

# THE CROSSING GATE



Twin Cities Division ❖ Thousand Lakes Region ❖ National Model Railroad Association

Spring 2018

Vol. 37.1



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## ED PETRY'S SIERRA RAILROAD

The Sierra Railroad Company was formed in 1897 to connect California's Central Valley to the gold country in the Sierra Nevada. The Railroad Atlas of 1948 shows the Sierra running westward from Oakdale through Sonora to Tuolumne. It connected to both the Santa Fe (at Riverbank) and the Southern Pacific (at Oakdale).



In 1957, Ed Petry saw a book written by the daughter of the surveyor who laid out the Sierra Railroad and was hooked. Since then he has built three layouts based on the Sierra, including the current one, where his many friends operate every Tuesday night and where he somehow finds time to continue working and improving the scenery and operations. Ed has tried to follow the prototype exactly, even to the grade percentages of the track segments. Of course, towns such as Jamestown, Cooperstown, Chinese, and Ralph are where they should be on his layout. The whole layout was carefully designed using a program called Autocad.

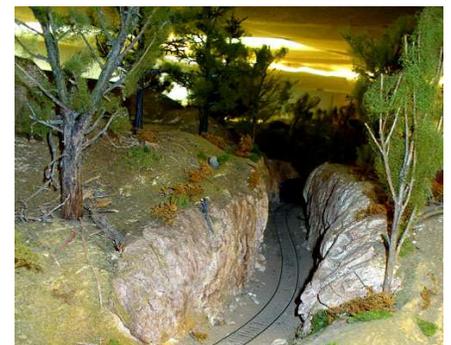


Ed was born in Pine City, MN, but moved to Vadnais Heights as a teenager. He worked as a structural engineer and cat skinner. He has two children. Along with a partner, he operated a Hobbytown store in South St. Paul and Northtown for 5 years. He moved to his present house in 1976, installed a basement under it, and be-

gan work on the first of his three Sierra layouts. Ed and his wife also keep a one-and-one-half-inch gauge train on a trailer and haul it to various sites in Texas, Florida and other southern states to display it and give rides every summer.

Above: The Sonora station, scratch-built to represent the real station.

Right: Table Mountain Cut closely models the actual. 40 ft. deep and 15 ft. wide.



(Text & photos by W. Bjorlie)

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#### THE CROSSING GATE

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Wayne Bjorlie

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Articles, photos, tips, or ideas are heartily encouraged and will be enthusiastically accepted! The preferred format would be in Rich Text Format (RTF), with photos as JPEGs, but we will accept any format (from a PC or Mac; MS Word, Simple Text, typed, or handwritten). Send it to your editor by regular mail to **THE CROSSING GATE**, 1922 Christensen Ave, W. St. Paul, MN 55118, or by email to [weugbj@yahoo.com](mailto:weugbj@yahoo.com)

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# From the Superintendent

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## Thanks to the TCD volunteers

Thank you for your time and dedication to our organization. As I look out the windows the snow looks like it may never go away, but to everything there is a season and a time for every purpose. The snow will go away and it will be time for new TCD folks to carry on the duties of the division going forward.

Those in charge of the National Narrow Gauge Convention to be held here in September asked the Twin Cities Division to sponsor or co-sponsor this event. As a sponsor, we would have no financial responsibility for this convention, and liability insurance coverage will be provided by the NMRA. Therefore, as Superintendent, I have agreed that TCD will sponsor or co-sponsor the convention.

This is my last column as your Superintendent, but I would like to continue doing clinics and would encourage anyone who has wanted to help our organization, to step up; it's fun, educational, and easy.

I'll be gardening and working on the layout. I wish you all a good spring.  
Supt. Jim Buck

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## VOLUNTEER AT THE NARROW GAUGE CONVENTION

Late this summer, model railroaders of the Twin Cities will once again proudly host a national model railroad convention. This time, over September 5 to 8, the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual National Narrow Gauge Convention will come to town. Overall chairman is Mike Engler, a well-known local modeler. The meetings will be held at the Doubletree by Hilton in Bloomington.

This convention affords Twin Cities modelers and others interested in model railroading a fine chance to volunteer for any of the many jobs necessary to produce a successful convention and offers volunteers a chance to see the convention from the inside. Opportunities will abound for volunteers to meet modelers from all over the country and interact with them.

Scott McCloud, one of the organizers of the convention, spoke to the Twin Cities Division earlier this season about the many jobs that will be available. If you are interested in volunteering, Scott suggested you contact the convention folks through their website at [www.NNGC-2018.com](http://www.NNGC-2018.com).

1. Assist vendors in preparing their displays.
2. Assist with convention registration and hand out convention goodies.
3. Help set up the contest room and receive contest entries.
4. Assist with the more than 50 clinics they are planning by running projectors

(Continued on page 3)

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## From the Editor

It has been said many times before, but it still bears repeating, that the model railroad hobby has something for almost everybody; that the only commonality among members of the hobby is a love of railroading itself. What each one does about that is an individual choice. If there is one thing that I have observed about model railroaders in the years I have been among them is that they do not suffer the herd to direct them and will not accept group-think as authority for any prescribed method or objective in their participation in modeling.

It is remarkable, then, that over the last 80-odd years model railroaders have built a national organization charged with regulating certain aspects of their hobby. Uniformity of critical model railroad hardware among manufacturers has made it possible for all members to enjoy the hobby more, even though that has required certain uniformity among model railroads. Modelers have deemed that tradeoff worthwhile, so the National Model Railroad Association has steamed ahead and accomplished wonderful things.

Uniformity in items such as rail gauge, coupler height, motor voltage, DCC signaling, etc. has resulted from long-time cooperation between the NMRA and manufacturers, who saw that their economic bread was buttered on the side of conformity. This has been a very positive force in the hobby and has justified modelers' continued support of the NMRA.

However, one force that is completely out of the control of the NMRA is the evolution in the railroad hobby supply market itself. In fact, truth be told, the NMRA leadership probably welcomes and encourages the development of new, more complicated, and more expensive equipment and new modeling techniques that require its use. Why wouldn't they? Practically everything in the economy is progressing in the same way, and the NMRA must keep up in order to remain relevant.

Members and potential members are being left behind, perhaps by their own available funding resources or perhaps --and this is important-- by their choices as to how they want to participate in the hobby and how they want to run their railroads. What the NMRA can do about this is not obvious; progress must progress. The old guy who makes his equipment from cereal boxes, wire, and scrap plastic to run on his DC layout is still out there but finding less and less in the modern hobby press or the NMRA to sustain him.

It is said that the average age of U.S. farmers is around 65. That might also be true with the NMRA. Food production will always be needed, and the agricultural industry will adapt as required to keep us fed, but membership in farmer organizations is stagnating. I wonder if the same will be said of the model railroad hobby and the NMRA.

W. Bjorlie, ed.

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*(Continued from page 2)* Volunteer at Narrow Gauge Convention

and laptops and providing other technical help.

5. In the vendors' room, control entry doors and answer questions (with training).
6. Be a "floater" stepping in to assist whenever another volunteer is on break or otherwise temporarily unavailable.
7. Assist at home layout tours. Tours will mostly be in the afternoons.
8. Help carry and set up modules and take them down.
9. Assist with the end-of-convention auction and awards.

Scott said volunteer jobs will be in 4-hour blocks, and they would like each volunteer to serve at least two blocks. Volunteers who do so will receive a 50-percent discount on the registration fee of \$99. If they serve three or more 4-hour blocks, registration for them will be free.

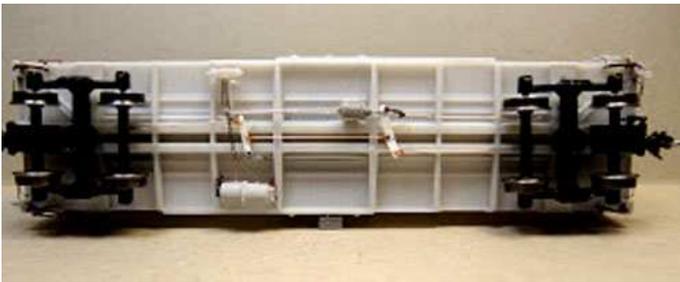
W. Bjorlie, ed.

## LESTER BREUER'S BLOG ON CARS

If you want freight cars with which you can win ribbons in judged modeling contests, all you have to do is... have extraordinary skill at modeling, have super dexterous fingers and a highly imaginative brain, have at least of modicum of tools available for fine work, and possess an encyclopedic knowledge of railcar parts and where the miniature versions of them are available. Most of us will probably fail somewhere in there.

Or, you can log onto Lester Breuer's blog on how to improve cars at:

<http://mnrailroadcab100.blogspot.com/> There, Lester goes into great detail about what he does to make his cars look like the prototypes they represent. He uses the terms for the parts that prototype manufacturers put onto cars, and he knows where to get the scale parts. His cars are among those that we envy as nearly indistinguishable from the real thing in a photo and wonder how the modelers did it. If you read Lester's blog, you will learn a great deal about that. Then, you will need a lot of patience to actually sit down and do it.



Lester lists what he did and with which parts to detail the brakes and other under-body items.

Lester goes into the alterations he makes to sides of cars to make them look like the prototypes. New ladders, doors, door hardware, stirrups.



Out-of-the box running boards and grabs, if not prototypical, must go and be replaced with the correct ones. Lester shows and tells how it's done.

The ends get a complete work-over, too, and Lester's blog shows us how.



And, Lester won't let us overlook the final dirt and grime that every good model should have before it travels onto your railroad or to the contest table. (Photos by Lester Breuer)



## PRE-MEETING DINNER GET-TOGETHERS

### WHEN MEETINGS ARE AT JACKSON ST. ROUNDHOUSE

1. McDonald's University Ave & Marion Street

GATHER ABOUT 5:30 PM \*\* EVERYONE IS WELCOME —OR—

2. Keys Café and Bakery, 1682 Lexington Ave N, Roseville, MN 55113

5:15 on the day of TCD meetings. For those from the northern suburbs.

## INSTANT AGING JUICE

BY TRACY MCKIBBEN

When fully constructed, my produce warehouse left me with a nice, new building with lots of bright, unspoiled wood surfaces. Nothing wrong with that, but since this building is meant to represent something that has been sitting outside in Minnesota weather, it wasn't quite the look that I wanted. I need to make this building look old, like it's seen the worst that Mother Nature can dish out.



Luckily, there are a variety of techniques that can be used to create that look, especially on a wood structure like this one. The first, and best known, is the use of India ink. Start with a full bottle of rubbing alcohol and mix in a few (4-5) drops of black India ink. This will give you a lifetime supply of wood stain. The alco-

hol is readily absorbed by basswood and balsa wood, pulling the ink deep into the woodgrain, making it really stand out. Brushing some of this solution onto the building quickly transformed it from a shiny new structure into one with an appearance approaching the weather-beaten look.

The next step was to paint the structure. Again, I wanted this to look like a building that has seen some harsh weather. That means cracked and peeling paint, faded in places, right down to the bare wood in others. Turns out there's an equally simple method for accomplishing that, using nothing more than some rubber cement and a pencil eraser. Simply brush some rubber cement onto the wood surfaces, in random



places, then wait for it to dry. Once it has dried, paint over it with the desired color, then wait for the paint to dry. After the paint has dried thoroughly, use the pencil eraser to rub off the rubber cement. The cement will peel right off, bringing with it the paint that was on top of it.

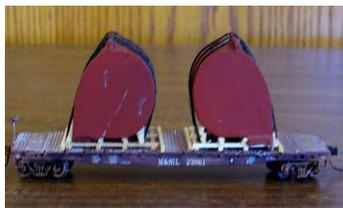


The final touch was to weather the metal roofing. I dry-brushed some streaks of rust-colored paint, keeping the streaks vertical and followed that up with a spray of Dull Kote. The Dull Kote kills the shine of the aluminum, and provides a surface for the next step to adhere to. That next step is chalk, lots and lots of chalk. Three different colors were used; black, brown, and a rust color. Using an old, dull hobby knife, I powdered the chalk by scraping the knife blade against each stick of chalk. This powder was then brushed onto the roof using an old stiff paintbrush. Mix up the colors, apply them randomly, brushing in different directions, and you end up with an ugly old roof that only a mother could love. (Photos by Tracy McKibben)

# HOBBY SHOWS & RAILFANNING EVENTS

Sat Mar 24 Sun Mar 25	Randolph, MN, RR Days. Swap meet, layouts, collectibles. Adm: \$5, under 13 free. RR Museum free. Randolph School, 29110 Davisson Ave., Randolph, MN 55065 Sat 9-3, Sun 10-2. Info: 507-841-1683.
Sat Apr 7	Granite City Train Show. River's Edge Conv. Ctr. 10 4th Ave S, St Cloud, MN 56301 9am-3pm. Adm: \$6, under 11 free. Info: 320-255-0033. See granitecitytrainshow.com. Or email edwardolson@cloudnet.com
Sat Apr 7	Newport Model RR Club Flea Market at Woodbury Sr. High School, 2665 Woodlane Dr. Woodbury, MN 9am-2pm Adm. \$5, under 12 free. Info: Ed at 651-233-3310.
Sat Apr 14	Greater Upper Midwest Train Show. Century College. 3300 Century Ave N (Highway 120) White Bear Lake, MN. 9am-2pm. Adm: \$5, under 13 free.
Sat May 5	St Paul Union Depot Train Day. 10am—5 pm.
Sat May 12	Twin Cities Model Railroad Museum Train Show. Minnesota State Fairgrounds Education Building. 9am-3pm Adm: \$6 under 8 free
Fri May 18 thru Sun May 20	TLR Convention "Rails to the River." Sioux Falls, SD Best Western Ramkota Hotel 3200 W Maple St. Tours, Contest, Clinics. See The Fusee for more info.

## TCD CONTEST WINNERS



The January contest for open top cars with loads was won by Art Suel with his flatcar load of heavy machinery components. Wayne Bjorlie won the February contest for loaded boxcars with his Mississippi Central 40-footer being loaded with cotton bales.

# TCD Timetable

Schedule for 2018		Contests
<b>Fri &amp; Sat</b> <b>Apr 6-7</b>	<b>Railroad Modelers' Retreat, Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church, 12235 Old Rockford Rd. Plymouth, MN 55441.</b> <b>Fri 5-10pm. Sat 8am-4:30pm. Registration \$20. Lunch and Display table free with preregistration. Limited commercial display space available. There will be three sets of presentations on Friday night followed by a Railfan viewing party. On Sat., open for setup at 7:00. Coffee will be on. Doors open at 8:00 for viewing and conversation. 6 hours of presentations begin at 8:30.</b> <b>Pre-registration send to: Ken Zieska, 11810 52nd Ave North, Plymouth 55442 Tel. 763-232-3455 email: mhry19@gmail.com</b>	<b>Best RR or model RR photo shot by TCD member.</b>  <b>Also, March Contest for car loading/unloading facilities will be held and judged, as the March TCD meeting had to be cancelled.</b>
<b>Thurs</b> <b>May 10</b>	<b>7 PM at Jackson St. Roundhouse.</b> <b>Annual TCD business meeting.</b>	<b>Figures, people or animal.</b>

## TCD ENJOYS FINE DISPLAY OF EUROPEAN LAYOUTS

The regular meeting of TCD for January was held at the Mt. Olivet Church in Plymouth, where there was more space for the European layouts that were on display. This program was organized by TCD member Larry Vanden Plas, who is very involved in modeling European railroads. At the meeting, two small layouts and a switching test were set up. Larry and Mike Nollan, of the German-American Institute in St. Paul, gave short, informative lectures. Larry discussed model trains in England and curve radii. Research has shown that the minimum operable curve radius is three times that of the car length. Mike talked about German prototype trains since 1840. He displayed a beer train and an East German passenger train.



Left. Larry Vanden Plas explains his switching test.

Right. Mike Nollan shows his German-themed layout.

(Text and photos by W Bjorlie)



Twin Cities Division, TLR, NMRA  
4476 Mason Ave NE  
St. Michael, MN 55376

## THE CROSSING GATE NMRA National Convention

Next Meeting: Apr 6-7. Mt. Olivet  
Lutheran Church, 12235 Old Rockford Rd.,  
Plymouth, MN. 55441.

See Page 7 for info on future meetings.

In accordance with stated NMRA  
policy, to participate in almost any  
regular Twin Cities Division activity,  
you must be a member of NMRA or  
become a member of NMRA after  
three visits as a non-member during  
your lifetime.



Kansas City, MO  
Aug. 5-12, 2018

## NATIONAL NARROW GAUGE CONVENTION

Sept. 5-8, 2018  
Doubletree Hilton -Bloomington, MN  
Convention Center  
Near MSP Airport.

## "RAILS TO THE RIVER" TLR CONVENTION MAY 18-20 SIOUX FALLS, SD

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### WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Lester Breuer, MMR Ed Petry Tracy McKibben

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### Becker's Model Railroad Supply

2166 Silver Lake Road  
New Brighton, MN 55112  
651.635.9480  
<http://members.aol.com/wcbecker>

### Choo Choo Bob's

2050 Marshall Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55104  
651.646.5252

### Historic Rail

640 Taft St NE  
Minneapolis, MN 55413  
651.635.0100  
<http://www.historicrail.com>

### Minnesota Commercial Railway

508 Cleveland Ave N  
St Paul, MN 55114

### 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>

### Blick Art Materials (Roseville)

2389 Fairview Ave  
Roseville, MN 55113

### Menard's

4777 Menard Dr  
Eau Claire, WI 54703

### Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway

P.O. Box 176  
114 Depot RD  
Osceola, WI 54020  
715.755.3570  
<http://www.trainride.org>

### Scale Model Supplies

458 Lexington Parkway  
Saint Paul, MN 55104  
651.646.7781  
<http://www.scalemodelsupplies.com>

### Exact Rail

1053 S 1673 W  
Orem, UT 84058

### Coastman's Scenic Products

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