

National Model Railroad Association North Central Region  
**Division 2 Newsletter**

Volume 11 No 4 Winter 2025



The annual CPKC Holiday Train makes its way past the Michigan Central Station, in Detroit, November 25, 2024.  
Permission to use photo granted by the Detroit News.  
Photo by David Guralnick, The Detroit News.



Somewhere in Chicago

**Happy Holidays to All**

# Division Meetings

**3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday (or as noted) of each Month**

The meetings will continue to be live and virtual via zoom. Meetings are from September through May (We take some time off for the Summer).

Our meeting location is the Foster Family Community Health Center, at 550 Munson Avenue, on the East side of town. Enter the north entrance (under the canopy) and proceed down the left-hand corridor. Near the end, on the right-hand side, you will come to Conference Room A. (or join us on Zoom). The meeting will start at 10:00 AM.

We now also have the option to host meetings in Gaylord. Details to follow.

Invitations and other details will be sent to Division members by email the week prior to the meeting. Following Division business and member Show and Tell, we will have a presentation (TBD).

## From the Editor – Jens Hensel

Our past Newsletters on our website are now searchable.

Thanks Paul!

This allows you to find past articles from the archived Newsletters easier. Try it out!

Send your photos (JPEG) and articles (MS Word) to us for our future newsletters. Our goal is to publish quarterly in March, June, September, and December. The deadline for submittals will be at the end of the month prior to each quarter.

This newsletter relies on articles and photos that we receive from **you**, our members. Have a favorite structure, loco or railroad? Share it with us. Thank you to all of you who have contributed to this newsletter.

### Crew Call:

- 12-20-2025  
Division Meeting – Live & Zoom 10:00 – 1:00
- 1-17-2026  
Division Meeting – Live & Zoom 10:00 -1:00
- 2-21-2026  
Division meeting – Live & Zoom 10:00 – 1:00
- 5-16 & 17 -2026  
Traverse City Area Model RR  
Open House

Watch for the Division Meeting Invites via Email

### On the Switch List:

	Page
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**All Aboard,**  
**Jens Hensel**  
[super@div2.ncrnmra.org](mailto:super@div2.ncrnmra.org)  
**Superintendent & Newsletter**  
**Editor**



## Super Sez... by Jens Hensel

The white stuff from above has arrived which means that you should have more time to spend on you know what. Unless you are a skier, ice skater, snow boarder, really like shoveling snow, or love other winter outdoor activities, you should head “downstairs” and get to modeling.

Survey. If you have not completed the Survey yet, please spend a few minutes and complete it prior to Dec 15. We would like to review the survey results with you at our next Division Meeting on Dec. 20. <https://div2.ncrnmra.org/2025-2026-division-2-member-survey/>

Please join us on Dec 20 for another great clinic. This one is from Doug Tagsold from Division 1 who will present (in person) his “Terminal of Toledo RR” to us. I heard that this Railroad is very nice, so you should not miss this meeting.

We will also have a little Social Gathering after our meeting. Soft Drinks, Sandwiches, and Sweets to celebrate the end of the year. Won't you join us?

Our Jan. 2026 Clinic will be presented by Dr. Jim Gore (MMR from New Hampshire) on making Paper Models. Mike Hauk will be presenting a "Static Grass" clinic at our February 21, 2026, meeting, most likely via Zoom.

More great clinics to follow.

Save the Date:

We are planning a May 16-17 Traverse City Area Model RR Open House. May 16 is set aside for NMRA members and their families only. May 17 will be a public event by Invitation only. A total of 6 Railroads have committed to hosting this event. More Information to follow.

Our Web Site is up and running with a lot of good content. Past Clinic Videos and PowerPoints are loaded. Take a look, in case you missed any of our past meetings. (See our Webmaster's report below)

**Happy Modeling,  
Jens**

# Division News

## Assistant Superintendent News by Paul Anderson

As reported in the November division meeting, I've been looking into the new NMRA branding. Since that meeting, I've done more work to adopt the new NMRA branding.

The overall rollout of region branding is supposed to be in January. I've been in touch with the Region webmaster Marshall Stull, (I'm his backup) and PR dude (Barry Hensel) and discovered that the region has done very little regarding the rebranding. That's not fatal, since they have less to do, with the primary change being the removal of the NCR Region logos and replacing them with the new NMRA Region *lockup* (logo term used by the branding firm that the NMRA hired).

The division branding rollout is supposed to be done in April, and we're well ahead of the game. I've already made a few adjustments to the *Tip of the Mitt* logo to mesh nicely into the new branding options. The new NMRA branding includes a color palette that we can choose from, and we'll need to do that during the December meeting. I plan to have a few mockups in place to show off at that time. The new NMRA branding also includes typography requirements; so, we'll want to download the required fonts and start using them on both the website and the newsletter. I expect to have the group decisions out of the way during the December meeting and start implementation on the website after that. The spring Newsletter will need to start using the new branding and color scheme.

## Quarterly Board Meetings by Jens Hensel

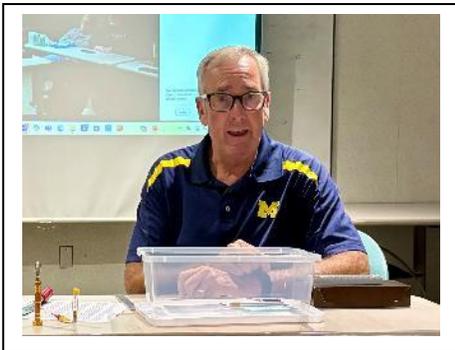
Please see the Board meeting minutes which are posted on our website. This last meeting was held directly following the Division Meeting on Sep 20, 2025. Our next quarterly Board Meeting will be on December 20 just prior to our Division Meeting and end of the year Party.

## Clinics - Yardmaster News

Here is a quick summary of our past Division Meeting and Clinics:  
Please see the past clinic and show and tell information (starting with the Sep. 2025 meeting) on our Website. <https://div2.ncnmra.org>.  
This includes Write-ups, Videos, and PowerPoint Presentations.

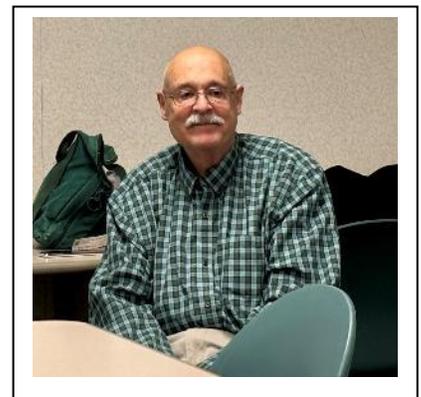
09/20/2025

Number of Participants – 15 in person, 6 on Zoom.  
Our Clinician was our own David Zolnierek – Making Aspen/Poplar Trees



10/18/2025

Number of Participants – 13 in person, 4 on Zoom.  
Our Clinician was our own T.J. Stratton – Building Resin Gondola Cars



11/15/2025

Number of Participants – 15 in person, 5 on Zoom.  
Our Clinician was our NCR President Rich Mahaney – 5 Busy Locations on your Railroad

If you are interested in giving a talk or clinic to the group, please let us know. Please contact T.J. Stratton [michigancentralrr@hotmail.com](mailto:michigancentralrr@hotmail.com) or Michael McDougall at [michaelcoquy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:michaelcoquy@sbcglobal.net).  
Clinics can be hosted in Traverse City or Gaylord.

# Website News by Paul Anderson

Our website is live – <https://div2.ncrnmra.org>.

After falling behind on webmaster duties in September, November finds the site completely caught up with all the pending content posted and available. With the transition of existing content from pages to posts, our website is now effectively a web log, or *blog* for short. The following are the major recent accomplishments with the website:

- Every new post to the website sends an email to all the members of the division (ones *with* an email address), with a few additional hand-chosen email addresses for interested parties included. We refer to this list of email addresses as our *subscribers*.
- All meeting invitations are posted to the website, so everybody gets a corresponding alert email.
- We've established a new monthly meeting *template* on Zoom that captures all our desired configuration settings, so every meeting behaves consistently. The important Zoom features that we've started to leverage are:
  - Using the Zoom AI to automatically summarize the meeting based on the transcript of speakers. This summary is the basis for new post-meeting summary posts,
  - Using Zoom to capture the video of our meetings. We use this video to capture interesting snippets (clinics, show and tell, awards) for inclusion on the website.
- We now have a [Tip of the Mitt](#) channel on YouTube. That's where we now post videos that we gather from meetings, or any other video content that we collect. The strategy is to use YouTube to host our video content and then embed that video content on our division website.
- All the existing pages for model railroad layouts have been converted to posts and distributed to the website subscribers.
- We've added a PDF search indexing plugin (Search WP) to our website so the content in all our newsletter PDFs are now searchable on the website. Unfortunately, this plugin, which only cost us \$79 for the first year, will cost \$199 per year starting next fall. Consequently, we need to engage in an effort to start using posts for our Newsletter (instead of PDFs) and convert our history of PDF newsletters to posts so they can be usable going forward. We effectively have a year to complete conversion of the old PDFs.
- I've got a plan in place to adopt the new NMRA branding on the website (see the Assistant Superintendent's report).

# Chief Clerk's Report

## Membership Information from Keith Aleo

[keith.aleo@interlochen.org](mailto:keith.aleo@interlochen.org)

You should have received a short survey asking how we can improve as a division. Thank you to all who have submitted your responses so far. We are sorting and reviewing the results. They will be published on our website prior to Dec. 20 and reviewed with you at our Dec 20 meeting.

If you have not completed the Survey yet, please spend a few minutes and complete it prior to Dec 15. <https://div2.ncnmra.org/2025-2026-division-2-member-survey/>

**We have 42 Active Members**



# Paymaster's Report

## North Central Region NMRA Division 2

### Financial Information

From David J. Zolnierek

[treasurer@div2.ncrnmra.org](mailto:treasurer@div2.ncrnmra.org)

As of Oct 31, 2025

• Regular Share Deposits-e-bonus, donations, div.	\$0.50
• Regular Share (Savings) - ending Balance	\$873.77
• Checking Account- Deposits for the year	\$49.00
• Checking Account Balance - Total for the year	\$1,474.52
• Withdrawals - Total for the year	\$165.29
• Ending Balance in Account as of Oct 31,2025	\$2,348.29



# Around the Division

## Modeling the Equipment, Freight Station and Logging Forests of the Drake Lumber Company, circa 1910.

### Part 3 - The Princeton Station, Drake Lumber Companies "A Frame" Skidder, and Forney locomotive by Keith Aleo

After finishing the Pine Rockland forest palms and Dade county pine trees, I moved on to the Princeton Station, steam donkey and locomotive.

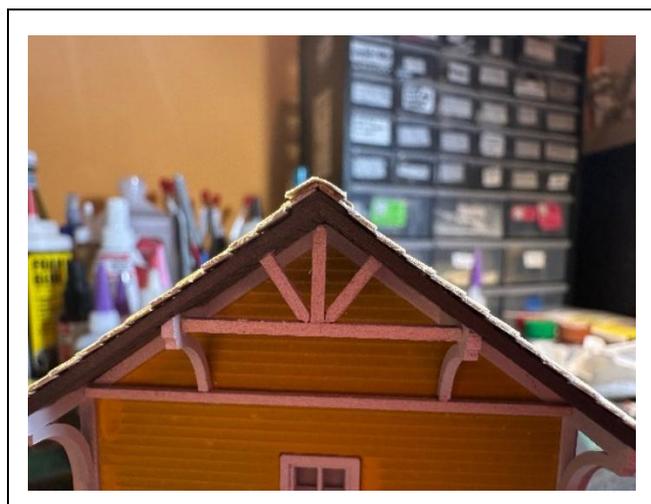
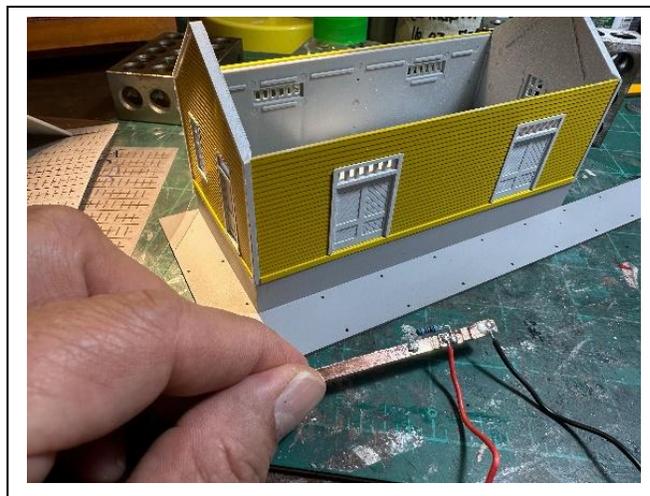
My first step was the Princeton freight station. The first challenge was being able to model this station fairly accurately within my limits as a beginning model railroader. Fortunately, I was able to find a kit that was very close to the look and size of the prototype station. Although the station plans are available, I wasn't ready to jump in, and scratch build this station.

The modeling began with a Walthers Cornerstone Series kit called the "Golden Valley Freight House". This particular model was a very close match to the prototype, although I still made several adjustments to the kit. First, I altered the foundations to the loading dock from the kit to the cement supports in the prototype photo. I used simple foam core pieces to match the prototype, painted them a cement color and glued them in. Second, I added to the roof supports by adding pieces of basswood to match the prototype's more complex pattern. See photos #4 and #5 of the completed station details of the foundation and roof supports.

I painted the parts of the Walthers kit preassembly. Henry Flagler painted all his Florida East Coast buildings a particular yellow to create a "cheerful and standardized" look to all the railroad buildings. The color, now known as "Flagler Yellow" gave the railroad a unified brand identity and was also used in the Flagler hotel chain dotting Florida's east coast. The out of production Floquil Railbox Yellow is a perfect choice to match to the Flagler Yellow. It is slightly lighter than the Flagler yellow, however, paint on buildings in the hot Florida sun always lightened. I purchased Floquil paint via eBay and used an airbrush to paint the building. I used a standard off white Badger paint for the highlights, window frames, doors, etc.



I put the building together using CA glue, matching the roof shingles in the prototype with Northeastern Scale Lumber Co. HO scale shingles. I included a lighting mount area inside the building to wire gooseneck lights and interior lighting.



The next step was the steam donkey. I didn't know much about steam donkeys and had to do a little research to understand what they are and what they do. Fortunately, I was able to find a fantastic book that explained, in detail, the way in which these pieces of machinery were used. The book is titled "In Search of Steam Donkeys: Logging Equipment in Oregon" by Merv Johnson. Although the book is about Oregon Steam Donkeys and I am modeling South Florida, I can confidently assume there was continuity in their use throughout the United States.

Once again, I was not confident I could scratch build a steam donkey; but I was definitely able to find a very close match that was a great kit to build. The KMP Models kit is a craftsman kit that has a lot of detail and is challenging, but enjoyable, for my skill level. The kit is available from several online retailers. The final result was pretty spectacular, I thought. I added the boom using basswood and mounted it with "bolts" from ship building kits.



The final piece of the puzzle was the power: the locomotive. The wonderful prototype photo that was included in Part 1 of this article was an inspiration to me and I just had to have it on my layout! I found a match with the brass Ajin Forney 0-4-4T steam locomotive. I spent several months trying to find this model and was fortunate to find it at the Original Whistle Stop in Pasadena California, brand new! Like most brass models, it was DC and unpainted. Whistle Stop could not finish the painting of the model by the time this article was printed (and I don't paint brass!), but a photo of my beautiful brass model is below. Although I don't have any prototype photos of the log cars used by the Drake Lumber Company, I assume they existed and I added several Kadee log cars and a Kadee logging mini cabooses to the mix. Soon, I will have a Florida logging train pulling up to the Princeton Florida train station with my Dade County pine trees on the Pine Rocklands!

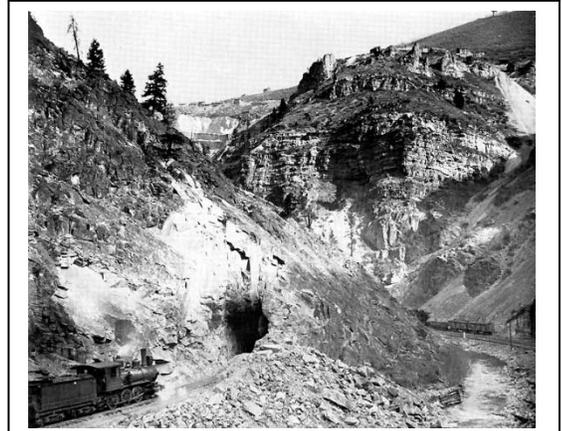
Completed photos are below.



# Around the Division

## MAKING A ROCK TUNNEL PORTAL By Bill Horning

My Rio Grande Midland Railroad is loosely based on the Denver and Rio Grande prototype between Pueblo and Grand Junction, Colorado over Tennessee Pass. Most of the scenery on the layout has been roughed in; but one of the last areas I need to work on is the west side of Tennessee pass between Red Cliff and Minturn. On the prototype there are two tunnels in the area near the Eagle Mine at Belden, but on my Rio Grande Midland I will have room for just one. The rock in this area is self-supporting, so no concrete tunnel liner is needed as opposed to my Tennessee Pass tunnel which is concrete lined. The tunnel near the Eagle Mine is blasted out of solid rock so the interior will have exposed rock faces its entire length. Here is how I made the tunnel.



**Tunnel near Eagle Mine**



**Woodland Scenics Mold**

At some time in the past one of our railroad group friends gave me a pair of Woodland Scenics C1250 Tunnner Liner Form Molds which have a rock surface in the mold. This mold is able to make both a single or double track tunnel by deleting or adding a piece at the top of the tunnel which is also part of the mold. When casts of these molds are made, they can be cut down for use in HO standard or narrow gauge and N-scale too. I used the Woodland Scenics mold as a pattern to make concrete tunnel liner molds of my own out of styrene from which I did the Tennessee Pass tunnel interior. The molds work great and produce liners with minimal flash that needs to be cut or sanded off.

In the past when making a tunnel liner, I tried to run it at least six inches inside the portal so a person can't easily see exposed benchwork or other infrastructure inside. The tunnel near Eagle Mine will be about sixteen inches long so instead of leaving a short open gap in the center I decided to model the entire tunnel length using castings from the molds. I make the castings by first painting a thin layer of dish soap on to the mold as a release agent then filling with Plaster of Paris mixed to a consistency of sour cream. I work a thin layer of the mix all over the mold, working it into the edges and valleys before filling the mold with the rest of the mix. After it sets up, about an hour later, I remove the casting then repeat the process for as many castings as are needed. The Plaster of Paris casting needs a little clean up with a knife, file, or sandpaper to true up the edges a bit.



**Plaster Casts and Molds**

The length of one casting is about  $3 \frac{7}{8}$  inches long; so I will need four castings on each side of the tunnel for a total of eight castings to make a little less than the sixteen inch tunnel length. I stood a pair of the castings upright with the sides vertically plumb as though they would be in the tunnel and measured the interior distance between at the base as  $2 \frac{3}{4}$  inches. The outer distance at the base is about  $3 \frac{1}{2}$  inches and varies depending on the thickness of the castings.

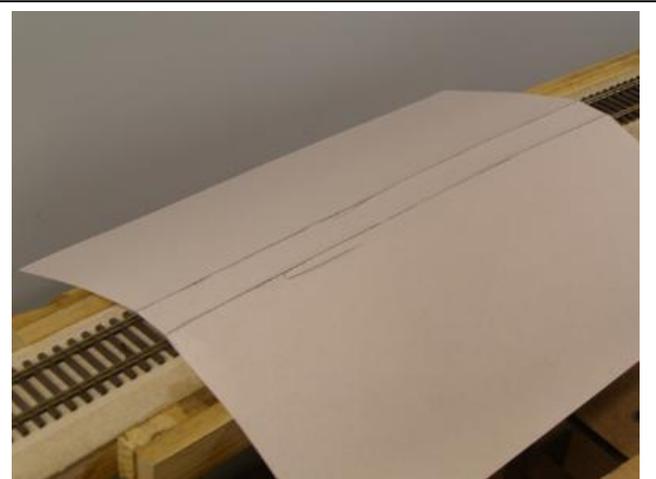
The area where the tunnel is to be placed has spline sub roadbed that is  $2 \frac{1}{2}$ " wide and on a gentle curve so I have to fur out that area to about a width of four inches. I cut four pieces of  $\frac{3}{8}$ " x  $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 18" pine, then glued two on each side of the spline



**Furring Strips Added**

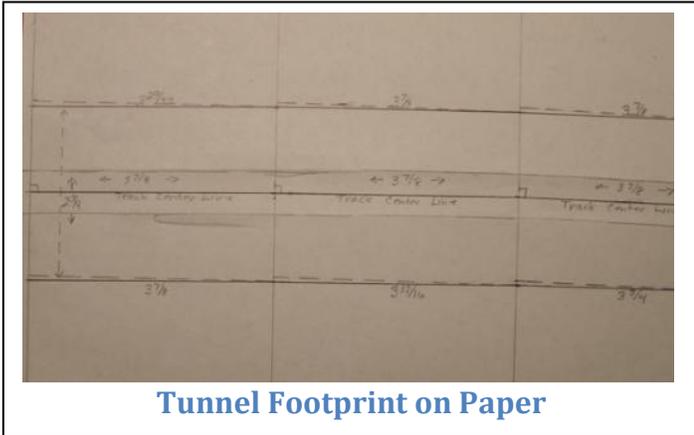
roadbed. I securely clamp the pine furring strips to match the curve of the sub roadbed keeping all as even with the sub roadbed as possible. This made a 4" wide shelf on which the tunnel will rest. To make the tunnel match the curve of the track I taped two pieces of paper together, laid this on the track, and ran a pencil over the top of both rails to trace the curve.

Back at the workbench I marked the end of the tunnel on the tracing and measured  $3 \frac{7}{8}$ " intervals along the tracing to identify where each of the castings will fall. Next, I marked the center line of the track at each of those intervals and drew segments connecting each, this identifies the center of each of the four pairs of castings. I drew a line at each of the intervals perpendicular to the track center line. Since the interior of the tunnel is  $2 \frac{3}{4}$ ", I measured  $1 \frac{3}{8}$ " from each side of center on those perpendicular lines then on each side of the tunnel. I connected those marks with segments which now show where the interior of each section of tunnel casting will lie.



**Track Tracing**

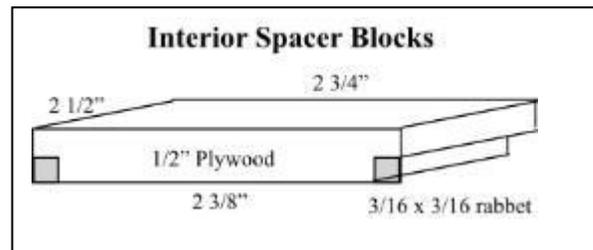
With the tunnel on a curve the inside radius of the tunnel will be slightly less than the outside radius, so I measured each of the segments on the outside and the inside and sanded the tunnel castings down to match those dimensions. On the drawing I also extended the tunnel base segments with a dashed line from one section to the next to show how there is a difference in the angle between each section along the tunnel.



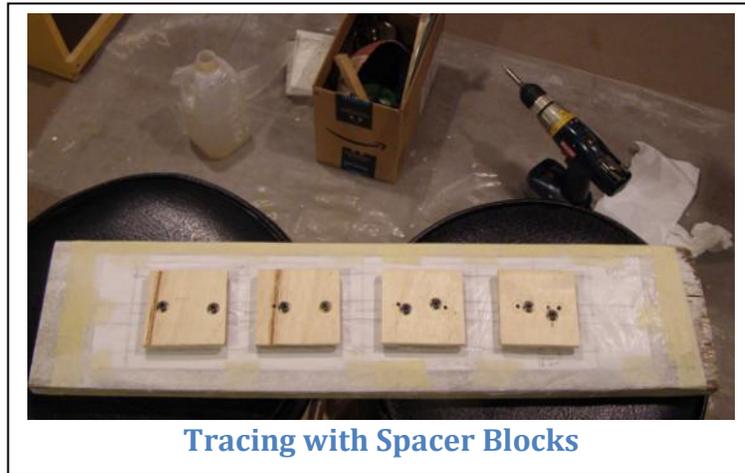
**Tunnel Footprint on Paper**

Keeping the castings at the proper interior width on the plan as pieces are glued together presents a problem. To help with this I made some spacer blocks  $2 \frac{3}{4}$ " wide out of  $\frac{1}{2}$ " scrap plywood. I didn't want to have interference with the glue joints, and the spacers so made the spacers shorter than each of the casting pieces, about  $2 \frac{1}{2}$ " long. I also didn't want to have problems with an uneven bottom edge on any of the castings causing alignment problems, so I cut a  $\frac{3}{16}$ " rabbet on the bottom edge of each

spacer as shown in the diagram. I mounted the tracing diagram sheet on a straight piece of 1 x 6 pine, covered it with wax paper. I screwed the interior spacer blocks on the tracing centered on each of the segments where the castings are to go and also centered on the track centerline with  $1 \frac{1}{4}$ " #6 drywall screws and #6 finish washers.



**Interior Spacer Blocks**

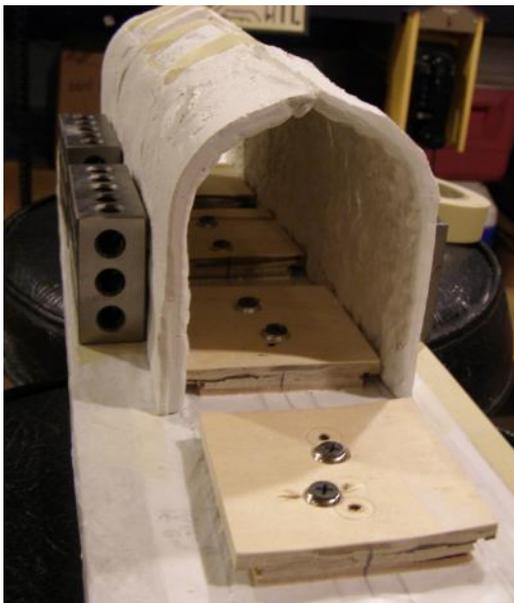


**Tracing with Spacer Blocks**

I cut and place wax paper over the spacers to protect them from any glue dripping down.

I use yellow carpenter's glue to glue each casting to its matching other half and also to each other but did not glue the bottom of the castings to the pattern as I wanted to be able to lift the completed tunnel off the tracing pattern later. I glued two castings

together at a time and placed a piece of masking tape over the top to hold them in position while the glue dried. I also placed weights on each outer side of the castings to hold them against the interior tunnel spacers.



**Assembling the Tunnel**

The glue dries fairly quickly, partly due to the dry plaster casting absorbing moisture so assembly of all four pairs of castings went smoothly. The last thing I did that evening was to apply more glue along the top joint of the castings and wiping off any excess.

The next day the glue was dry, and the tunnel was firm but still relatively fragile. I wet the tunnel with water then apply four layers of wet plaster cloth over the top and sides. Wetting the tunnel was essential so the plaster castings would not absorb all of the water from the plaster cloth weakening the application. I added more water and smoothed all of the plaster cloth to make a uniform plaster cast and bedded the cloth well into the plaster. Once dry, the tunnel will be very rigid.

After the plaster dries I carefully lifted it off the tracing pattern and spacers. Turning the tunnel over shows that on the interior the individual castings still had gaps between them. Looking down through the tunnel form, one end those gaps are not noticed except for the seam at the top.



**Plaster Gauze Applied**



**View through the Tunnel**

I wet the seams, mixed a small quantity of Plaster of Paris, and used a carving tool to apply the plaster into the seams, smoothing them out to closely resemble the rest of the tunnel interior.

Once dry, it's time for paint. There is very little light inside the tunnel; so color is not a real issue. I spray painted the interior with Rust-Oleum Primer Gray, gave it a light coat of my base scenery color, then to simulate decades of steam locos working up hill, applied Krylon Flat Black to the roof and sides of the tunnel in a few coats as needed.

Before gluing the tunnel over the track, I painted the roadbed and track Railroad Tie Brown, cleaned the rail heads thoroughly, and ballasted the track very lightly. Near each end I carry a little heavier ballast layer about four inches inside and outside of the tunnel.



**Interior Patched and Painted**



**Track Paint and Ballast**

Once I finish roughing in and coloring the scenery in this area, I will properly ballast the track, but that's a project for another time.



**Tunnel in Place Interior**



**Tunnel in Place**

Making the castings and building the tunnel near the Eagle Mine has been a good project and enjoyable. It hasn't taken long, has been fun, and I think it turned out adequately well. Once I finish roughing in the rest of the landscape the tunnel should fit nicely into the scene.

## Around the Division Growth Comments/Ideas by Walt Wyatt

I constantly hear from the NMRA leadership that we need to grow. Growth does not come from older modelers with deep pockets, it comes from the youth. You must get them interested before they pick other forms of entertainment. Most shows that are to promote our hobby are not kid friendly. You must view a layout from a distance from behind ropes. Many are too high for kids to see and parents soon get tired of holding their child up to see. The layout owners most times are more interested in their trains or each other; seldom do they engage the visitors. To grow, "the look-do not touch" mentality must end.

The pictures are of a hotel my grandson, Nick, built for my Cincinnati layout when he was 11 years old. He combined 4 old Tyco railroad hotels, a few sheets of styrene and items from my scrap box. His developing skills made the hotel look 100 years old, which just fit my needs. I added a few details when I placed it on my layout here in Hope.

It is time for older modelers to ask a youth or two to join them, not to watch but to work side by side with them. You will learn from each other and have a good time.

Just my views. Walt Wyatt professor emeritus marketing/management retired.

Nick is now a senior at Michigan Tech and has been working with a team to develop a non-detectable underwater drone for the Navy along with other manufacturing problems.

### OTHER STUFF

Mark Albert and I had a portable trolley layout in Cincinnati that we took to all the shows. So the kids could get close we put 12 inches of clear Plexiglas along the edges of the layout so they could get as close as possible to the trolleys passing by. We also had a set of steps with hand rails next to the layout so the short kids could see.

Very popular at the shows was Mark's brother's layout. It was just a loop of HO track on a cafeteria table. The train went round and round very fast. Kids loved it.

At The Cincinnati Museum Center where Carolyn and I volunteered for over 17 years, the most popular items at the Christmas display were the train the kids could ride in and a Lionel layout. That display was low and had a row of buttons the kids could press to make each train run and activate many Lionel accessories.

Time to think outside of the box.

# Around the Division

## Growth Comments/Ideas by Walt Wyatt



Building by Walt's Son Nick when he was 11



Tugboat heading up River



The ferry connects the Sweetwater RR with the Mount Healthy Trolley Line



Nick is now a Senior at Michigan Tech

# Around the Division

## Trains & Things Hobbies Closing in Traverse City

### Press Release

#### Long-time Downtown Business Announces Retirement Sale and Closure

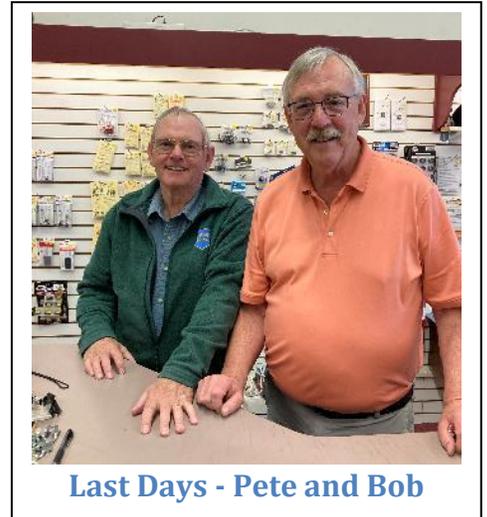
After 43 years of meeting the needs of locals and visitors alike, Trains & Things Hobbies announces it will be closing its doors permanently on September 30th. The store offers serious model railroad hobbyists, radio control flyers and even grandparents looking to entertain their families on a rainy day just the right locomotive, aircraft, rocket, plastic model or jigsaw puzzle they were looking for.

Owner Peter Magoun says the time has come to end a long, successful run of a business that has been a presence on Front Street for several decades. He says that store manager Bob Long has been a key reason the store has been viable all these years, having been an employee since 1986 – and lasting through (or working with) three owners.

The business began in 1982 when Bob and Mary Ellen Rethman opened Trains & Things in a small retail space in the alley between the Boardman River and Front Street. They moved the store up to 106 E. Front Street (now the entrance and foyer of the City Opera House) a few years later. In 1992 the Rethmans sold the business to Bruce Penney, who operated the store until 1998, when he sold it to Magoun.

In 2002 the business moved to its current location at 210 E. Front Street.

Magoun said he wants to thank everyone who supported the store over the years for their patronage and good will.



**Last Days - Pete and Bob**

# Around the Division

## Random Pictures from T.J. Stratton

Here are some photos I took in Lapeer last month. The depot was originally built by the Grand Trunk. It still serves 2 Amtrak passenger trains and many freight trains each day. The three cabooses on the property are nicely restored!



GRAND TRUNK TRAIN BULLETIN		
TRAIN NO.	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
EAST	TO	PORT HURON
364	10:32 PM	10:34 PM
THE	BLUE	WATER
WEST		
365	7:06 AM	7:08 AM
TO	TO	CHICAGO

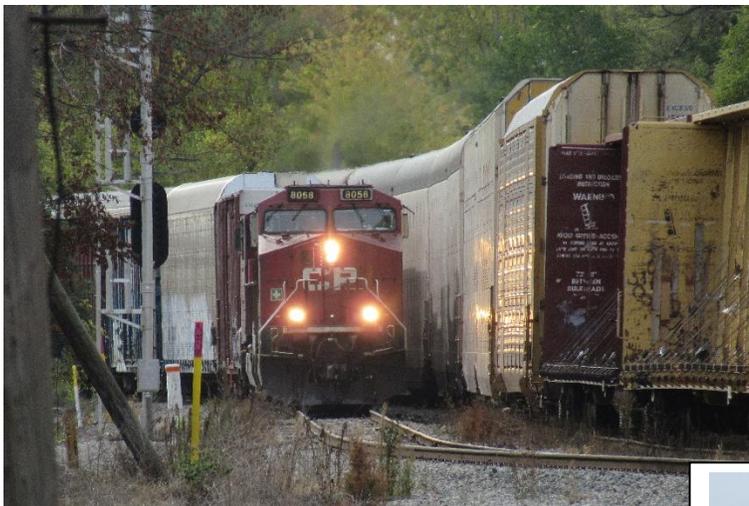


# Guest Pages

## Random Pictures from Rich Mahaney – NCR President



String of Tank Cars near Mason MI



Northbound CP Freight near Delray Tower  
South of Detroit



New Tank Cars with Corrosive Liquids near  
Delray Tower South of Detroit

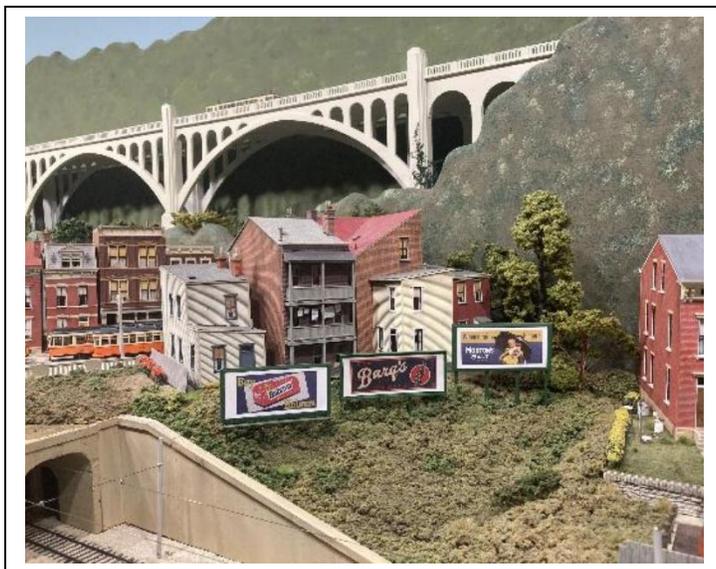
# Guest Pages

## Billboards on a Hillside

By Mark Albert (MCR Div. 7) Photos by the Author

Although many people consider today's advertising billboards to be unwelcome visual clutter, I'm often glad to have them brighten long stretches of highway driving. Similarly, on a model railroad layout, billboards put a splash of color in trackside scenery and add visual interest. They can also help establish the time period of the layout and give a scene authenticity. What's more, old-time billboards usually have a nostalgic charm that is pleasing and appealing.

I have three billboards on my HO-scale Cincinnati-themed traction layout that take advantage of all these positive values while serving other strategic purposes. They dress up an otherwise scrubby hillside and help move the viewer's eye from one interesting area to another on a higher level.



**Use billboards to enliven a layout scene with color and nostalgic appeal.**

Constructing these billboards was simple but installing them on the layout was even simpler. A project like this easily can be finished in a few evenings or over the weekend.

Here are the details. For the main display panel on two of the billboards, I used the ones from Walthers plain billboard kit (Part # 949-4250). The panel in the middle (Barq's Root Beer) is custom built using a 1¼ by 3½-inch rectangular thin plastic sheet with 1/16-inch square strip styrene for the framing. On the back of each display panel, I glued four support poles that are sections of scrap sprues left over from other plastic kits. They are

approximately 1/8 inch in diameter. Polystyrene rods could also be used (Evergreen Item No. 214). The poles are spaced about 1 inch apart.

Early in the 20th century, the outdoor advertising industry specified a particular green color for wooden billboard construction. I used Poly S forest green, which appears to be a close match. This paint is no longer available, but any deep bluish green acrylic craft paint will do.

The size of billboard panels also was covered by an industry standard as modeled in the Walthers kit, but advertisers did not always follow it. My Barq's billboard is one example. Avoiding three billboards of the same size turned out to be a small plus because the eye finds subtle variety a pleasing effect. Note that on the layout, the billboards are not at the same height or strictly in a straight row for the same reason. Too much regularity creates visual monotony.



**Heavy wood poles often were used to support billboards. Model them with sections from plastic model sprues or use plastic rod.**



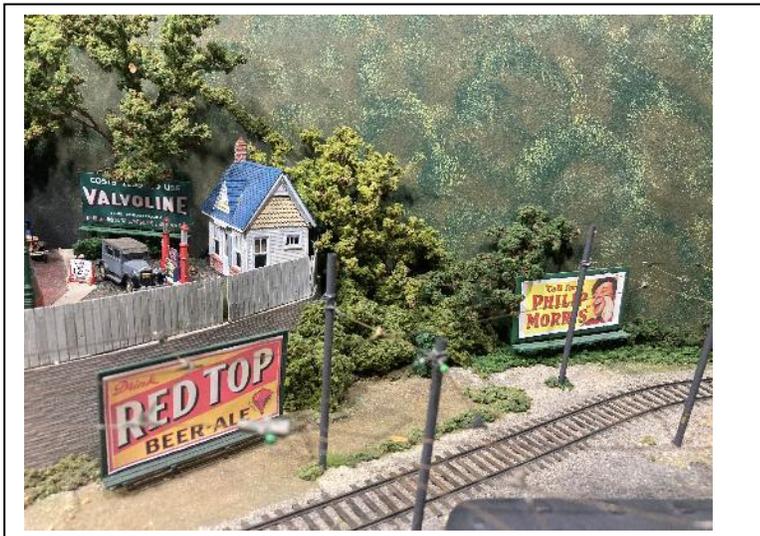
**I intentionally kept these billboards from appearing too straight and neat—and boring to look at.**

Vintage advertising images are easy to find by doing a search on the Internet, especially if you look for a certain product type such as soap, bread, motor oil, cigarettes, beverages and many other common household or automotive staples. Popular brand names also are searchable: Kellogg's, Nabisco, Campbell's, Ford, Quaker State, Lucky

Strike, for example. Try typing in 4 VINTAGE [product or brand] BILLBOARD or VINTAGE BILLBOARD SIGNS and see what comes up. That's how I found the ads for my hillside billboards.

Searching for local or regional brands is a good way to find images that help identify the locale of your model railroad. Billboard signs for hometown bakeries, breweries and retail chains often were a distinctive feature of a particular city or region. For example, the photo here shows a billboard with an ad for Red Top, a well-known (but now long-gone) Cincinnati brewery.

Images for billboards also generally followed a standard size. The exact dimensions are not that important, but the image was typically surrounded by a white border in the old days. Saved images from your online searches can be inserted as a picture in a word processing document and sized appropriately. Print the page in color and trim the ads with a hobby knife or scissors. A thin layer of diluted white glue is all you need to attach one to a billboard panel.



**My parents' generation would have recognized the Red Top billboard instantly. This brewery was one of many that served the beer drinkers in Cincinnati. Note the other signs in this photo.**

To install a finished billboard on my layout, I marked the spot where each of the support poles touched the layout surface. Because my hillside is rigid foam insulation that has been painted and covered with Woodland Scenics ground foam, I could insert a tapered scribing tool where each mark has been made to produce the mounting hole. You might need a twist drill for holes in firmer materials. Then I just gently pushed the support poles in place but used no adhesive so they can be removed for repair or to access details behind them.

That's all there is to it. One last comment: I have several other billboards with support poles that match the existing mounting hole locations, so I can swap out the current ones for other product ads if I so desire. Changing them up occasionally keeps the whole layout looking fresh.

# NCR 2025-2026 Happenings

## Save the Date:

Please be advised (or remember) that the NCR will hold an all-NCR Member Meeting on **December 19, between 7pm and 10pm**, during the NCR Division 6 meeting. The reason for this, is that the NCR Bylaws requires the NCR to have an annual meeting. Normally this is done during the fall NCR Convention, but because of hosting the NMRA Convention in 2025, a decision was made to not have a Fall Convention. But we still need to meet the Bylaw rules. Stay tuned for additional information.  
Rich Mahaney



## 2026 Spring Modeler Meet

### Hosted by Division 1

**April 18, 2026 – Sylvania OH**

with additional evening activities on Friday, April 17th for early arrivals!  
[Sylvania Senior Center, 7140 W Sylvania Ave, Sylvania, OH 43560](https://www.sylvaniaseniorcenter.com/)

Advance Registration is Available for 2026!!

<https://smm.ncrnmra.org/registration/>

# NMRA

## NORTH CENTRAL REGION, DIVISION 4 GRAND RAILS 2026 3 DAY CONVENTION

OPEN TO ALL MODEL RAILROADERS! YOU DO NOT HAVE  
TO BE AN NMRA MEMBER TO ATTEND!

BASIC NMRA MEMBER REGISTRATION (PRIOR TO SEPT 1, 2026)	\$60.00
BASIC NON NMRA REGISTRATION (PRIOR TO SEPT 1, 2026)	\$80.00
YOUTH RATE (17 AND UNDER W/PARENT OR GUARDIAN)	\$5.00
YOUTH 18-25	\$20.00

There will be layout tours, railroad operating sessions, clinics, railroad displays, and more!

**OCTOBER 8-9-10, 2026**  
**HOWARD MILLER COMMUNITY CENTER**  
**14 SOUTH CHURCH STREET**  
**ZEELAND, MI 49464**

CHECK THE DIVISION 4 WEBSITE FOR UPDATES AND  
REGISTRATION INFORMATION  
[www.grandrailsdiv4.com](http://www.grandrailsdiv4.com)

Save the dates AND come join us for some great days of  
model railroading, learning and fun!

Sponsored by  
NMRA, NORTH CENTRAL REGION

# Mystery Spot

Fall Newsletter's answer was:

Sites along Route 66 in Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas



Four-part questions:

This Giant Kangaroo Escaped from the Zoo.

Who placed the "O" or "G" scale Kangaroo on a "HO" Railroad?

How did he get that pencil?

What Town and State is he in?

Who's the Model Railroad Owner?

You need to get all 4 questions correct to win the prize.

# AP Corner – December 2025

Pete Magoun, MMR©

Well, the summer is now officially history, the first accumulating White Gifts from above have fallen and disappeared, there are more on the horizon, Operating Sessions have started around me, and it's time to get Back in Training! I did have the pleasure of presenting AP certificates to Mike Cipko, Jens Hensel and Dr. John Campbell at the Division meeting in September. We're still waiting on the "National Publication" pages I mentioned last time to arrive in magazines, and when they do, if the count is right, we'll be able to add "MMR" to Dr. Campbell's name.

The Muse is gradually returning to me, and I now have several ideas for progress on the railroad, but Antiquity is still hampering my ability to get up and down stairs. It is what it is.... <sigh>.

But what of the rest of you? Are any of you contemplating using the Achievement Program for its intended purpose, which is to stretch your skills and abilities to improve the quality and joy of your hobby? Are you laden with questions on how things work or what is necessary? And are any of those questions ones you're afraid to ask because they're "dumb," but you still don't understand the answers? If so, then ask ahead, because there are NO "dumb questions" here. Again, the whole purpose of this process is to educate You, to help You become a better modeler and get more joy from Your hobby....

As I mentioned in our last Newsletter, if you have questions or comments on any of the AP stuff, I'm easy to find. Let's hear from you!

High Green!

11/20/25

The NMRA Achievement Program is designed to challenge the skills of the modeler. The Achievement Program is divided into eleven categories covering different aspects of the hobby and the NMRA. As members of the NMRA earn credit in the different categories, awards are presented to signify the member's achievement. All current AP Awards are listed in the NMRA Magazine each month. Those who have earned the Master Model Railroader® award are listed both by number and by Region on this website.

Need additional information? Please reach out to Pete Magoun - MMR©. [orion@chartermi.net](mailto:orion@chartermi.net)

# AP Corner

## MMR Update Summary

Several AP certificates were awarded to our Division Members in September of 2025:

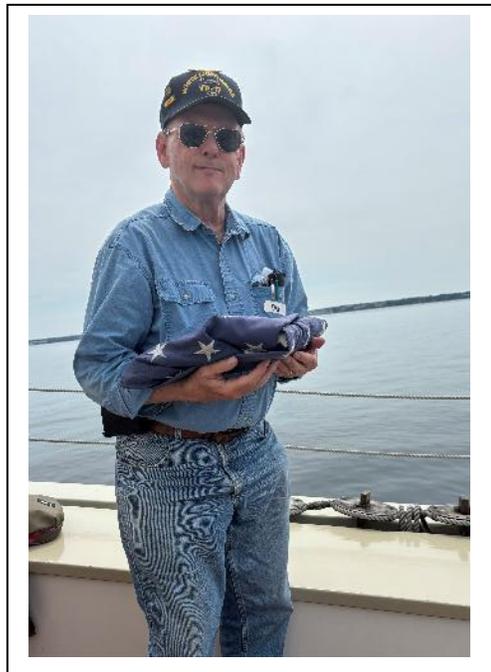
Mike Cipko – Association Official.

Jens Hensel – Association Volunteer

Dr. John A. Campbell - Prototype Models and Scenery. ((2) Certificates)

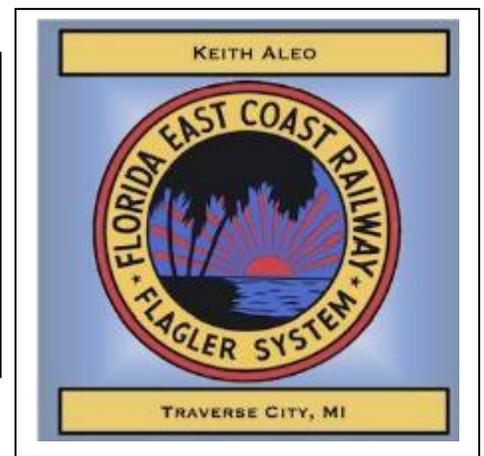
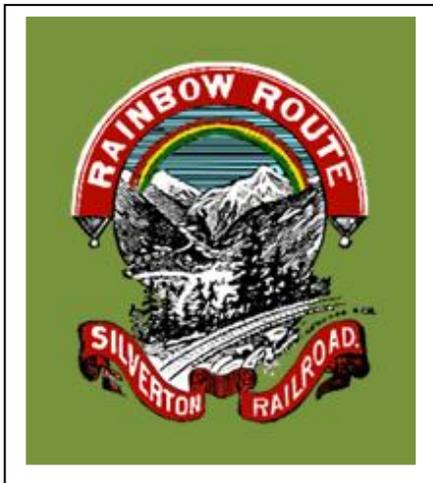
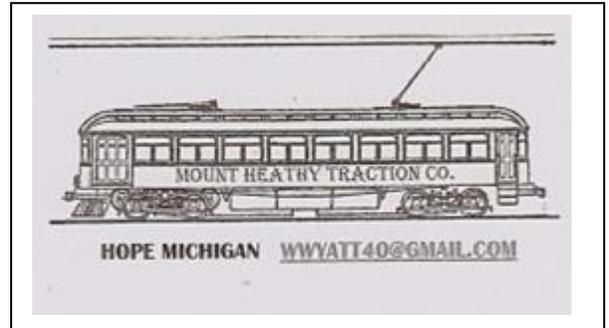
Dr. Campbell is very close to obtaining his MMR. Stay tuned.

See our website (Sep. 2025 Meeting) for additional pictures and information.



Pete, Thank you for your service to our Hobby and especially to our Country.

**PIKE ADS: SUPPORT YOUR DIVISION. BUY A SPACE FOR THE YEAR – ONLY \$20.00**  
**CONTACT DAVID ZOLNIEREK**  
 treasurer@div2.ncrnmra.org



**For Upcoming Model Railroad Events:**  
<https://www.trainlist.com>  
 (cut and paste into your browser)

## *Division 2 Leadership*

- |                        |                   |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Superintendent       | Jens Hensel       | super@div2.ncrnmra.org        |
| • Asst. Superintendent | Paul Anderson     | asstsuper@div2.ncrnmra.org    |
| • Chief Clerk          | Kieth Aleo        | keith.aleo@interlochen.org    |
| • Paymaster            | David Zolnierек   | treasurer@div2.ncrnmra.org    |
| • Yardmaster - North   | Michael McDougall | michaelcoguy@sbcglobal.net    |
| • Yardmaster -TC       | T.J. Stratton     | michigancentralrr@hotmail.com |
| • Trainmaster          | Al Johnson        | alwyn0008@gmail.com           |
| • Webmaster            | Paul Anderson     | webmaster@div2.ncrnmra.org    |
| • AP NCR 2 Div Chair   | Pete Magoun       | orion@chartermi.net           |
| • Newsletter Editor    | Jens Hensel       | jens.hensel50@gmail.com       |

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Oh wait, there's more:

