

NMRA

THE BRASS POUNDER

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

Superintendent's Corner

By Chad Barnette

Division Coming Events

Monthly Meeting for September

Annual Picnic at the Village Park in Kannapolis located at 700 W. C Street on September 19th at 11:00. See you there!

Summer is winding to a close! Can you even believe that? I can't really believe it - I'm holed up in an office all day and didn't often feel the true heat of summer. Either way, we've got plenty going on in the division. We had a nice group come to our monthly meeting in August where we got to do a bit of railfanning, share some current projects, and enjoy a nice Thai lunch. It was really a great time. I think everyone would agree. Something we should definitely add to our regular rotation.

Looking ahead we have our annual picnic on Saturday, September 19th at Village Park in Kannapolis. Please be sure to register by Saturday, September 12th so we can get an accurate count for food. Please don't be shy about only coming for a brief time. We would rather see you for 30 minutes than

not see you at all. How about we try and break the record for most well attended Annual Picnic? Who's up for some friendly competition against our past selves?

Finally be sure to mark your calendars for all the wonderful layout visits in the upcoming National Model Railroad Month celebration. We have expanded our offerings this year so please check out Dave's article that we are running again this month. Perhaps you could even consider hosting next year if you are so inclined or inspired by what you see this year. Fully completed model railroads are not a requirement (do those exist?) - just a willingness to share your progress and your story with others.

Editor's Notes

By Chad Barnette

For this month's Editor's Corner, I wanted to share a little experimentation I have been doing with applying ground foam.

As I have gotten back into scenery work, one of the things I have struggled with is finding a good way to secure ground foam without simply going out and purchasing commercial scenic cement. As a side note, I do eventually want to buy some scenic cement and compare it with what I am currently using. Believe it or not, I have never actually tried the commercial stuff, so I am curious to see whether it works noticeably better or is simply a more convenient version of something we can make ourselves.

In the meantime, I decided to experiment.

I started with the traditional approach of mixing regular PVA glue with water. I tried several different mixtures and ratios, including the familiar 50/50 mixture of glue and water. It certainly provides a strong bond, but I was looking for something that would flow and spray a little more easily when applying it over ground foam.

That led me to Mod Podge.

The mixture I ultimately settled on is ****one part Mod Podge to three parts water****, along with two or three drops of dish detergent. The detergent helps break the surface tension, which allows the mixture to penetrate the scenery better and also seems to help it flow through the sprayer nozzle more easily.

So far, the mixture has been easy enough to work with, but there is one thing I am not completely satisfied with: the strength of the bond.

It simply does not seem to hold the ground foam as firmly as the 50/50 PVA glue-and-water mixture. That probably should not be surprising considering how much more diluted the Mod Podge mixture is. It works, but I am not yet convinced that it is the best solution.

For now, though, that is what I am going to continue using.

My next experiment will be something surprisingly simple: actually buying a bottle of real scenic cement! It will be the first time I have ever used the commercial product, and I am interested to see how it compares with my homemade mixtures. Maybe I will discover that I should have been using it all along—or maybe I will decide that making my own is perfectly adequate. Either way, I will report back on what I find.

And that brings me to something else I would like to do with Editor's Corner.

If you have a favorite scenery technique, a tool you have discovered, a homemade solution that works particularly well, or even something completely unrelated to scenery that you think other model railroaders would find useful, I would love to hear about it.

Click the link below and send me your thoughts. It does not have to be a completely fleshed-out article or even a particularly detailed idea. Send me what you have and I am happy to take the idea and run with it.

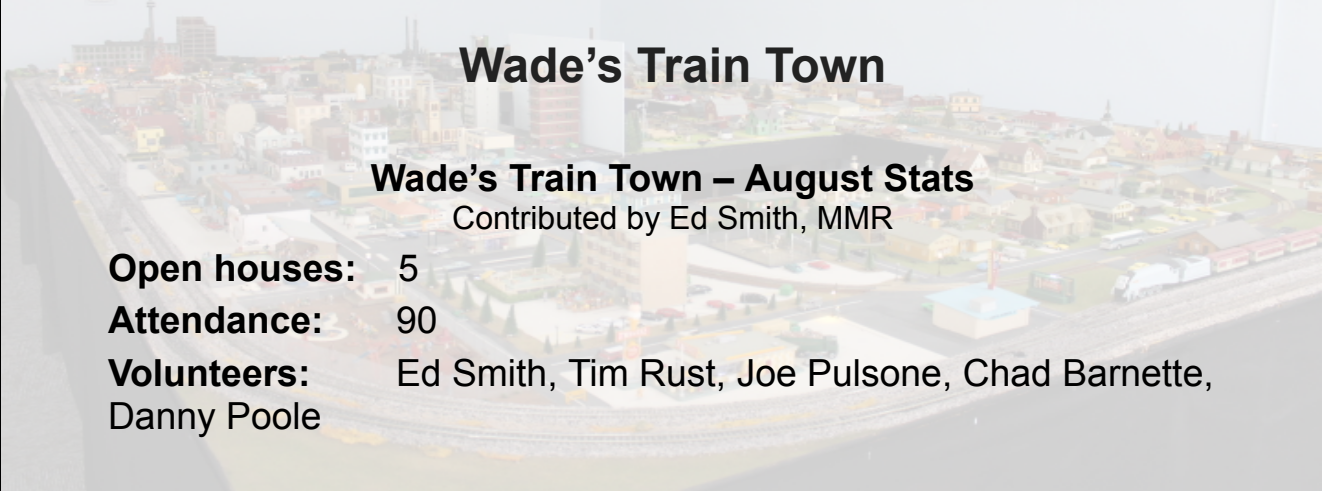
That is what makes me the editor, after all!

Thanks for your help, and as always, I appreciate any and all input.

Click the link to email me articles & ideas:

editor@carolinasouthern.org

Division and Regional News



Wade's Train Town

Wade's Train Town – August Stats

Contributed by Ed Smith, MMR

Open houses:	5
Attendance:	90
Volunteers:	Ed Smith, Tim Rust, Joe Pulsone, Chad Barnette, Danny Poole

AP Updates from the Plywood RR Desk

Contributed by Neal Anderson, MMR

September Rail Movements

- Dylan Petro's Scenery was handed to him at the August Meeting (pic below)
- People I'm waiting to see are:
 - Scott Davenport
 - Joe Trzybinski
 - Brad Jones
- Richard Shulby, how are you doing on Chief Dispatcher?
If you need more help just contact me.



P.S. For the people that are thinking about doing the AP Award on Modular Railroading. The Concord Club has wiring and building of a module in its guide lines. You are in control of the three modules that you have to build. The club dues is the purchase of a shirt and a Dollar a month after that. Take your modules to a show and let them run at three different events and do the paperwork.



August Monthly Meeting

Contributed by Chad Barnette

CAROLINA SOUTHERN
— DIVISION —
MID EAST REGION • NMRA
MONTHLY MEETING

DEEJAL NOODLE BAR
3629-103 N Davidson St,
Charlotte, NC 28205

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 2026 **10:30AM**

LET'S GO RAILFANNING!
We'll take a bit of time to railfan the area—bring your camera and enjoy the action!

SHOW & TELL
Bring a project piece to share with the group!

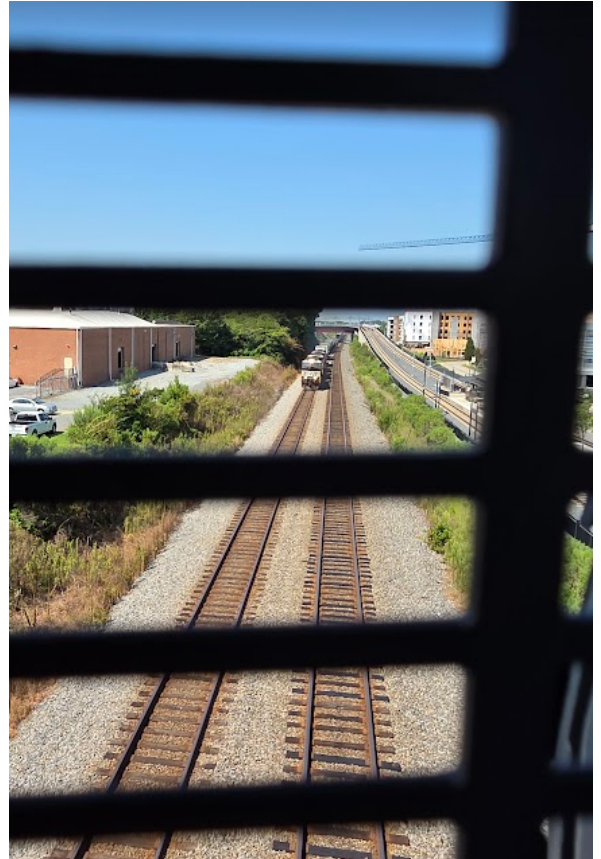
NO ZOOM PROVIDED
We hope to see you in person!

Our August meeting was such a fun experience. This was a new idea that I don't think we've done before - or at least we haven't done it in the past few years. Either way, I think that the combination of real trains, model trains, and good food was one that just can't be beat.

Dylan and I traveled on the LYNX Blue Line from Sharon Road Station to the nearby Sugar Creek Station. From there we were treated to our first freight train. I didn't get a

great still shot of it, but if you squint just so you'll be able to see it. We continued on from Sugar Creek Station for a short 10 minute walk to the restaurant. Along the way we'd happen upon a mysterious SUV parked off to the side of the road in a vacant lot. Who was in it? None other than our very own Ed Smith, MMR! Ed followed Dylan and I the rest of the way and we were pleased to see several other members were already there.

We got to enjoy some nice camaraderie on the trackside patio while the restaurant owners got the kitchen up and running. A few folks shared current projects and Neal reviewed some upcoming changes to the AP program. Pretty soon it became hot enough for us to decide it was time to retreat to the air-conditioned portion of the restaurant. We all had a delicious meal and prepared ourselves for this month's delicious meal at the Annual Picnic. We hope to see you there, and we hope to see you at the next trackside lunch!





Join Us

Contributed by Chad Barnette

We still have two open positions that we are looking to fill. I would love it if you would consider volunteering a bit of your time to help out our group. After all, it takes all of us working together to create a lively and engaging division. Thanks for your consideration!

CSD Program Chair – Responsible for arranging programs for Division meetings. This may include presenting a program, recruiting a presenter, or coordinating a remote (Zoom) presentation. Once confirmed, program details (who, what, when, and where) must be provided to the *Brass Pounder* editor and webmaster so members can be notified before the meeting.

RMU Chair – Oversees the Division's annual Railroad Model University (RMU), a day-long clinic event for model railroaders. Responsibilities include recruiting presenters, creating the clinic schedule, coordinating the venue, promoting the event, and assisting with registration and A/V needs.

Please contact me (superintendent@carolinasouthern.org) if you have any questions or would like to volunteer.

America 250 Locomotive Celebration

Contributed by Alan Hardee



Greetings CSD members. How did you spend last weekend in the August heat? As I'm writing this, I am reflecting back to my long hot weekend with over 10,600 excited rail fans. How would you celebrate 250 years of freedom? I spent all day Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at the North Carolina Transportation Museum volunteering with the Metrolina Model Railroaders layout to entertain over 10,600 visitors from 45 states, Canada, and Australia.

The America 250 Locomotive Celebration brought in 31 locomotives, 5 TTX boxcars, and 1 caboose all sporting special patriotic paint schemes. Even a 7 1/2" Hiawatha from California that Neal would have loved. Some were older locomotives and some were brand new but with the same purpose, Honor America. Between photographing locomotives, visiting with friends in the exhibitors booths, and running the layout, I was kept pretty busy. Shane Wilson, President of Scaletrains, and I made arrangements last month at the National Convention in Chattanooga. I was granted the use of several Scaletrains models to run on the layout. The models were exact replicas of the patriotic locomotives outside. I even had the opportunity to recreate the same scenes around our turntable and roundhouse.

Please enjoy some of my photos.







Basement Empire Continues

Contributed by Chad Barnette

Work on the Basement Empire is finally moving forward again as I focus on creating the turnaround in the corner of the train room. I have been able to work on the layout a little bit each day, and that steady approach has helped me make progress without letting unnecessary delays bring everything to a halt.

The most significant improvement so far has been rebuilding the benchwork in the corner. My first attempt had become a complete mess, but the newly framed benchwork is clean, sturdy and—most importantly—level. A laser level that I purchased from Amazon proved to be completely worth the investment and made the rebuilding process much easier.

Making the Basement More Inviting

Not every recent improvement has involved trains or benchwork. Some have simply been about improving my quality of life in the basement.

I had begun to notice that I did not always want to come downstairs and work on the layout. There were several reasons for that, and I realized that I needed to make the basement a more comfortable and enjoyable place to spend time. I wanted it to feel like a place where I looked forward to working, rather than somewhere I had to force myself to go.

One small but irritating problem was the presence of gnats and flies. To deal with them, I invested in what may be a basement model railroad room's best friend: a Zevo insect trap.

The Zevo uses ultraviolet light to attract the unwanted visitors. Once they fly toward the light, they encounter a sticky mat that brings their journey—and their time in the Basement Empire—to a slow and unfortunate end.

But I digress.

The Reach Problem

Returning to the layout itself, I have created a problem that many model railroaders have faced: part of the layout is difficult to reach.

The turnaround will form one end of the layout's continuous running loop, but I cannot reach far enough across the completed benchwork to comfortably install and maintain everything in that corner. My solution has been to divide the area into three separate two-by-four-foot modules made from quarter-inch MDF.



Before permanently installing those sections, I need to complete the trackwork and at least a basic layer of scenery. Once the modules are joined together, portions of them will be much more difficult to access. That realization forced me to return to scenery work in a way that I have not done for a long time.

Back to Scenery Basics



The project has required me to revisit several basic scenery techniques, including applying ground foam and ballasting track. It also led to an enjoyable side project: learning how to use Sculptamold.

I found Sculptamold very easy to mix, apply and shape. It allowed me to create more natural terrain instead of settling for the dull, flat appearance found in some of the layout's older areas.

I did, however, learn an important lesson. My first application was much too thick. As a result, it took several days for the material to dry completely. Despite the long drying time, I am pleased with the finished result and with the additional shape and visual interest it gives the landscape.

What Comes Next?

The immediate goal is to bring all three two-by-four-foot modules to the point where they can be permanently installed. That means completing the necessary trackwork, adding enough scenery to the hard-to-reach areas and then joining everything together.

Once that is done, I should finally be able to complete the continuous running loop. At a minimum, I hope to have the loop operating in time for the upcoming Train Month visits.



Completing this section will also give several existing structures a permanent home. I have been working on some of these buildings for quite a while, but until now there has not been a finished location for them on the layout.

I am excited about the possibilities—not only for the layout itself, but also for the basement as a whole. My goal is to make the train room a place where I genuinely want to spend time: somewhere working on the railroad does not feel like a chore or an obligation, but instead feels like something I am fortunate to be able to do.

That may be the most important lesson from this stage of the project. Progress does not always come from one large burst of activity. Sometimes it comes from doing a little each day, solving one problem at a time and creating an environment that makes you want to keep returning.

I will check back in with another chapter from the chronicles of the Basement Empire in the next couple of months.

2026 CSD National Model Railroad Month Celebration

Contributed by Dave Thrams

It's time to talk about this year's Carolina Southern Division (CSD) celebration for National Model Railroad Month. I want to thank all the layout owners that have shared their layouts over the past two years! This fall will be our third year of layout open houses to celebrate National Model Railroad Month.

Would you like to join in the fun of celebrating the World's Greatest Hobby? There are two ways to join in on the fun.

One way is to visit some or all of the layouts that are open for us to see over four Saturdays. By visiting the layouts, you get to fellowship with model railroaders you may not know. By talking to them and asking questions about their layouts, you get to know them and who knows, you may have a new friend at the end of the visit.

The second way is to open your layout for our members and friends to see. We don't advertise to the public, but we encourage our members to invite friends and someone that has an interest in model railroading but maybe not an NMRA member....yet! Who knows? That person may decide to join the NMRA party.

If you participated in the past, you may have learned it doesn't matter if a layout is under construction with benchwork and a little track, or if it has full scenery, people enjoy learning from others' experiences. We get to see how the layout owner put together trackwork, scenery, or electronics and by exchanging information of how it was done, or maybe should have been done differently, everyone learns something new.

Layouts change from year to year too! Just to name a couple, Joe Skorch has expanded his layout and you'll be able to see lots of changes he's made to his layout. Andrew Stitt has built an entire second layout in his basement so now you will see two operating layouts when you visit him.

In addition to seeing changes to some layouts, two layout owners, Steve Colby and Joe Pulsone will be opening their layouts to us for the first time! Thank you, Steve and Joe!!

Even though we currently have eighteen layouts that have agreed to open for us. We are still in the planning stages of this wonderful month of model railroading and we can always add more layouts to this celebration. You are welcome to add your layout to this list! Who knows? If we get enough new layouts on this list, maybe we can add another Saturday, or shift the hours when layouts are open, so we can all have even more fun!

So, have I just created a new model railroad mathematical formula? More Layouts = More Fun?

Below are the dates and layouts confirmed to be open this year. This schedule may be subject to change.

October 24, (North/Northeast)

Steve Colby Denver (new)

Joe Skorch Kannapolis

Marcus Neubacher China Grove

Andrew Stitt New London

October 31, (Southwest) Gaston County/West CLT area

Seth Gartner West Charlotte

Dave Thrums Stanley

Alan Hardee Bessemer City

Cherryville Model Railroad Club (10am – Noon)

November 7, (Southeast) Fort Mill/Lancaster/Fort Mill/Waxhaw area

Dick and Karen Bronson Waxhaw

Dave Myers Waxhaw

Dylan Petro Fort Mill

Chad Barnette Fort Mill

Tim Rumph Lancaster

Gordon Miller Matthews

Fred Miller Charlotte

November 14, (Northwest) Statesville/Nebo/Taylorsville/Newton area

Joe Pulsone Statesville (new)

Neal Anderson Statesville

Ed Smith Taylorsville

Wades Train Town at Newton Depot

John Short Nebo

Some of these layouts are on our CSD website. Click this link to get a preview of some of these layouts: www.carolinasouthern.org/mbrlayouts.html

If you decide to share your layout with our Carolina Southern Division members and their friends, contact:

Dave Thrums at thrums.dave50@gmail.com (704) 747-6823

Alan Hardee at Director1@carolinasouthern.org (704) 689-3867



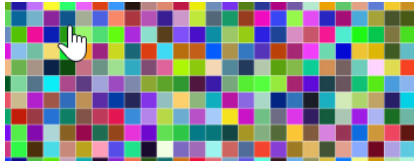
Fred Miller has a few highly detailed shelf layouts that are amazing and highly automated. This is just one of his layouts. (Fred Miller photo)



A view of Gordon Miller's Proto-Freelance 1950's Pittsburgh Northern Railroad layout. (CSD website photo)

One of the layouts at the Cherryville Model Railroad Club. (Dave Thrums photo)





Digital Distractions

Here's a twist - model railroad in a shipping container! Read on....

Northwoods Productions is where railroads, wilderness, and craftsmanship come together.



Follow along as we build an ambitious model railroad inside a shipping container, transforming an empty steel box into a fully equipped workshop and immersive railroad empire. From benchwork and scenery to structures, operations, and behind-the-scenes problem solving, you'll see every step of the journey.

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