

THE CROSSING GATE



Twin Cities Division Ö Thousand Lakes Region

Fall 2012 Vol. 31.3

IRON HORSE RR MUSEUM IS UNIQUE SITE

A visit to the Iron Horse Central Railroad Museum in Chisago City is likely to elicit a number of reactions from model railroaders. Most of us are continually on the lookout for modeling ideas and prototype inspirations. The whole place could be such an inspiration, though you might want to start small by selecting one single item on the property to concentrate your efforts. Still, if he is looking for a basic notion behind a fairly large and complicated diorama full of fine details, a modeler couldn't do much better than this museum.

It is a family operation, and they are real railroaders -- of the 1:1-scale variety. The CEO seems to be Richard Thompson, who started collecting the rolling stock and locomotives back in 1963.

He is ably assisted by son Eric and nephew Jim. They all have old grease under their fingernails.

Standing outside the engine house as the museum's sentinel and quietly rusting while it awaits its turn in the shop at some undefined but distant

(Continued on page 3)



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Inside This Issue

- “ Visit to End-o’-Line RR Museum in Currie, MN
- “ Visit to Ironhorse Central RR Museum at Chisago City, MN
- “ Hobo signs
- “ Super’s car knocker shack

END-O’-LINE MUSEUM PRESERVES 1900 RR LIFE

Have you ever seen an Armstrong turntable that can be turned by one person? With an engine on it? If you travel to the End-o’-Line Railroad Park and Museum in Currie, MN 56123, you will see it and a lot more. Their rolling stock and engines are very well preserved and will provide modelers much information on detailing.

Currie was on a Chicago and Northwestern branch line off the main that went from Mankato toward Sioux City. About 1970, the C&NW decided that the station there, which had not seen passenger traffic for several

years, would be torn down. The C&NW had been a great presence in Currie, providing employment and a connection to the rest of the world, so the community wanted to preserve the depot. In 1972, two 4-H girls and their



(Continued on page 4)

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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! 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 editor@tcdnmra.org.

From the Superintendent

The fall issue of the Crossing gate tells us that it is almost time for the Twin Cities Division meetings to begin. This year's schedule of meetings and clinics is published elsewhere in this issue. Take time now to add the dates to your calendar or if you are more inclined, add it to your smart phone and let it remind you. Personally, I am still working on DCC and have not graduated to a smart phone.

We are going to try something unique this November. The Thursday evening meeting will be all about Operations and then Saturday we will have three TCD members open their layouts to allow you to try operating in an easy, no-pressure environment. December is our holiday auction. If you have items to donate, get them to us early, as it will help us plan. As important, be there in December to bid on all sorts of goodies, things that will fill your winter with model railroading fun.

All year we will have a special buzz at our meetings as we work toward the 2013 Thousand Lakes Region Convention that we will help host in May. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to help as a volunteer and many great activities to enjoy as a participant.

Thanks for letting me serve as your superintendent. Ron Bodin did a great job, and I will need to work hard to keep up the energy he created.

Ken Zieska, Superintendent

From the Editor

This summer, I used a good chunk of my spare time in getting almost all of my rolling stock rolling. Over the last 25-odd years since I started model railroading, I have been painting and decaling all kinds of cars and engines. Ninety percent of the cars went back into their boxes without trucks and couplers and in no shape to generate revenue for the Midland Continental. Now, most of them are.

The Midland Continental (MCRR) got "legal" this year, too. After several years' hiatus, the NMRA's pike registry has resumed operation. So, I registered the MCRR and was pleased to discover that nobody had beaten me to that name. I received a nice certificate more or less promising that the NMRA would not knowingly issue a "conflicting" certificate for the MCRR for three years. I might be safe. I got certificate No. 12-001.

This is not to say I remained locked in the railroad room all summer. I had heard about the Iron Horse Railroad Museum up near Chisago City and decided to visit it, partly to see if I could use it as Crossing Gate material. The museum was over my head. It would take a knowledgeable old railroad man to truly appreciate all of the old cars and engines they have collected. Each one seemed like a member of the Thompson family, spoken of with reverence and affection. They are PROUD of their collection. Not being a heavy-equipment guy, myself, I have little idea of how they moved it all to their property. It must have taken real he-men to get it done. Go take a look.

(Continued on page 3)

IRON HORSE MUSEUM

point in the future is the 927, an 0-6-0 from 1896. It was a Mogul before it was made into what is said to be the oldest Baldwin 0-6-0. The engine was a Soo Line unit which the Thompsons purchased for \$5,000 from the City of Brainard in 2005.

Also standing outside near the museum entrance is a double-sheathed DWP boxcar built 10-16, in use last as transport for trainmen. The Thompsons offer a 1.5-mile train ride around the property that passes by many old cars and engines that could be part of a terrific diorama. They are hidden in the woods, and one wonders how they all got to where they now rest.



The ample engine house now holds an ex-tank loco, an 0-4-0 that runs and may be fired up on October 6 during the fall leaf tours. This engine was built in 1922 by H.K. Porter and worked most recently as an industrial switcher for Dresser Trap Rock Co. The Thompsons obtained it in 1963. Inside the engine house, the Thompsons are storing several old cars, including some rare ones. For example, NP 1870 is there, a coach rebuilt at Como shops in 1883 and one of only four such cars. There is an 1894 Santa Fe Pullman reefer, said to be the oldest in the U.S.

Over the years, somehow, the Thompsons have collected identification signs from depots all over Minnesota --places like Spring Valley, North Branch, and Cromwell-- and the signs hang in the murky light of the engine house above the old cars.

How could all of this have been collected in one place? That was one of the reactions one must have on seeing the museum. There is more dedication to just plain railroading here than is evident in other, tamer museums. They

pried one old caboose out of ice up in a St. Louis County bog one winter because that was the only time they could haul it out of the woods on a flatbed trailer.

It is not hard to reach the Iron Horse Central, but it is not a direct route. The address, for Mapquest purposes, is 24880 Morgan Ave., Chisago City 55013. Basically, it is northeast of Forest Lake. If you go on October 6, you may see the 0-4-0 being fired up. Or, wait until next spring.



On a drive to southwest Minnesota, we ran across the little town of Currie and its railroad park and museum. A certain amount of heavy work was required to put that one together, too, but the story there is how a railroad town pulled together to save its tradition for the enlightenment of future generations. Many life-long railroad people were involved, imparting an authenticity to the displays that isn't always present at "touristy" railroads. The place just felt good.

Now, it's time to get started on contest entries for the new TCD season and try to get the rest of my buildings up so the MCRR workers and their families have places to live, shop, and get their old cars fixed. Wayne Bjorlie, editor



Iron Horse Depot. Text and photos by Wayne Bjorlie, ed

END-O'-LINE MUSEUM

leader, Louise Gervais, began a campaign to acquire the station and move it. The whole town contributed money, time, and know-how. The C&NW finally sold the depot for \$1, but the town was responsible for moving it. It became the centerpiece for the End-o'-Line Park.

The Armstrong turntable was built in 1901 at 56 feet in diameter and was enlarged to 70 feet in 1922. It still serves to turn an industrial switcher. The turntable is listed on the U.S. Register of Historic Places.



The museum soon began acquiring other railroad-related buildings such as the section house, a beautiful saltbox structure from 1899 where the section boss lived with his family. It is fully restored and furnished with period pieces. The coal bunker now serves as a picnic shelter. The depot, of course, is a beauty inside and out.

Other business and service buildings from the area around Currie have been moved in and restored, so a modeler can take inspiration from inside detailing as well as construction techniques and outside detailing. There are a general store, grist mill, church, schoolhouse, and court house.

The museum also found here and there a collection of rolling stock and engines. There is a well-restored Grand Trunk Western caboose (blt. 1942), as well as one from the Minneapolis and St. Louis. The GTW came from Chicago attached to a train. The M&St.L formerly reposed at the fairgrounds in Sioux Falls. The last train out of Currie ran in 1979, a C&NW GP-7, the 1635, pulling a consist of empties collected along the way.

The two-stall engine house contains a gem. It is the 13, a Mogul, built by Baldwin in 1875 and cleaned up to look like it's still working. It has a wood-burner stack. This engine had a career somewhere in Peru and was acquired by the museum in Colorado for \$150,000.

Outside the engine house stands another steamer, a ten-wheeler, with many details intact, though it likely will never run the rails again.

The End-o'-Line Railroad Museum is well west of Mankato, so it would require a long day or an over-nighter to visit it. However, it might prove to be worth the trip for the modeling ideas.



Top, left section house occupied by section boss and family, 1899. Lower left 1:1 scale detailing inside section house. Above 10-wheeler. Top right beautifully restored caboose. Lower right, note detail on front of school house.

Text and photos by Wayne Bjorlie, ed.



CAR KNOCKER SHACK

The Twin Cities Division of the NMRA clinics offer plenty of “hands on” opportunities. The last two seasons, we have conducted clinics on building laser cut structures. The Division contracts for a special run of laser cut buildings in several scales and offers them for sale at a greatly reduced price. As a part of the clinic, we offer different ways to finish the kit and ideas on how to build it. During the clinic, many of these buildings are completed but some go home to get special treatment.

This example was built as a car knocker shack for the town of Centralsota on the Minnesota Heartland Railway. I strayed from the instructions by adding a partition for an office as well as a smoke stack and separate door on the office end. I did not detail the office but in the workshop, I detailed the floor, created a workbench with tools on it and added other work supplies to support a days work. The backside of the building has ladders oil drums and trash to help make the scene.

This year, we will have opportunities for you to share your modeling tools and techniques. We have a model contest every month and always enjoy “show and tell”. Check out the Division’s 2012/2013 calendar, get out of the basement and come down to the roundhouse.



The Twin Cities Division, National Model Railroad Association, will have a series of hands-on clinics again this year. Below left, Robert Fink shows members how to use artist’s pastels for weathering cars. Center, Ron Bodin shares his experience with plaster casting for scenery. Right, Art Hill (right) receives his achievement certificates for “association volunteer” and “scenery” from Dave Hamilton, TCD’s achievement program leader



HOBBY SHOWS & RAILFANNING EVENTS

2012 weekends	Minnesota Free Mo. Wayzata Bay, Center Mall, Wayzata, MN. More information at www.mnfreemo.org ,
Sat, Oct 6	IronHorse RR Museum, 24880 Morgan Ave, Chisago City, MN 55013. Fall Leaf Special. Tel 651-213-0391 for info.
Sat, Oct 13	North Metro Model RR Club Fall Train Flea Market 9am-2pm. VFW Coon Rapids. 1919 Coon Rapids Blvd. Coon Rapids, MN 55433 Adm: \$5, under 13 free.
Sat, Oct 20	Newport Model RR Club Train Show & Sale. 9:30am-3:00pm. Woodbury High School 2665 Woodlane Dr. Woodbury, MN 55125 Adm. \$5, under 12 free. Tel. 952-200-9726.
Sat Oct 20 & Sun Oct 21	Great River Valley System (GRVS) Westminster Junction Model Train Show. Sat 10am-4pm; Sun 10am-3pm. Carpenters' Union Hall, 710 Olive St. St. Paul. Adm: non-perishable foods or cash donation for Carpenters' Food Shelf.
Sat Nov 3 & Sun Nov 4	Great Train Expo. Canterbury Park. 10am-4pm. Info: www.GRVS.org
Sat Nov 10	Granite City Train Show. National Guard Armory, 1710 Veterans' Drive St Cloud, MN 10am-4pm. Adm. \$5, under 12 free. Info: 320-255-0033 or email edwardolson@cloudnet.com . See granitecitytrainshow.com
Sat Nov 17	Upper Midwest Train Show Century College, White Bear Lake, MN 9am-2pm Adm: \$5, under 13 free. Info: Tom Jefferson 651-429-2885.
Thurs Dec 13	TCD-NMRA Great Holiday Train Auction and Sale. Jackson Street Roundhouse, 193 Pennsylvania Ave. E, St. Paul. Starts 7pm Adm: free
Sat Jan 26 2013	Great Tri-State Rail Sale Civic Center 2nd & Pearl St. LaCrosse, WI 54601 9am-3pm Adm: \$5, under 12 free

TCD TIMETABLE

Meetings at the Roundhouse 2012-2013 Season

Month	First Topic	Second Topic	Help Topic	Contest
Oct 11 Meeting	NMRA Achievement Program	2013 TLR Convention Hosted by TCD	DCC Programming	MOW
Nov 8 Clinics	So you want to try operations?	Operations on your layout	Operations Planning	Yard Switchers
Dec 13 Meeting	Holiday Auction	Holiday Auction	Get Bargains	No Contest
Jan 10 Clinics	Scenic Water	LEDs for lighting and signals	Make Some Water	Heavy duty flat cars and loads
Feb 14 Clinics	Making latex molds	Casting with latex molds	Entering an NMRA Contest	Model RR Photos and videos
Mar 14 Clinics	Tool Tips for Modeling	Tool Tips for Modeling	Hands on with Tools	Hopper cars with loads
Apr 11 Clinics	Volunteer Training for TLR Convention	Volunteer Training for TLR Convention	Hands on with Tools	Dioramas
May 9 Meeting	TCD Annual Business Meeting	TCD Election of Officers	None	No Contest

HOBO SIGNS

Traveling men who were a bit down on their luck faced all kinds of inconveniences as they availed themselves of the “wide-door Pullmans” to move on. Hobos had a signal system that was widely understood and consisted of signs left in conspicuous locations along the lines where the men stopped. A jagged, stretched-

out WMWM meant there was a dog on the premises.

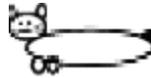


A picnic table sign meant a good place to

camp.

A cat meant a kind-hearted woman lived on the premises and might be counted on for a hot

meal or, at least, a cool drink.



A series of triangles is said to have meant “tell a pitiful story” (in

order to get a little money or some other favor, presumably.)



A railroad dick was represented by a

tiered cross,

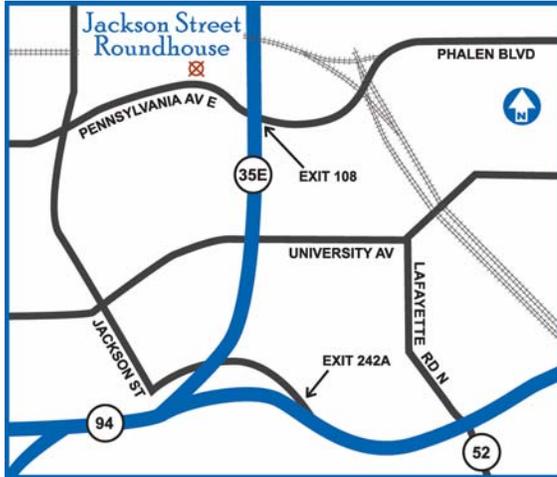
. You can find other hobo signs online. You might want to let your travelers know where the important spots are on your pike by posting a few signs yourself.

THE CROSSING GATE

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

Next 3 Meetings:

Oct 11, Nov 8, Dec 13 7:00 PM
Jackson Street Roundhouse
193 Pennsylvania Ave E
St. Paul, MN 55130
651.291.7588



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