

Alohegan Pequot Model Railroad

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Lake/9467/index.html>



The News for: March 2002

Springfield, The Morning After

Two days of model railroading euphoria are over and it's time to come back down to earth. In aggregate, the Springfield Show was successful but exhausting. Vic Clark got a trailer used to carry electronics (means a smoother ride) this year so our modules were transported in style. Thanks Vic! Loading on Wednesday night at Avery Point, and then unloading, and setting up on Friday, operating on Saturday and Sunday, breaking down and loading on Sunday at Springfield and finally unloading at Old Saybrook on Monday, all went very well, primarily because there were enough Club members to do the job.

All of the layouts were operating by Friday afternoon. Ross McLean actually got an HO train, a Hornby engine no less, around the track before the N-Scalers got running. Will you guys ever live that down? The Club G, HO and N scale layouts all ran well during the show and were adequately staffed.

The Amherst Railway Society gave the Club twenty-five kits of their club boxcar. (These were given out to Club members at the first February meeting. Another good reason to attend meetings.) President Dan decided things were too busy at the show and there was an insufficient number of people present to conduct the raffle of the Connecticut Railroads book

The logistics and parking problems that we discussed so much didn't manifest themselves in a big way. Getting into and out of the Big E through one gate really

wasn't very difficult. Dan Delany gave out the parking tickets and nobody seemed to have a problem. The Amherst club did show themselves to be a model of inefficiency though when it came to handing out individual badges. We all got to stand in line and wait and wait.



Club Business

Meeting results and other day-to-day activities of the working of the Club will be reported in this section.

February Meeting Notes

Bert Beukelaer was welcomed back by the members after his protracted stay at the hospital, nursing home and recovering at home. Burt's comments can't be repeated verbatim but suffice it to say that he is much happier doing model railroading again.

Selling Club cars was discussed. Art Ferguson presented various options. A motion to purchase 250 boxcars in five color/number combinations from Model Diecasting/Roundhouse (MDC) was carried by acclamation. The car prototypes will be 40' steel boxcars from the 1930 to 1960 era. The MDC cars have plastic wheels but the

quality of the cars and graphics have improved. The selling price will be in the \$12 to \$15 range.

Dan Delany has been working with Bob Murphy and Gary Domer to help smooth the transition to the new treasurer.

As hard as it is to believe, we are still waiting for a date to be set so the Club can present the plaque to North American Van lines in Providence for loaning us a trailer to go to Springfield these many years.

Display at Saybrook

The Club will operate the layouts at the Bed and Bath store in Saybrook on the second and fourth Sundays of March from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. We will stay at Saybrook through sometime in April before the Willimantic show and operate the second Sunday. The shopping center management will take care of advertising for the display.

Meetings and Work Sessions

Meetings this month will also be held at the Saybrook Shopping Center at the conclusion of the operating sessions on Sunday March 10 and 24. [Meetings in April will also be at Saybrook as long as we can stay in the store.] Work sessions will be at Saybrook every Wednesday evening at 7:00 P.M.

Dues are Past Due for 2002

If you are reading this you paid your dues for 2002 or somebody made a big mistake and sent you a newsletter anyway. Regular membership is \$25. Seniors and juniors are \$12.50 and family memberships are \$30. The new Club policy is to pay your dues to the secretary, George Harran, not the treasurer Gary Domer. George will record the member as being paid and update the Club mailing list accordingly. George will then give the check/cash to the treasurer to deposit in the Club account. Mail your check, letter of apology and \$100 fine for late dues to George Harran at 17 Robin Hill Rd. in Waterford, CT 06385. Include your zip code with your correct mailing address.

February Club Display at Saybrook

The Club display at the Bed and Bath store in the Saybrook Shopping Center on the weekend of February 23 went well for the Club but not too well for the Christ the King Men's Club. We only had to run the trains and were supposed to receive 10% of the gate. The size of the gate dictated that we accept the food that they provided for the two days in lieu of the 10% cut of the gate.

The Club Show

The Club has signed a contract with the Saint Bernard High School in Uncasville, CT to hold the Club show on October 20, 2002. This is the third weekend in October. Show hours will be from 10 AM to 3 PM.

M&P at Willimantic Show

This show is scheduled for April 21. Details are sketchy now but we hope to be able to move the modules directly from Saybrook to Willimantic. We hope to be able to hold a raffle and will put out the donation box. We need your old model railroad and train magazines to help make the public more generous.

The President's Corner

Nothing was received from the President this month for his column. Let the abuse begin!

M&PMRR Officers & Functionaries

The President	Dan Delany	537-3610
Vice President	John Waller	564-3114
Treasurer	Gary Domer	848-0690
Secretary	George Harran	443-0707
Storekeeper	Larry Southwick	535-2996
Bulk Purchases	Bill Evans	267-9482
Meeting Speakers	Bill Evans	267-9482
Layouts/Name Tags	Stu Dom	536-7637
New Passenger Module	Stu Dom	536-7637
Field Trips	Jim Delany	889-4029
Newsletter	Clark Pritchett	444-1884
Club Web Page	Ross McLean	669-9841
Train Shows	Ron Pothier	repth@snet.net

Member News

Well the Springfield show is over but the smoke hasn't cleared at the newsletter editor's house so there are no profiles of our new members. Hang on guys; I'll get there. In the meantime we have three more new members; Paul Robillard of Salem, Thomas Rochette from Old Saybrook and William Badgett from Milford.

Dave Alley's Amtrak Trip to Springfield

The important thing to remember is that fees paid to Amtrak are not for transportation but are for the side show.

On the way out we left Chicago Union Station about 10 minutes late only to stop about 10 blocks later to hook on additional baggage and freight cars? (that is what the trainman said. The baggage cars I can see but freight cars?) Anyway, at the same time they found a bit of an air leak so we sat and sat. About an hour later we finally began to make tracks east. It is a far cry from the great races between the Pennsylvania and the NYC coming around the tip of Lake Michigan side by side at better than 80 mph. The good part is that the train was about half full and the seats were comfortable. The bad part was that the heat was stuck on in the car where they wanted me to sit. While this wasn't good for sitting it was fine for sleeping. I did quite well curled up on a pair of seats.

In the morning I found out why someplace around Toledo or maybe a little west of there we came through a bad ice storm which knocked out the signals. With signals out, I don't understand how we made any progress but we did keep going slowly. Good for sleeping bad on the schedule. 12 hours into the trip we were 4 hours behind. We ran into 2 more of these areas of signals on the fritz due to ice. An impressive number of trees had been pruned of good size limbs by both nature and the RR. We also spent almost the entire distance between two stops in E New York or W Mass following a freight train. 51 miles in something like an hour and 48 minutes. Really smoking up the rails. All in all we

must have lost something like 7 hours but were ONLY 5 hours late getting in so we did make up a little along the way. The most interesting things on this part of the trip had to do with law enforcement. In Buffalo the Border Patrol came on the train. They left with a Hispanic woman and her kid or kids (I didn't see which). Apparently this is routine because they were back on the train going the other way. The other tidbit was related to me by a guy I was talking to - he was going to Springfield for a wedding but turned up at the train show as well. Apparently there was a young man who had a sleeper who was paid a visit by the DEA somewhere in route. They confiscated from him in excess of \$50K (that's \$50,000.00) according to the story he was telling in the club car. Apparently this is also common because he said that this was at least the third time it had happened. The trip back was almost as eventful. Again the car to which I was "assigned" had the heat stuck on. You could manually turn it on and off and if the conductors had done so every half hour life would have been OK, but they didn't think of that. Again, it was OK for sleeping but nothing else - I moved in the morning. More people on the train going in this direction. Maybe because it was Sunday. The Border patrol paid us their respects in Buffalo again. This time they went clear through the train talking to anyone they thought might not be citizens and probably some others as well. They spent a while talking to two Viet Nameese looking guys in the seats across from me. Work visas but one of them didn't know who he worked for or when he last worked. Radio coms with the keepers of the computer records said he was OK.

Schedule wise we were doing well up till we got to Toledo. I knew something was up when we had to wait to get into the station because the east bound train was still there. It would have been about 8 hours late at that point. Turns out that there was a major derailment early the evening before somewhere around South Bend Indiana. From Toledo west most of the way to Chicago there are spots (or maybe lots) of

single track mainline. In any case progress was slow. When we got to the site of the derailment, I saw one freight car off in the dirt, upright but clearly where it was not supposed to be. About a mile later there was a locomotive also off on the side. It was also upright but was missing one truck and its fuel tank. They were sitting further off the right of way. The trainman said that there were two more locos derailed on the other side of the track we were on. Needless to say you could walk about as fast as we were going through there. I guess we were actually lucky to make it as the wreck was big enough to make the Chicago news. When all was said and done, we were about 3 hours late getting into Chicago. The bright spot in all this is that I called Amtrak to complain after I got home. They sent me a voucher for \$125 toward my next trip. Since I was able to get my 4 brass coal hoppers at the show so much cheaper than I could have ordered them on the Internet, I figured I had already paid for my trip. With nearly free train fare, coming was a really good deal. Now, how to spend the voucher - I have a trip coming up to Denver in April. Maybe, just maybe.

Dave



John Waller's Column

Some time back I promised to tell you about my DCC activities. As explained in the Newsletter of June 2001, the NMRA specifies the DCC track protocol, namely the combined track power and signal which controls and drives locomotives¹. An NMRA approved command station from one manufacturer must work with the NMRA

¹ See the diagram at the end of the June 2001 Newsletter.

approved locomotive decoder from any other manufacturer.

The NMRA does not specify how the command station is controlled; that is up to the individual manufacturer, and each has a unique system. As mentioned before, I started to look at the Digitrax system which uses LocoNet as the cab bus, with the LocoNet protocol made freely available on the Internet. After I had studied LocoNet carefully I decided it was too complex, and a vast overkill for what I am trying to do.

As an aside, the Digitrax technical staff recommended I subscribe to their chat zone, which I did. Unfortunately, the chat zone is conducted by email, and I started getting up to 20 email messages per hour! None of them touched on any of the matters of concern to me. I stood this for a couple of days before un-subscribing.

OK; what am I trying to do? I am trying to make my own "throttle" or "cab", the name given to the device a user holds to control the trains. I could buy a throttle and dismantle it to roll my own, but I was hoping for a more elegant solution. Then Brian Barnt, the NMRA DCC coordinator, suggested I look at EasyDCC, made by CVP. Their command station, driven by a Philips microprocessor, will accept RS-232 signals at 9600 baud. RS-232 is now a very old standard, but it is still in use between your computer and modem, although usually at a much faster speed than 9600 baud. All this is being superseded in favor of the Universal Serial Bus (USB) now appearing in new computers. The rate at which things happen in the model train world, however, means that RS-232 at 9600 baud is plenty fast enough.

Well, why am I trying to do this? I have now coined the term "super throttle", which is what I am building. It is an intelligent throttle, with its own microcontroller, which can control all the trains in a layout, and accept inputs from track sensors to exercise block and signal control. The super throttle sends train speed orders to the EasyDCC command station via the RS-232 link.

As explained before, the additional task with DCC in respect of automatic train

control is train identification; my current demo does not need this. With DCC it is insufficient to know that there is a train in a block; the system must know which train it is. The system of train identification I propose to use is simply to initialize the layout with trains in known positions, and the super throttle keeps track of them thereafter. Train detection is done just as it is in my current demonstration, with magnets and Hall-effect sensors.

I have now built a very simple layout to run DCC at home, just a figure eight. I have the base-grade version of EasyDCC, which is all I need to set up a breadboard system. So far the only DCC locomotive I have is the Shay. It is fitted with a type 3 decoder, which means it can run from DCC or analog, without the need to change anything in the locomotive.

My impression of the Springfield show just held is that the numbers were high on Saturday, but low on Sunday. One neat DCC trick I saw while touring the various layouts was the fitting of a video camera in the train, nothing new in itself, of course. The operator drove the train while looking at the video screen.

There was much interest in my demo, perhaps even more than last year, as most of the time I was running the Shay. Either the Shay, the demo itself, or both, caught the public eye. The number of people who asked when they could buy a system also increased, to which I usually responded that I am working on a DCC-compatible version, probably a more marketable proposition. I noted at the Dynotrol stand that a signal and block package is selling for over \$100.

The Dynotrol system demonstrated does not allow for arbitrary train length. I made up the longest train I could, which actually spanned three blocks, to show my system copes with it. I had found some logic glitches when I first tried this, but I believe they have now been fixed. The flexibility of having a flash program memory in the PIC micro-controllers is a boon in this regard.

John Waller

The Market Place

Club Member Ads

Advertise (free) here to reach almost seventy model railroaders eagerly waiting to buy your wonderful stuff. Editor's Note: Let me know when your item sells or when you want to stop running the ad.

Club Members Selling at Train Shows:

If you come to the shows in Cheshire and Greenwich, CT this month, Clark Pritchett will be selling beautiful old railroad pocket watches, and stocks and bonds from fallen flag railroads. (For price lists e-mail modlrrnews@aol.com Please put "Wanted, watch and/or stock price list" in the subject line.) At the same table next to Clark, Art Ferguson will be selling off the rest of his HO rolling stock and power to pave the way for his full transition to S Scale. Almost everything that Art is selling has KaDee couplers and metal wheels.

The Club Store

The Club carries a number of items commonly used by model railroaders. The stock changes over time. Below is the latest list from the storekeeper, Larry Southwick. Stu Dom is about to make a bulk purchase of electrical/electronic items for the new passenger module. Anyone requiring parts should contact Stu pronto so he can increase the size of the order.

The Storekeeper's Report

Here is the Club inventory list. An update is expected soon (right Larry?)

Peco Switches: short, medium and long (lefts or rights)

Couplers (Kadee or McHenry)

Metal Wheels (Proto 2000 or Kadee)

Club Hats and Badges

Club Polo Shirts (a few left)

Pushbuttons (momentary contact)

Red or Black.



The Technical Section

Contributions are always welcome. You can write about anything from prototype to model railroads. Scenery, electrical, benchwork, model building and more are all of interest to the club members.

Electronic-Mailing/Communications

Please e-mail the newsletter editor at modlrrnews@aol.com to get on the list for sending the newsletter electronically. Some people still have technical problems but we are trying to overcome them.

Also, would all Club officers and functionaries please send in their e-mail addresses if they haven't done so already.

The World Wide Web

Here is the URL of the Webville and Hypertext Railway Company. It isn't real but it is interesting.

<http://www.spikesys.com/webville.html>

March logos copy write by Ken Houghton



Model Railroad Calendar

This Month in 2002

March 3 Cheshire, CT –The High School Band sponsors this show which runs from 10 AM to 3 PM. The M&P N Scalers will display. Art & Clark are selling. (Sandy Alonzo knows all about this show.)

March; 6, 13, 20 & 27 Old Saybrook, CT
Work sessions on the new passenger modules will start at 7:00 PM on Wednesday evenings at the Bed and Bath store in the Saybrook Shopping Center.

March 10 & 24 Old Saybrook, CT –Club meetings will be held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month after the doors close on the public display (1:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.). We will be at Saybrook until they rent the store. (Sometime in April)

March 17 Greenwich, CT –Westchester Model Railroad Club 30th Annual Spring Meet at the Greenwich Civic Center from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Art & Clark selling For information call Bob Wilson at 914-328-4258 or e-mail Doug Kadow at twmrc@aol.com

Next Month and Beyond

April 21, Willimantic, CT 10 AM-3 PM. Windham High School. Eastern Connecticut Chapter of the NRHS. M&P will be there. Details next month.

Send in the information please.

Newsletter Items

The Club has a post office box that can be used for newsletter mailings and other Club purposes. The mailing address is; P. O. Box 55 Quaker Hill, CT 06375-0055 E-mail enclosures can now be opened and electronic versions are preferred to handwritten copies so retyping is not necessary. Microsoft Word and other compatible word processing programs should be used. You can also send items to be published by E-mailing them to me at: modlrrnews@aol.com If you do send something, it is a good idea to phone and say that you sent it since unwanted e-mail is constantly filling the system and I dump it before reading. Say M&P newsletter article in the subject line. You can also put the items on a floppy disk in Microsoft Word and give it to me or mail it to the post office box (above). The deadline for submissions is one week before the end of the month.

Clark Pritchett, Editor



*New York
New Haven
and Hartford*

Railroading Activities 2002

Directly from the computer of Ron Pothier

Brass Expo – March 1/2, - Hunt Valley, MD., Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn. Ellicott City Scale Model Railroad Assoc.

Fri, 6:30 – 10:30 PM, Sat. 10 AM – 5 PM, Sat, 7 PM – 11 PM, Contact: Howard Zane, 5236 Thunder Hill Rd, Columbia, MD. 21045, PH. (410)-730-1036

Train Show – March 3, 10 AM-3 PM, Cheshire, CT. – Cheshire High School Cheshire Band Association

Train Show – March 10, 10 AM-4 PM, Fairfield, CT. – Ludlowe Middle School Housatonic R/R Club, Station Stop Show

NMRA-NER, Train Show – March 17, 9 AM-4 PM, Warwick, RI.-West Warwick Civic Center – Little Rhody Division Show

Train Show – March 17, 10 AM-3 PM, Greenwich, CT. – Greenwich Civic Center Westchester Model R/R Club

Train Show – March 23/24, 10 AM-4 PM, West Weymouth, MA. – Weymouth High School & **Open House** – Hingham, MA, - Bare Cove Park, Building 51 South Shore Model Railroad Club

Train Show – April 14, 10 AM-3 PM, Milford, CT. – Jonathon Law School Robert L. Fabbri (203) 933-0922

Train Show – April 21, 10 AM-3 PM, Willimantic, CT. – Windham High School Eastern Connecticut Chapter NRHS

Convention & Train Show – April 27, 10 AM-5 PM, Dedham, MA. –Holiday Inn – NMRA-NER, Hub Division Show

Spring Convention – May 17/19, Portland, ME. – Sheraton South Portland Hotel NMRA-NER, Seacoast Division

National Convention – July 14 – 21, Loxahatchee, FL. National Model Railroad Association Train Show – Aug. 18, 9 AM-3 PM, New Haven, CT. – Lanman Center & Payne Whitney Gym, Yale University – John or Robin Vanacore (203) 230-1346

www.AFSTrains.com

Train Show – September 29, 10 AM – 3 PM, Webster, MA. – Wesster Elks Club Providence & Worcester Railfan Club

Railroad Activities 2002 Continues

Fall Convention – September 27/29 Syracuse, NY. NMRA-NER,

Train Show – October 19, 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM, Americal Civic Center & **Open House** – Wakefield, MA, North Shore Model Railroad Club

Train Show – November 9, 9 AM – 3:30 PM, North Haven, CT. Holiday Inn NHRHTA

Train Show – November 24, 10 AM – 4 PM, Cheshire, CT. – Cheshire High School Cheshire Band Association

Railroading Activities 2003

The Train Show – February 1/2, 9 AM – 5 PM, West Springfield, MA., Amherst Railway Society Eastern States Exposition Grounds

