

# THE ORDER BOARD

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## Time Table

October 24  
Cajon Fall Event  
Buena Park, Ca



## “ FROM THE DIRECTOR ”

From Richard Hock, The Director



“A breath of fresh air! Even through a mask!

The past six months has been an exercise in lock down isolation, removing us from those daily activities that we now all miss. I think, that speaking for myself, I am going to scream with another activity or event cancellation and further delay of my favorite restaurants returning to indoor dining. I no longer take those pleasures for granted. I guess that I never realized just how much of my social life revolved around food, drink and model trains.

Your Cajon Division board has been working hard to maintain the scheduling of the Fall Meet in Buena Park. With careful consideration of current health regulations, a format is being planned to hopefully address our pent-up hobby needs. I have built as many structures and weathered as many pieces of rolling stock that I can before I go out of my mind. To come together for this event is a breath of fresh air in this less than optimal environment that we find ourselves living in. Even if we do it with a six-foot pole.

Membership! Here is your homework! (That is the college professor coming out in me.) Pick out that pandemic project and do some paperwork to place it in the Contest room or just bring it to the meet for the Show-and-Tell activity. I am sure that there has been a lot of great modeling. I am looking forward to seeing your work.

As the newest officer and board member, let's say “hello” or “what if.” See you in Buena Park!

Richard

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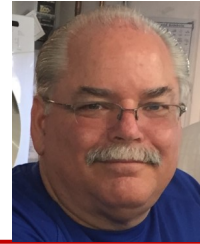
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## *From the Brass Hat's Desk*

by Superintendent  
**Joel Morse**



Staying social while social distancing is becoming an artform. This past weekend my wife and I went to a friend's house for a socially distant al fresco afternoon of hanging out, playing music (I play banjo and sing) and a terrific summer style dinner. This was the first time we visited anyone except our kids at their house, since the pandemic hit. But I have to confess, I have been out in public a few times and we have had a few friends over. This is pertinent because as soon as I had that thought, I realized that far and away, the majority of my in-person, social distance interactions since February, have been with my model railroading circle of friends. And of course, my only essential shopping trips have been to Arnie's to support them as much as possible.

My rail buddies Frank, Mark and I have a standing early December date, where we meet and watch trains at the Fullerton Station. Dan (Cajon Paymaster) joined us for the first time this past December. Frank decided he didn't want to wait until December, so in early July and then again, a couple of weeks ago, the four of us met at the station and watched trains (plenty of Amtrak but few freights, and those are all stack trains). Good thing the goal of these meetings isn't really trainspotting, it's to spend some time with friends doing something outside that we enjoy. And we don't enjoy anything as much as spending time chatting about trains. I think Dan got the most out of the July conversation, because he's planning a small HO layout and we spent a good amount of time talking about his concept and critiquing his track plan. Dan's layout will be a small transition era mining line in the mountains of Arizona, with lots of operations potential. And he got some excellent advice; both Mark and Frank are my operations mentors, and they are very knowledgeable about both prototypical and model railroad operations. So we drank coffee, ate the excellent breakfast burritos served at the station (yes, excellent) and passed the time, together, sharing our passion for trains and model railroading. Truly enjoyable. Only down side is that there is no public restroom. So be prepared.

Also last month, Dan brought his friend Rand, a new Cajon member and a fellow N scale modeler, to my house to introduce us, take a look at my layout and to talk about trains. We spent a few minutes in the garage discussing my layout (masks and distancing) and then spent another couple of hours out under the awning, enjoying the weather while sharing our various modeling areas of interest (N scale & operations) and some of our shared interests outside model railroading.

Right after the pandemic started, I think it was late March or early April, my friend Wolf came by to drop off a couple of items he so graciously offered to work on for me. We spent a couple of hours talking about airbrushing, and some of the modeling I had recently completed. Great to spend time with my friend!

I'm not ready to start operations sessions yet; 7 or 8 guys in the inescapably close quarters required to operate my layout is still out of my comfort zone, but I do miss the guys! So, I'm looking forward to doing some more social distance socializing in the coming months. How about you?

As of this moment, our October 24<sup>th</sup> Buena Park event is on. However, we are working out exactly what it will look like. It may be totally outside and socially distant, with limited clinics, designed to give us all a way to see each other, stay connected as a group and swap some stories, have a Hobo Auction or swap meet! Keep your eyes open for updates in the next few weeks as the Board figures it out.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you at [Superintendent@CajonDivision.org](mailto:Superintendent@CajonDivision.org)

### In Appreciation

Mrs. Charlotte Hauver recently donated much of her husband David Hauver's N-Scale model railroad-ing materials to the Cajon Division in his Memory.

David and Charlotte crisscrossed the country for many years displaying their compact Piute Flats Branch of the Denver and Rio Grande Western N-Scale layout at train shows.

You can view the layout (which has been adopted by relatives) by going to this website, put up by modeler who was so taken with the layout when he saw it at a train show that he added a page to his blog to talk about it.

<http://summitvillerr.blogspot.com/p/piute-flats.html>

### Membership on Track

by Per Harve  
Membership Chairman



At the end of August the membership of the Cajon Division was at 316. There were no new members in August.

Please welcome the following new members to our division:

#### MAY

John Grieco, Las Vegas, NV

Todd Quiggle, Huntington Beach, CA

#### JUNE

Randolph Boyd, Huntington Beach, CA

#### JULY

John Anderson, Wildomar, CA

Peter Meister, Lake Forest, CA

James Tennant, Henderson, NV, 89002

Thomas Weekly, Yucaipa, CA, 92399

### Social Media Report

By Dan Moran (Interim)

*Volunteer Needed*

Do you enjoy spending time on Facebook and keeping in touch with your friends in model railroading? Well the Cajon Division is in need of a member to run our social media efforts and you might just be the person we need! This role will entail keeping our Facebook page and our Facebook group up-to-date, reaching out to our membership via social media, and helping promote our events. In the future, it might also extend to Twitter or a YouTube channel, but for now, we're focused on Facebook. If you are interested in helping your division out in this role, please contact Richard Hock at [director@cajondivision.org](mailto:director@cajondivision.org) or Joel Morse at [superintendent@cajondivision.org](mailto:superintendent@cajondivision.org).

Cajon Social Media sites

Groups.io group: <https://groups.io/g/CajonDivisionPSRGroup>  
Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/CajonPsr/>  
Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CajonDivisionPSRGroup/>

If you have questions about using Social Media, email me at [Social@CajonDivision.org](mailto:Social@CajonDivision.org).

### Virtual Meetings via Zoom, Skype, etc.

While new to some, IT types have been using products like webex and gotomeeting to do training to remote sites for many years. From July 12 to 18 the NMRA hosted the first-ever NMRAx Virtual National Convention. I was able to watch many of the clinics and I suggest you check the NMRA website to see what is available.

Finally, the Operations Special Interest Group, OPSIG, holds virtual meetings every other Sunday. They last 1 to 2 hours and the schedule for September is September 14 and Sunday September 28. For times and other information see the OPSIG website [opsig.org](http://opsig.org).

Common elements of all of these meetings are that attendees are provided with the login information, the time and as well as reservation information as there may be limits on the number that can join in. Often the meetings have been recorded and are available on YouTube.

The formats use a combination of layout tours and clinics, some with PowerPoint presentations. In addition, there are a lot of videos available on the NMRA website.

## The Editor's Column

by Morrie Fleishman

Editor: Cajon Division



This is a regular format Cajon Order Board. All activities scheduled through September have been cancelled as well as the November Nevada event. The Cajon Buena Park event in October is still on the schedule. The trends in Orange County are favorable. However, if held masks and social distancing will likely be required. Also, there may be other modifications to the format that haven't been determined yet. So, stay tuned a final word in the October "Running Lite".

It is important that members help us with material for the upcoming Order Boards and newsletters. These can take the form of pictures, lessons learned, etc. If you need help in putting together an article or column please email or call me and I will provide assistance. Remember articles published qualify for credit toward the Author certificate.

Thanks, stay safe and lets hope that things get back to normal in quickly.

Morrie Fleishman editor

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## The Backshop

by: Gary Butts, MMR, AP Chairman



Well it has been a long dry period for this Covid issue and it doesn't seem that we are out of the woods yet. I trust that everyone is taking advantage of our hobby to make the best of it. I know that my and Sandy's layout expansion program has been moving along pretty well and we are quite a bit ahead of our original schedule. In any case the lack of conventions and meets has reduced the number of contests and AP evaluations so the activity in the Achievement Program has been limited. Since the last issuer of the Order Board we have had a couple of our members qualify of their Golden Spike awards. Congratulations to Mike Allee and my girl Sandy Butts for completing the requirements for the award. The Golden Spike award requirements are such that they lend themselves fairly well to remote evaluation via. electronic and or photo submissions. Both of these members evaluations were approved by our Cajon Division Per Harwe. Per is familiar with both of these members work and along with comprehensive photos and explanations felt comfortable signing as witness for the qualification forms.

If you think you are getting close to qualifying for the Golden Spike take a look at the requirements which can be found on the NMRA web site or contact me to discuss your progress. There is no requirement for a quality evaluation so the requirements can be verified somewhat remotely during these trying times. Basically, to qualify you need to construct, with scenery, 8 square feet of model railroad and be able to display it. This can be as small as a 4x2 module or as large as you want. There is a requirement to be able to operate two trains simultaneously on the layout so a passing siding or some such qualifies. You must display 5 units of rolling stock that are either detailed commercial or craftsman kits. Ready-to-run models do not qualify unless you disassemble them, paint weather and super-detail them. The point is to show that you have done some modeling, so paint, decals, grab irons, brake details, etc. would bring a commercial kit or R-T-R model up to qualification standards. You need to lay three "different" types of track. This means just not straight track. It can be commercial track and three turnouts will qualify. Crossings, crossovers, grade crossings, etc. all qualify. Lastly, you must show some type of electrical installation. Light up a building or put a switch motor on one of your turnouts and you are good to go.

The award not only comes with a nice Certificate to hang above your model work bench but you also get a golden spike lapel pin and a mounted full-scale spike with your name engraved on the plaque. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact myself, Carl Heimberger (Region AP manager) or any NMRA Master Model Railroader for answers.

Meanwhile, keep on modeling and plan on bringing your models to our next allowable meet, whenever that might be. I am hoping that we can get together this October for a safe meet or maybe an outdoor swap meet in Buena Park. It may not be able to happen so we may not be able to get together until next year depending on how this virus plays out.

Stay Safe and I look forward to seeing you and your models soon.

# Cajon Division- NMRA

## Fall-2020

Saturday  
October 24th



7:00 AM

### COVID SENSITIVE MEET

**Activities will be outside under cover or in large rooms with social distancing!**

**\*\*\*\*\*Masks and Social Distancing Required\*\*\*\*\***

### Schedule

Registration Opens: 7am

Swap Meet Setup: 7am

Contest Room Open: 7:15am to 8:30am

Swap Meet: 8am to 10 am

General Membership Meeting and Awards Ceremony: 10:15am

Modelers - Show & Tell: 11am to Noon

Hobo Auction: Noon to 1:00pm

### TARIFF

#### Event Registration

NMRA Member: \$10.00

Non-Members/Guest: \$15.00

18 and Under *with Adult*: FREE

#### Registration Tariff includes:

1 Door Prize Raffle Ticket: Four Great Prizes

1 6-foot Table Allowed

(Bring your own table, chair, pop-up)

Add'l Space \$5 each

Water, Soda, Snacks included

**MODELS:** Bring a model for contest, AP judging or Show & Tell and receive 1 (one) sheet of Hobo

**Messiah Lutheran Church  
Parking Lot and Courtyard  
6625 Dale St, Buena Park**

**Near the 5 and 91  
Free parking**

## **2021 PSR/NMRA Convention “Orange Blossom Special”**

As you may be aware the 2020 PSR Convention had to be canceled due to the corona virus. However, the 2021 PSR Convention committee is offering a special discount rate for full fare to the 2021 PSR Convention of just \$105. This will include the Wednesday night Welcome Reception, Thursday General Membership Meeting with continental breakfast, Contest Room, Hobo Auction, Saturday Swap Meet and the Awards Banquet. This offer is however only good until September 30, 2020, after that the price will increase to \$125. To take advantage of this special offer go to the 2021 PSR Convention web site;

[psrconvention.org/OrangeBlossomSpecial2021](http://psrconvention.org/OrangeBlossomSpecial2021).

Many activities for the 2021 convention have already been planned we have 28 rail clinics and 3 non-rail clinics already. And we are working on several options for rail and non-rail prototype tours. Four layouts to tour and 2 layout for Op's have already secured and we are working on more. In addition, we have several really nice raffle items already secured.

The convention hotel is the Hilton Irvine/Orange County Airport Hotel located just across the street from the airport, 18800 MacArthur Blvd, Irvine. Room rate is \$125 and includes FREE parking and wireless internet also includes is a 20% discount on all hotel meals at onsite restaurants.

We hope you will join us for some fun filled days next year with the chance to meet up with old friends, make new ones and to just enjoy some great model railroading.

Carl Heimberger

2021 PSR/NMRA Convention Chair

## CELEBRATION OF MODELING by Mike Allee

Many of us have been enjoying our hobby a great deal in the last few months to a point boredom has set in. Yet, we've had the opportunity to go to that shelf and pull something off of it that has had the tag "Get Around To It" for some time. Just before COVID-19 changed our lives the module club I belong to had agreed to participate in two shows the same weekend. To fulfill commitments two modules needed to be built a small one foot long module to connect modules that didn't have the same track arrangement, a simple task. The other was to build a ninety degree corner. During my high school teaching career I sponsored railroad club which I provided the corners modules the kids built. They've been stored for many years still in their plywood two track NMRA standards state. I've built many rail cars, structures, installed decoders, and built modules, but haven't tried vegetation or geology sense I was in high school.

The Cajon Board has been grappling with increasing the model display participation in the contest room at our meetings and increase interest in the Achievement Program. As Contest Chair I was assigned the task of forming a committee and bringing to the board possible ways to increase participation and interest in the Achievement Program. The result has been the creation of a number of awards. The exact details haven't been completed but will be introduced and awarded at the October meeting in Baldwin Park. The additional awards will be given to first time entries in a judged category.

There are two ways a model can be displayed; as a "Display Model", not to be evaluated nor available for the additional awards and entered in to "to be judged category", the Achievement Program were Merit Awards are given. Evaluators use a set of NMRA guidelines to determine if the model meets or exceeds the criteria. (The guidelines can be reviewed on the NMRA website.) A display model is part of the popular vote.

As the Contest Chair I've focused my attention on checking in models, security of the models, assuring judges had clear and easy to follow NMRA guidelines, record results, presenting awards, and informing the Achievement Program Chair of models that have received merit status. In preparing for the committee meeting I read the NMRA Achievement Program materials and came across the "Golden Spike" award. I'd always thought it was an award given to someone who had completed the track work to a layout. Far from it. It is the NMRA's way of introducing/encourage members to participate in the Achievement Program. With very little effort. The following has been copied from the NMRA website and reconfigured in the interest of space.

### **GOLDEN SPIKE (taken from the NMRA website)**

The Golden Spike is the easiest, and for many people, the first AP award that they earn. It is designed to demonstrate familiarity with different areas of the hobby, rather than expertise in a particular area. So take a look at the requirements - you may find that you have met most, or all of them already.

Here's the [Golden Spike Award Application Form](#) . Use it as a checklist, you may surprise yourself.

#### Rolling Stock (Motive Power & Cars)

Display six (6) units of rolling stock (Scratch built, craftsman, or detailed commercial kits). Notice that the requirement is to "display" them. Nowhere does it say that they must earn a minimum number of points in judging - just that they must be displayed. ( In the monthly contests at your division meetings, for example. Even having them set out on your layout, or a table in your basement counts as "display").

These models need to show a little more effort than a "shake the box" kit. For example, by itself a freight car kit straight out of the box, is not enough to qualify. However, by painting and decaling it, adding a little detailing, perhaps some weathering, etc., you'll have a qualifying model in no time!

#### Model Railroad Setting (Structures & Scenery)

Construct a minimum of eight (8) square feet of layout. Again, there is no requirement about how good or how elaborate your layout must be - just that you must "construct" it. On the other hand, you may have trouble convincing someone that a loop of track nailed to a piece of green painted wood constitutes a "layout" . . . How much is 8 square feet of layout? Well, a typical module is 4 feet by 2 feet, and would easily satisfy this requirement.

Construct five (5) structures (scratch built, craftsman, or detailed and commercial kits). These structures may be separate, or one or more of them may be part of a single scene. The same comments apply here about the type of kits. The idea is to show that you can do more than glue a simple plastic kit together. Painting or weathering are good things to consider. Remember that "structures" aren't just buildings. Things like bridges and trestles also fall into this category.

#### Engineering (Civil & Electrical)

Three (3) types of trackage are required (turnout, crossing, etc.). All must be properly ballasted and installed on proper roadbed. Commercial trackage may be used. This requirement sounds a lot harder than it is. First, notice that last sentence about commercial trackage; you don't have to hand-lay anything - you can just install a store bought turnout. "Types of trackage" can be just about anything: turnouts, crossings, and grade elevation (a change in elevation of the track) are all examples of "types of trackage". Also, note that the three types DO NOT have to be different. For example, just having three simple turnouts will qualify. The "proper roadbed" requirement can be met by laying the track on a raised roadbed, ( such as cork ) and ballasting it. The purpose of this requirement is to show that you understand roadbed profile, drainage, etc.

All installed trackage must be properly wired so that two trains can be operated simultaneously (Double-track main, single-track main with sidings, block or command control, etc.). This requirement can also be easier than it sounds. Notice the option for a single track main with sidings. This means that as long as you can cut power to the sidings individually, you can run one train, park it on a siding while you run another, then park it and run the first again. This meets the requirement.

Provide one additional electrical feature such as powered turnouts, signaling, turnout indication, lighted buildings, etc. Don't read more into this than is there. A powered turnout can be something as simple as an Atlas turnout with a switch machine. Think in terms of anything that runs off the 'Accessories' terminals of a power pack and you're half way there.

One other thing to remember: Not all of these requirements need to be met on the same layout (or piece of layout). They don't even need to be met in the same scale! If you want to build G scale rolling stock, an N scale Model Railroad setting, and an HO scale layout for trackage and wiring, go ahead.

Also, the Golden Spike, as well as the other parts of the AP have a certain amount of flexibility. For example, suppose you and your (friend / spouse / child) work together on all your projects, but do twice the required amount (12+ units of rolling stock, 16+ square feet of layout, 10+ structures, etc.). You can both be considered, as long as you can show that you have each demonstrated the required skills.

As you have read it is rather easy to acquire your first merit award in one of three categories. I've had no intention of taking the time or make the effort to receive merit awards or attain the recognition as a Master Model Railroader (MMR). By building twelve feet of an industrial scene module to participate in activities in the module club I belong to I qualify for two of the above, Model Railroad Setting and Engineering. I wanted an SP Over Night train so I bought unsold Athearn Blue Box from PSR divisions that didn't sell at conventions they sponsored, twenty-five in all. These white plastic kits were built, painted, decaled, Kadee couplers, steel wheels and axles, and weathered. This project fulfills the Rolling Stock requirement. If I can do it I'm sure you can. I suspect many of you have all ready accomplished the task. Fill out the paperwork (name, address, check the appropriate box(es) and a couple of signatures). You'd be on your way to an MMR behind your name or if that seems more than you're ready to tackle presently a nice plaque on the wall with your Golden Spike Award would be neat.

See you in the contest room.

Mike Allee



## Extra Time and the Achievement Program

by Morrie Fleishman

The Covid-19 virus has given many of us a lot of extra time at home with minimal social interaction. So, how can we make use of this time? My suggestion is to look at the NMRA Achievement Program. This program can lead to becoming a Master Model Railroader (MMR). While some modelers enjoy the challenge of working on certificates and such, others say that “this is a hobby” and because this is a hobby many of us don’t want to deal with paperwork and evaluations, etc. Their view is that Model Railroading is for fun, fellowship and enjoyment. Let me suggest another way of using the program that can lead to enhanced enjoyment whichever viewpoint one has.

From time to time, we all need a challenge and the Achievement program can provide that challenge. There are eleven categories in which one can earn a certificate. To earn an MMR, you need to earn seven of the eleven certificates. Two of those involve volunteering, while the remaining nine relate to demonstrating skills of the hobby.

When we read model magazines, we marvel at the skills displayed and the information supplied for us to use. But, do we really make use of the material available? If you have built a module or layout, then you have demonstrated some of the skills required for the certificates. My suggestion is to take one of the certificates and use it to expand and improve your skills just by working on that certificate. Maybe even earning it.

For example, look at the structures certificate. Most of us have built kits right out of the box, and they usually end up looking the same on each other’s layout. So, what can we do to make our structures unique? To earn the Merit points needed to get the certificate, you may have to kit bash or rearrange parts of the building. How about adding details to the roof, like vents and HVAC units? What about adding drainpipes, a water spigot, and an electrical fuse box? You can add a streetlight and maybe a power or telephone pole as part of the front sidewalk. You can also add trash cans and a fire plug on the sidewalk in the front. I have not even started to discuss window detail options, and interior items that can be added. The point is that in looking to meet the requirements you are now looking at the structure in a totally different way and viewpoint. This requires you to develop new skills and change your construction process. While the project will take longer to complete when done it will look unique, totally yours, and be worthy of a merit point evaluation.

Another certificate is dispatcher. This involves learning how to understand and operate a model railroad complete with schedules, moving cars from yards to industrial locations, etc. When I first reviewed the requirements, I was totally overwhelmed. However, I started attending operating sessions at other layouts, which led to my making modifications to my layout and hosting operating sessions. Now, I am just a few hours and some paperwork short of earning this certificate. The best part is that I really enjoy operations.

Deciding to work on Achievement certificates and go for the MMR is a personal decision. However, even if achieving the certificates doesn’t interest you, using the achievement requirements as a guide can lead you to try different aspects of the hobby and create additional areas of interest and enjoyment now and for the future.

## On Operations #4 – Getting the Layout Ready for Operations – The Physical Plant by Joel Morse

Creating an “operating” model railroad requires a combination of deep thought, analysis, research and effort to get you to the point where you can move traffic across your railroad in a purposeful manner. How much time and energy you put into the effort is up to you, but if you enjoy operations, the effort will be worthwhile.

For the purpose of this series, I’m going to have to ignore the entire subject of “designing your railroad for operations”, meaning the actual track planning, “givens and is both too broad to cover here, but the individual answers each modeler reviewed in Part 2, “Getting Start-ume 48 Number 1). Innumerable written on the subject of track plan-design: a few that are in my library: *For Realistic Operation*” and along with Tony Koester’s “Realistic “Realistic Model Railroad Building and magazine articles that can pro-



you can build and modify (my first layout was from the Atlas publica- tion called “Nine N-Scale Model Railroads” and I built the Atlantic Long-haul layout with my Dad). But when it comes down to de- signing your “dream” layout, the truth of the matter is that nothing beats one or two fellow model railroaders who know as much or more, about the subject than you do. There are many gents like this in the Cajon Division, including me, who would be happy to assist you with your layout design effort. Therefore, I am going to assume that you have designed and built your layout; if you are still in the planning stage, you will be able to “plan ahead” to address these concepts in your new layout, if you have a layout, mod- ifications can be made to make it more operationally oriented and to increase the play value.

Getting the layout ready for operations really breaks down into to four major categories of work efforts: 1) preparing the physical plant of the railroad; 2) determining the types of trains and their purposes; 3) creating the traffic management system materials; and 4) identifying the crew positions needed to make the railroad come to life. This installment focuses on the getting the Physical Plant of the layout ready to go.

### Preparing the Physical Plant:

Well regarded operating layouts and ones that are fun to operate on all share at least one key characteristic: the track work is carefully installed and locomotives and rolling stock run nearly flawlessly. This means that derailments are eliminated, track and locomotive wheels are clean, locomotives run without stalling (especially on turnouts), couplers stay coupled when they are supposed to and can be uncoupled efficiently when required. Hundreds of articles have been written (as well as videos produced to help you create flawless trackwork and get your locomotives and rolling stock running smoothly. So, I’m not going to talk about those things, instead, I’m going to focus on three components of the layouts’ physical plant that will improve operations that are not as obvious as good track, but just as important in the end.

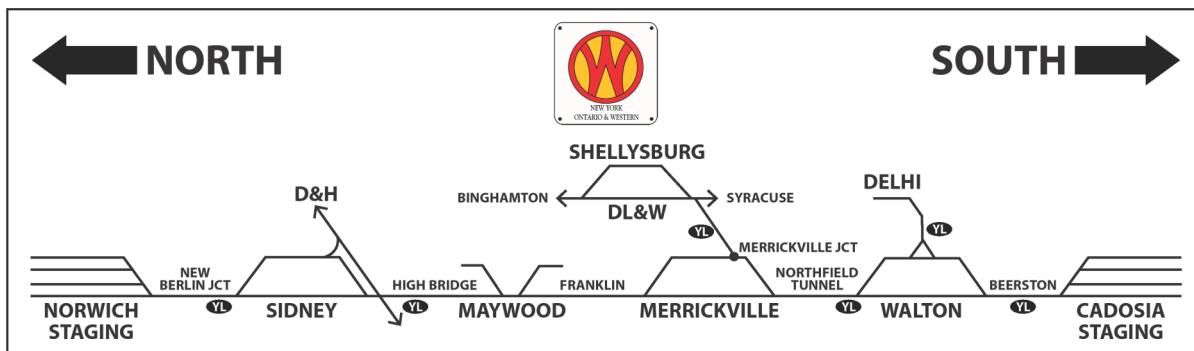
**Frogs:** Powering the turnout frogs for operating railroads (especially anywhere switching will take place) might be the most critical component (next to eliminating derailments) of ensuring an enjoyable operating session. If you automate your turnouts the motors generally provide a simple way to do this. If you hand throw your turnouts (which I believe is a better approach for yard work and switching), you should not rely on power to be provided only from the point rails, especially in N Scale. For my first couple of sessions, I relied on point rail power (and soldered jumpers from the point rails to the closure rails) and still had stalling of the short wheel-base switchers (GE-44 tonners and NW-2s). Before the next session, I installed Frog Juicers on all turnouts; this was a critical improvement to the enjoyment and efficiency of every operating session that followed. If the trains don’t run well every operating session, crews are frustrated, and anything else you do is reduced in play value.

**Couplers:** Getting the coupling and uncoupling right is also key; you don’t want the couplers to part when pulling up a grade, going around a curve or when backing up a string of cars for a switching move. The key to this is to ensure that all couplers are at the proper height and if possible, minimize the types of couplers you are using to one or two (ideally one) “standard” coupler manufac-

turer(s). And install those couplers on all the cars and locomotives in your fleet. When considering standardizing couplers, one question that often comes up is whether couplers should be body mounted or truck mounted. In my mind, there are only two operational considerations related to the benefits of using truck or body mounted couplers: whether you are running long trains and whether you have tight curves on your railroad. Body mounts are much more reliable when pushing and pulling long strings of cars during switching. Backing up (pushing) long trains with truck mounted couplers is asking for trouble. But that benefit of body mounts is lost for short trains on good track work. On the other hand, if you have tight curves, truck mounted couplers will improve performance by allowing the cars to move through tighter curves than body mounts, without stress on the coupler pocket. This is benefit is especially true on longer freight cars (60') and typical length passenger cars on less than sweeping curves.

**Naming locations on the layout:** Prototypical railroads name everything and every place; every turnout, road crossing, yard track, every customer and customer spot: if it might need to be referred to while working the railroad, it has a distinct name. To ensure smooth and efficient operations, your operating model railroad needs to follow this practice, and have as many locations and feature named and labeled as possible. Doing so will assist train crews in knowing where they are in relation to a schedule or to allow them to identify their location to the Dispatcher. And it will enable the Dispatcher, Agent or Yardmaster to provide accurate instructions to a train crew. This name might only consist of an alpha-numeric designator like a Control Point – CP 202 or a name and number – Bridge 28, or a full name, Merrickville Junction. As the layout owner, you probably have all these locations in your head and your regular crew may be able to get along by saying “the middle track”, but a new operator won’t have a clue. The goal here is to make the layout easier to operate for all crew members, improve the efficiency of all crew communication with the Dispatcher, Agent or Yardmaster, remove a potential source of frustration, and increase realism by providing names for both the prominent and mundane locations on the railroad.

*In order to improve communication on my layout, in addition to naming everything, I have a 36 x 48 inches NYOW schematic hanging in a visible location in the train room so all crews, the Dispatcher and Yardmaster can see and refer to it. A smaller version of the schematic is also located on the Fascia at all towns for crew reference.*



#### **NYOW Schematic: Overhead and Fascia Mounted**

This schematic provides the place names for all locations on the layout where the crew might need to OS (report) their location or a location that the Dispatcher might use on a written or verbal track warrant to provide trackage rights. If you look carefully, there are a number of levels of information on this schematic: the **BOLD ALL-CAPS** place names are the visible towns and staging; the ALL-CAPS non-bold locations are additional “Blocks”, which the Dispatcher uses to more finely control the movement of trains between the towns. And finally, the small “YL” in a black oval identifies Yard Limits, which tells the road crew that they need to contact the Yardmaster to proceed any further.

But a hanging schematic or fascia mounted schematic at a town can only provide so much detail because of size and readability. In many locations on the railroad, additional levels of detail are required to help crews navigate efficiently around the railroad. And provide locations for the Dispatcher to use to provide instructions to the crews. In the picture below, note that the on the fascia mounted schematic, there is a red “you are here” dot on the map at Merrickville, and the very specific railroad location is “Merrickville Junction” as indicated by the sign on the fascia. Merrickville and Merrickville Junction are very busy locations on the NYOW. Merrickville Junction is where the DL&W connects to NYOW, and trains crews must contact the Dis-

patcher when arriving at this location to leave NYOW territory and enter the DL&W or leave the DL&W and enter the NYOW territory. There are three customers in Merrickville proper, as well as the junction with the DL&W. The Dispatcher will often have one train in the siding, one train passing on the main and another ready to enter the NYOW from the DL&W.

In addition to the fascia mounted information, I also label each track between the ties. The picture below is the same location, Merrickville Junction, but looking down on the trackwork. (Unfortunately, the label for the Siding is a not readable.) Notice the change in ballast and tie color on the DL&W.



*NYOW Schematic: Overhead and Fascia Mounted*

At Merrickville and other locations, a detailed fascia track



map focused on this location with track names and customer names could do double duty by assisting crews in identifying their location, as well as identifying customer spur tracks and specific car locations on the spurs. By providing labeling of the individual tracks and providing customer names on the structures, almost the same result is accomplished on the NYOW.

*Merrickville Junction Track Labels* →

Working the first time as Yardmaster in an unfamiliar yard, whether large or small, with inadequate labeling is a frustrating experience for the Yardmaster, and dangerous for the overall operation of the railroad. Having clear information about each and every track in the yard is critical for a first-time Yardmaster to get up to speed quickly and keep the traffic moving.

On the NYOW we have the relatively small Walton Yard that moves a lot of traffic and is critical to the smooth operation of the layout. If the Walton Yard gets bogged down, the layout can grind to a halt, so it is important to help the Yardmaster be as efficient as possible. It is so critical that we assign both a Yardmaster and Assistant Yardmaster/Hostler to the yard. Labeling the tracks and hand throwing yard turnouts avoids the need to get familiar with a complicated control panel or find buttons that correspond to the correct turnout on the fascia. I have operated in “automated” yards where I have spent as much intellectual energy trying to see or remember which button controls which turnout, as I did to figure out the next car movement. This slows down the yard work, immeasurably, and when the pressure is on, it can lead to a stressed out Yardmaster!

Labeling the yard tracks themselves also improves the communication between the Yardmaster and Assistant Yardmaster: “Please use Track 3 for Sidney bound traffic”; or between Yardmaster and Dispatcher: “Please have train NYOW 803 South hold at the North Yard Switch” or between the Yardmaster and Road Crews: “Please come into the yard on the A/D track”. Without track labeling, imagine how less clear these conversations would have been!

In addition to labeling key locations, yard limits, yard tracks, and customer spurs, it’s a good idea to label the customer structures themselves, either with readable signs as part of the modeled structure, or as shown here, with cardstock signs on the roofs or on the ground (for the team track). An additional level of labeling would be appropriate if you want to have road crews switch customer traffic to specific loading doors.



*Yard Tracks, Classification Tracks Clearly Labeled*



If you have questions about operations, please feel free to ask those questions on the Cajon Division Facebook page, or Cajon Division/PSR IO

website: [CajonDivisionPSRGroup@groups.io](mailto:CajonDivisionPSRGroup@groups.io) . Or email me at [Superintendent@cajondivision.org](mailto:Superintendent@cajondivision.org) (your question and my response will be posted on the above referenced websites so the entire membership can learn from it).

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