



THE BRASS POUNDER

Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Div, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Assoc.
Volume 7, Number 2 May, 2007

Superintendent's Message

At our September meeting (15 September 2007) I am proposing that we hold a MODEL RAILROADER UNIVERSITY. The MRU would be held at the Cook's Memorial Presbyterian Church facilities on Mount Holly - Huntersville Road. We would plan to start with a registration at 8:30 AM. Between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM there would be a series of seminars, clinics and presentations running on a 30 minute format. Depending on the number of presenters, we could offer two or three different choices in each time slot.

I also plan to invite the MER Advancement Chair to attend and to conduct a judging of structures, rolling stock and the like for modelers working on components of the NMRA AP.

And I plan to open the event to attendees and presenters from the local model railroad clubs and the Divisions surrounding us. Further, we will advertise the MRU in all local hobby stores and model railroad venues, hoping to attract new members.

Upon the conclusion, we will go to the home of Jack Parker for the traditional picnic and Operating Session on the Piedmont & Western RR. In order to defray expenses, I think it will be appropriate to charge a \$5.00 registration fee.

My questions at this time are: (1) would you be willing to present a clinic or seminar? which one(s)? and (2) what clinics or seminars would

you like to attend, what would you like to learn more about?

I would like to have your input on any aspect of this - and the answers to my questions above - via email, telephone or snail mail!

In advance, thanks!

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The Division Brass

Superintendent.....	Rick Knight
Asst. Superintendent.....	Jack Parker
Clerk.....	Jack Haynes
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Director 2007.....	Michele Chance
Director 2008.....	Fred Miller
Director 2009.....	Jack Monette
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Membership Chairman.....	Jack Parker
AP Chairman.....	Dave Chance
Webmaster.....	Gil Brauch
Newsletter Editors.....	Frank Binder/ Jack Haynes

Website:

www.bytedesign.com/CSDiv/index.htm

Next Meeting

Date: July 14, 2007

Place: Martin Oakes' House
Denver, NC

CSDiv Meeting and Social

See web site for more info

News and Events:

- June 9 Wade's Train Town Open House
Brookford, NC
- June 9 Rail Day
NC Transportation Museum - Spencer
- June 23 4th Annual NC Rail Fair
(formerly the Concord show)
Metrolina Center, Charlotte, NC
- June 23 & 24, Great Scale Model Train Show
Timonium, MD
- July 6 & 7 P&W Operating Session
Jack Parker's
- July 14 Wade's Train Town Open House
Brookford, NC
- July 28 NEW DATE! Concord Area MRRC
Various Locations
- July 22-28 Great Lakes Express
NMRA National Convention
Detroit, MI
- Oct 18-21, James River Flyer
2007 MER Convention
Lynchburg, VA
<http://www.trainweb.org/MER2007/>

Clerk's Meeting Notes

Since we have not had any meeting since the last newsletter, I don't have any news on this front. Instead, I will describe a technique that I learned at a previous meeting from one of the layout visits. I rarely visit someone else's layout without picking up some idea that could be useful for my own, so this could become a regular feature of the Brass Pounder as long as Rick keeps coming up with new layouts to visit.

JH

Layout Tour Tip:

Last August, we visited the Black Cat Club layout in Wilkesboro as guests of the Yadkin Valley Chapter, NRHS. As with many of us, their layout was not completely finished, so there were stretches of mainline with no scenery, just a strip of plywood with roadbed and track on it.

To humor some nervous members who got anxious seeing their DCC and sound equipped, super detailed locomotive cruising along just an inch or so and a derailment away from a long downhill plunge to a concrete floor, one of them (Charles Williams) came up with the idea of installing netting below these areas, attached to the benchwork. Like the net under a trapeze at the circus, the net will catch any stray equipment and is flexible and springy to stop it without any damaging impact. The photo below shows the netting installed.

The netting is made of woven black polypropylene to provide a soft, non-scratching surface. The openings in the netting are about 1" hexagons, similar to the metal wire poultry netting sold at garden centers. Small hooks are screwed into the sides of joists and girders all around the space to be protected. The netting is simply hung onto the hooks.



Plastic netting under Black Cat layout to catch derailed equipment.

When trains are not operating and work needs to be done under the layout, the netting can be easily removed and replaced when the work is completed.

Finding the right netting could be challenging. I didn't find anything like it at the usual gardening/hardware sources (Lowe's or Home Depot) Charles tipped me off that he thought it was a kind of bird netting. An Internet search found a supplier in New Jersey selling it, but mostly in large rolls (6'X100').
<http://www.louispage.com/aviary.htm>.

I plan to look around locally some more to see if it might be stocked or sold in smaller quantities someplace. Perhaps a farm supply store or pet store. If any one knows a place, let me know and I will pass it along to the membership (unless there isn't much of it available and then we will keep it our secret until we have as much as we need).

JH

NMRA ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

DAVE CHANCE, DIV. 12 AP CHAIR

In 2006, Division 12 did great in the AP Program. We earned a total of 4 Golden Spike awards and 6 AP awards. We had one Electrical Engineering, one Scenery, two Chief Dispatcher, and two Association Volunteer awards earned! So far in 2007, we have only two awards presented, but both were very important awards. Jack Parker received his "Association Volunteer", his sixth award. Only one more to have earned the coveted "Master Model Railroader" award! Jack needs either "Master Builder-Motive Power" or "Master Builder-Cars" to complete his requirements. Rick Knight earned the "Author" award. That's his fifth award, which means he needs only two more to qualify for MMR. Rick needs either "Master Builder-Motive Power" or "Master Builder-Cars" and one other in any category, to qualify. I think he will try for "Association Official" since he will complete his third year in December 2007. Congratulations to both of you! Keep those achievements submissions coming!

Remember, **I will talk with anyone who wants to participate or learn more about the AP program.** Several members are currently working on various projects for the Achievement Program and a few others have completed all the work except the paper work. I will help you with the paper work, if you will just let me know that you want my help. Give me a call at (704)933-4200, send me an email loconut@carolina.rr.com or just talk to me at a division meet, at the hobby shop or anywhere else you see me.

Saga of a Spare Room Baron *Episode 1: The ROW Survey*

A few years after my retirement, our daughter moved to Charlotte on a job transfer. My wife and I had often talked about moving south eventually and this looked like an opportunity to explore. We had lived in Syracuse, New York most of our lives, but the weather was starting to wear on both of us, and all our children had settled elsewhere. I personally had shoveled enough snow for a lifetime and knew I would not miss doing any more of it. Syracuse averages about ten feet of snow each winter and two recent years were new records with over sixteen feet.

So Marianne went to Charlotte to help care for the grandson (and also spend a little time with our daughter and son-in-law) while they settled in. She sent back glowing reports on the area. She came back to Syracuse for Christmas and I drove her back to Charlotte after New Years intending to stay a couple of weeks and then go back home. We drove through a blizzard in the Pennsylvania mountains. The whiteout conditions caused a huge pileup on I80 just a few miles west and at almost the same time as we crossed over it on I81.

One day during that visit, I went out to play golf with my son-in-law. We had the course pretty much to ourselves. I guess most golfers in Charlotte think forty-five degrees is a little too cold for golf. If we waited for fifty degrees in Syracuse, we would miss half the season which is already pretty short. When we got back after a very enjoyable day, I saw on the web that the high temperature in Syracuse that day was 5 degrees and was going to 10 below that night. The decision was pretty much made. We didn't have to go back to that. I stayed on for three months. We went back to Syracuse in April to clean up the house and sell it.

I had a layout in the basement in Syracuse. It wasn't a large area, about 12 X 12, but it was an open, unfinished area that I could use however I wanted. That option doesn't seem to exist in Charlotte. The "basements" that exist are usually at ground level with walk-out doors and come as finished living space. They are already cut up with finished walls and at least some of the rooms need to be used for some family function. So it really didn't matter whether the house came with a basement or not, I would probably be working with a large bedroom at best. A ranch style house was attractive so that we would not have to contend with stairs regularly as the aging joints got a little stiffer. Putting a layout in an above-ground space would also help with the expansion and contraction problems caused by humidity changes in basements. In Syracuse, the humidity in the basement would vary from 65%-70% in summer (even with A/C and a dehumidifier) to 15% in winter (with a power humidifier on the furnace). That changed the size of wood and homosote enough to buckle any section of track that didn't have sufficient expansion joints.

The real estate agent we worked with in Charlotte needed a little education on the hobby of model railroading. Based on my layout in Syracuse, I determined that a space about 12 X 15 would be sufficient. It could be an extra bedroom or a bonus room. After a few showings, she knew to bring her laser measuring device to get quick measurements of the extra bedrooms. They became the second stop at each house after the kitchen. If there wasn't a bonus room or large bedroom in addition to the master, there probably wasn't any point in looking at the rest of the house.

As with most house purchases, we eventually had to compromise a bit. The selected house has a secondary bedroom about 13 X 14. That might seem equivalent to what I was looking for, but the longer dimension of the layout space determines the maximum length of straight track for yards or large towns. By the

time you eliminate space for the curves in the corners, every foot of length is important. But it is still a little larger than the space I had before. I would have to contend with access allowing for the door in one corner, two windows on the opposite wall, and a closet on the wall in between. The closet would not be expendable, since we were already downsizing in total housing space, and any storage was a critical need.

Next: Packing and moving a layout.

JH

Question for Discussion:

I saw an article somewhere recently that many of the emergency services are changing out their radio equipment for new ones that are digital and "trunk" communications. It occurred to me that this might mean some people might be getting rid of radio scanners they had used to monitor police and fire communications. Many of those scanners are capable of receiving railroad frequencies. Caution!! Some older models use crystals to determine what frequency bands they can receive and the ones for the old police and fire may not be the same as for railroads. I found one on Craig's List: charlotte.craigslist.org/ and bought it at what I think was a good price. The web site: zippy.ci.uiuc.edu/~roma/rr-freqs/index-old.html has an old list of railroad frequencies by AAR channel and by railroad. I found frequencies for CSX ex-SBD and for NS ex-Southern. The scanner receives messages on several of those channels.

My question for other members who might be more knowledgeable in prototype railroads is: do the railroads have any plans for changing to digital, trunking radios any time soon? I checked the FCC and AAR web sites and didn't find any reference to changes, but they might not be too public about it. Did I make a good investment?

JH

Submissions For Brass Pounder

Our planned schedule for publication of the Brass Pounder is for five issues per year. They will be issued in the odd-numbered months with July and September combined into one issue in August (everything in the South seems to move slower in the summer). Deadlines for submission of articles will usually be the tenth of the month of publication. January will be an exception for the Annual Meeting issue:

Issue	Submission Date
August	August 10, 2007
November	November 10, 2007
January	January 1, 2008

Our requirements for submitting articles are a little looser than the national publications. Any form of text or pictures is pretty much acceptable.

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