

# The Crossing Gate

FALL  
2003



Newsletter of the Twin Cities Division, Thousand Lakes Region, National Model Railroad Association • [www.twincitiesdivision.com](http://www.twincitiesdivision.com)

## Another year, another NMRA convention

### Our veteran convention-goer's report on Toronto

By Bruce Notman

My wife, Pam and I flew to Toronto, Ontario, Canada in July to attend Maple Leaf 2003, which was this year's edition of the NMRA National Convention. It was our 23rd National.

We arrived late Saturday afternoon, July 12th. At the Registration Desk we were greeted by the Convention Chairman, who put his arms around us and said, "Welcome." I guess they really were worried about the SARS effect on the convention! Although attendance was down from what was expected, it was still very well attended.

After spending a lot of time visiting with old friends, Pam and I split up for the convention, seeing each other only once or twice a during the day in the halls. As usual, Pam had a great time spending all day Sunday working at the Company Store as a volunteer. Because of the SARS scare it hadn't been well stocked

so almost everything was gone by Monday afternoon.

Pam took two tours. On Monday she visited Dundurn Castle (actually a country estate) and the Royal Botanical Gardens. On Tuesday the tour took her to Casa Loma, a very well known castle in Toronto. Before the tour, she worked at the silent auction for two hours, and then attended the Ladies' luncheon.



There were 22 different non-rail clinics – perhaps the most ever offered at a National – so in her spare time, she attended many of them.

While Pam was off having her fun, I spent my first few days in the SIG's Roundhouse working at the registration desk of the Layout Design Special Interest Group. I'm now the National Convention Coordinator.

While there I was able to observe the Operations Special Interest Group's

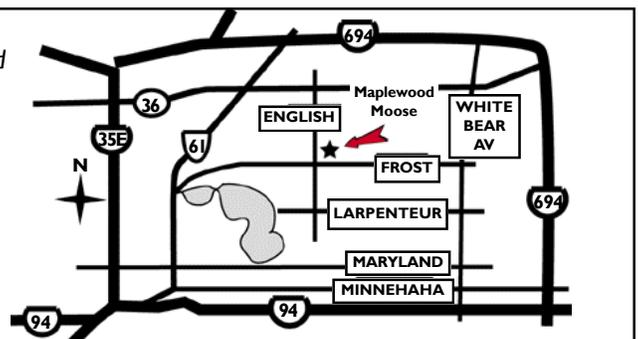
*Continued on page 7*

#### Next meetings:

Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11, and Jan. 8 at 7:30pm. (Check our website for any last minute changes.)

#### Where:

Maplewood Moose Lodge  
1946 English Street  
Maplewood, MN



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THE CROSSING GATE is published quarterly by the Twin Cities Division of the Thousand Lakes Region of the National Model Railroad Association. Material may be reprinted with permission.

Articles, photos, tips, or ideas are heartily encouraged and will be enthusiastically accepted in any format (PC or Mac; Word, Simple Text, typed, handwritten, scribbled on the back of a bar napkin, etc.) Send it to your editor by regular mail to THE CROSSING GATE, 6459 Smithtown Road, Excelsior, MN, 55331, by email to editor@twincitiesdivision.com, or hand it to him (along with a \$5 bribe) at the next Division meeting.



# TCD Timetable

**THURSDAY, OCT. 8, 2003 7:30 pm**

MODELING CLINIC – *Weathering*

*Rolling Stock (Michael Mornard)*

PROTOTYPE PRESENTATION –

*Railfanning in the Summer of 2003*

*(Slide show by Lynn McCall)*

POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST –  
*Flatcar Loads*

**THURSDAY, NOV. 13, 2003 7:30 pm**

MODELING CLINIC – *Handlaid Turnouts*

*(John Thomas)*

PROTOTYPE PRESENTATION – CNW

*Mankato (Slide show by Dave Vos)*

POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST –  
*Passenger Cars*

**THURSDAY, DEC. 11, 2003 7:30 pm**

MODELING CLINIC – *Computer Layout*

*Design Using 3rd PlanIt (Bob Sterner)*

PROTOTYPE PRESENTATION – *Stations*

*(Slide show by Paul & Kara Hutchins)*

POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST –  
*Square-foot Diorama: Winter in Minnesota*

**THURSDAY, JAN. 8, 2004 7:30 pm**

MODELING CLINIC – *Modeling with DPM*

*(Videotape of '02 NMRA Nat'l Convention*

*Clinic by Miles & Fran Hale) (Gerry Leone)*

PROTOTYPE PRESENTATION –

*Operation Lifesaver (George Warren)*

POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST –  
*Cabooses*

**Popular Vote Model Contests for the rest of the season:**

Feb. 12, 2004 – GE Locomotives / Mar. 11, 2004 – Grain Cars

Apr. 8, 2004 – Whimsical Railroads & NMRA Merit Award Judging

## Railfan & Hobby Show CALL BOARD

**Saturday, 10/11/2003 - 9th Hutchinson Model Railroad Show**

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM, McLeod County Fairgrounds Agribition Building, 840 Century Ave. S.W., Hutchinson, MN. Adults \$3, children 12 and under, free. For more information, contact: (320) 587-8073 or luceline.tripod.com

**Saturday & Sunday, 10/25-26/2003 - Great American Train Show**

11:00 AM - 5:00 PM, RiverCentre, 143 West Fourth Street, Saint Paul, MN. Adults \$7.00, children 12 and under, free. For more information, contact Great American Train Show, P.O. Box 93955, Las Vegas, NV 89119. (702)-252-0334, www.greatamericantrainshow.com  
NMRA model contest on Saturday (see article in this issue).

**Saturday, 11/22/2003 - Greater Upper Midwest Train Show & Sale**

9:00 AM - 2:00 PM, Century College West Campus, 3300 Century Avenue North, White Bear Lake, MN (Two blocks north of I-694 and Highway 120 (Century Avenue)) Adults \$4.00, children 12 and under free. Contact: Tom Jefferson (651) 429-2885

**This show is also scheduled for 1/31/04 and 04/03/04**



Just before presstime a major computer meltdown at Chief Clerk Al Dowd's house turned the new Call Board listings into vapor. Please check the "Events" page on our website at [www.twincitiesdivision.com](http://www.twincitiesdivision.com) for new updates as they're available. Sorry for the inconvenience!

Contributors to this issue:

**Bruce Notman, Lynn McCall, Bob Sterner, Joe Binish, Les Breuer, Al Dowd, and Neil Maldeis... Thanks!**

Deadline for next issue:

**December 10, 2003**

Wow! No space in this issue for any blabbing from me... except to say that I welcome any and all contributions... articles, tips, pictures. Just send 'em along and we'll purdy 'em up!  
- Gerry



## The Supe's prize-winning photos

As we reported in the Summer edition of *THE CROSSING GATE*, our own Superintendent, Lynn McCall, brought home four ribbons from the photo contest held in May at the Mid-Continent Regional in Kansas City. Here are his two first-place shots. On the left, "CSX Coal Drag," shot in Mobile, AL, in January of 2000. The shot took

top honors in the Prototype Slide category. On the right is a shot that took First Place in the Model Photo category, "A&IB 3930." The picture shows Lynn's own Alameda & Indian Beach loco as seen on Bill Pnaik's Arlee Valley Railroad in Crystal in 2002. Once again, congratulations, Lynn! [See additional pictures on our website!](#)

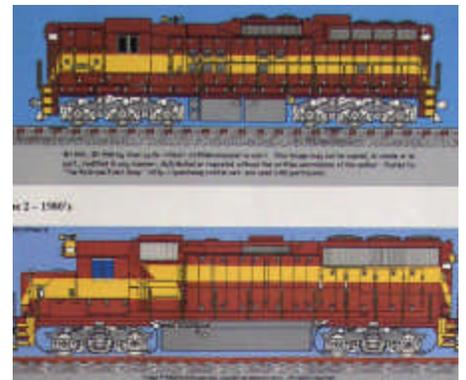
## "Free-mo" modules will highlight the Railroad Club at the U's layout

By Bob Sterner

What do an engineering student, a geologist researcher, a former CB&Q and BNSF traffic manager, and a biologist who teaches university students about lakes and ponds all have in common? Why, trains, of course. These individuals and more are among the members of The Railroad Club at the University of Minnesota, a group begun in 2001 and which, in the short time since, has grown steadily. The club has organized several excursions plus a multimedia railroad

show, acquired space, and started construction on a 600-square-foot layout, which includes both permanent and modular sections.

The HO layout under construction on the East Bank campus represents the fictitious "Upper Midwest Transportation Corporation" (go ahead, check out the acronym and recall the name of our campus). When complete, the permanent layout will be multi-deck, have over five and a half scale miles of mainline, and will represent portions of a railroad stretching from Chicago (hidden staging) through the Twin Cities and westward on into prairie. A double track helix will connect the different levels and there will be a large double-ended yard. The mainline, complete with easements, grades, etc., was planned accurately using "3rd PlanIt" software. (Bob will present a modeling clinic on this software at our December 11 meeting. — Ed.) To date, most of the benchwork for the lowest level has been completed and track work should have begun by the time you read this. Thanks to a generous donation from



Even though the Club is still laying track, its locos already have a color scheme, based on the U's familiar maroon and gold.

Digitrax, that company's DCC control systems will be used. In addition to the layout, the club enjoys a good quantity of storage and workspace.

The entire mainline will have permanent trackage, but one of the unusual features of the layout will be its module docking points. Club modules will follow "free-mo" specifications — a set of standards derived from the European FREMO standards and brought to popularity by clubs on the U.S. West Coast. Free-mo uses a single-track main and places strict standards on the ends of the modules, while allowing what happens between the two ends to be largely, well, free. Modules themselves may twist and turn

**Continued on page 7**



Bob Sterner stands in front of a prototype Free-mo module built by Twin Cities Division Superintendent Lynn McCall and Chief Clerk Al Dowd.

# A Shakopee quilt shop finds its home in an old train depot

On a recent field trip to a quilting store with my wife, I got a very pleasant surprise. Seems the Eagle Creek Quilt Shop in Shakopee is housed in a very nicely restored train depot. The depot, which was built in 1909, is somewhat unique in that it stood between the Milwaukee Road and C&NW tracks, and served both. It was abandoned in the '60s and remained vacant until a Prior Lake couple bought it a few years ago.

Meanwhile two women, Lori Gillick and Becky Kelso, were getting ready to open a quilt shop in nearby Murphy's Landing



Park. After completely renovating the space, the building burned to the ground two weeks before the opening, taking their inventory with it. It was then that the two quilters met up with the depot owner.

Once again Lori and Becky did renovations, and within several months were able to open up the Eagle Creek Quilt Shop. The renovation is remarkable and it's worth the trip just to see the restored depot (as well as the UP trains that run past it twice a day). And if you know someone who's into fabrics or quilting, be sure to bring her/him along - Better Homes & Gardens selected Eagle Creek as one of the country's 10 Best Quilt Shops for 2003.

**Wanted: a few good G-men**  
However, most interesting to model



railroaders is the fact that Lori and Becky also lease the empty half-acre lot adjacent to the depot, and their fondest wish is to have a garden - with a garden railroad - out there. They asked if I knew anyone interested in possibly designing and building one. Well... maybe!

If you're interested, call them at 952-233-3774, visit [www.eaglecreekquiltshop.com](http://www.eaglecreekquiltshop.com), or see the shop at 333 2nd Ave. W., Shakopee. They're aware of this article and that TCD members may be calling.

If you do decide to forge ahead with this project, please let me know so we can publish some photos and an article here in THE CROSSING GATE. -Gerry

See additional pictures on our website!

## Modeling Tips & Tricks

Remember last month's needle-eye tip? Joe Binish sent in a great use for the other end of the needle: put it into another dowel and use it as a center punch for drilling in plastic or wood. Use a strip of electrical tape to differentiate between the glue applicator and this one.

Les Breuer uses plastic pop or water bottle caps to mix paint in small amounts for figures or freight car trucks. He dips a different flat toothpick into each paint and uses that to dispense the right

number of drops, then mixes it all. When he's done, the bottle cap and toothpicks go in the trash. No cleanup!

*From the internet:* For easy loads for flats, gons or road trucks, save the bubbles from blister packs that parts and screws come in. Paint them with Floquil black, brown, gray, etc. Cover with single-ply tissue or 'dryer sheets' and then soak the sheet with paint thinner. Enough will bleed through to color the 'tarp' and will also warp it nicely so it's not too regular.

## Don't forget the contest at GATS!

A reminder: the TCD is sponsoring an NMRA-sanctioned model contest at the Great American Train Show October 25-26 at River Centre in St. Paul. Entries will be registered between 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. on Saturday and judged that afternoon. Both merit certificates and First, Second and Third Place awards will be given. **NOTE:** Only 5 total entries per person will be accepted!

Need more info? Contact Dave Burnell at [contest@twincitiesdivision.com](mailto:contest@twincitiesdivision.com) or see our Summer 2003 CROSSING GATE, which is available in PDF format online at <http://www.twincitiesdivision.com>. Go to the CROSSING GATE page.

Have a tip, hint, trick or technique you think is the greatest... or at least pretty good? Share it! We don't care if it's original, someone told it to you, or you read it somewhere, let us hear about it!



# Fall 2003 Layout Tours

**Saturday, October 11, 2003 , 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm**

## **Rod Eaton**

Rod has a fantastic freelanced G<sub>n</sub>3 garden layout modeling mining operations in the West during the late 1800s to the early 1900s. He's scratch built most of the buildings and rolling stock and has 300 feet of mainline that is all handlaid on cedar ties. Rod said some friends may operate live steam on tour day--definitely would be something to see! Follow the paths and come around back, but watch your footing because some of the ground is uneven. Rod can operate the layout in inclement weather, so only a steady rain would stop the trains!

## **Doug Addison**

Doug has an outstanding N scale operation of the Great Northern serving the ore mining areas and docks in Minnesota in 1965. The layout is approximately 23' x 11.5' and features excellent running long ore trains.

Doug is also the author of "Great Northern Railway – Ore docks of Lake Superior Photo Archive" so bring your questions of ore operations! Doug scratchbuilt the 932' ore docks in Duluth/Superior on his layout. He also has a fine model of a Lake Superior ore boat tied up taking on a load.

**Maps deleted by request.**

## **Steve Loahr**

Steve has a large walk around HO scale layout (20'x15") with a center island representing the BNSF today. Steve has many examples of modern diesels roaming the single mainline that travels through a variety of urban scenes.

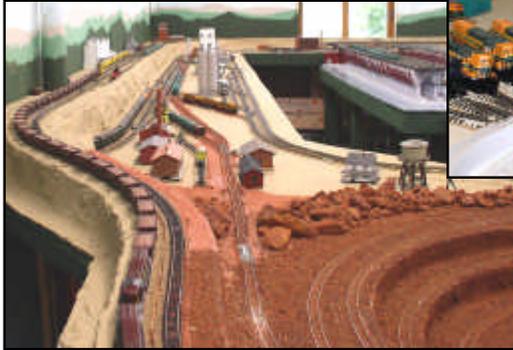
Steve prefers modeling urban scenes and has many examples of scratch built industries and buildings covering the landscape. He also has several areas left to complete so he is interested in getting any ideas that may help to get the job done.

**Please follow the rules!** *TCDivision members ONLY, plus only 1 guest ♦ Be ready to show your TCD membership card ♦ Sign the guestbook ♦ Be courteous! Don't arrive before 1:00 p.m. Leave coats outside the layout area (save the scenery!) ♦ No smoking, please*





# Fall 2003 Layout Tours



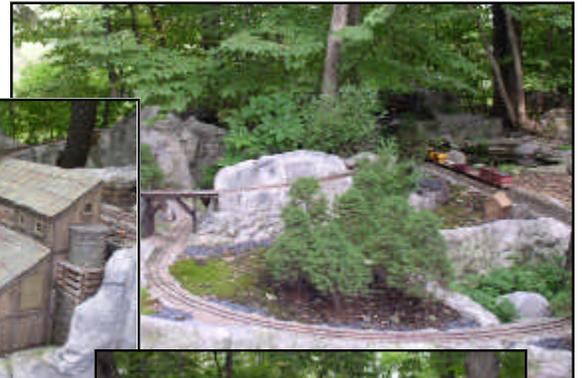
**Doug Addison's ore hauling N-scale layout**



Welcome back to another great season for model railroading. I hope everyone had a great summer and is looking forward to enjoying some great layouts.

In keeping with Steve Nitti's approach I will set up the tours this year within a small geographic region to make it easier to visit all the layouts open on the tour day. This season's first tour will be in the NW suburbs outside of the 494-694 loop. Hopefully we'll have a beautiful autumn day and can enjoy the changing leaves as well as the layouts!

*-Neil Maldeis, Director-at-Large for Layout Tours*



**Rod Eaton's G<sub>n</sub>3 garden layout**



**Steve Loahr's HO BNSF layout**

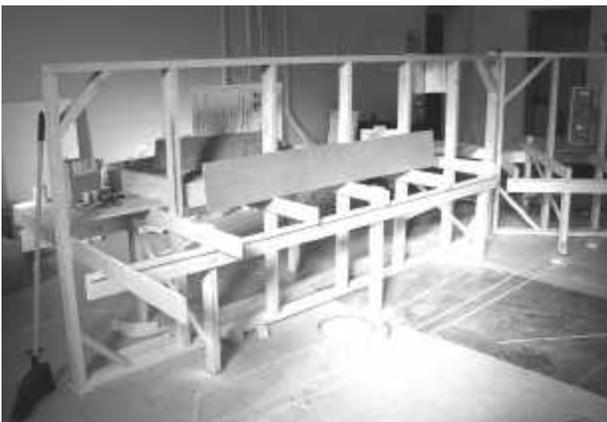
*All photos by Neil Maldeis*



### **“Free-mo” cont’d from page 3**

or be long or short. But because the single track main provides extra space, some stunningly beautiful scened examples have been produced.

These specs aren’t intended to merely generate modules that are eye-candy, however. Using Digitrax DCC, large setups on the West Coast have often involved point-to-point or point-to-loop configurations. U of M free-mo modules connected to the permanent layout will represent two separate branch lines and will emphasize switching and industrial aspects. A TCD clinic on free-mo is



The benchwork for the permanent section of the Upper Mississippi Transportation Corporation began last August.

planned for a future date.

For the U of M club, the combination of permanent and modular trackage has many benefits. Members will be able to construct an entire “layout” in the confines of a single module, practicing or learning all the basic hobby skills. It will also let us take part of our efforts on the road to public or school shows.

Within a few guidelines, members may use their own discretion on what to do with their own little piece of the world. Over the long term some modules will be replaced, so even if the last bush is planted on the main layout, there will always be something fresh and different for visitors to see.

University and college railroad clubs – especially a mixed-age club such as ours – give this next generation of railroad fans a much better opportunity to pursue their interests, and bridge the “intermediate years” between childhood layout and adult hobby. That’s

why we welcome new members, as well (of course) as any donations such as railroad items. It’s still very much the ground floor, so if you’re interested in being a part of the future of this group, let us hear from you.

In addition, we hope to see you at Gopher Rail 2004. Our first multimedia event was held on the U campus in August and will continue to be held annually.

*More pictures on the TCD website!*

### **For more information:**

Website for The RR Club at the U:  
<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rrclubum>

Yahoo discussion group (registration is free and open to anyone)  
[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/uofm\\_rr\\_club/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/uofm_rr_club/)

FREMO (European progenitor of free-mo):  
<http://www.fremo.org/>

Free-mo: <http://www.free-mo.org>, or see articles in the April and May 2003 *Railroad Model Journal*

**Bob Sterner is Professor and Faculty Advisor to The Railroad Club at the University of Minnesota**

### **“Convention” cont’d from page 1**

25’x52’ modular “M-shaped” layout on which operating sessions were held every three hours. Group members used it as a training device to introduce Timetable and Train Order operation to convention attendees. It was a very popular event and far surpassed the expectations of the builders.

My stint in the Roundhouse kept me from going on any of the tours or attending many clinics. However, I was able to see a few, including those by Bill Darnaby and Allen McClelland. Modelers like Bruce Chubb, Tony Koester, David Barrow, and clinicians from the model railroad magazines weren’t in attendance. But to me it was no loss – I’ve been to so many conventions that I’ve seen most of their clinics anyway.

Although some clinicians had canceled, their places had been filled, so there was still a full slate to see. Clinics ran continuously from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. in eight rooms from Sunday evening through Saturday morning. There were plenty to choose from.

Thursday afternoon and evening, we in the Layout Design Special Interest Group had our own tour of nine layouts. Since we use carpools for tours, we have more time at each layout. It also means we can visit layouts that are anywhere from the planning stages to completely finished. The layouts were in the Hamilton, Ontario area and eastward back to the hotel. At the midpoint of the tour, we had a catered picnic at a conservation area. On Sunday afternoon, we had a smaller three-layout tour where all the layouts were in the main Toronto area. So I did see twelve very interesting layouts.

On Friday evening members of the LDSIG had our own banquet and had a great time.

Saturday, Pam and I spent a couple of hours at the train show. While there were several layouts and some vendors, there were no manufacturers so we soon left.

Pam and I both agreed that, in spite of the NMRA pulling out of the silent auction, Company Store, and the Train Show, the Toronto convention was one of the better ones we’ve attended. All of the Toronto crew went out of their way to make sure that it was. We didn’t hear of any major problems so apparently everything went smoothly.

After two days of sightseeing (including Niagara Falls and downtown Toronto) Pam and I returned home on Tuesday, ending a great convention and vacation.

# THE CROSSING GATE

Twin Cities Division, TLR, NMRA  
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## *Inside:*

- ◆ Fall Layout Tours!
- ◆ The Maple Leaf  
2003 Report
- ◆ The Railroad Club  
at the U of M

*Check your mailing label to see when your membership expires!*

## Local Twin Cities hobby shops

*The shops whose names appear in bold are sponsors of the Twin Cities Division. Show them your support!*

**Beaumont's Quality Tools**  
3539 West 44th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55410  
(612) 922-1954

**Becker's Model Railroad Supply**  
2166 Silver Lake Road  
New Brighton, MN 55112  
(651) 635-9480  
<http://members.aol.com/wcbecker>

**Como Shops**  
1021 Bandana Blvd. E  
Saint Paul, MN 55108  
(651) 646-2094  
<http://www.skypoint.com/~jcluecke>

Creative Trains  
3090 Courthouse Lane  
Eagan, MN 55121  
(952) 905-1144  
<http://shop.store.yahoo.com/creativetrains>

Dad's Trains  
2647 Co Rd 22 NW  
Alexandria, MN 56308  
(320) 763-6545  
[bryants4@rea-alp.com](mailto:bryants4@rea-alp.com)

**Hobbytown USA**  
7916 Brooklyn Park Blvd.  
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445  
(763) 424-5900  
<http://www.hobbytown.com/>

**Hobbytown USA**  
11319 Highway 7  
Minnetonka, MN 55305  
(952) 931-2262  
<http://www.hobbytown.com/>

**Hobbytown USA**  
1750 Weir Drive  
Woodbury, MN 55125  
(651) 702-0355  
<http://www.hobbytown.com/>

**Hobby Zone**  
1960 Cliff Lake Road Suite 115  
Eagan, MN 55122  
(651) 905-9523  
<http://hobbyzone.com>

**Hub Hobby Center**  
82 Minnesota Ave.  
Little Canada, MN 55117  
(651) 490-1675  
<http://hubhobbycenter.com>

**Hub Hobby Center**  
6416 Penn Avenue S  
Richfield, MN 55423  
(612) 866-9575  
<http://hubhobby.com>

Ill Rail Trains  
535 Northdale Blvd. NW  
Coon Rapids, MN 55448  
(763) 767-9545

**KDC Model Trains**  
915 Hopkins Center  
Hopkins, MN 55343  
(952) 938-5456  
<http://www.kdc-trains.com/>

**Mendota Bike & Hobby**  
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Mendota Heights, MN 55120  
(651) 454-2066

**The N Shop**  
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(612) 521-8909

Northern Scale Models  
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(763) 475-0647  
<http://www.northernscale.com/>

Only Trains  
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Rockford, MN 55373  
(763) 477-6186

**Osseo Train World**  
340 Central Avenue  
Osseo, MN 55369  
(763) 425-7171

**Scale Model Supplies**  
458 Lexington Parkway  
Saint Paul, MN 55104  
(651) 646-7781  
<http://scalemodelsupplies.com>

Steve's Train City  
912 Main Street  
Hopkins, MN 55343  
(952) 933-0200