

Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad

<http://www.mprr.org>



The News for: August 2003

The Club Show

Twenty-eight invitations were mailed out on June 30. Three affirmative replies have been received. One letter was returned address unknown (not unusual for these mailings!). See list at end of Newsletter.

Passenger Modules Status

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

On July 9, Stu put more air in the rear tyres of his van (just kidding) and brought the main control panel, partially complete, for inspection and discussion. It was offered up to the "C" module, and, mechanically, fits well. That was one hurdle crossed.

Stu has done an excellent job so far. After much discussion, it was recommended that all power supplies should go in a separate unit, which will sit on the floor. There are several reasons why this helps:

- The floor can take the weight!
- Ventilation of the heat-producing power sources will not affect the panel in any way.
- It is difficult to estimate in advance exactly how much power will be required, since it can only be estimated on a probabilistic basis.
- Space for wiring (none yet in place) inside the panel is tight; removing power supplies provides more room at crucial points.

It is very important that the internal wiring in the panel be planned very carefully. In the actual modules, this is not so important, as there is plenty of room, and wires can be bundled together with ties to keep them out of harm's way. Except for the tails to the next module, nothing has to move. This is not so in the panels, as they are hinged on the module side, with nearly all of the wiring destined to go to modules taken across the hinges. The wires must be bound in several bundles so they can flex across the hinge without pulling or snarling. This requires that the wiring be designed as a "loom" or "harness".

There was much discussion about the complexity of the controls on the panel. Of course, this "merely" reflects the complexity of the track work. As Stu asserts, this is no more and no less than originally sought and agreed to by Club members. Don't think of operating the panel as a "problem" but as a "task". It is no different, in principle, from what we have been doing for years. Operators will need to watch the main tracks, and know which switches stop main-line trains, and so on. Maybe we need written operating instructions? But you know the old saying: "when all else fails, read the instructions!"

Seriously, many members, Stu in particular, have put much time and effort into the new passenger modules. The Club has expended a few thousand dollars thereon. The goal

posts (provided nobody moves them) are in sight. We are moving along at a steady pace.

Club Meetings

The July 13 meeting was held at the Bill Library.

The minutes of the June 8 meeting were received by acclamation.

No Treasurer's report.

The Storekeeper had wheels and couplers and Tortoise machines for \$11-95 each.

The June trip went very well. Dan and Stu had pictures to show. Dan will do a trip story (when??).

We need more electric wire for the Passenger Modules (PM), and need to know more about the N scale skirting. Stu will contact Sandy. The HO layout needs some 350 feet of skirting. Color still to be decided. New plexiglass, if installed to uniform standards, will require some modules to be modified.

Stu pleaded for more work to be done Monday and Wednesday on the PM.

The Willimantic Show might be dropped. It might have clashed with Thomas anyway.

Next meeting will be August 10 at the Bill Library.

Field Trips

The June trip went very well.

Member News

Nothing to report.

John Waller's Column

Recently I wrote about a 2000 mile rail link nearing completion, the Darwin to Adelaide railway in Australia. The last segment of this

track, Alice Springs to Darwin, is being laid with the most modern machinery available.

The same could be said about the American Transcontinental Railroad, started in 1863 and completed in 1869. But then, the most modern (and only) machine, was the steam shovel. The rest was low-wage muscle power, man and beast, and black powder, helped by a lot of cussing and liquor.

When George Washington won the Revolutionary War, his resources for moving troops and equipment around were little better than those enjoyed by Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar. But a few short years after the Revolution all that had changed with the coming of the railroad, and steam power generally.

The vast area of the rapidly burgeoning USA cried out for rail lines to be built everywhere. By British standards, American railroad tracks were rough, but cost much less than half to build per unit distance; American rolling stock was adapted to cope. As a result the total track distance laid in America soon exceeded that of Europe, including Britain.

Naturally, the early railroads everywhere had teething troubles; failures and accidents were common. Cast iron was not a good medium. But, by the 1850's things had settled down and railroads had achieved a degree of maturity, despite the fact that steel, in quantity, was yet to arrive.

This period also saw the gold rush in California, and people came from all over the World, including Australia, to make their fortune. Later, the discovery of gold in Australia somewhat reversed this tide. But by then, California was well established, although very isolated.

There were three main ways to get to California from the eastern and mid-west USA. The first was to cross the Rocky and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges using muscle power. The second was to sail to the

Panama Isthmus, cross over to the Pacific Ocean, and sail to California. The third was to sail west-about around Cape Horn (against the prevailing winds), and then north to California. All methods were exceptionally hazardous, and each could take as much as six months.

Naturally, it became clear that a railroad across the continent would enable the journey to be made in six days (or so) rather than six months, and with much greater safety.

I am prompted to write about all this by reading *Nothing Like it in the World*, author Stephen E. Ambrose, Simon & Schuster, 2000. Not everybody likes Ambrose's views or his writing, but I found this book first rate. It may have been one of the last books he wrote. So I am indebted, posthumously, to Ambrose for some of the material here.

Although the benefits of building a Transcontinental Railroad were abundantly clear, it was not immediately obvious how much it would cost, how long it would take, and who would pay for it. Being a long-term project, it might not attract much capital in the prevailing climate of many highly-profitable shorter-term projects. Furthermore, which route should it take? Everybody had their favorite route, all based on little more than conjecture.

In such circumstances, it falls to governments to step in when the need and cost are so high. Here the timing was bad, as the debate over the railroad coincided with the lead up to the Civil War. Congress could not get anything passed, as Northerners wanted a northern route, and Southerners a southern route. At the time, California was uncommitted as to whether it would opt for slave or free.

Two events happened which pushed the odds in favor of a northern route.

Firstly, Abraham Lincoln was elected President. Lincoln, of course, was from

Illinois, very supportive of the railroad, and saw the it running west from Rock Island, or perhaps other places on the upper Mississippi River. Furthermore, the Platte River complex provided an easy rise to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Secondly, Theodore D. Judah, a young engineer, was recruited by the Central Pacific to begin work at the California end. The starting point was Sacramento, already an established river port, and Judah started a survey from there to find a route across the Sierra Nevada Range, consistent with the northern route plan.

Now Sacramento is just about 70 miles from what eventually became the western summit of the line at 7017 feet¹. Allowing for the plain around the Sacramento River extending some 10 miles inland from the terminal, that leaves 60 miles to climb 7000 feet. That is already 117 feet per mile which was the 2% gradient limit applied to the railroad, also dictated by Congress when a bill was finally passed.

But Judah found a way to do it, without using switchbacks, and produced a most detailed report on the survey. In addition, Judah's wife Anna drew beautiful pictures of the land subject to survey. Judah threw his whole effort into providing information for, and advocating the building of, the railroad.

Perhaps the hardest part of the line to build was at the summit, where a tunnel through the granite mountain was required. With black powder, despite intensive efforts by the work force, progress was measured in inches per day. Working was from both sides and (later) the middle. Astonishingly, the two ends met in the middle with an error of a few inches.

Those who have the National Geographic video "Love those Trains!", will see the

¹ According to the map inside the front cover of Ambrose's book.

Salad-Bowl Express passing through the summit tunnel.

The use of nitro-glycerin, a much more effective explosive, was still immature. In liquid form, it is very dangerous. The discovery that nitro-glycerin is much safer if embedded in clay, was still to come. This, of course, is the now familiar dynamite.

Three times Judah and Anna made the perilous journey to Washington, and back, via the Panama Isthmus. Backed up by the beautiful Anna, Judah was very persuasive. Congress, although in the middle of a terrible war, but no longer stymied by the Southern vote, actually passed legislation providing some finance for the railroad. This was helpful, although the constraints on the hoops to be jumped through, in order to get one dollar out of the government, were bewildering².

In addition, private financial backing was obtained, but in ways by which the Securities Exchange Commission of today would give more than a second look at. As Ambrose puts it, there were plenty of things screwed up, but enough was done right, as history attests, that the line did get built³.

Not the least notable in the whole enterprise was the performance of the Chinese laborers. Many Chinese came to seek their fortune in California and (later) Australia. In both places the Chinese were treated with contempt. Many were recruited by the Central Pacific, a matter which drew some ridicule, as how could these slightly-built men compete with much taller and heavier men of European descent?

But the Chinese laborers proved to be second to none. Their small physical size was more than compensated for by sheer dedication, long hours, hard work, and very quickly learning new techniques. While on

² Does congress ever pass any other sort of bill?

³ It must have been done right as, when I-80 was planned, no better route could be found.

the job, they remained much more healthy than the other laborers, with careful attention to what they ate and drank, and their moderation during times of relaxation. The Chinese took on the very dangerous task of blasting granite ledges and tunnels; after all, they said, our ancestors did this in China, and we invented black powder.

Sadly, Judah, for all his good work and absolute devotion, never saw a single spike put into the track. On a fourth trip to Washington, he contracted yellow fever⁴ at Panama, and died in New York, a little time later. Ambrose includes a formal photograph of Judah, looking very stern and important, but writes that no pictures of Anna have been found⁵.

Another new feature of the line is that passengers went to a higher elevation, in a train, than they had ever been before. They were also suspended on ledges built on the sides of very steep slopes, initially giving rise to great trepidation among crew and passengers.

John

The President's Corner

Oh, Danny Boy, I long to get your email containing your notes for the month.

Vice President's Niche

We rely greatly on emails to conduct our Club affairs. Consumer Reports (CR) recently had an article on Spam. What could have been a convenient medium for communications, is being ruined by Spam. Laws are in place to prosecute Spam generators, and more are being planned, but not a single person has yet been charged.

⁴ The discovery that yellow fever is propagated by mosquitoes was still to come.

⁵ One other picture which Ambrose does include shows a Native American, in full tribal dress, standing atop the hill above a cutting, looking pensively down at the recently-completed track.

I use Microsoft Outlook, which does have some filtering, and various filtering software packages are available, which I have not tried. I am reluctant to mess with Outlook, as it is buggy anyway.

CR advises not to open Spam, not even to try and delete yourself from the mailing list, still less buy any Spam products.

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 advertisement.

The Club Store

The Storekeeper's Report

Thanks to Bill Evans for procuring Tortoise turnout machines.

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

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, bench work,

model building and more are all of interest to the club members.

Model Railroad Calendar

A neighbor drew my attention to "Nature's Train Weekend" at Voluntown, 9 and 10 August. It is on a campsite at 96 Ekonk Hill Road, off Route 49N, telephone 860 376 4203. It is advertised as "First Annual Train Enthusiasts Weekend." Look at www.naturescampsites.com. I will check it out.

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. Don't assume a session is being held; check first.

From an email sent to Dave Alley

To: ASME_060330

Subject: Landmark Dedication - August 16, 2003

Region VI Meeting Notice

Saturday, August 16, 2003

Family Day and Landmark Plaque Presentation

Great Northern 2313/Montana Western 31

GN 2313 is a self-propelled car which contains a locomotive area, baggage area, a smoking section, and a passenger section. The Great Northern used it as an economical replacement of a steam-locomotive hauled train in branch line service.

Great Northern 2313 is the 30th car built by the Electro-Motive Corporation (EMC). This car has its original type of prime mover (Winton 106A) and original type of traction motors (General Electric 240A). This car predates by some 5 years the acquisition of both Winton and EMC by General Motors, leading to the creation of the Electro-Motive Division (EMD) of that company.

Gas-Electric Rail motorcars prior to EMC used existing electric streetcar technology combined with on-board electricity generation. This caused

control problems for the engineer prior to the development of a system by Dr. Hermann Lemp, The Lemp system, used on GN 2313 is still used on Direct Current locomotives to this day.

Diesel locomotive technology, and its adoption of the Lemp control system, was in its infancy during GN 2313's creation. In many ways, developments between gas-electric railcars and diesel-electric locomotives were intertwined. Neither can be said to be clearly a successor of the other. Nonetheless, the widespread use of the Lemp control system prior to the creation of passenger and freight diesel-electric locomotives contributed greatly to the latter's success.

In 1940, the Great Northern sold the rail motorcar to the Montana Western. This short line merely removed the first and last digits of GN 2313 to form MW 31. In 1966, the Montana Western was purchased by the Great Northern, which, in turn, donated the car to the Mid-Continent Railway Museum. More information on the car can be seen at <http://www.midcontinent.org/collectn/DIESEL/mw31.html>.

The role of gas-electric rail motorcars was eclipsed by diesel-electric locomotives. Most of those rail motorcars were therefore scrapped, had the prime mover removed to become trailer cars, or had the prime mover replaced with a diesel engine. Thus, GN 2313 / MW31 is a remarkable survivor from its era.

Location: Mid-Continent Railway Museum, Foot of Walnut St, + mile west of the 4-way stop, North Freedom (near Baraboo) WI (608) 522-4261

Schedule: 11:00 AM Check-in
11:40 Ceremony
12:00 Presentation of Plaque
12:45 Lunch
1:30 Talks
3:30 PM Train ride

Cost: \$20.00 Non Members
\$10.00 Children of non members
\$15.00 ASME, or Mid Continent Members, And their guest
\$ 7.50 Children of members (3 to 12)
\$40.00 Members Family
\$ 7.50 ASME Undergrad Engineering Students

Reservations: Download and mail in a reservation

form from the links at <http://www.asme.org/sections/rockriver>, <http://www.midcontinent.org/ride/invitation.pdf>, or <http://www.midcontinent.org/ride/asmeform.html>. Email the names and number of attendees, company name, and ASME status for BOTH the free plaque ceremony and the lunch/talks/train ride to nancy@midcontinent.org, or call Nancy Miller at the Mid-Continent museum at (608) 522-4261 or (800)-930-1385, and leave the same information and a phone number in case of questions.

Deadline: 5:00 PM Saturday, Aug 9, 2003.
Please cancel if your plans change. Reservations not cancelled by deadline will be invoiced at dinner cost.

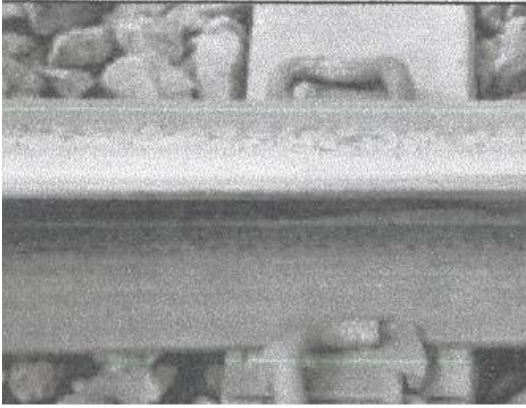
Directions: A map to North Freedom is available at http://www.midcontinent.org/map_large.jpg

Lodging: A Best Western, Campus Inn and a Park Plaza are nearby.
Phone numbers for these and other hotels is available at <http://www.baraboonow.com/hotelmotel.asp>
(Thanks, Dave, good to hear from you.)

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.

Thanks Bert; I can now scan pictures, but I need to keep memory size down!! Also I need to learn how to de-skew, and things like that!



Berkshire Hills Hobby Supply
Bob's Photo
Buff Valley Railroad
Connecticut Discount Trains
Cookies Die Cast, LLC
Danbury Railway Museum
DeLany, Jim & Dan
Dick's Trains
E & H Traction Co.
Federal Hobbies*
Ferguson, Art
Hobby Center
Hobby Gallery
Hobby Stores Distributing, Inc.
Howard's Hobby
Johnsons Trains
Loco & Bobs*
Pritchett, Clarke
Providence Northern Railroad Club
Quequechan Valley Model Railroad Consultants
Railfan Photographer & Writer
Railroad Articles
Robert J. Hauschild Studio
RR Model & Hobby Supply
Shippertown Model Shop, Inc.
Sokol's Structures
Summit Hobby Supply (Bennington Scale Models)*
The Train Connection
Toms Trains of Connecticut
Trackside Sales
Train One, Inc.
Train Stuff LLC
Trash-n-Treasures
Valley Hobbies and Trains, LLC
Visuals at Work

* Already replied and paid.

Quequechan Valley Model Railroad Consultants letter was returned as undeliverable. The address I have is 108 Main St., Middletown, RI 02840, contact Paul E. Brown. Anybody help please?