

# Alohegan Pequot Model Railroad

<http://www.mpr.org>



## **The News for: July 2003**

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### **The Club Show**

Dan has confirmed that St. Bernards is available for 18/19 October, 18 setup and 19 show. Bill Paradis recommends Dan have a face-to-face meeting with the contact person to ensure we don't have anything like last year's drama!

An entry has been placed in the ModelRailroader event schedule (thank you Art). Invitations to vendors will be sent out by the end of June.

We intend to invite the G-Gaugers again.

### **Passenger Modules Status**

As usual, work continues on the passenger station modules, Wednesday evenings 7 PM at Henry's.

### **Club Meetings**

The June 8 meeting raised a number of matters.

We are "pencilled in" for Thomas at Essex in November. We are not sure whether the dates are 1, 2, 8, and 9 or 8, 9, 16, and 17.

The Mystic Valley Railroad has invited the Club to take part in a model train display (no vendors) at Worcester, MA, on November 23. This might clash with the Fall Willimantic Show, which would take precedence. Dan will seek more details.

Jim Spavins described the Club web site, with the aid of a laptop (off line). One part

of the site includes descriptions of member's modules as well as Club modules. Jim will include pictures submitted to him, maybe shrunk to reduce download time. An earlier decision precludes putting the newsletter on the site, to avoid copyright and plagiarism problems. Tutorials are planned, such as ballast laying.

A motion approving expenditure for the web site was carried by acclamation (estimated \$41 initially with \$13 per year).

The HO skirting and plexiglass panels have seen better days. Various suggestions were put forward concerning improved ways of attaching the skirting, such as Velcro, and transport of plexiglass sheets. Maybe the skirting needs to be fireproof? Methods used on the N scale layout might be appropriate.

Bob MacGregor has made further modifications to the Club trailer to facilitate loading and unloading.

Future meetings will be July 13 and August 10 at the Bill Library.

### **Field Trips**

Jim Delany gave further details of the June trip to Pennsylvania. Eight members said they are going, with three not sure.

### **Member News**

Nothing to report.

## John Waller's Column

The Thursday night sessions at Larry's are partly devoted to running Digital Command Control (DCC) on the outer track. Recall that the NMRA has specified standards and recommended practices for DCC, and will not give their stamp of approval to any manufacturer without compliance.

But the NMRA standards are strictly confined to the asynchronous serial protocol of the output from the command station (CS) to locomotives and ancillaries connected to the track. The ancillaries might be in the locomotive (whistles, bells, etc.) or trackside signals, crossing gates, and so on. The serial protocol carries information and power.

In my current phase 2 "smart throttle" development, I am not connecting trackside signals to the asynchronous signal, partly because the NMRA standard for signals is still preliminary. Instead I connect the signals via a microcontroller, effectively programmed as a decoder, with information from the smart throttle using a synchronous serial protocol, known as I<sup>2</sup>C, through fixed wiring entirely separate from the track. By doing this I avoid taking up precious queue space in the DCC protocol.

Beyond those parts of DCC specified by the NMRA, manufacturers are encouraged to be innovative, and every system that I know about has a different way of operating, including the ones I am developing.

The layout in Larry's basement operates with the DCC pack connected to the outer track at Power Mountain. Those of you who have operated trains from there will know that trains disappear from view around the basement staircase, to reappear against the east wall, and people standing inside the track introduce a degree of obscurity.

Perhaps even more than with analog control, you really have to keep your wits about you

when operating DCC. Sure you could simply shut off the DCC power if things look dicey, but that is cheating. In the real railroad world, there is no master switch which will immediately stop all trains running.

Curiously, my EasyDCC™ CS provides a "kill" facility that can be invoked via the RS-232 link, but nothing on the CS that can do this directly, although the power switch on the main transformer can be left handy. But kill interrupts the serial power; all trains grind to a shuddering halt, whistles stop, and lights go out.

The other night I was controlling four trains at once using the Digitrax CS. The four trains had addresses of 03, 05, 16, and 25, respectively. It is necessary to memorize these numbers and know which train each belongs to. One of them was easy, namely my three-truck Shay (05). Preferably, the address is related to the locomotive number, but that may not always be possible. My task was complicated by locomotive 16 stopping every so often, of its own accord, for no obvious reason. It was not dirty track, as the lights stayed on.

With the Digitrax CS, it is necessary to press four buttons to select a new two-digit address. This requires some quick thinking, as mentioned earlier. Not only that, the single throttle is a mechanical knob which stays wherever it is left. When a new address is selected, the train so selected immediately assumes the throttle setting, which is not usually what is wanted. To get over this it is necessary to partially set the new address, change the throttle setting to the new value, then complete setting the address.

The other system in use that night is by MRC. This overcomes the button-pressing by having a number of preset addresses selectable by a rotary switch. It is easy to select the address, but the address range is limited. The throttle-setting problem just mentioned still exists.

I have my own ideas as to what the ideal throttle should be capable of doing, and these are being incorporated in the smart throttle, along with other things. But I would appreciate people giving me ideas in this regard.

*John*

### The President's Corner

Oh! Dan(eo), where art thou?

### Vice President's Niche

As mentioned in the meeting notes, we are concerned about plagiarism claims against anything placed on our web site. To plagiarize is to use someone else's ideas or work and claim them as your own. A statement attributed to Wilson Mizner (1876-1933) reads: "If you steal from one author, it's plagiarism; if you steal from many, it's research."

I often use articles from Trains magazine, for example, to get material for my column. Even though I am fastidious in giving references back to sources, maybe I sometimes skate on thin ice. Anything I copy word for word (and this is unusual) is in quotation marks. Mostly I am reviewing an article, and expressing ideas of my own, extrapolating the material from that article. I would claim that I never plagiarize, but others may care to comment.

### 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

Bill Evans has been asked to procure some Tortoise turnout machines.

(Ed. Perhaps members could let me know what they need??)

#### M&PMRR Officers & Functionaries

<b>The President</b>	Dan Delany	860 643-9303
<b>Vice President</b>	John Waller	564-3114
<b>Treasurer</b>	Gary Domer	848-0690
<b>Secretary</b>	George Harran	443-0707
<b>Storekeeper</b>	Larry Southwick	535-2996
<b>Bulk Purchases</b>	Bill Evans	267-9482
<b>Meeting Speakers</b>	Bill Evans	267-9482
<b>Layouts/Name Tags</b>	Stu Dom	536-7637
<b>New Passenger Module</b>	Stu Dom	536-7637
<b>Field Trips</b>	Jim Delany	889-4029
<b>Newsletter</b>	John Waller	564-3114
<b>Club Web Page</b>	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

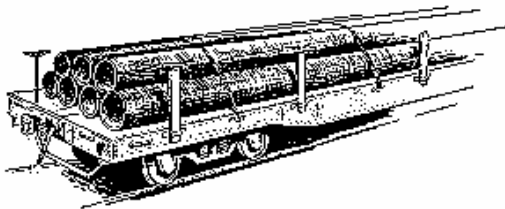
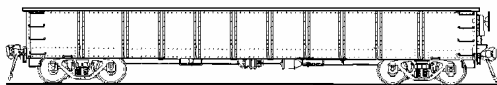
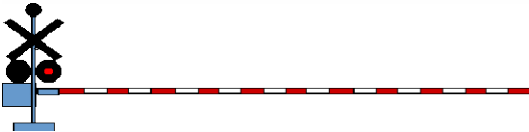
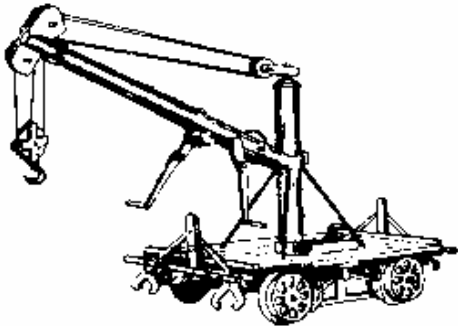
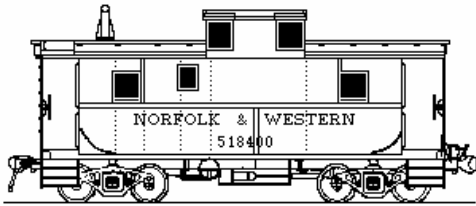
##### This Month

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.

#### 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.



(Ed. Thank you, Bert, for the pictures you gave me, which I will need to scan. I was planning to get a scanner anyway.)