 18: The overhang roof is installed along with its shingles. Coal chute assembly is completed and the structure is mounted on foam core board.



Pic 19: The bucket conveyor is installed and weathering applied. The main roof was made with cloth tape to represent tar paper roofing.

Here are the completed structures (pic 20). An assortment of details, shovels, baggage carts, etc. will be added as the buildings are installed on the layout. The buildings were set on the layout to get some kind of idea of how they will look (pic 21). Because of my track orientation

on the lower deck, left is West and right is East, the station actually faces away from the aisle. This aligns with the aerial view but restricts viewing of the front of the building.



Pic 20: The three completed structures.



Pic 21: Trial placement on the layout.

Hopefully, I can get back to the upper deck mainline soon. If not, I have plenty of kits to keep me busy. My working buddy, Elway, has decided a warm chair is better than my shop in the winter (pic 22). Stay safe, and I hope we can all get our vaccine shots soon. Maybe, just maybe, we'll be able to meet again in the upcoming months.

ED





Decisions, Decisions...

By Ed Gumphrey

Background. Like most in our generation, I started out with Lionel in the mid fifties. When my dad got stationed in Germany in 1957, I got my first exposure to HO scale, looking at Märklin and Fleischmann models. My dad was somewhat obsessed with the need for electrical simplicity, especially with wiring reverse loops. Märklin's 3 rail AC was just like the simple Lionel, so Märklin got the nod over Fleischmann's 2 rail DC. At my first Christmas in Germany, I received a starter set of Märklin trains, marking my entry to HO. I collected and ran European prototype trains, and actually learned a good bit about the German National Railway (DB - Deutsche Bundesbahn).

We returned to the U.S. in 1960 and I set up a Märklin layout in the corner of my bedroom. By 1962 it was off to military school (I graduated from Culver Military Academy in 1966). Those years, followed by 2 years of partying at Clemson and my first four years in the Navy, all interrupted my activity in the hobby. In the fall of 1973, while taking my wife Kathy shopping for a sewing machine, I spotted a nearby hobby shop. I commented that I hadn't been in a hobby shop in years. With Kathy's blessing, I dropped in to browse. I was astounded at the level of detail in HO models, and chatted at length with the young clerk at the hobby shop. It just so happens he was a member of the nearby Severna Park Model Railroad Club. The club is located in the old Baltimore & Annapolis depot in Riggs Ave. He invited me to stop by that evening during their normal meeting time. That was the spark that reignited the fire.

I visited the Severna Park club that night and was astounded. They had just been on the cover of MR the previous summer (June '73). The club featured incredible detail, all hand-laid track, and lots of scratchbuilt structures. The membership included a number of avid B&O fans (most of whom are, in today's terminology, RPM modelers, and all would be considered "rivet counters."). I joined the club. The members actually agreed that active-duty military should be able to join free of dues, for which I was thankful. I think the doctor, two lawyers, an airline pilot, and several business executives sensed the constraints of a Navy E-5 with a wife, two kids and his first mortgage. As an aside, the staff from Scale Trains recently



The Severna Park Model Railroad Club is located in the old Baltimore & Annapolis depot in Severna Park, MD. They celebrated their 50th anniversary in the summer of 2013.

visited the Severna Park club and posted a [four-minute video](#) that includes footage of the Severna Park layout. Coverage of the layout begins at about the two-minute mark of the video. Alas, I digress.

Back to the history. Within a couple of months in '73 I also became part of a round-robin group of B&O aficionados. By late '74 I had polished my airbrushing skills to the point of getting commissioned to paint some brass locomotives. The extra income financed my first brass loco purchase, a B&O E-27 consolidation by PFM. Living on the outskirts of Baltimore from 72-74, then again from 77-80, I did lots of railfanning of B&O sites. I spent countless hours watching trains with my sons at Thomas Viaduct, visited Camden Station and the freight warehouse at Camden Yards, the B&O Museum, Point of Rocks, Harpers Ferry, etc. All the while, I was rubbing elbows with B&O experts. The hook was set, and I decided to focus on modeling B&O equipment. These relationships cemented my interest in the B&O ever since. These signature B&O scenes, shown in the accompanying photos, were etched into my brain as places that would make fantastic focal points on a model railroad.



B&O Camden Station in Baltimore, MD in the current era, after the Oriole Park was opened.



B&O Warehouse in the current era, after the Oriole Park was opened.



B&O Warehouse back in the days before Oriole Park. The warehouse is almost 1100 feet long. An HO scale model of the warehouse would be a touch over twelve feet long and about fifteen inches tall.



B&O Royal Blue on Thomas Viaduct in 1937 when the viaduct was already over 100 years old. Completed in July of 1835, the curved arch viaduct carries double track mainline CSX traffic to this day.



The beautiful B&O station at Point of Rocks, MD. Completed in 1873, the station sits at the junction of the Old Main Line into Baltimore and the Metropolitan Branch into Washington, DC. The station is preserved today, but no longer active for passenger use.



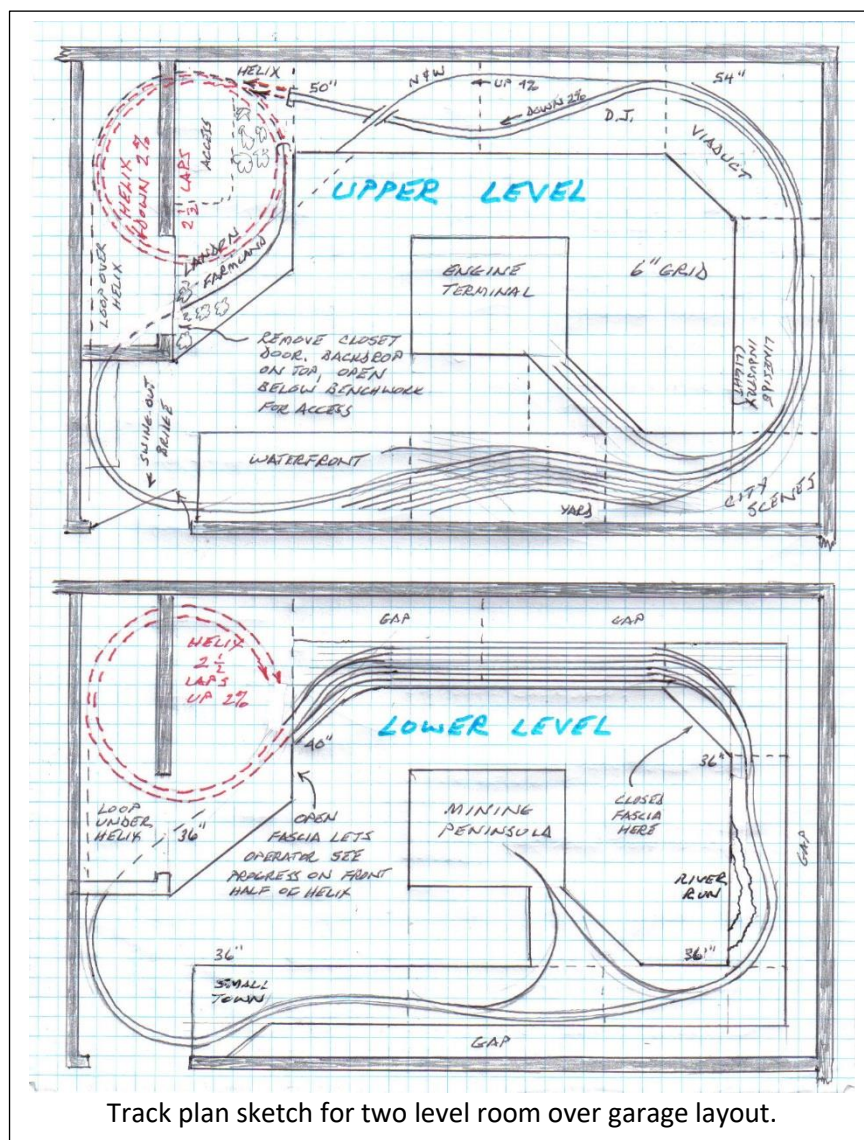
A signature scene of the B&O crossing the Potomac River into Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.
The diverging lines would make a great scene on a model railroad.

In 1980, after the Navy stationed me on a ship homeported in Charleston, SC, I finally had a chance to build a railroad in one half of our 2-car garage. It was a free-lanced, B&O-based layout, featuring hand-laid track and block control for three throttles. Prototype-based freelanced railroads were common then. The famous articles about Allen McClelland's V&O had built a strong case for the "close enough" approach, and operations were becoming more important to many in the hobby. The freelanced railroads were similarly represented by the likes of Tony Koester's Allegheny Midland and other model railroads that his railroad conducted virtual interchanges with. My freelanced B&O pike had imaginary towns named after my five children, but my intent was to follow B&O practices and use equipment as close to the prototype as I could. I managed to get to the point of an operational mainline, and some scenery in place. I even had my own version of a scaled down (6 arches instead of 8) "Thomas Viaduct" with its two tracks on 48" and 50" radii. I tore it all down after two years to open up the garage - I was taking in car repair work for extra income. By the time I packed up, I had collected 4 brass locomotives (all B&O prototypes), another half dozen plastic steam locos (also B&O) and a few first generation diesels (you guessed it, B&O).

The Dream Layout. Fast forward 30 years. One restriction or another had relegated me to armchair railroading, but I was collecting stuff from time to time. I passed up the chance several times to build a small layout, but opted to wait until I could build my "dream railroad." In retrospect that was a mistake, but that's a topic for another discussion. By 2008 I had the fortune of some disposable income and kicked my collection habit into high gear. In addition to lots of B&O stuff,

I started my "interesting locomotive" collection (UP Big Boy & Challenger, #611, SP Cab Forward, UP Veranda Turbine, etc. - even a D&RGW Galloping Goose. I was also bitten by the collection bug for Walther's Name Trains (UP Cities, ATSF Super Chief and El Capitan, GN Empire Builder, Milwaukee Hiawatha, PRR Broadway Limited, etc.). All the while, I continued collecting B&O equipment and kits for my future "dream" layout. A particular gem was a Christmas gift from my wife. She treated me to one of Model Tech Studios limited run resin kits of the Point of Rocks station. My "dream railroad" would aim at capturing the "feel" of the B&O without being prototype-specific as to locations. Mythical towns, etc. I like waterfront scenes, and had collected all the Walther's waterfront kits along with Sylvan Scale Models freighter (about 3 feet long). I was going to name it "Eastport" as it would represent the eastern end of my railroad. Proceeding west would include the Thomas Viaduct and Point of Rocks. As the line progressed westward it would capture the feel of crossing into West Virginia and heavy coal operations.

After I retired from the Navy, I started a second career as a project manager and systems test manager in the ship repair industry. That necessitated a move to Virginia Beach – the bulk of the Navy's ship repair is in Norfolk and Portsmouth. I worked up a track plan for a double level layout in the room over the garage. Roughly 12' x 19', it was cramped and full of compromises from my "dream." Again, I decided against building anything and just continued focus on collecting stuff and armchair railroading.



Then, about 2011, I read an article (I think in NMRA Bulletin) about how many "dream railroads" never got finished - people bit off more than they could chew. The tales about the number of "dream railroads" that had languished after a few years were staggering. The author also talked at length about "starting over" by examining his own interests. He even changed from HO to S scale and built a small branchline. That train of thought really struck me. A seismic shift occurred and I grasped the idea of a free-lanced branchline. Bear in mind that all through the years the hobby was changing too. There was much more emphasis on prototype accuracy and operations. Freelanced railroads were not as much in vogue in the hobby press. Even Tony Koester had abandoned the Allegheny Midland. In addition to his well-documented construction of a very accurate Nickel Plate railroad, his many editorial articles in *Model Railroader* emphasized the enjoyment of research and fidelity to prototype railroading. Now you're starting to see why I titled this article "Decisions, Decisions." At least I could continue feeding my collecting habit. To at least look at stuff, I even had the luck of displaying some models in my office.

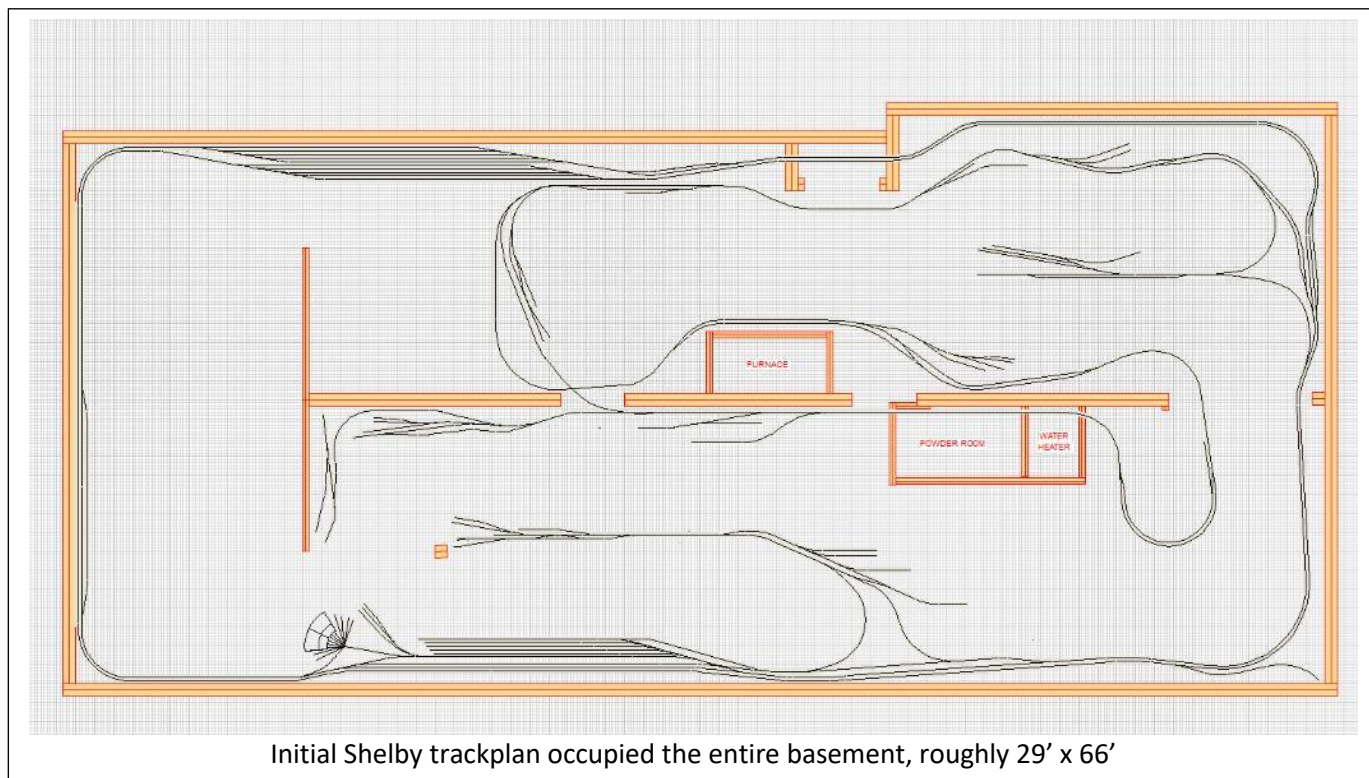


Office wall display let me at least enjoy some of my equipment, including all of the Chessie System Safety Slogan cabooses on the bottom two rows.

I decided to start selling off some of my B&O stuff, rented a table at a train show and sold off about \$1700 worth in a day. My collecting shifted to light steam (2-6-0, 2-8-0, 4-6-0) that my fictitious railroad would use. Heaviest motive power would be light mikes. That trend only lasted about a year, and then faded as I succumbed to the horrible thought of disposing of my vast B&O collection.

By the time I was ready to retire in 2014, I had amassed a huge collection of B&O stuff (over 30 brass steam locos, 20 diesels, and 300+ freight cars from the transition era), as well as virtually every Walther's Cornerstone kit ever marketed. A full basement was a must on our retirement home house-hunting venture. We found our dream home in Shelby, a 1950 square foot brick rancher on 5.6 acres with a full unfinished basement. My mouth was watering. I finally

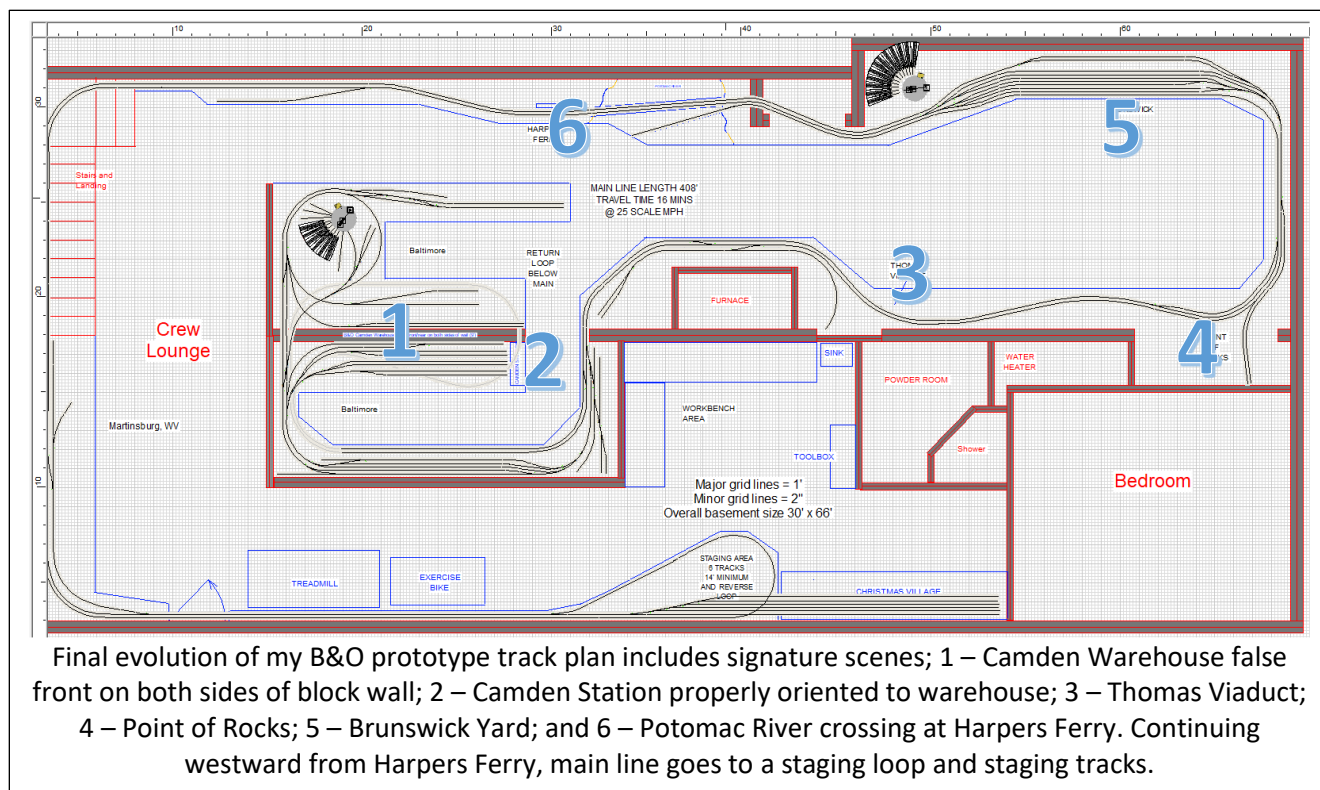
had space to build my “dream” layout. The concept was still a freelanced railroad based on B&O practices. My initial trackplan occupied the entire basement.



Initial Shelby trackplan occupied the entire basement, roughly 29' x 66'

Next in the evolution was the influence of prototype accuracy. New budding friendships with CSD members (Andrew Stitt - accuracy to railroad operations in and around York, PA; Seth Gartner - accuracy to NYC railroad operations around his home town; Ed Smith - accuracy to Erie operations and signature scenes; Tim Rumph - accuracy to Southern's S-line; Joe Skorch – accuracy to Southern Pacific sugar beet operations in California; and even a layout tour during the MER convention to John King's incredible fidelity to the B&O Shenandoah Division. Thus was born a shift in concept to actual prototype scenes - Baltimore, Point of Rocks, etc. which brings us to the present.

In the meantime, I had decided to reduce the railroad's footprint. I would build a bedroom in the corner of the basement, expand from a half bath to a full bath, and provide for a large workshop area. Creative ideas flooded into my mind. After constructing some walls for the new spaces, a section of the centerline concrete block walls would lend itself to being a double-sided false front / false rear of the huge B&O warehouse at Camden Yards. I could also include Camden Station correctly oriented. I even have enough room for the warehouse to be a tad over 12 feet long – no selective compression needed. With the line westward, I could feature Thomas Viaduct, Point of Rocks, the large yard area at Brunswick (a B&O Division Point), and even incorporate the Potomac River crossing at Harpers Ferry. I was elated over this evolution of plans for my “dream.” I could abandon the idea of a prototype-based freelance railroad and more accurately model the real B&O. I would build part of Baltimore! I would include all my favorite signature scenes.



DECISIONS, DECISIONS. As pleased as I was with my ideas and the final evolution of my "dream," its complexity is daunting and put me back on the fence. To some extent I began struggling with the frustration of traveling down the "RPM" road. Research into actual operations revealed that the heaviest steam motive power wasn't used east of Brunswick. During my favored timeframe of 1952-53 trackage east of Brunswick was at least 95% diesel. Some of the stuff I like I can't use. Deviations from actual prototype track plans become negative factors. Once you start "bending" the reality of history, you start down a slippery slope back to a "free lanced" approach (which might not be as bad as the model railroad press makes it out to be). All of which prompted more introspection.

Reality also sets in. My energy level isn't anywhere close to what it used to be. My wall and bathroom construction in the basement has been going on for about 3 years now, and I'm easily 3 months from completion, even if I "kick my own ass" into gear. Many weeks pass with no progress when I just don't feel like doing anything. The likelihood of becoming mired down by a complex undertaking which becomes an overwhelming challenge is daunting. I have a strong fear that I'll become another one of those statistics of a "dream railroad" unfinished and collecting dust. Time for some thought on basic factors.

I like steam. Although heavy steam is awesome, I'm drawn to the lighter locos typically used by branch lines (moguls, consolidations and ten-wheelers). In addition to their charm, branch lines are easier to scale down to HO and still maintain realism with short trains and small trackside industries. I like building models (tons of generic structure kits, both plastic and craftsman type). Like many, I really enjoy doing scenery - it's a nice outlet for the "artist" in me to create something original. I'm a bit of a novice at operations. Although I'm quickly bored by running in circles, I don't find complex operating schemes particularly appealing. My approach to

operations is more along the lines of wheel count: one car in, one car out. Within the Division I'm somewhat geographically isolated in Shelby. The likelihood of getting more than two or three people here at once for an operating session is slim. Most of my operations will be solo, with no need for complexity.

All of which leads me back to the idea of a short line railroad. I went back to the idea of a free-lanced short line. My favorite idea I've named The North Carolina and West Virginian, a line connecting with the B&O in WV and with the Southern Railway in NC. I have affectionately dubbed it "The Blue Ridge Line". With attention to interchange trackage at each end, I am developing a short line track plan. It will be far less complex – single track with passing sidings.

If I go true point-to-point, I can eliminate several complexities, including going under the stairs. I can open up the hall area to the bedroom. A simple interchange at each end doesn't even need to lead to any staging. Interchanged cars from the short line can simply sit until the next train and then become "new" cars to come back onto the short line. If I re-adopt the idea of a continuous run option, I can do a loop-to-loop schematic.

As to disposing of my collection, I would keep a few items for display - there's plenty of market for all of my other stuff on e-Bay. Shifting to a branch line would even let me keep the beautiful craftsman kit from Hunterline of a timber truss bridge (resting on framed piers) from my last trip to a train show in Timonium. As you might gather, I'm still on the fence.

As always, I welcome your thoughts. By the time we have another Division meeting I should have something worked up. I'll bring copies with me and we can brainstorm together. Thanks for bearing with me, but I think the history puts it all in perspective as to how I got where I am today. Bottom line at this point is I don't know what I want to do for sure.



170' HOWE TRUSS THROUGH BRIDGE

I bought a Hunterline craftsman kit at my last visit to a Timonium train show three years ago. It begs to become a focal point on a small branchline railroad,.

CLOSING PAGE BONUS



*As this issue goes to press, not too far
to the north...*

Photo from internet search

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