

Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad

<http://www.mpr.org>



The News for: May 2003

Still Time for M&P Dues in 2003

Although almost all members have paid, there are still a few out there who haven't. If you're still interested, here's the details: Regular membership is \$25, seniors and juniors are \$12.50 and family memberships are \$30. (Ex-editor's Note: It costs more than a dollar to send a copy of the newsletter so regular membership is encouraged. Generous donations are always graciously accepted.) As we did last year, the policy is to pay your dues to the Club secretary, George Harran, not treasurer Gary Domer. George will record the member as being paid and update the Club mailing list. He will then give the check/cash to the treasurer to deposit in the Club account. This system worked well last year, especially for mailing lists and email lists, so I think we ought to stick with it. If you can't make it to the meetings, mail your check to George Harran at 17 Robin Hill Rd. in Waterford, CT 06385. Please include your complete mailing address (including zip code).

The Club Show

We are now starting to make arrangements for the 2003 Club Show at St Bernards on October 19.

Passenger Modules Status

As usual, work continues on the passenger station modules. May 14 we plan to start painting!. There is a hold on fitting the rest of the uncouplers (to module C), as John Waller is still wiring it up. Why is he so slow??

Club Meetings

These are being held for May 11 and 25, at the Bill Library, 7:30 PM.

Field Trips

We are planning a field trip to Steamtown, PA, and other venues in the vicinity, during the latter half of June. We are aware of heightened security issues in such trips, and plan to take action accordingly.

Member News

John Waller's Column

I recently went on a brief tour of the mid-west. The first place I visited was St. Louis, but to get there I changed planes at Midway, the first time I have been to that airport. Visibility was good on flying in, and I had a fascinating view of the enormous number of train tracks. At first it looked like N scale, then HO scale, and finally G scale. I saw quite a few of the reportedly 11,000 grade-level crossings in Illinois.

In St. Louis I was taken to Union Station, recently renovated at a cost of \$135M, but as specialty shops, not a railway station. Nevertheless, the whole place is steeped in railroad memorabilia. All of the architecture as to how the tracks were accessed was preserved. The immense station roof is still there. There is a bulletin board showing letters from people who had experienced the

station in its heyday; hopefully someone will publish them. It is sad in a way, the last major upgrade was in 1944, when the number of tracks was increased to nearly 50, on the eve of the disastrous decline in the use of passenger trains. Our transition module could have been modelled on the station's track plan, as the main tracks ran at right angles to the station tracks alignment. The main tracks parallel the Mississippi River, although some crossed the river at the station. A few tracks are left on the station property, used for excursion trains.

Another highlight of St. Louis was the Transport Museum, which has access to a main line through a short tunnel under a hill. There is a weird acoustic effect here as a train on the main line sounds as though it is about to burst into the museum area. There was a good exhibit of train stock, as well as a few boats, cars, and aeroplanes. I saw a turbo-train, one of the ugliest trains I have seen. Then, as I was walking among the exhibits, I saw a mallet-configured locomotive. I could not believe my luck; it was a Big Boy, number 4004. I walked slowly from end to end, both sides, with great reverence. There was also the "Dinky", a school bus fitted with rail wheels, which was used to carry students to Principia and back.

Last month I wrote about the Northeast Corridor Electrification, nearly 100 years in the making. Perhaps we think that there are no new major railways left to be built, anywhere in the World, but it is not so. I want to tell you about a railway which has been well over 100 years in the making. I knew that this was happening, and I already knew much of the background, but the full story is given in *Australian Geographic*, JAN-MAR 2003, page 50: "The Never Never Line" story by Jack Rozycki; photography by David Hancock. It is the story of the Adelaide to Darwin railway, from south to north, right across the middle of Australia. Imagine building a new railway from New Orleans to Toronto, and you get the idea. See the map.

The telegraph and the railroad both came into use in roughly the same time scale. From the beginning of the great sea voyages, it took months for messages to get from Europe to Australia. Then the land telegraph began snaking its way across Europe and Asia, terminating in Singapore, and other places. Now the distance by sea from Singapore to Darwin is much less than the distance to and from Europe. The obvious move was to build a telegraph across the dead heart of Australia from Darwin to Adelaide, to link up with the rest of the Australian network. And so it was done, with much of the heavy work being done by camels which were, with their drivers, imported from Afghanistan. The outback Australian environment is ideal for camels, and they remain there to this day. There are camel races at Alice Springs.



Naturally, the success of the telegraph fostered great interest in the possibility of building a railway over the same route. So in 1878 work began at Port Augusta which is at the head of Spencer Gulf, the larger of the two gulfs near Adelaide (see map). The line got as far as Oodnadatta, well short of Alice Springs, and ran out of money, in 1891.

Oodnadatta remained the end of the line for 36 years. The Federal Government took over the venture and the line eventually reached Alice Springs in 1929. The train which travelled the route was called the “ghan” after the camel drivers. Another line was started at Darwin, but only got about 500 km before dying in the Great Depression. Even that line deteriorated and was out of service by 1976. That left a big gap in the middle.

But the people of South Australia and the Northern Territory would not let go of their century-old dream. A joint government body, the AustralAsia Railway Corporation, called for tenders in 1997. In one sense the job had been made easier by then as the Federal Government had replaced the original narrow-gauge Port Augusta to Alice Springs line with a modern standard-gauge line over a much better route, opening in 1980 (the “new ghan”). The old route had been subject to frequent washaways due to desert flash floods. Speed on the old line was limited to 20 mph, and the journey took two days, if you were lucky.

Building the line from Alice Springs to Darwin involves crossing no great mountain ranges. I doubt if there will be a tunnel anywhere. The hazards are the searing heat of the desert, and the three months of monsoons nearer to Darwin. In 1999, 121 years after the line was first started, Asia Pacific Transport was awarded a contract to complete the line.

Naturally any notion of using timber sleepers (ties) was out of the question. Two factories at strategic positions along the line were established to weld and pour concrete sleepers. Together they turn out 20,000 sleepers each week, with 2.3 million scheduled for the complete work. Special road trains have been developed to carry welded rail from Adelaide in 90 foot lengths. Mobile construction camps move every eight weeks as the lines, started simultaneously at Darwin and Alice Springs, move together.

By this stage you may well be asking what will the line, scheduled for completion in 2004, be used for? New port facilities will open in Darwin, where sea time to Asia is reduced by some 10 days compared with most other ports in Australia. There will be roll-on, roll-off container facilities, as well as bulk gas and oil loading. But, wouldn't you know; the railway will run in competition with road transport, which was established more than 50 years earlier, over much the same route.

John

The President's Corner

Dan, the pen is mightier than the Dremel tool!

The Prez, *Dan Delany*

Vice President's Niche

I want to start people thinking about what sort of Club we want to be. A number of factors make this an appropriate time to start thinking. The average age of members continues to increase. The hope of being able to set up a permanent layout somewhere seems as far away as ever. Many of our HO modules are old and we need to decide when to put them out to grass. Should our Train Shows emphasize quality instead of quantity on the HO layout? Should we introduce more DCC and why? How should we plan for four-line main track on HO?

The Market Place

Club Member Ads

Advertise (free) here to reach more than 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

The Club Store

The Storekeeper's Report

M&PMRR Officers & Functionaries

The President Dan Delany 860 643-9303
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 John Waller 564-3114
Club Web Page Jim Spavins

The Technical Section

Contributions are 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.

Model Railroad Calendar

This Month

Work sessions will generally be held each Wednesday at Henry's and Larry's each Thursday. To check on a particular date, call Henry or Larry respectively. Both sessions start at 7 PM.

Next Month and Beyond

Bill Paradis reports that Essex is under new management, and we are slotted in for November 8, 9, 15, 16. Unfortunately, we cannot stay on after that, assuming we could put up with the cold, as Essex only rents the building from a State authority(?).

Submitting Newsletter Items

The club has a post office box that can be used for newsletter mailings. It is; P. O. Box 55 Quaker Hill, CT 06375-0055 Electronic versions are preferred so retyping is not necessary. E-mail enclosures can now be opened. Microsoft Word and other compatible word processing programs

should be used. Send items to be published by E-mailing them to me at home at: john.waller@snet.net If you do send something, it is a good idea to phone (860 564 3114) and say that you sent it. 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.

