

# THE BRASS POUNDER

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

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## Carolina Southern Division Events

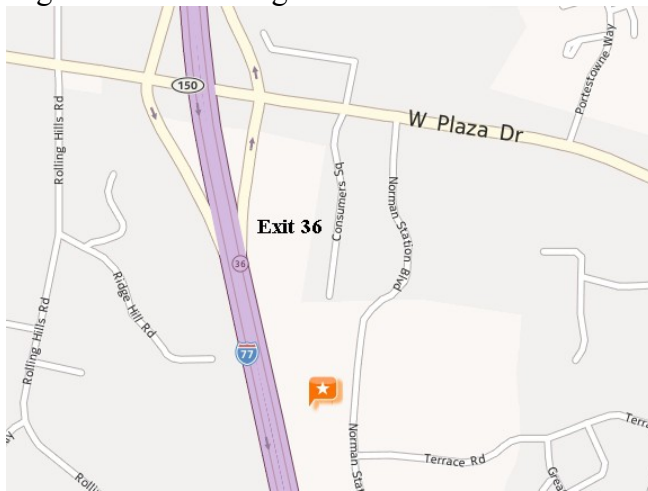
### Saturday Monthly Meetings

**May 18 10:30 AM**  
**June 15 10:30 AM**  
No July meeting  
**August 10 10:30 AM**

See carolinasouthern.org web site for program details.

HobbyTown USA,  
168-W Norman Station Blvd., Mooresville

North on I 77 to exit 36  
Right at end of ramp  
Right at Wal-Mart sign



### Wade's Train Town Open House

**Saturday June 8 10:00 – 2:00**  
**Saturday July 13 10:00 – 2:00**  
**Saturday August 10 10:00 – 2:00**  
Brookford Town Hall

## Calendar of Events

**July 14 - July 20, 2013**

**Peachtree Express**

**2013 NMRA National  
Convention**

Atlanta, GA

<http://www.nmra2013.org/>



**October 10-13, 2013**

**C & P Junction, MER Convention**

Rockville Crowne Plaza  
Rockville, MD

<http://mer.nmra.org/MERConv/MERConv.html>

Sat, June 22, 9am – 4pm  
2013 NC Train Show

Metrolina Expo Trade Center, Charlotte, NC  
<http://www.gserr.com/shows/2013NCFlyer.pdf>

## February Division Meeting

By Dave Draxler

Roy Becker presented a lecture on how to program motive power decoders using JMRI (Java Model Railroad Interface).



Roy set up a DCC system interfaced to his laptop PC running JMRI with the monitor output displayed on the large TV in the HobbyTown store

From JMRI's website: instead of having to know how to program decoders using the CV's and the hexadecimal system the DecoderPro symbolic programmer is meant to improve this. It is configured using text files, so that it can be adapted to additional decoder types easily.



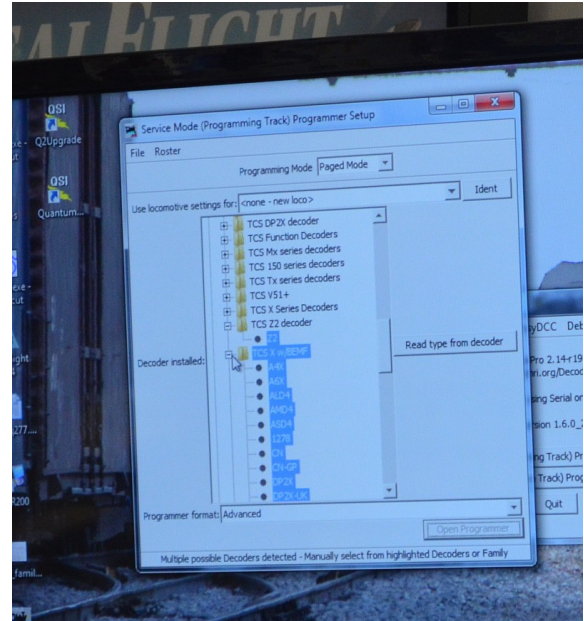
Roy shows an interface board that lets him connect a decoder to the programming track output of the DCC system. Board includes a motor so that the decoder can respond to commands by briefly turning motor on and drawing current from the DCC system.

Decoder Pro talks to the decoders using the JMRI programming interface, so that it can run on any computer and layout hardware that JMRI has been ported to. It's freely available for download. And

since the code is available via open source, if you want to improve on it you can.

Here's the link to the DecoderPro portion of the JMRI website:

<http://jmri.sourceforge.net/help/en/html/apps/DecoderPro/index.shtml>



DecoderPro comes with an extensive list of configuration files for many models of decoder.

I use both DecoderPro and PanelPro in working on my layout.



Bob Halsey brought a field guide to locomotives for the raffle.

## At The Throttle

By Jack Haynes

The North Carolina Transportation Museum has a special program called At The Throttle. It is held on just a few Saturdays each year. This year, I was presented a surprise birthday present: a ticket for the event on April 13. It was a great day.



The engineer goes over the controls of the locomotive in hopes of keeping me out of trouble during the run.

A ticket for the event gives you thirty minutes at the controls of a real steam engine under power. The locomotive is Lehigh Valley Coal #126, a saddle tank 0-6-0.



It's fired up and ready to go. With the engine brake released, I have the throttle in hand and ease it open.

As instructed, we checked in a little ahead of time and go over some basics on the process and safety measures. The staff working the event were all great, very friendly, helpful, and patient.

When my turn came, I climbed up into the cab and the engineer introduced me to the firemen. That's right, someone else does all the hard work shoveling coal (yes coal fired) and maintaining the water level. The engineer then went over all the controls explaining what each did and how to operate it. He covered the engine brake, train line brake, drain cocks lever, Johnson bar (forward/reverse lever), whistle cord, and throttle lever. A steam engineer has a lot of individual functions to control, you don't just open the throttle and let a computer take care of everything else.

So then he stepped me through starting up. First, open the drain cocks; when an engine has been sitting idle of a few minutes, steam condenses in the cylinders and will get in the way of normal operation so they have to be open on starting and then closed after a short distance. Then set the reverser to forward, moving the Johnson bar to the forward position. I should have prepared for the event by lifting some weights. I had to step behind the reversing lever and lean against it to move it. Release the engine brake moving the lever to the left watching the air pressure dial (that one is easy to move). Blow the whistle two times to signal that we are about to move forward. Finally, move the throttle slowly back to let steam to the cylinders and wait for the engine to respond. As the engine speeds up, adjust the throttle for a constant speed. They only go ten to fifteen miles per hour. Oops, don't get too excited and forget to close the drains.



We are off! I have actually started up a steam locomotive.

The track for the run is on one side of the museum grounds. It runs along the side near the main road and goes out beyond the exhibit area. It goes about a half mile up to a road crossing for an access road to the storage tracks behind the museum grounds. It is a lightly maintained track so it is a little bumpy and this loco doesn't have soft springs.

So now it's time to stop and go back. Ease off the throttle, move the engine brake lever gradually over and wait. These brakes aren't like your car, they take time to stop. Once stopped, it's time for the Johnson bar again. Brace a foot against the cab wall, get a shoulder against it, release the lock lever and give it a good shove (or two, or three) and get it to the reverse position. Sound the whistle three times to signal moving in reverse and ease out the throttle to send steam to the cylinders again. No need for the drains, we weren't stopped for long.



We're back passing the station, move quickly through the steps to stop before the end of the track.

On the run back, we went a short way past the station and stopped before we go too close to the switch that connected to the main part of the museum.

There was plenty of time left on my thirty minutes so we set off on another run. While watching some others run the engine before my turn came, it seemed that there were extra people in the cab. We asked about it and were told that one other adult could ride along after the first run. I guess they needed to know that I wouldn't run it off the track. My grandson, Cameron, was old enough to qualify as "adult" (he's almost as tall as me) so he climbed aboard for the second run. He

got a cab right out of the deal about fifty years younger than me.



Grandson enjoyed a cab ride and had a chance to assist the firemen.

On the second run, I could let the throttle out a bit more and worked on my whistle technique. You can make a lot of different sounds by varying how far and how quickly you pull on the cord.

At the turn, the fire needed a little help, so the fireman handed Cameron the shovel and pointed him to the coal bunker. Opening the firedoor, he pointed to a corner of the firebox where the coal should go and Cameron threw it in. A couple more shovelfuls and we had enough steam to finish the ride.

We made one more short round trip to finish up my half-hour then climbed down, a little gritty, but very happy to have had the opportunity.

I want to thank all those involved in the NC Transportation and especially those who crew At The Throttle. I was a special experience that will not be soon forgotten. Hopefully it will be back again next year. Watch their web site:

<http://www.nctrans.org/>

**The Division Brass**

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**Submissions For Brass Pounder**

Next Issue Submission Date  
 August 2013 July 28, 2013

Articles are welcome on any railroad topic, model or prototype. Your editor is available to assist in preparing the materials.

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