

THE CROSSING GATE



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

Spring 2013

Vol. 32.1



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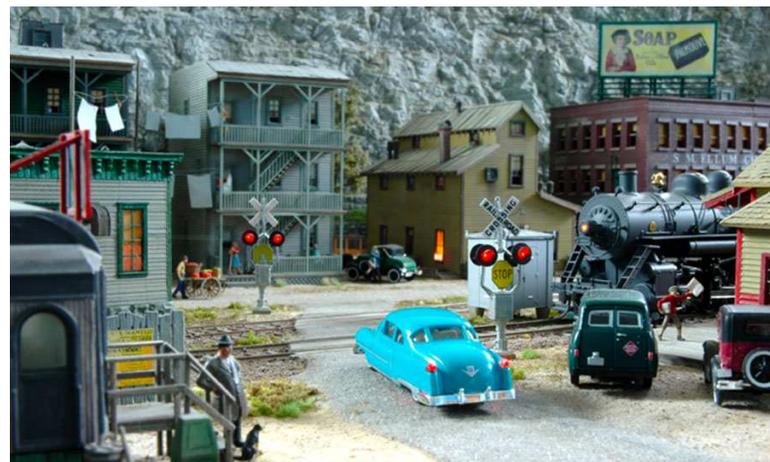
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TLR CONVENTION MAY 17-19 OFFERS UNHEARD-OF NUMBER OF LAYOUTS ON TOUR...OVER 30

The Thousand Lake Region, National Model Railroad Association, will hold its annual convention in **Minneapolis** over the week-end of May 17-19. Details of the activities connected to the convention may be viewed at the TLR website by typing in <http://www.tlmmra.org> and clicking on "Thousand Lakes Region NMRA" and then on "TLR Conventions." There will be many clinics at which techniques for modeling will be discussed. There will be hands-on experiences for modelers to learn by doing. A free building kit even will be given to each participant. There will be a banquet at which a recognized speaker on model railroading will be featured along with the muligan and spuds. Get this: there will be more than thirty (30+) layouts in the Twin Cities area that may be visited by convention goers. *The Crossing Gate* aims to whet your appetite by showing you a few of those layouts. We will rely on the TLR website to provide for you a more complete revelation of layouts on the tour and an exhaustive list of clinics and other experiences that will be available.

Art VanDe-Water's layout is in a 15' x 25' room and features standard gauge HO in the center and narrow gauge HO_{n3} hugging the walls. This scene is of the standard gauge in the town of Bear Creek and shows great trackside industries, as well as fine stonework and structures.



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www.tcdnmra.org

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THE CROSSING GATE

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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 Spring Issue of the Crossing Gate already? Well it may not feel like spring is here but it will be soon. As fast as Minnesota weather changes, we could be have 70 degree highs by the weekend.

This is a great time to look back on a wonderful year of clinics and meetings in the Twin Cities Division (TCD) and we still have one more clinic, the annual meeting and the TLR Convention (May 16-18) to go. Like the TCD meetings, the convention will be full of great clinics featuring National Award winning modelers, two guest manufacturers (monster Models and Clever Brothers) and plenty of hands on projects. But wait! there is still more, over 30 great layouts on tour and 3 prototype sites to visit. Just go to:

<http://www.thousandlakesregion.org/> and take a look. Up to date information is there and will be updated up to convention time. Registration forms are also available on the Convention site.

Don't forget the April meeting and the May Annual Meeting. We need some help on the Board of Directors to keep all these good things going. Step up and keep the TCD on track.

Ken Zieska, Superintendent

From the Editor

This issue is devoted to the most important and significant model railroad event to hit town in many years...the TLR convention. Though there will be a pamphlet with pertinent data on all of the layouts that may be visited by convention goers, together with great photos, the catch-22 is that you may not be able to see it unless you register for the convention. Our aim in picturing a few layouts here was to get your interest up enough so you would.

Two new features we hope to make regular are the "Tool Corner" where members' brilliant innovations and tips will be displayed, and a "Get to Know" section where TCD members can become better acquainted with each other. Dave Norman is the first member up. Wayne Bjorlie, editor.

INTRO. TO DCC CONTINUED:

PROGRAMMING A DECODER

By Walt Thompson With Wayne Bjorlie

You have finally been convinced to try Digital Command Control (DCC) on your railroad. You purchase a “DCC-ready” locomotive, intending to give it a trial run on your buddy’s fully prepared pike before jumping in yourself. What do you do when you get home from the hobby shop with your new baby?

At the hobby shop, you discovered or were informed of your need for both a Digital Command Station (DCS) and, possibly, a decoder, if your new loco doesn’t already have one. You can plug the decoder into the jack inside the loco.

To begin the process of programming your decoder, you first will need to determine whether your DCS equipment will handle a separate “service track.” This is an actual track where your loco will sit while you program the decoder. This is called “service mode.” Since all signals in DCC go through the track, it is easy to nail down which loco you talk to by putting only that loco on the service track. In service mode, you will know that you have successfully sent a message to the decoder because the decoder will send a signal to the DCS unit, triggering an “ack” (acknowledgement, for short), usually seen as a small movement of the loco, a “twitch.”

If your DCS unit will not handle the service mode and will allow only programming of the loco’s decoder “on the main,” you will program it right on the running track, or main line, of the road. In programming “on the main,” you will send data to a specific loco’s decoder by addressing the information to that decoder. Programming on the main is known as a “blind write” because the decoder does not tell the DCS unit that your message (the “write”) worked, and the DCS does not expect it to. If you have multiple locos on the main, each with a different address, you can change the CV’s in any or all of them, but you must first tell your DCS that you want to talk only to loco number XX, and then to each one individually in turn thereafter. Your throttle will do this. This is excellent for speed matching, setting sound levels, setting light options and anything else that changes how the loco performs on the main.

Under either the service track or the on-the-main method, the first step in programming the decoder of your new loco is to establish an electronic identity for the loco so that it knows when your hand-held throttle is talking to it. It must have an “address.” Virtually all new DCC locos have an address of “3” that was programmed in at the factory. You will need to change that address to some other number unique to that locomotive, for example, the number painted on the side of the loco. To assign the identity number, or address, to the loco, you will program the loco’s decoder using your hand-held throttle. The address is one of several settings on a decoder which, collectively, are called “CVs” or configuration variables, per official NMRA terminology. Other CVs would regulate sound, lights, speed, etc. Different decoders have more or fewer CV possibilities.

There is another option with some DCS units called “Blast mode.” This is similar to service mode but is done on the main, and the DCS does not expect an ack from the loco’s decoder. Be very careful, as this programs all decoders that are on the track that is connected.

Once in a while a decoder will go, what I call “stupid.” The loco won’t respond. Your best friend when a decoder starts acting very strange or not at all is “factory reset.” This is a specific CV that you can trigger in the loco’s decoder, and it will set all CVs, including the address, back to the settings they were given at the factory. The majority of the decoders that are returned to vendors are said to only need a factory reset to fix them. Do the factory reset on the programming track, then place the loco on the main and see if it will respond to address 3. That will demonstrate that your factory reset has been successful. Then, start again to program in the new address.

Next time, we will discuss programming a decoder using a computer, with Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI).

TCD CONTEST WINNERS



The January contest was for heavy-duty flat cars with loads. **Wayne Bjordie** won it with his “turbo machine” on an Athearn HD flat decorated for Westinghouse (Champ decal) with spare “turbos” on an Athearn flat decorated for the Rutland (CDS). The main machine is a piece of 2x2 lumber with assorted plastic junk painted and attached. To leave the loads uncovered for viewing while protecting them for later transit, some HO men were busy during the contest covering them, while others secured them with chains and cables.

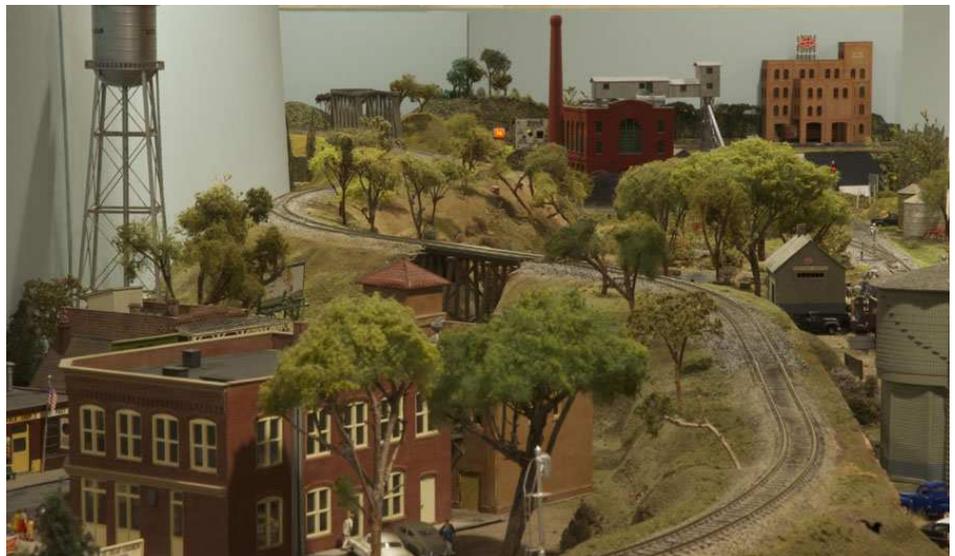


So far, 2013 has been the year of the Jules. In capturing the blue ribbon for the February contest on photos and videos, **Jules Loipersbeck** exhibited a photo of one of the first street cars in Minneapolis, shot in the 1920s. In the March contest for hoppers and loads, Jules showed a well weathered covered hopper that was decorated for the Atlantic Coast Line and contained...what was in there, Jules? He has entered almost all of the TCD contests in recent years and has claimed several ribbons.



Photos by Dave Hohle

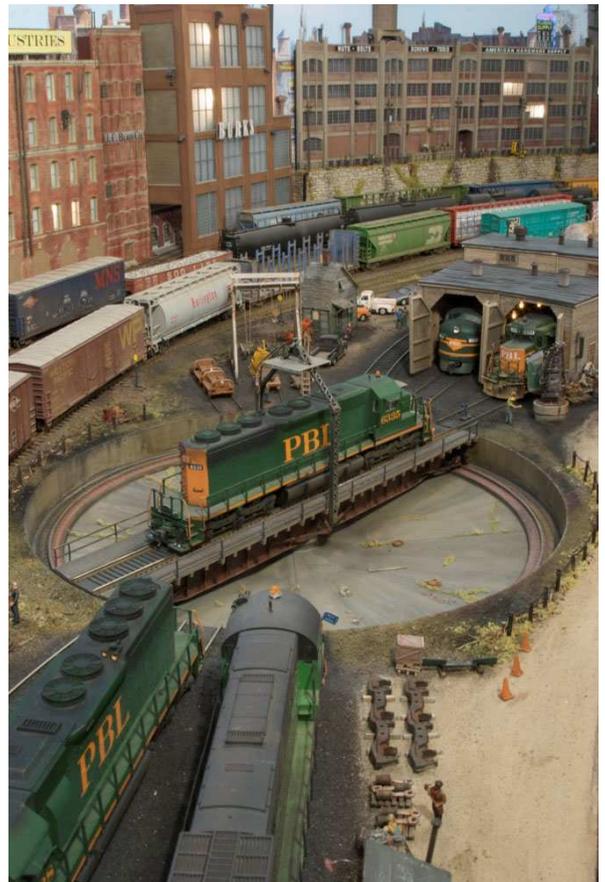
Les Breuer is a well-known Twin Cities modeler whose 12 x 28-foot Minneapolis and Northland Railroad is loosely based on the Minneapolis, Northfield, and Southern. His interest is also in modeling local Twin Cities lakes. This scene is the town of Bass Lake in 1954. On the TLR tour.



Eduardo Romo's San Juan del Oro railroad is an HO_n3 line that serves a gold mine and a lumber industry in the San Juan Mountains of southern Colorado in 1932. The layout is 85 percent complete and represents about a year of Ed's labor. The scene is of Lagarto Canyon, near the town of San Juan del Oro, "The Town that Time Forgot." Ed claims he rummaged through the local court house and found records which he used along with pictures and measurements of the ruins of the town to reconstruct it. See it on the TLR tour.



Seth Puffer's Puffer Bridge Line (PBL) models the period from 1970 to 2000. (Right) Seth began work on the layout in 2001. Seth's interest in railroads began at an early age when he lived in Buffalo, MN, and hung out at the Soo Line depot. The layout is 14 x 20 feet and contains some nice industrial track-side buildings, mostly fronts, in the town of "Aurora." PBL 6335 is an SD-40.



Dave Hamilton's Burlington River Division is an operation-centered layout set in the late 1960s. It occupies 950 square feet of his basement and contains a lot of modern trackside industrial structures. The BRD is part of the Dubuque-LaCrosse section of the Burlington.



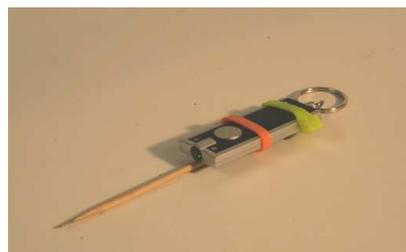
All TLR Convention Layout Photos by
Art VanDeWater

HOBBY SHOWS & RAILFANNING EVENTS

Sat Mar 23 & Sun Mar 24	Great Minnesota Train Expo Eagan Civic Arena 3780 Pilot Knob Rd. Sat 9am-5pm Sun 9am-3pm. Adm: \$5, under 8 free. showinfo@GRVS.org or ph. 651-269-3433
Sat, Apr 6	Greater Upper Midwest Train Show, Century College, White Bear Lake, MN 9am-2pm. Adm: \$5, under 12 free. Info: Tom Jefferson 651-429-2885
Sat, Apr 13	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
Sat, Apr 20	Woodbury Flea Market at Woodbury Sr. High School, 2665 Woodlane Dr, Woodbury, MN 10am-3pm. Adm: \$5, under 12 free. Info: 952-200-9729
Sat Apr 20 & Sun Apr 21	Randolph, MN RR Days. Swap meet, Layouts, RR Collectables, Museum. Adm \$5, 12 & under free. Chicago Great Western equipment. New, improved, expanded. Two days this year!
Sat May 11	Twin Cities Model Railroad Museum Train Show. Minnesota State Fairgrounds Education Building. 9am-3pm Adm: \$6
Fri -Sun May 17-19	TLR Convention Best Western Mall of America Minneapolis TWIN RAILS 2013 For info, check: www.NMRATLR.org
Sat, May 25	Beginning of season for End-o-Line Railroad Park and Museum, Curry, MN 56123 Sat. 10am-5pm, Sun. 1-5pm. ph. 507-763-3708.
Sat, Jun 8	Beginning of season for Iron Horse Central RR Museum, 24880 Morgan Ave, Chisago City, MN 55013 10am-5:30pm ph. 651-357-3394

TOOL CORNER, BY JIM BUCK

A lighted uncoupler pick. I put together a bamboo bar-b-que skewer zip strapped to an LED key fob.



TCD TIMETABLE

Meetings at the Jackson Street Roundhouse 2013

Month	First Topic	Second Topic	Help Topic	Contest
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

MEET DAVE NORMAN

Dave Norman is a long-time NMRA member who may have the oldest layout in the Twin Cities. Dave is 70 and lives in the same 1889 house where his mother was born in 1905. Fifty years later, in 1955, his uncle built the basic layout that still circles the entire basement. They ran tinplate back then. They operated in 027 gauge, and not much was available commercially. Dave built cars and switches from scratch. The material for one stock car he built was bought at a hobby shop that went out of business in 1960. Dave has always concentrated his interest in trolleys. He



and his dad rode trolleys in Minneapolis and were on the very last trolley ride before street cars disappeared from the streets in June 1954. Even today, Dave is a motorman for the Lake Harriet trolley. Dave calls his O-scale layout the "Toonerville Transit" after an old comic strip that started in 1908 and spawned many films and comic books. His current trolley is a model of a car from the Baltimore system.



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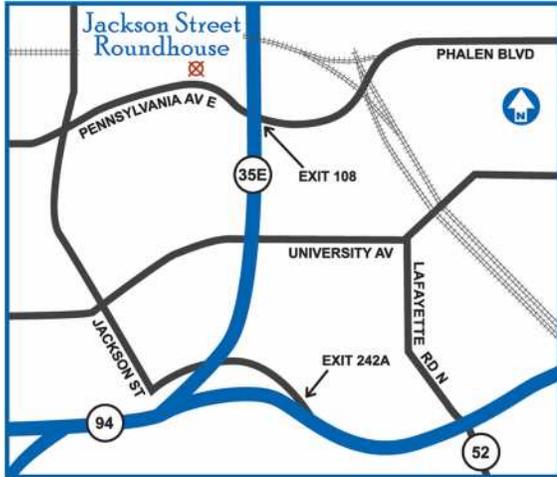
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4476 Mason Ave NE
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Next 3 Meetings:

Jan 10, Feb 14, Mar 14 7:00 PM
Jackson Street Roundhouse
193 Pennsylvania Ave E
St. Paul, MN 55130
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