

THE BRASS POUNDER



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

Volume 15 Number 4

September – October 2015

Coming Events

(See CSD Website for
further details)

CSD Monthly Events:

Saturday, October 17
Tour of the Lionel
Corp Headquarters in
Concord, NC
(reservations
required)

Saturday, Nov 14th
CSD Swap Meet at the
Brookford Community
Center, Hickory NC

Other Events:

Oct 9-11, 2015
CSD sponsored semi-
annual North Carolina
Rail Ops Run

Delaware Valley Turn
MER Convention
Oct 22-25, 2015
Mt. Laurel, NJ
[http://mer-
nmra.com/MERConv.html](http://mer-nmra.com/MERConv.html)

Division Website:

[www.carolina
southern.org](http://www.carolinasouthern.org)

Superintendent's Corner RMU Needs a Home

by Jack Haynes

Since 2007, Railroad Modeling University has been one of the Carolina Southern Division's signature events. It has always been well attended by members and visitors from a wide area. Unfortunately, the Northside Baptist Church, our host for the past five years, has decided to not host our Railroad Modeling University next year. We need to find a new home for this popular annual event. If any of you can think of a facility that might be suitable, please contact me or one of the other Division officers. If you have a personal relationship with the facility and are comfortable asking them, see if they are open to the possibility. If they are, the Division officers will work with you and the people at the facility to see if we can reach a suitable arrangement. If you don't want to be directly involved, just provide us with the name of the facility and any contact information you can find and we will take it from there.

Generally, we need the facility for a full day on a Saturday between mid-January and mid- February. There should be space for about four concurrent clinic sessions. This could be four rooms or a larger space where sessions could be held simultaneously and be far enough apart that they won't interfere with each other.

If the facility can provide lunch service, that would be great, but if they cannot, there should be some places nearby where attendees can get lunch. The facility should be fairly convenient to get to, near some major highway, for example.

If you have any ideas, please contact me at 704-293-5193 or jbhaynesjr@yahoo.com, or any of the officers listed in this newsletter or on the Division web site: carolinasouthern.org.

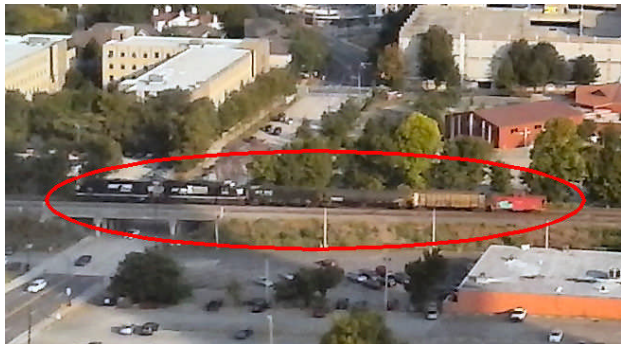
Editor's Notes

By Fred Miller, MMR

Hello again from your **Brass Pounder** editor. This issue of the BP is chock full of articles written by our lady members. They

have stepped forward with some great recounts of Division and NMRA experiences.

The short train pictured below, complete with two diesel units, a couple of freight cars and a graffitied caboose has been sighted on the NS mainline through Charlotte. It has been seen at least once a week during the month of July traveling both north and southbound.



MYSTERY TRAIN

Does anyone have a clue? Sure fun to see a caboose travel the mainline.



A report on the NMRA 2015 Convention by Michele Chance

I had the privilege of attending the 2015 National Model Railroad Association Convention, Portland Daylight Express, in Portland Oregon. The airport arrival was followed by a short 15 minute rail ride to the convention hotel. The light rail made it very convenient for me to stay in the second convention hotel just a 5 minute ride to the main convention hotel.

The clinics were on two floors and plenty of space was given on the first floor for the model contest room, SIG room, and prototype model room, clinic office, registration office/company store, and the

layout tour desk. It was made very convenient to volunteer by sign up sheets on the web and again in the hall at the convention, and your reward beside the experience was a great tee shirt. A separate building housed the silent auction, my choice for volunteer work. I manned the table with clothes pins and matching cards, for clipping to your carry items placed on my



EASTBOUND ON MAX IN PORTLAND

storage table while you took a card with you to retrieve your things after you cruised the train goodies displayed on 100's of tables (well at least many, many tables).

Clinics in eight rooms for modeling and two more rooms for non-rail activities made it hard to choose where to spend your time. I did not join the modeling with the masters in their make and take rooms for I knew I would have to ship my new personally made by me item home. Nine hours a day, eight rooms, for six days comes to 432 rail and model clinics delivered, and every one that I attended was terrific. Now if I could just keep the knowledge delivered I would be an exceptional modeler.

I did take a day to take the guided rail fan tour of Columbia Gorge. It is amazing to see two major rail lines, one on each side of the river. Funny experience is the fact that when on the North side of the river, all the train traffic seemed to be on the South side,

and when the bus rode on the South side all



U.P. LINE ALONG COLUMBIA RIVER IN WISHRAM, WASHINGTON

the train traffic appeared on the North side. One thing I gained by this rail fan trip was the history of the west explained well by our Kiwi guide (New Zealand) and the fact that trains played a major role in the forming of cities and industry of the west. Another appreciation was how long a train can be. The tracks along the gorge had to be moved when the river was damned. The federal government provided money to help the railroads relocate their track higher on the cliffs next to the river. They still sit close to the river but do not have to fear flooding because the damns can control the river. Sometimes causeways were built in the river to run the track, to protect from elevation changes of tracks, and to get stable rock to lay track on.

We also looked at several yards: UP yard in Oregon and BNSF yard in Washington. A lot of attendees were from Canada. I know NMRA tries to move the national convention east and west for convenience of its members but I had not thought of the north and south directions, and can see having it more north brings in the Canadian crowd. Some of the clinics showed bridges of Canada, and the variety on a line was amazing. I need to pay attention to our bridges here and look for the variety.

I also took a day to tour layouts; unfortunately some of the tours were closed

because of forest fires. Some attendees talked about their Amtrak ride to the convention being rerouted because of the fires. I took a layout tour that was local in Portland south west and saw several club layouts and a home layout. A gentleman who had disabilities and owned a stair lift to access his basement opened his home to share his love of trains. He recruited family



LAYOUT BACKGROUND REPRESENTING FAMILY ATTACHMENTS

and friends to help with greeting the modelers and running trains for our enjoyment. My favorite part of his layout was the smile and pure joy reflected in his face as he told some of the created aspects of his layout. He had grandchildren named buildings and pictures of family buildings painted in the backdrop. One layout was at a middle school and though difficult to find was enjoyed and the story gave us the intent of the layout. Each semester the students at the school are allowed to pick the model train study course and they are given instruction and turned loose to create and enjoy the layout. Talk about getting younger people into the hobby, this course delivered that concept very well. I also enjoyed seeing a layout designed for locals to share as a public display with room for everyone in the club to build. An old dairy company had been converted to stores and two of the big rooms are dedicated to model railroad clubs, one room is an HO club, and

another store front is an N gauge club.



NMRA BOOTH AT TRAIN SHOW

The national model train show allowed 9 am to noon for convention attendees only and then opened to the public for the rest of Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday. Lots of modular layouts from around the world were at the expo facility. I saw more Z gauge at the show than I would see in five years around the CS division. Lego trains, built with DCC controls, took up huge areas, and really brought out the family and young modelers. Again some of the layouts were



BRIDGES ON CANADIAN MODULAR LAYOUT IN THE TRAIN SHOW

from Canada, with beautiful bridges and rocky mountain scenes. Tools and equipment and materials were in booths all over the place. I am very interested in a foil with felt, from Woodland Scenic, to make

hydrocal mountain support. Kaydee couplers filled a jar, and I guessed the number in the jar with a chance to win a lot of couplers, must have guessed wrong. The authors were at the magazine tables greeting the crowds. It really is fun to talk to people whose words you have been reading for years. I also talked to Cody Grivno who presents Cody's workshop video presentations. He gave a clinic on changing the railroad at Model Railroader headquarters. It helps me to keep in mind that I can make changes to my line in the future when new thoughts show a better way.



LEGO DISPLAY AT TRAIN SHOW

My favorite part of the convention was the clinics. I even went to a clinic by NMRA president Charlie Getz. He told us what the board has been up to. I voted, or at least was counted in the national meeting that followed.

The next national convention is in Indianapolis Indiana July 2016. Close enough to drive to, and sure to give us fun and pleasure. The one in Orlando Florida in 2017 should give a great outing for all those with young at heart families. I hope to see you at the conventions, one of your benefits of being a member of NMRA. By the way, volunteer a few hours, you will be surprised who you meet and the experience you will have with the attendees.

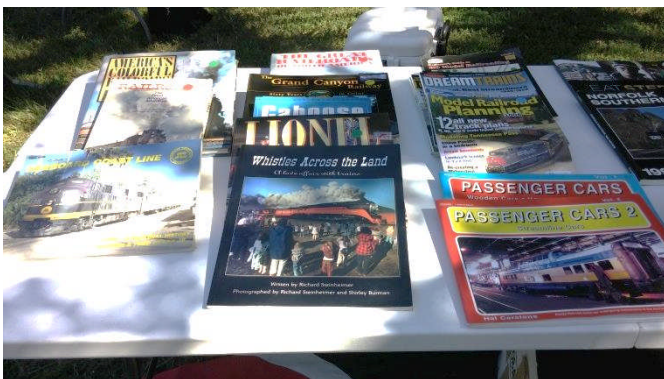


Jack Haynes, Fred Miller, Gil Brauch, Larry and Nora Paffrath, and Dayna enjoy the view. Morgan and Troy are in back, busy at the grill



Roxana, Roy, and Joe chowing down

Naturally, there were door prizes and a fund-raising raffle after the meal, and then Jack Parker invited the assembled members to enjoy some operating time on his fantastic layout. Several members took up the challenge, and the others sat and chatted and enjoyed the lake view.



Door prize winner and the raffle winners got to choose from an assortment of books and

magazines which were displayed on a side table



If you are planning to attend the 2015 MER Convention here's an important note from Bob Clegg, Convention Chair:

First, there will be home railroads to see on your way to the convention on Thursday afternoon and evening. The booklets with maps and directions are available to registered attendees, so get in those registrations!

Thursday booklets are available via return email. Send your request to BobcatCS@comcast.net with the subject "MER 2015 tour booklet." Be sure to include your name, NMRA membership number, and registration number, The booklet will be sent via return email. You can also receive the hardcopy version by sending a stamped (70c) self-addressed #10 envelope and the same information to:

Bob Clegg
 Delaware Valley Turn
 956 Venezia Ave.
 Vineland, NJ 06361 -8600

The tour booklets for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are also available in advance. All of the booklets are .pdf files so you may print complete booklets, or just the pages containing the destinations that are of interest to you.



NMRA INFONET NEWS



July 2015

by Tom Draper, HLM
Director – Support Services

Candidates for the 2016 Election John Stevens, NMRA Secretary:

National Nominating Committee Chair, Tony Koester has submitted the Combined Nominating Committees' Final Report to the National Board of Directors. The candidates for the 2016 election are as follows:

Atlantic District Director

-Peter Bowen
-Kathy Millat

At Large World Wide Director

Mike Brestel

Western District Director

-Steve Barkley
-Don Fowler
-Stephen Priest

A message from Mike Brestel, NMRA At Large Worldwide Director

The three strikes policy: What is it and what does it mean?

We've been getting a lot of questions about the Visitor Policy that the NMRA Board adopted and publicized in February of this year, limiting visitors to NMRA

meetings to three visits during their lifetime. This isn't really a new policy, since it was first adopted in 2007 and explained in the "President's Car" column in the November, 2007 issue of *Scale Rails*. Then, as now, the needs of our insurance provider played a large part in the adoption of this policy, but there are also issues of basic fairness, as well as tax issues in the U.S.

Here's the policy: Visitors are allowed three visits to an NMRA meeting IN THEIR LIFETIME. If they don't join by their third visit, they cannot attend any more meetings.

A lot of the questions we've been getting are from members trying to over-complicate the policy, worrying about this or that exception and making up complicated what-ifs. The policy does not apply to spouses who come along to the meetings so that they can go to dinner afterwards. It does not apply to non-member caregivers who aren't modelers, but who provide a ride to a member who cannot drive himself. It does not apply to events that are organized for the general public, like mall shows, swap meets, beginner clinic series, and the like, nor does it apply to things like joint meetings with another group or family picnics or outings.

Allowing freeloaders to participate as if they were members is unfair because it takes advantage of our members who HAVE paid up. We're all paying to keep the organization going – what are the freeloaders doing, besides getting a free ride on our backs? And tolerating permanent freeloaders can give our insurance providers a reason to cancel your coverage if you have an incident, leaving individual officers and members responsible for paying the claim. The IRS has rules about giving benefits of membership to non---members, too – they say don't do it, and there are tax consequences if you do.

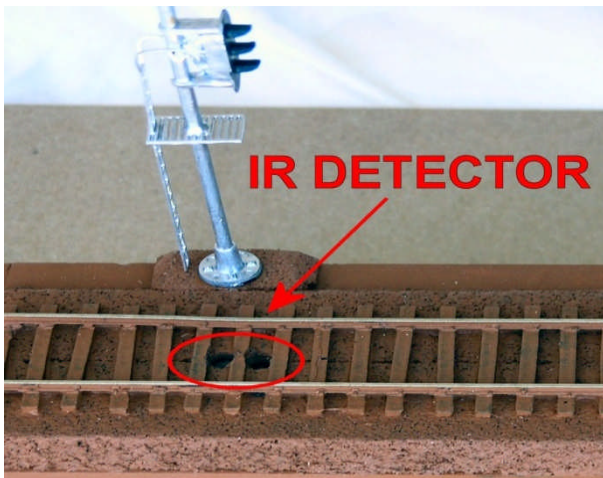
MicroControllers in Model Railroading

by Fred Miller

My interest in the use of microcontrollers was recently renewed when I discovered the easily used ARDUINO series of microcontroller chips and support boards. (Just Google "Arduino" and you get a massive amount of references to vendors, producers, help groups, etc. Lots of books have also come on the market, e.g., *Arduino for Dummies*.)

Since the use of the Arduino series had entered the model railroading world, I decided to learn the device and build some experimental projects.

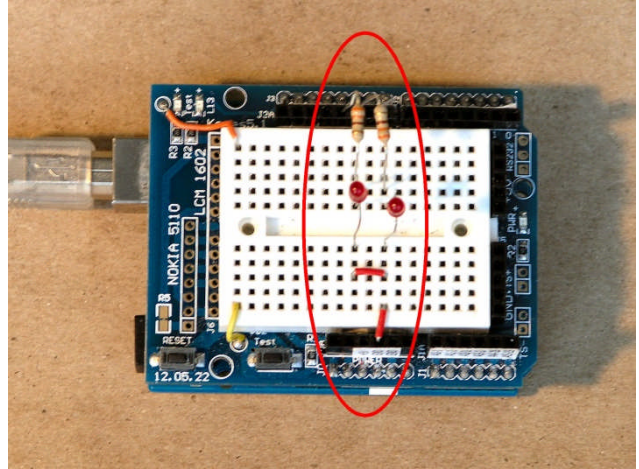
Well that led to a large number of applications including interfacing with LocoNet, and running servos for turnouts, gates and semaphores, and running little sound boards for layout background sound.



3-COLOR SIGNAL DEMONSTRATION

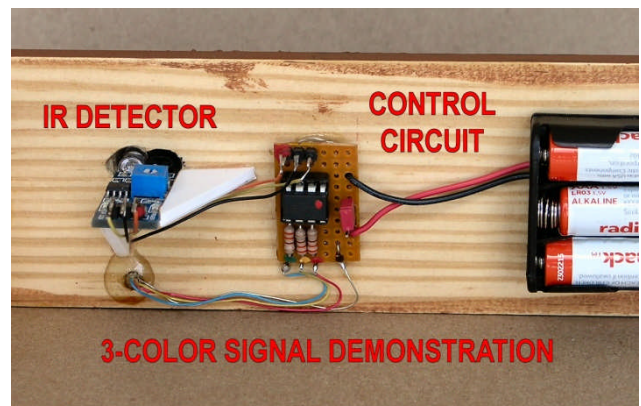
One of my "experiments" was building a 3-color signal, triggered with an IR detector. I used the Oregon Rail Supply 3-color signal kit. My project is a simple standalone one-way operation to just provide a little line-side animation. When

a train is detected, a RED aspect is shown. After a 30-second delay, a YELLOW is shown (if the train has moved beyond the signal), and then GREEN is shown after another 30-second delay.



ARDUINO UNO WITH BREADBOARD PLUG-IN "SHIELD"

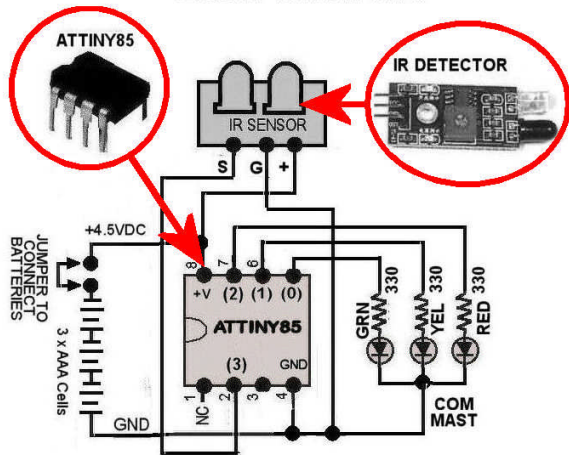
I developed the Arduino control software using the standard Arduino UNO and a plug in Breadboard shield. This combination provides easy experimentation with software and simple circuits. When I was satisfied all was working, I transferred the software to a little very inexpensive 8-pin microcontroller chip called an ATTINY85.



The circuit for the signal control is very simple as shown in the circuit diagram below:

3 COLOR SIGNAL - IR DETECT

VERSION 2 - F. MILLER 7/21/15



The project cost under \$13 – about \$10 for the signal kit plus another \$3 for the IR detector, ATTINY85 and miscellaneous hardware.

If anyone is interested in duplicating this project for their layout, I am willing to share the software, or even a pre-programmed ATTINY85. (You are on your own for soldering the control board for the chip).

A parts list is available from me at: tractionfan@aol.com

Division Brass

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