Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad

http://www.mprr.org

The News for: September 2003

The Club Show

There was a short heart-stopping pause when St. Bernard's wanted to deny us the school for our Show. Dan and Bill sorted things out, and all is well. Thanks to Ron and Tim I have some new candidate vendor names and a corrected address for Quequechan Valley Model RR Consultants. Unfortunately, Bob MacGregor has just reported the G-Gaugers cannot attend. Bob will try and put together a G-scale layout.

Annual Club Picnic

The Hargers have most graciously offered their home for our Picnic, September 13th from 1 to 5 PM. It is pot luck, the club is providing hamburgers, hot dogs, buns, and soda. Bring a bathing suit if you want to go in the pool. Croquet and badminton will also be set up. A folding chair is recommended, although we will have some extras here. The first September meeting will be at 5 PM followed by an operating session. Tea will be provided for those who do not wish to operate.

Directions:

Take I-95 to the Camp Rowland exit (74). Turn right at the end of the ramp (from either direction) and head south toward Niantic. At the fourth light (not counting the exit ramp light) there will be a Y in the road. Take the right branch (East Pattagansett Rd) and continue right through the stop light at the Christmas Tree Shop. In about 1/4 mile the road will take an S turn under the railroad with a stop sign just past the underpass. Turn right to the next stop sign (2/10 mile) turn right to Wildwood Drive (200 yards) and go to the end. We are the right hand drive. Looks like a dirt road to the right of mailbox 19. If you get lost-call 739-4224. email - hejeharger@myeastern.com

Passenger Modules $tatus

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

Over the last several weeks we have had the benefits of Jim Spavins expertise; in particular, the creek is now flowing well and collecting lots of junk as befits its location. We wish Jim well in his studies.

Stu has completed component mounting on the left panel of the main control panel, and has turned the panel over to John Waller, heaving a sigh of relief in the process. There are many unresolved wiring tasks, because the wiring density is very high.

Club Meetings

The first meeting in September will be held at held at 5:00 PM on the 13th. (See Club Picnic article) The second one will be at the Bill Library in Ledyard on September 27 at 7:30 PM.

August Club Meeting Minutes

The August 10 meeting was held at the Bill Library.

The secretary's report of the July 13 meeting was received by acclamation.

No Treasurer's report.

The Storekeeper had wheels and couplers.

A discussion and ideas for future skirting and plexiglass on our modules was continued from last meeting. More discussion is still needed as to how and when, and will continue at the next meeting.

Mondays & Wednesdays will continue to be passenger module work at Henry's house. Please call and confirm before showing up.

A discussion followed on the future work needed for the passenger module.

Thursday nights will continue to be operating & module work at Larry's house, with the outer loop normally connected to DCC.

The club show is scheduled for Oct.19 with setup on Oct.18. A few problems existed with St. Bernard's but thanks to Bill Paradis everything is now on track. Thanks Bill!

The G.Gauges will attend and help out with our show this year (but see note above).

The Club had an offer to display in Vernon CT on September 14 but due to our busy schedule the members turned down this offer.

Jonathon Harger and his wife at his home in Niantic will host this year's summer picnic. It will be on Sept.13th from 1 to 5 pm with a short club meeting following (see Picnic).

Field Trips

Dan is doing a trip story (Ha Ha Ha!!).

Member News

The summer model railroading doldrums have set in. There is nothing to report.

John Waller's Column

Driver-less trains? What next! Not entirely novel, of course, but Trains Magazine of September 2003 has an article *Get Ready for No-Man Trains*, by Kathi Kube[1].

As Kathi writes "…will put the railroads back into the game against truckers, bust unions, slow operations to a crawl, and destroy safety. Or none of these."

The existing (manned) practice is to have an engineer in the cab, and a switchman on the ground, each affiliated with separate unions. It may be fair to comment that switching operations during the 19th Century, and their inherent danger, helped make railroad unions what they are today. Back then, management's indifference to the plight of injured workers was rife. Unions may still feel that pressure on management continues to be necessary, witness the Enron scandal.

Clearly, railroad management would like to replace two men with one to save cost, and may, in the eyes of some, be putting safety in second place. The irresolvable argument is that "unless you comply with this new method, none of us will have a job anyway."

An engineer in the cab, being high off the ground, has a better overall view of the yard than the switchman on the ground, within the limitations of the field of view of the cab, which is inherently configured for looking forward. But the switchman will be able to see things which the engineer cannot.

[1] I don't think the reference is to all-women crews! But the "man" could be from the Latin "manus" or "hand", and the reference really means "hands-off train operation".

As modellers, we have a bird's eye view of the yard, and can see the whole picture, unless it is so cluttered, or moves too quickly, for us to assimilate it enough to prevent some mishap. If we do see something bad about to happen, the great out-of-scale hand can reach down and intervene. It would be very difficult to build this capability into a real yard, although thought is undoubtedly being given to it.

For my own benefit, I found a new term in the article; a "switch list" which not only specifies which switches[2] to throw, but how trains are to be coupled and uncoupled, moved, and so on. The switchman then radios to the engineer to move his train. Thus the switchman is really in charge, although the engineer still has safety responsibilities, a matter which must give rise to finger pointing.

Although not stated, I am assuming the switch list includes head-out and head-in movements. This is where I become interested with DCC operations. Automatic control of DCC trains on a main line requires the block system to know the positions of all trains, against each train's DCC address.

Once this process gets going each train can be tracked automatically. It is the "get going" that took some figuring out. My first attempt, which can still be demonstrated to anyone interested, provided just a main line, and nothing else. Trains were placed on the main line and the user keys in which block each train front and rear is situated. A set of rules warns if the settings are not self consistent. But the user must match each train with its address.

With real trains, I assume the switch list identifies each train by some designated train number, and the switchman can check that the train number matches the description of a train of interest. The train number obviously needs to be unique to each train within a particular system, as does the DCC address. Duplicated train numbers could cause havoc, just like duplicated DCC addresses.

It is therefore quite prototypical to require the DCC user ("switchman") to assert the one-to-one correspondence between train and DCC address. In fact, the remote-control train device in the referenced article, called Operator Control Unit, no doubt has some equivalent means of selecting trains.

What is the point here? The point is the next DCC system I am building has a yard and main line. The user selects a train to head out, and advances it to the head-out station, where the train stops automatically. The user is then asked to confirm the match between train number and DCC address; if confirmed, the train then waits for a main line slot, and heads out automatically. Otherwise, the user is able to back the train from the head-out station to cancel the head-out procedure.

The head-out procedure itself, after waiting for a main line slot, sets the head-out turnout to branch, sets signals to guard the head-out block, allows the user to set non-zero forward speed (but limited to the designated slow speed for the train), whereby the train heads out. On clearing the head-out block, the procedure sets the turnout back to straight, and sets signals as if the train just headed out had always been on the main line.

As a postscript to last month's article about the first Trans-Continental Railroad, the above issue of Trains has an insert about Omaha-Council Bluffs. As well as Union Pacific, there are now sixteen other railroads, the most prominent being Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Iowa Interstate, and Canadian National. Sadly, many abandoned lines are also included.

John

[2] Such alliteration!

The President's Corner

Speech is silvern, silence is golden, but writing does not make much noise.

Vice President's Niche

I received an email recently which spoke of the dangers of mixing cell phones and VOC (volatile organic compounds). If the cell phone transmits, the VOC can ignite. Sounds improbable, but the email claimed that several fires have been reported where people were filling their car with gasoline and carrying a cell phone. In one instance the whole station burnt down. These unfortunate people were not using their cell phone; it was simply turned on. During this time, the "cell" transmitter could well interrogate a phone, to determine if it is turned on, for example. The interrogation makes the phone respond, that is, transmit.

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
None

M&PMRR Officers & Functionaries

The President	Dan DeLany	860 643-9303
Vice President	John Waller	564-3114
Trea$urer	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

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.

Submitting Newsletter Items

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, or snail-mail to 94 Glebas Road, Plainfield, CT 06374-1429. 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. The deadline for submissions is one week before the end of the month.

Thanks to Clark for providing the following pictures, and for vetting this Newsletter before publication.

Don Counsellor hard at work laying ballast.

This is the light at the end of the tunnel you don't need to see!

WYOMING
OPERATION
LIFESAVER, INC.