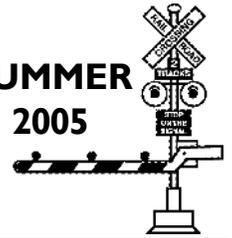


The Crossing Gate

SUMMER
2005



Newsletter of the Twin Cities Division, Thousand Lakes Region, National Model Railroad Association • www.twincitiesdivision.org

Changes in store for TCD

By **Tim Klevar**
Twin Cities Division Paymaster & Webmaster

Much like the NMRA, the Twin Cities Division is facing a challenge in attracting and retaining members for our organization. Arguably, the TCD, because it is based in a major metropolitan area, should (or could) be one of the more vigorous and healthy Divisions in the NMRA. I say this because the Twin Cities area is one of the "larger" railroad areas, both presently and in the past, in the country. We were home to the Great Northern. Other roads, such as the Milwaukee Road, were a huge presence in town. Cincinnati, a metropolitan area smaller than the Twin Cities and the location of this year's National convention, boasts a Division of nearly 300 active members. In contrast, the TCD has around 50 regularly active members on a membership base of about 200.

Your TCD Board and Officers met in June to see what could be done to make the Division more attractive to existing and potential members, to be more involved in the community, and to try to become a Division really worthy of the name "Twin Cities Division."

Possible meeting day change. One of the ways we want to attract more people to the meetings is to look at the day of the week on which our meetings are held. To this end, we are proposing to hold two meetings during this coming year on Saturday. These two meetings will be the December meeting (on December 10 instead of December 8) and the April meeting (on April 8 instead of April 13). We feel that by having a Saturday meeting, it may be more convenient for many of you to attend. Currently, the meeting place will remain the same (the Moose Lodge in Maplewood) but we'll also look at offering alternative areas if the membership should desire it.

The Board met to see what could be done to make the Division more attractive to members.

Holiday auction to be held. In conjunction with the December meeting, we will offer a holiday auction, just in time to help you with those gifts for the railroader. This will most likely be a "silent auction" type of arrangement, but details have not yet been set. Naturally, you can also use this as an opportunity to add to your own fleets and collections, as well as offering items for auction yourself. Our auction at last season's May meeting went very well, and was moderately financially rewarding to the Division.

Door Prize structure changed. Additionally, to help get more people involved in our monthly meetings, we're changing our door prize ticket structure. The price for six tickets will remain at \$5.00, but now, for \$10.00, we'll give you 15 tickets. This gives you more opportunities to grab one of the terrific prizes featured at the meetings. Hopefully, this will be another incentive to come to the meetings!

Boy Scout program possible. In the Community Outreach category, we have decided on a two-pronged approach. The first, a basic program for attaining the Railroading merit badge for Boy Scouts is being discussed with the local Scout Councils. We feel that we could put on a one-day workshop and have the Scouts fulfill the requirements for the Badge. This would serve a dual purpose: to get more young people interested in both railroading and model railroading, as well as

"Changes" continued on page 5



**The folks who need the help:
Twin Cities Division
Board & Officers**

For all Division business or questions:

Superintendent

Lynn McCall
763-425-3509
super@twincitiesdivision.org

To volunteer to give a clinic:

Assistant Superintendent

Bill Gisch
asuper@twincitiesdivision.org

To volunteer for a train show or "Timetable" entries:

Chief Clerk & Train Show Coordinator

Al Dowd
651-260-1606
clerk@twincitiesdivision.org

For membership problems, CROSSING GATE subscription
or address problems, or website issues:

Paymaster & Webmaster

Tim Klevar
paymaster@twincitiesdivision.org

For article or photo submissions:

CROSSING GATE Editor

Gerry Leone, MMR
952-474-8364
editor@twincitiesdivision.org

For Golden Spike or NMRA Certificate questions:

NMRA Achievement Program

Dave Hamilton
763-449-0058
ap@twincitiesdivision.org

To volunteer your layout for a tour, or suggest one:

Layout Tour Coordinator

Neil Maldeis
tours@twincitiesdivision.org

For hobby shop or door prize questions:

Public Relations

Don Smith
pr@twincitiesdivision.org

Director at Large

Bruce Notman
assistant@twincitiesdivision.org

Education Director

Bruce Selb
ed@twincitiesdivision.org

Popular Vote Contest Chairperson

Pam Notman

NMRA Contest Chairman

position open (hint hint)

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.org, or hand it to him (along with a \$5 bribe) at the next Division meeting. No photos by email; please put them on a CD and mail them.

Be part of the Division! If you're an NMRA member, become a Regular member of the Division (you get a year's subscription to THE CROSSING GATE, plus voting privileges) for only \$10 per year. If you're not an NMRA member, become a Subscriber (you get a year's subscription to THE CROSSING GATE) for only \$10 per year.



From the Editor

Hey! What's that smell?

I think I know the answer: it's the smell of people burning out. I'm talking about that handful of people listed in the box on the left. Some of those folks have been listed on the roster for years. All of them (I should say "us") are in at least our second terms. And some of them/us are feeling the burden of doing a big job all alone, just to keep the Division running. Just to keep you entertained for 8 months of the year.

I speak on behalf of all of them: we need your help. There are about 200 people who've received this newsletter, and we're talking to each and every one of you. If you're getting anything out of the Division, how about putting a little something back in?

And if you're thinking, "Aw, let somebody else do it," then just pray that the other 199 folks aren't thinking the same thing. Or we'll all have nothing in the end.

Here's what needs to be done:

Clinics: Everyone in this hobby has something to share, even if it's not a "how-to." Got a collection of train photos? Done some research on a prototype industry or rail line? Have an easy way to make layout trees? A collection of vintage Lionel? A track plan you'd like some help on? All of us would love to see what you have. Your clinic doesn't have to be a razzle-dazzle computer-driven Hollywood production. Know someone who's too shy to volunteer him/herself? Let us know. The point is, without you volunteering, we've got no clinics. And without clinics, we've got no monthly meetings. What's the price of volunteering? Forty-five minutes of your time, plus maybe a few hours of prep time beforehand. Step up to the plate and call or email Bill Gisch (box at left).

Layout tours: It doesn't have to be the Franklin & South Manchester. It doesn't even have to be the Plywood Pacific. If you've got a layout, I'd bet dollars to donuts a lot of Division members would love to see it, no matter what shape it's in, no matter what size it is. There's not a layout I've seen that I didn't learn something from. People love to see layouts in *any* condition. Volunteer yours for a tour this year. The cost? One Winter afternoon every four or five years. Call or email Neil Maldeis (box at left).

Public relations: We're lucky we have so many hobby shops in the Metro area. But Don Smith can't get to every one every month just to say "hi." If you live near one or visit one often, let Don know (box at the left). He'll send you a few of our monthly flyers – you just plopp 'em in the store and you're done. The effort costs you zero and you've taken a load off of Don's shoulders. While you're there, let the owner know we really do appreciate their generous donations every month. Without them, no door prizes.

More public relations: Hundreds of people show up to the train shows and swap meets. Where are all those people on the second Thursday night of the month? You can help let them know about the TCD. If you could sacrifice an hour to man (or woman) a Division table at a swap meet, you'd be helping all of us. One hour a year. Not a whole lot. Contact Al Dowd (box at the left).

Articles and photos: I know you know that the pages in this newsletter don't magically fill up every three months. If you've got something you think could make a good article, trust me, it will make a good article. You don't need to be Shakespeare. You don't even need to be a writer. Just send me what you've got (box at left) and I'll help you look good in print. And if you have an interesting model or prototype photo, send that in, too, with a little caption. It costs you a few hours, and you get immortal fame in these pages, and undying gratitude from me.

Other stuff: There's always room for more volunteers: people to help us find a new meeting location, people to help stick labels and stamps on THE CROSSING GATE, people to help set up the A/V stuff at meetings. You get the idea. There's a lot of stuff that needs to be done. And the folks at the left are getting tired of doing it all.

Don't just read the newsletter. Don't just come to the meetings. Be a *part* of the Division. Thanks.
- Gerry

Contributors to this issue:

Roger Flaten, Tim Klevar, Carl Wessel, Al Dowd, Jim Bernier, Bruce Engebretsen, Jules Loipersbeck, Pat Walker ...

THANKS!

Deadline for next issue: **Sept. 10, 2005**

Operators take Lynn McCall's Alameda & Indian Beach for a shakedown op session



Operator Dave Zuhn switches the cement plant on the east end of the Alameda & Indian Beach railroad.

By Carl Wessel

At the end of last year, a second shakedown operation was conducted on the Alameda and Indian Beach. Superintendent Lynn McCall had invited a group of seven operators to give it a go at his apartment in Brooklyn Park.

The afternoon started with a frenzy of cleanup activities by Lynn and Carl Wessel. As the hour was drawing near, a lot of work remained, including checking of locomotives.

Then, of course, there were no car cards, no waybills...what to do?

As Lynn worked on locomotives and power curves it was up to Carl to figure out a game plan. It was determined that two or three switch jobs would be run with two-man crews. A yardmaster was required at the west end.

Remembering some prior experience with a railroad in Oklahoma, Carl decided to write an instruction sheet for each job. With just over an hour to go and Lynn off for beverages and snacks, Carl worked on two sets of train

orders for each crew.

A brief description of one of the newest railroads in the Twin Cities is in order. The Alameda and Indian Beach is a single-track mainline switching district with a main yard on the left (or west), three switching districts, and a small yard on the right (or east) end.

All switch jobs originate out of the west yard working their way east to their switching districts. There is an ADM/Co-op job, a warehouse transfer, and a cement/ethanol turn. Each district has unique switching challenges involved in spotting cars in the right location.

The day's attendees included Greg Koon, John Hamre, John O'Brian, Bill Pniak, Dave Zuhn, and John Thomas.

After the age-old question was asked, "What do you want to work?" a quick set of numbers were made and drawn for the pick. The chosen yardmaster got to work, and after a while, the locals left and spent about 45 minutes doing all their switching.

A new set of orders was undertaken to allow



West end yard superintendent Lynn McCall watches the action as members of the crew take on their switching assignments.

for a second round of operations and written up while the crews were still working. A re-scuffle of work and crews was accomplished smoothly, with the second round of work done by different crews.

The AIB performed well, with few interruptions. Only one locomotive had some problems and there were a couple of car wheel or coupler problems.

It was agreed by all that the AIB was – and is – a fun layout to work. Hopefully you got a chance to see it in person during last Spring's layout tours.

Is this issue late or what?

Well, yes and no.

This issue was actually slated to hit your mailbox on or around July 1. But at the TCD Board and Officers meeting (see story, page 1) last June, we decided to postpone it one month in hopes of finding volunteers for early Fall layout tours. Neil Maldeis, our Layout Tour Coordinator, tried his darndest, but in the end came up empty-handed – no one volunteered (see editorial, page 2). He'll keep trying, though. Watch our website.

Layout tours are one of the main reasons people join the TCD. So please, if you have a layout, let Neil know (see masthead, page 2). We'd love to share it with everyone!



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Flush-mounting Atlas switch control boxes on a panel

Text, photos and artwork by Bruce Engebretson

The Atlas #56 “Switch Control Box” is a device for operating remote switches, or “turnouts” in model railroad lingo. While many modelers use under-table slow motion switch machines, many of us have used the Atlas controller and snap-action switch machines for years. Although they’re not as realistic in operation as slow motion motor-driven machines, they’re much less expensive.

The Atlas controller is a shallow plastic rectangular box $1\frac{1}{8}$ ” wide by $1\frac{3}{4}$ ” long with a slide-push actuator button. It’s wired to a snap-action switch machine at the turnout. I used Atlas #65 under-table switch machines, but the wiring is the same for topside machines.

I needed several control panels on my HO-scale Ramsey Glen and Marathon RR for local control at yards and sidings. I didn’t want to surface-mount the Atlas controllers end-to-end in a row with exposed wiring per their instructions. My solution was to make a small control panel with a schematic of the trackplan and mount the Atlas controllers on the back with just the actuator portion projecting through. Position the controllers on the schematic in the correct location to provide easy recognition of turnouts and their alignment.

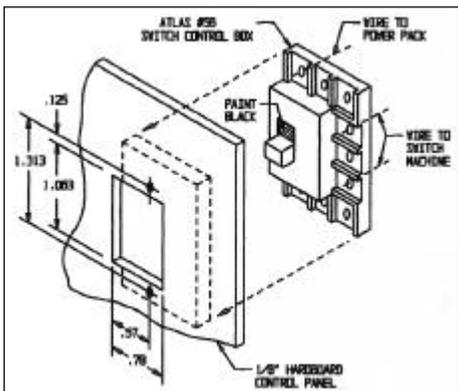


Figure 1

See Figure 1. The front of the controller with the actuator button has a raised area about $\frac{3}{4}$ ” wide by $1\frac{1}{16}$ ” long. I used $\frac{1}{8}$ ” thick hardboard for the control panel and cut rectangular holes with a jig saw for the actuator to project through. Two #3-48, $\frac{1}{2}$ ” long flathead countersunk screws and nuts mount the Atlas controllers to the back of the panel.

That’s great, but the terminals and screws for wiring are on the front of the controller. An

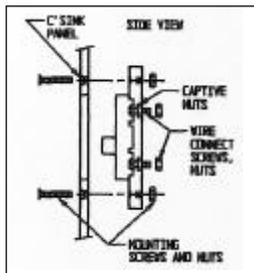


Figure 2

easy fix – see Figure 2. I replaced the #3-48, $\frac{1}{8}$ ” long screws with #3-48, $\frac{1}{4}$ ” long screws and installed them before mounting the controllers to the panel. They project through the back of the controller into the captive nuts. Then connect wires using #3-48 securing nuts. Do not install the screws from the back into the captive nuts on the controller as these nuts are electrically isolated from the terminals on the front (except on some older controllers).

The Atlas controller has terminals and screws for seven connections, but you only need to wire three of them. See Figure 3. Two wires

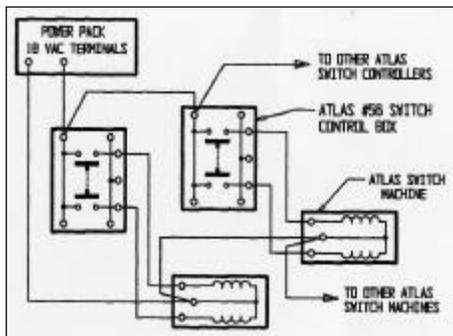


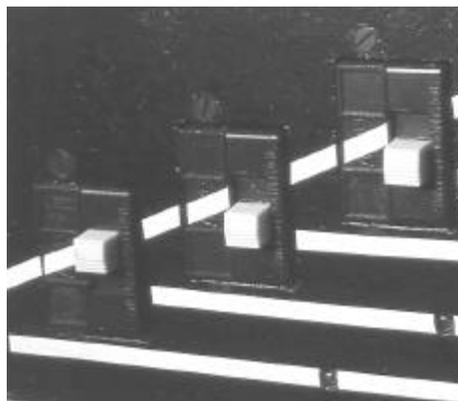
Figure 3

are run from each controller to their switch machine at the turnout. The third wire is an 18VAC power source and is jumper-wired to the other Atlas controllers. These connections require #3-48 securing nuts which I removed from the back of the controller at unused locations. Leave the three captive nuts in place for the three connections.

The center terminal of all switch machines are jumper-wired and a single “return”

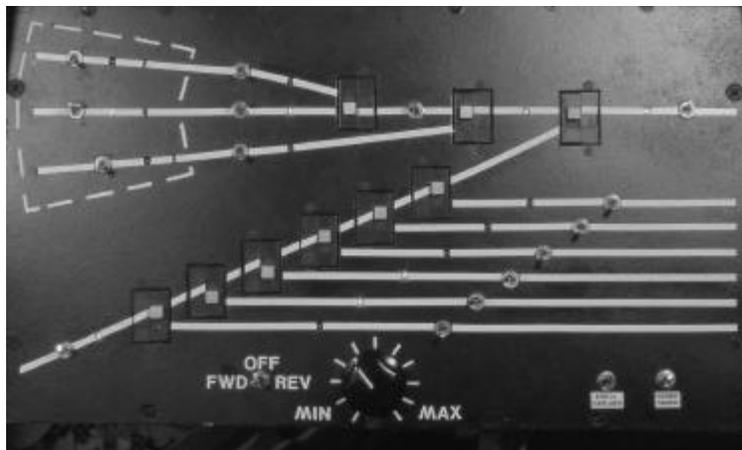
wire is run back to the 18VAC source. To avoid the momentary dimming of accessory lights or jerky train motion when the turnout is actuated, I use a separate small “train set” power pack.

I painted the control panels and the exposed mounting screw heads black and used white $\frac{1}{8}$ ” wide pinstripe tape for the trackplan. See the photos. The panels have a neat, smooth look with the Atlas controllers flush with the



surface. My panels include toggle switches for power to each electrical block (no DCC on my layout) and a reversing toggle switch. On one panel I used double-pole toggle switches and wired the second poles to miniature lights to show which blocks are powered on. I also included a 25-ohm potentiometer for local speed control.

These panels are very functional with the actuating slide-push buttons lining up with the trackplan tape for easy recognition of each turnout and track alignment.



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!

"Changes" continued from page 1

get more people from the Division participating in programs. For those of you who may be interested, the requirements for the merit badge can be found at <http://www.meritbadge.com/mb/094.htm>.

"Mini-Modeling With The Masters" planned. Second, we want to offer a "Modeling with the Masters" mini-clinic, open to all, but with discount admission to TCD members. We have some excellent modelers

in our ranks, a couple of "fair-to-middlin" MMRs, and have contacts with national clinicians. We could use their expertise to help everyone sharpen their modeling skills, as well as continue to spread the word about the Division.

Possible CROSSING GATE changes. As many of you may remember from the Business Meeting, our revenue/expense ratio is also getting a little unbalanced. THE CROSSING GATE you are holding is our single largest expense at nearly 70% of our annual budget. We've discussed a

couple of options to help reduce that expense, including a less expensive printing method, individually stapled pages, and elimination of the color printing. Color pictures would be included on the website (<http://www.twincitiesdivision.org>). Using THE CROSSING GATE to entice people to visit the Web site for further content or pictures would allow us to have more "real-time" content and (possibly) more in-depth details on upcoming events and clinics.

Additional fund raising. Because fund raising is at the top of our list, we are considering some tweaks in the way we do layout tours. One of these options includes charging \$1/person for the day, with free door prize tickets for participants. The layout tours offer us another wonderful opportunity to interact with less active members to get them more involved with the Division.

The Board also agreed that we would sell the high definition TV since we now have our nifty computer/video projector.

Finally, in a shameless appeal, I'll put a donation box by the signup sheets during meetings for the upcoming year. Any and all donations would be welcome!!

These are a few of the changes the Board believes will both benefit the Division and will help reinvigorate our image and direction. If you have other suggestions or ideas, please let one of the Board members know. If you want to put on a clinic, let us know about that, too.

We aren't quite at the level of a "Long Range Plan" yet, but we need to get more involved with other organizations around the metro to truly live up to our name of "Twin Cities Division."

Railfan & Hobby Show CALL BOARD

COMPILED BY GERRY LEONE (WITH AL DOWD AND JIM BERNIER)

August 5, 2005 - Gopher Rail, 6:30 p.m. -9:30 p.m., University of Minnesota, Murphy Hall 130 - East Bank. Tickets \$7 at the door, \$5 for students. Tentative line up includes Greg Smith - MNS history, Ted Pope - Milwaukee Road electrics, Dennis (Homer) Holmes - "Homer - Modern Day Railroad Boomer." Door prizes, too. All proceeds go to the U of M's Railroad Club. More info at their website: www.tc.umn.edu/~rrclubum.

September 10-11, 2005 - Lakes Area Model Railroad's 10th annual Train Show, Central Square Cultural Center, Glenwood, MN, 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sun., Admission: \$2, (320) 762-8840, lamrra@yahoo.com.

September 24, 2005 - Twin City Model RR Museum Flea Market, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., State Fairgrounds Education Bldg, St. Paul, Admission: \$4, children under 12 free.

October 1, 2005 - 11th Hutchinson Model Railroad Show, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., McLeod County fairgrounds, Hutchinson, \$3. Hosted by Luce Line Railroad Club Inc. and Minnesota River Valley Division of TLR/NMRA. Layouts, flea market, clinics, model contest, door prizes.

November 2005 - Greater Upper Midwest Train Show & Sale, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, Century College West Campus, 3300 Century Ave North, White Bear Lake, MN. \$4, under 12 free. For more information, contact Tom Jefferson at (651) 429-2885



TCD Timetable

THURSDAY, Oct. 13, 2005 7:00 pm

MODELING CLINIC - (to be determined)
MODELING CLINIC - (to be determined)
POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST - Flat Car loads

THURSDAY, Nov. 10, 2005 7:00 pm

MODELING CLINIC - (to be determined)
PROTO PRESENTATION - (to be determined)
POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST - Locomotives, Private and Personal

SATURDAY, Dec. 10, 2005 Time to be determined

SPECIAL HOLIDAY AUCTION
POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST - Square Foot Dioramas: Train Depots

THURSDAY, Jan. 12, 2006 7:00 pm

MODELING CLINIC - (to be determined)
PROTO PRESENTATION - (to be determined)
POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST - Cabooses

THURSDAY, Feb. 9, 2006 7:00 pm

MODELING CLINIC - (to be determined)
PROTO PRESENTATION - (to be determined)
POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST - Weathered Boxcars

THURSDAY, Mar. 9, 2006 7:00 pm

MODELING CLINIC - (to be determined)
PROTO PRESENTATION - (to be determined)
POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST - Steam Engines

SATURDAY, Apr. 8, 2006 Time to be determined

MODELING CLINIC - (to be determined)
PROTO PRESENTATION - (to be determined)
POPULAR VOTE MODEL CONTEST - Whimsical Railroads / NMRA Merit Point Judging

THURSDAY, May 11, 2006 7:00 pm
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

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Using Programmable Logic Controllers on the layout

By Roger Flaten

Like most beginners, I started without any knowledge about the hobby. Because I didn't have much room in my basement, I needed to build a small layout, but I wanted one with lots of action. So I used the classic 4'x8' sheet of pressed wood.

One of my biggest desires was to incorporate automatic switching on my layout. So I set out to look for relays and associated parts. It turned out to be a hard chore. However, after making the system work, I found that the relays weren't as reliable as I had hoped.

Then a friend brought it to my attention that I could automate the system reliably with a small programmable controller. These devices are called PLCs - Programmable Logic Controllers. By using this device I found that automated switching could be both easy and dependable. The model I'm using is by Allen-Bradley, however there are many brands to choose from, including Cutler-Hammer, Modicon, GE, and others.

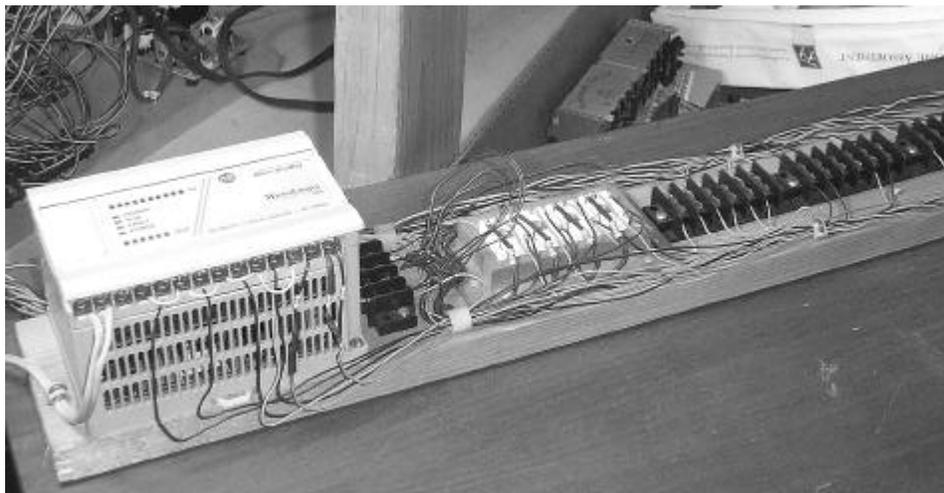
For the most part, PLCs are programmed externally with a computer. Mine has 8 inputs

and 8 outputs. The inputs are voltage controlled, and the outputs are dry relay contacts. In addition, I use one other feature on my model: timing. Timing is used for the length of the pulse of electricity used for throwing the switches.

While I've found a PLC to be a tremendously reliable way to automate switching on a layout, the downside is that they are expensive. In

addition, if you're not computer savvy, you'll need someone to do the programming. However, if PLCs are something that interest you, talk to an electrician, assembly line technician, or take a look on the internet.

One word of warning: if you do find a PLC, be sure to get the programming software that goes with it!



Here's Roger's Allen-Bradley Programmable Logic Controller all wired up and working on his layout.

Convention Update

NorthStar '06: So what else is going to happen?

By Pat Walker
Northstar '06 Chairman

I'm glad you asked. Besides all the convention stuff, there will be some outreach, in the form of helping interested Boy Scouts get their Railroading Merit Badge. We're in touch with NMRA people that have worked up a system that helps the Scouts earn this badge. We will be contacting other model railroad and prototype groups in the area, along with hobby shops and museums, and hope to get as many people and groups as possible involved. Obviously the Viking and Indianhead Councils will be involved, and we hope to get as many Scouts as possible to come and join us.

The tentative plan is to gather a week or two before the convention and have a series of work sessions set up, each covering a different requirement for the badge. The Scouts will move through the stations, checking off each requirement until they finish them all. We'll have some food, some door prizes, and a lot of fun. It would be great to get some young blood

interested in the hobby, but if all we get is Scouts who understand railroads a bit better, that's fine with us!

The Scouts who finish the requirements will be invited to join us at the convention. They'll get to attend the clinics, visit the contest room, and possibly visit the layouts. All in all, we hope to show off the hobby to a group of people who may not know much about it, but are interested in learning.

To change the subject, have I mentioned Door Prizes? The drawing after the Saturday Banquet is a TLR tradition, done with a TLR twist. If your ticket number is called, you head up front and get it verified. Then you head over to the tables where the prizes are displayed, and take your pick. Yup, you get to pick what you want. The prizes will be on display before the banquet so you can get a feel for where your favorites are, but no - you can't put a reserved sign on your favorite. Sorry. In the past we've had several thousand dollars' worth of door prizes available, and we're looking forward to doing the same next year.

As to the convention itself, registration information will be available this Fall at the TCD meets and here in THE CROSSING GATE. You'll be able to register by mail or online. Just keep watching this space (OK, keep watching THE CROSSING GATE overall) for all the information you'll need. There will be a website available soon.

There is also a good possibility that operating sessions will be available during the weekend. They won't be an "official" convention function, but they will definitely be part of the fun available!

One last thing - A call for clinics. Do you have something to share, some interesting way of doing things, some unknown photographs of the prototype? Are you interested in helping the TCD and the TLR by giving a clinic - and getting Author points to boot? Let us know at 2006@thousandlakesregion.org.

See you in the next issue, and at NorthStar '06!

You, too, could (or should) be an MMR!

By **Tim Klevar**
Twin Cities Division Paymaster & Webmaster

Fifty, smifty. You don't have to be an old codger to earn your MMR, despite the fact that it's the way it seems to happen.

Those of us who are NMRA members opened up our issue of the *March Scale Rails* to find the smiling face of our own editor, Gerry Leone, staring out at us. I, on behalf of the Division, want to offer our congratulations to Gerry on attaining this milestone, especially in the short time on which he worked on it. [Thanks! -Gerry]

After many of us recovered from our spasms of laughter, we realized, yes, this is attainable for most of us. Gerry did it in three years. Many of you could do the same. With a layout, many of the certificates are within your reach to qualify for MMR status. In addition, and as a shameless plug, writing articles for THE CROSSING GATE (such as this one) and serving as an officer of the Division will help you qualify as well.

Gerry has been active in the Division for a number of years. He has served as a Board member at the local level and editor at the Regional level. His layout helped him gain certificates in several of the disciplines. Being editor of THE CROSSING GATE and former TCD webmaster helped him round out the number of certificates he needed.

Building, or helping to build, a layout will gain you points towards the Scenery, Structures and Prototype certifications. Building models will bring you closer to Motive Power and Cars. Being active in the Division will help you attain Association Volunteer and Official points (not to mention helping Gerry fill out the quarterly CROSSING GATE). Activity in operating sessions helps you with Chief Dispatcher. Once you have achieved certification in seven of the eleven areas, you are eligible for certification as a Master Model Railroader.

This really is the World's Greatest Hobby. I know of no other which allows one to exercise their skills and imagination in so many different areas.

Congratulations, Gerry, and well done. Let's get some more MMR's on our roster!! [Thanks... and I couldn't agree more! -Gerry]

Train sites and sounds abound on the World Wide Web

Submitted by **Jules Loipersbeck**. Reprinted with permission from the **St. Paul Pioneer Press**

By **Rob Hubbard**

Only a few weeks ago was the 136th anniversary of a golden spike being driven through a railroad tie in Utah. When it was pounded into the ground, North America's first transcontinental railroad was complete.

Using the latest technology to learn about this industrial-age innovation can be a fascinating journey. So climb aboard.

First of all, if you'd like to learn more about that "Golden Spike," you should visit the National Park Service's site on it at www.nps.gov/gosp/home.htm. There's a fine virtual tour of the area and a history section that provides a lot of good historical content.

One of the most popular destinations on the Web for railroad enthusiasts is www.trains.com, which has plenty of intriguing articles, be your interest in trains on a small scale (like HO) or big enough to inspire you to hop on an Amtrak once in a while. For those who release their inner "Empire Builder" in the garage or basement, the site has a link to *Model Railroader* magazine. You're asked to register, but it's free.

Speaking of the Empire Builder, that's the name of the Amtrak route that travels through the Twin Cities (on its way from Chicago to Seattle or Portland, if you're westbound). If you take it to Chicago, the rest of the country is your oyster: you can hop on a train at Union Station and end up almost anywhere in the United States. If you'd like to plan a journey, go to www.amtrak.com. And, say what you will about the advantages of air travel, but they don't have any routes called the Cardinal, Crescent, Downeaster or Palmetto, do they?

By the way, the "Empire Builder" was the nickname given to one of St. Paul's most famous, influential, and wealthy residents, James J. Hill. You can learn a bit about him at www.mnhs.org/places/sites/jjhh/aboutjames.html.

Looking at American history through a framing device like the railroads can be fascinating, and PBS has done a great job with a pair of sites designed to accompany their "American Experience" documentaries. In the 1930s, the silver "streamliners" started streaking across

the country, and you can read all about them at www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/streamliners.

At the same time, others were seeing America from the inside of a boxcar, living the hobo life during the Great Depression. There's also a fine site on that side of rail travel at www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rails.

If you'd like to be able to speak the lingo of train workers, you can get a glossary from the Union Pacific people at www.uprr.com/about-up/rrtalk/index.html.

And you can take a peek at what may be the future of rail travel by reading about "MagLev" (magnetic levitation) trains at www.popularmechanics.com/science/transportation/1289196.html.

New CD of steam recordings made by O. Winston Link is released

By **Gerry Leone, MMR**
Reprinted from the **TLR FUSEE**

Listen up all you steam lovers! On April 11 of this year National Public Radio broadcasted a story about a new CD which had just been released, entitled "The Fading Giant." The CD contains recordings made by the late 1950s railroad photographer O. Winston Link. While Link is famous for the images he captured on black and white film, few knew he had made an extensive collection of tape recordings from the end of the steam era.

Using an 80-pound tape recorder hooked up to a custom power supply, Link recorded the sounds of the trains, both as they passed through towns, and from the trains themselves.

The story and audio clips from the CD can be found at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4585996>. As this issue went to press, the link still existed on NPR's website, and will hopefully remain there for several more months.

The story, and the audio recordings, are worth your time... even if you have a dial-up internet connection!

THE CROSSING GATE

Twin Cities Division, TLR, NMRA

PO Box 14470

St. Paul, MN 55114

Inside:

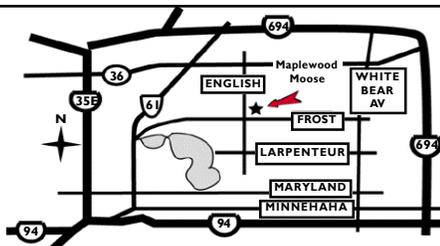
- ◆ Changes in store for the Division
- ◆ Flush-mounting Atlas controlers on a panel
- ◆ Update on Northstar '06

Next meetings:

October 13 and November 10 at 7:00 pm. (Check our website for any last minute changes.)

Where:

Maplewood Moose Lodge
1946 English Street
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Check the mailing label to see when your membership expires... then renew now!

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