

# Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad



## The News for: May 2005

### First Field Trip of the Year

In March, Jim Spavins, the President of the Rensselaer Model Railroad Society, invited the Mohegan and Pequot Model Railroad Club up to the frozen tundra of Troy, NY, for a private open house to see their world famous layout. This may be one of the last opportunities to see, from noon to 3 P.M., one of the country's premier model railroads because open houses will be limited in the future. The layout is in the basement of Davidson Hall and features prototype scenes from New York and Vermont from the early 1950s. It has been featured in numerous model railroad magazines over the years.

The Club readily accepted and will go to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) on Saturday April 30. About 15 to 18 people are expected to make the trip. Club Members will split the cost of the drivers' gas and pay for their own food as well as the layout admission price, which is still to be determined. The layout will open at noon so we will move back and forth between the Selkirk yard and the layout of Jonathon Harger's father in-law before and after the RPI tour. The logistics are as follows. We will leave the commuter parking lot west of Exit 82 from I-395 in Norwich at 7:00 A.M. Exit 82 is north of Route 2. Do not go to Route 82 (Exit 80) which is south of Route 2. It takes about three hours to get to Troy, NY.



### Meetings and Work Sessions

It will take a while for us to become comfortable with the new schedule for meetings and work sessions. Once again, here it is. The normally scheduled weekly work session is still on Wednesday evenings and begins around 7:00 PM. There will be one "all-day" work session each month on the Sunday of the first monthly meeting. Starting times on the Sunday work session are flexible and will change to fit project needs and deadlines but presently start at noon. All work sessions are at Larry Southwick's house at 200 Wyassup Rd in North Stonington. [Painting, shelf building and organizing are almost complete.]

The first meeting of the month will be held at Larry Southwick's house in North Stonington and the second meeting will be held at the "normal" location, the Bill Library in Ledyard. The aim is to have a clinic/workshop at the first meeting and to primarily concentrate on business at the second meeting. Repeat after me "Number one is for fun and number two is for less fun." Both meetings begin at 7:30 P. M. In the future the meeting time at Larry's house may change to better fit the work session and dinner.

This month, the first meeting is at Larry Southwick's house at in North Stonington on May 8 at 7:30 P.M. The work session

Trip to RPI Layout and Selkirk Yard on April 30.

will start around noon. Directions to Larry's house are at the end of the Newsletter. The second meeting will be on May 22 at the Bill Library and starts at 7:30 P. M.



### **Building new Modules**

New modules need to be built to replace aging ones and the one-foot wide bridge modules that we use to expand the layout at shows. In June there will be some work sessions to build lightweight basic modules for members. The modules will be built in either four or six foot lengths and can be 24 or 30 inches deep. They will not have any trackwork or scenery. It will be the responsibility of the member to complete them and carry them to shows in their vehicles. Almost any car can carry a four foot module and any mini-van can carry a six foot one. If you have a full-size van or pickup truck then you may be able to transport an eight-foot module. We don't want to have to carry any more eight-foot member-owned modules in the Club trailers.



### **Extracts: April Meeting Notes**

[Only includes information relevant this month or not incorporated in other newsletter articles.]  
(Ref. John Waller's April 10 & 24 notes.)

### **NMRA Conventions**

We are asking for a layout size of 32' x 24' as a minimum for the Fall 2005 convention at Stamford. Bill Evans is the point of contact for Hartford 2009. Dan reiterated his determination to be "on the radar screen" for the 2009 convention.

### **Clinics and Demos**

Dan Delany gave a weathering demonstration at the April 10 meeting, which resulted in some very realistic effects on cars and engines of rust, dirt, graffiti and the like. No seminar is scheduled for May. Dan would like to see one on constructing

scale model trees soon but there will just be a work session for May 8 (mother's day!).

### **Work sessions**

The aim is to get the layout in Larry's basement running as soon as the fitting of new legs to the inside corners is done. Larry reported that many of the track connectors on the passenger station were humped. He also mentioned the need to clean turnout blades. Stu has a plan to use the auxiliary contacts on the tortoise machines to avoid the need for electrical contact between the turnout blade and fixed rail<sup>1</sup>.

### **Member News**

Here is where we actually try to communicate with our fellow Club members and those who might want to join us. Do you need some help with a model railroading problem, have expertise to share or just want to get out in the world more? Then let it be known in the Club newsletter.

### **Bert Beukelaer**

Bert had a little work done at his favorite facility, L&M Hospital. They replaced a defective pacemaker and he says that his vision is much better and he feels good too. He is scheduled to get out of the hospital on Monday, April 25. As Bert says, "Good for another twenty years of model railroading!"

### **Dave Bidwell Returns**

One of our long-time members came to the April 24 meeting after a prolonged absence for medical reasons. Welcome back Dave!

### **Letters to the Editor**

Vent your opinions here!  
Com'on, you have one.

### **Field Trips**

Spring has sprung, sort of. Anyway, here is what Jim Delany has to say about our field trips for 2005.

The following club trips have been scheduled or are being considered.

The RPI layout tour is on Saturday April 30, 2005. (Age restrictions might apply to visitors to the layout.) [The Rensselaer

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<sup>1</sup> Oh joy! More wiring, but at least it is not in the control panel.

Station will not be part of the trip because security is tighter at the station these days and we cannot gain access to the platforms.]

Annual Club Trip -- scheduled for the week of July 18th to July 24th, 05. We do plan to return to Fostoria, Ohio, as this was and is a very busy area, with about 160 trains per day. We can discuss other destinations in the next few months.

Other trips tentatively planned in May and June are a visit to Northlandz in New Jersey and a local tourist railroad there. Visit New Haven station and take MetroNorth to Grand Central Terminal in New York City. Also visit to the Providence Northern club and AA Hobbies, and a trip to the Palmer, MA area where CSX and New England Central cross (formerly Boston and Albany and Central Vermont). Tucker's Hobbies is only a 15 min. drive from Palmer.

Various Connecticut railroad museums were also mentioned for one-day trips.



**Trackside in Maine.**

### **John Waller's Column**

I have been working with some former colleagues in writing a history for the Naval Laboratory in Sydney, where I worked for just over 20 years.

Somewhat before I joined, the lab had purchased its first digital computer, which turned out to be an absolute disaster. For some time thereafter, management would have nothing to do with computers. Finally we were allowed to purchase a PDP-11 which, at the time was a revelation.

Things, of course, move on. Some things move much more rapidly than we expect;

other things much less so. We have a problem forecasting the rate of progress<sup>2</sup>.

My next phase of model train control is still in the planning stage. The main microcontroller I currently use, the Microchip 16F877 PIC, has given excellent service in my current demo, but does have one rather annoying limitation. The stack is limited to a depth of 8. This means that calls to subroutines can only be nested to a depth of eight. There were several instances where I needed nine, Murphy's law, of course.

The semaphores I use on my demo layout are operated by a simpler PIC microcontroller, the 16F628, which has the same stack limitation but, with the much simpler program, there is no stack problem.

Recently Microchip has launched the so-called 18F series, a considerable upgrade on the 16F series I have been using. And, my joy is unconfined, the stack will go 31 deep! Physically, the new 18F452 is a drop-in replacement for the 16F877, but the software has many differences.

I am bemused to note that the chip in the 18F452 package is about the size of a fingernail, but its capabilities are comparable to the processor in the PDP-11 we thought so wonderful 40 years ago, but which required a room of its own.

It is a self-imposed burden, but now I am learning how the 18F452 ticks. Microchip has taken some trouble to remove many of the memory access and other features of the 16F877 which were untidy, but not show stoppers. The stack limitation is not a show stopper either, but cumbersome to work around.

While Microchip markets a very good microcontroller series, the documentation is appalling. The instruction manual for the 18F is a 300 plus epic of mistakes, contradictions, and poor description. The more capable the microcontroller, the worse is the documentation. I think there is a Latin phrase: "Caveat Emptor", let the buyer beware.

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<sup>2</sup> Chinese proverb: "prediction is difficult, especially where the future is concerned."

Fortunately, there is a team of dedicated people, who like the PIC microcontroller series, and what the PIC can do, who have spent many hours of reading the technical documentation and experimenting with the devices, to find out exactly what they do, and how they work.

My first encounter with this group, who are connected in various degrees with the magazine *Everyday Practical Electronics* (EPE), was a set of tutorials by the EPE Technical Editor, John Becker. This set me down the PIC path, and now I am an accredited member of the above group.

Technical documentation has been sliding downhill for quite some time now. Way back, a product came with an instruction manual, nicely bound on glossy paper, which was very reliable in terms of the accuracy of its information.

In due course, paper disappeared altogether, and was replaced with disks, and later CDROM. Now even that is gone, and downloading from the website is now the norm.

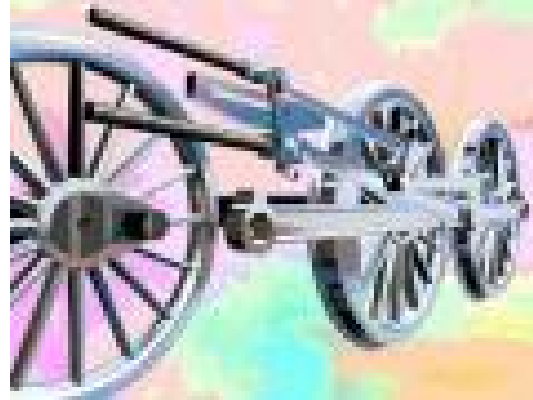
I speculate the poor quality of the Microchip documentation arises from the use of technical writers, who have difficulty getting the attention of the technical staff who really know what is going on. At times these writers seem to put down the first thing which comes into their heads but, I don't envy the position they are in.

*John*

## The President's Corner

See the World Wide Web section

*Dan*



**Wysart valve gear**



## Vice President's Niche

Club members come and look at the passenger station control panel and shake their heads in dismay. It is so complex that it is difficult to see what has been changed from week to week<sup>3</sup>. But progress is being made. Each week a problem is resolved or a new part of the track energized.

Bob Applegate kindly fixed three tortoise motors recently. These just have to be connected electrically, and all the turnouts should be working. Thanks Bob; good job. Bob seems to have the knack of getting the tortoise lever wire into the hole in the moving blades mechanism. Better 'n me.

*John*



**Allegheny**

## 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.)

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<sup>3</sup> Cynics would say from year to year.

### The Club Store

The Storekeeper, Larry Southwick, has stuff. That includes model railroading supplies such as track, wheels and couplers, and new Club hats and shirts. Shirt prices for Club Members are:

Tee Shirts \$12  
Polo Shirts (Collars) \$16  
Sweatshirts \$15

### Commercial Corner (from Barbara Schubler)

Just a note to let all of you know, I no longer have to order two of everything at a time from Broadway Limited. I can now order just one item. This means that now you won't have to wait for your items that you have ordered, if they are in stock you will get the item in 3 or 4 days.

Hear the Real-Life sounds of model trains!  
**BROADWAY-LIMITED IMPORTS** HAS JUST THAT! Close your eyes and you imagine your standing next to the real thing! To View the **BROADWAY-LIMITED IMPORTS** and witness the sounds and beauty of these model train engines go to: **www.broadway-limited.com**.

For competitive prices and great service contact one of the few Broadway-Limited Authorized Dealers in southeastern Connecticut. Contact Barbara at TACDAB, LLC / 860-447-9023 / [schubb@myeastern.com](mailto:schubb@myeastern.com).

To find out a little bit about this dealer, just talk to anyone from the Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad Club, and they'll confirm that TACDAB, LLC is a business to do business with. You'll be glad you did!



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[schubb@myeastern.com](mailto:schubb@myeastern.com)

### The Technical Section

Contributions are welcome. You can write about anything from prototypes and history to model railroads, scenery, electrical, bench work, model building and more are all of interest to the club members.

Picture(s) of the Month  
~~Keep~~ Start 'em coming.

### World Wide Web

**YOU send in** your favorite railroad related websites and they will be published here so everybody can access them.

Dan Delany sends: There is a self-guided tour set for May 7th in Rhode Island for six different model railroads if anyone might be interested. A couple of these are very impressive.

<http://www.northeasttrak.org/TOUR05.html>

Jim Hodgdon provided this link to an article in the New Hampshire Union Leader about using a steam engine that's part of the collection of the White Mountain Central Railroad, at Clark's Trading Post.

[http://www.theunionleader.com/articles\\_showfast.html?article=53687](http://www.theunionleader.com/articles_showfast.html?article=53687)

### Model Railroad Calendar

#### This Month in 2005

**April 30, 2005: Troy/Selkirk, NY.** M&P field trip to the Rensselaer Model Railroad Society and the Selkirk Yard. See Page 1 for details and logistics.

**May 4, 11, 18, & 25 2005: North Stonington, CT.** Work sessions at Larry Southwick's house at 7:00 P.M.

**May 8, 2005: North Stonington, CT.** Work session at Noon and Club meeting at 7:30 PM at Larry Southwick's house.

**May 22, 2005: Ledyard, CT.** Second meeting of the month at 7:30 PM at the Bill Library.

#### Next Month and Beyond

**July 18 to 24, 2005: RR Points West.** This is the big M&P Club train-watching trip to Fostoria, Ohio and other hot spots along the way. To reduce the cost you will need to find someone to share your motel room. Last year it cost ~\$300 per person.

**Ron Pothier's** 2005 list of train shows is available from him at [repth@snet.net](mailto:repth@snet.net).

**The Lighter Side**  
(from John Waller)

Trip to RPI Layout and Selkirk Yard on April 30.

The election of the new Pontiff spawned a series of Pope jokes:

Ratzinger is being called God's Rottweiler. Ratzinger knew he would get elected, as he knew he is already infallible.

Three cardinals went to talk to God before going to the Sistine Chapel, Ratzinger and two others.

The first to talk to God was Ratzinger, who left without a word after the interview. The second then went in to talk, and came out in raptures at the revelations made known to him. The third did likewise.

Then God came out and said he was glad Ratzinger had set him straight!

#### A War Story

A Marine squad was marching north of Basra when they came upon an Iraqi soldier badly injured and unconscious. Nearby, on the opposite side of the road, was an American Marine in a similar but less serious state. The Marine was conscious and alert. As first aid was given to both men, the Marine was asked what had happened.

The Marine reported, "I was heavily armed and moving north along the highway and coming south was a heavily armed Iraqi soldier. Seeing each other we both took cover."

"What happened then?" the Corpsman asked.

"I yelled to him that Saddam Hussein was a miserable low-life scumbag, and he yelled back, "Teddy Kennedy is rich, good-for-nothing fat drunk."

"We were standing there shaking hands when a truck hit us."

### Club Administration

In this new standard section we will **eventually** have the things that we all need to know so the Club functions more smoothly.

#### The April Newsletter

The Editor thanks John Waller and Robert Applegate for getting the April Newsletter out in his absence. You couldn't tell the difference could you?

#### M&PMRR Officers & Functionaries

**The President Dan DeLany** 860 748-7581  
**Vice President John Waller** 564-3114  
**Treasurer Don Counsellor** 739-6381  
**Secretary Robert Applegate** 464-2118  
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Newsletter Mailing, Meeting Speakers and Bulk Purchases **Bill Evans** 267-9482  
New Passenger Modules, Name Tags and Show Layouts **Stu Dom** 536-7637  
Real Prototype Railroading Information  
**Richard Peiffer** [rpeiffer@charter.net](mailto:rpeiffer@charter.net)



#### Membership, New and Renewals

Membership applications, how much, how to submit them, etc. (to be developed by the Club Secretary).

#### Location for Permanent Layout

What members should do/can say to the owner etc. if they find a location that may be used for a permanent layout for the Club. (to be developed by the Club President)

#### Club Website

What members should do if they have something for the Club Website. (to be developed by the Club Webmaster)

#### Submitting Newsletter Items

Send items to be published by E-mailing them to Clark at: [modlrrnews@aol.com](mailto:modlrrnews@aol.com), or snail-mail them to 23 Beacon Hill Dr. Waterford, CT 06385.

#### Directions to Larry Southwick's House

On I-95 north, take exit 92; at bottom of the ramp, turn left onto Route 2 west (actual direction is north). Go one mile to traffic circle (Route 184 intersection). Go straight thru staying on Route 2. Go another 1.5 miles to the first traffic light. Turn right onto Rocky Hollow Road. Go about 1,500 feet to a stop sign. Go straight passing the North Stonington Town Hall on your right. At the next intersection go straight. This starts

<http://www.mpr.org>

Wyassup Road. Follow this road for 1.7 miles reaching number 200 on the mail box on your left. Directly opposite on the right turn into driveway with stone walls and metal gates and you are there.



**A Diamond is a railfan's best friend**

**Trip to RPI Layout and Selkirk Yard on April 30.**