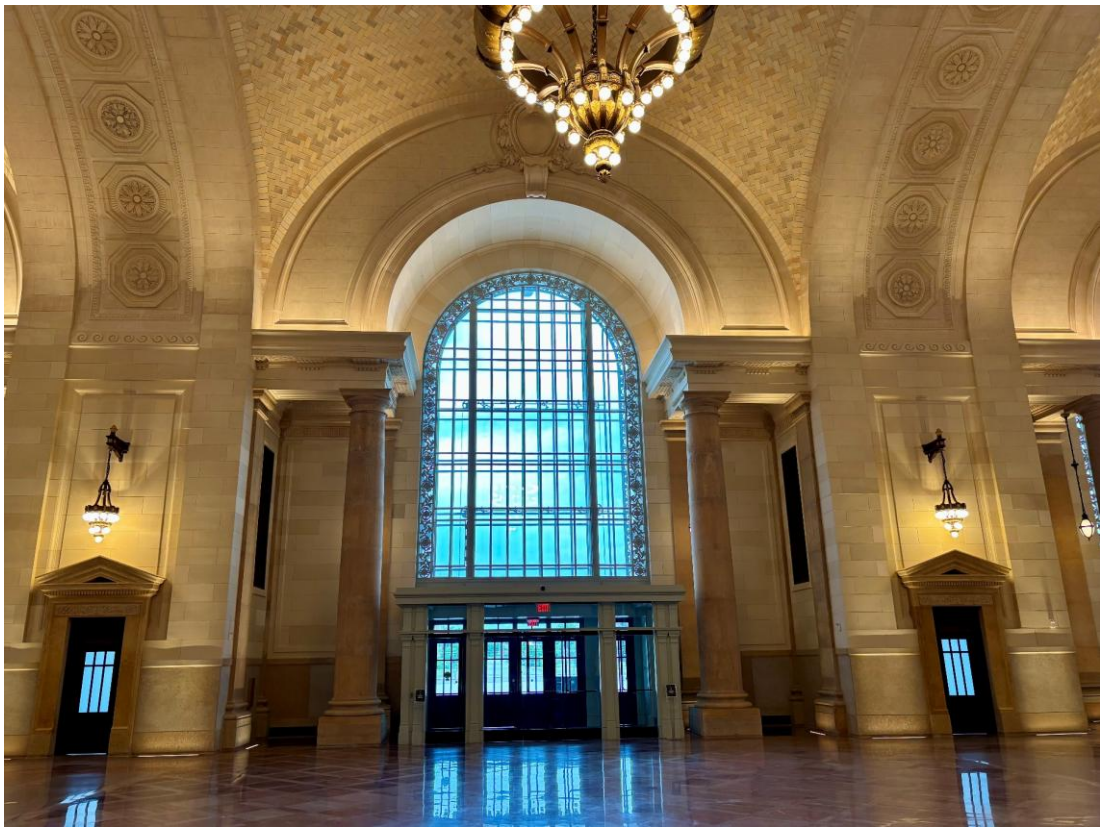
National Model Railroad Association North Central Region

Division 2 Newsletter

Volume 12 No 1 Spring 2026

Tip of the Mitt
Division 2 of the North Central Region, NMRA

NMRA NORTH CENTRAL REGION



Michigan Central Station
This month marks the 70th anniversary of my arrival in Detroit from Hamburg, Germany.
Jens

Division Meetings

3rd 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).

Crew Call:

- 3-21-2026
  Division Meeting – Live & Zoom 10:00 – 1:00
- 4-18-2026
  Division Meeting – Live & Zoom 10:00 -1:00
- 5-16-2026
  Traverse City Area Model RR Open House
  See info on Page 28
  10:00 – 5:00

Watch for the Division Meeting Invites via Email

From the Editor – Jens Hensel

Have you viewed the latest on our website?
Videos of our past clinics, copies of all our past newsletters, pictures and videos of our members' railroads. Paul Anderson has done a fantastic job of making this one of the best Model Railroad Websites. You need to take a look.
https://div2.ncrnmra.org.

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.

On the Switch List:

All Aboard,
Jens Hensel
super@div2.ncrnmra.org
Superintendent & Newsletter Editor

Super Sez... by Jens Hensel

I'm not sure why we have the word "Spring" in our March Newsletter Header, since the white stuff may not stop until sometime in April. But here we are. I guess we use that in the title to scare away the "white" spirits from above. Hope it works. In the meantime, keep working on your railroads.

Thanks to all who completed the Survey. We will be conducting a detailed review of this survey with the officers at the next board meeting. This will be immediately following our Division Meeting in March. It seems that the biggest action item we have is how to reach out to the younger crowd. Your input is welcome if you have some ideas.

Please join us on March 21 for another great clinic. Craig Wilson will be the presenter. The topic will be Ann Arbor Railroad Cabooses.

Our April 18, 2026, clinic will be presented by Ralph Moxley. Ralph will present his Ann Arbor Railroad.

Save the Date:

In lieu of a Division Meeting, we are planning a May 16 Traverse City Area Model RR Open House. A total of 7 Railroads have committed to hosting this event. See below for more Information. The event is "live" meaning you can sign up at any time on the Website.

New Members: A hearty welcome to the following who have joined our division in the last few months:

John Muntean from Traverse City

Thomas Hand from Petoskey

Happy Modeling,

Jens

Division News

Assistant Superintendent News by Paul Anderson

I will start working with David (Paymaster) to coordinate the creation of a PayPal account for online handling for some of our accounts payable/receivable transactions.
Paul

Thank you, Paul, for stepping in for me at the Division Meetings in Jan. and Feb. while I was away trying to escape the nasty weather.
Jens

Quarterly Board Meetings by Jens Hensel

Please see the Board meeting minutes which are posted on our website.

This last meeting was held directly prior to the Division Meeting on Dec 20, 2025.
(I now know that Munson's Urgent Care on East Bay does not open until 9:00am. I always assumed that it was a 24/7 facility).

Our next quarterly Board Meeting will be on March 21 just after our Division Meeting.

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.ncrnmra.org.
This includes Write-ups, Videos, and PowerPoint Presentations.

12/20/2025
Number of Participants – 16 in person, 4 on Zoom.
Our Clinician was Doug Tagsold from the NCR Division 1 who presented (in person) his “Terminal of Toledo RR” to us.

01/17/2026
Number of Participants – 8 in person, 9 on Zoom.
Our Clinician was Jim Gore, MMR from New Hampshire – Making Paper Models.

02/21/2026
Number of Participants – 13 in person, 4 on Zoom.
Our clinician was Mike Hauk who presented a Static Grass Clinic. Mike is the Superintendent of MCR Division 12.

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 or Michael McDougall at michaelcoguy@sbcglobal.net.
Clinics can be hosted in Traverse City or Gaylord.

Website News by Paul Anderson

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

I've added a short video guiding first-time meeting attendees to the meeting room at the Foster Family Community Health Center.

The page for the May Open House has been live for several weeks; we currently stand at 42 RSVPs, with 40 of those being an initial block for the Newcomers of Traverse City members. We do have a maximum limit, so I would encourage you to RSVP when you get a chance. Include any family members in ***your count*** that are coming with you. You do not need to register if you are one of the Railroad helpers.

Homepage (Latest posts)	**271**
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Modeling Cardstock Buildings - Jim Gore, MMR	29

Since the last newsletter, we've had a healthy number of views on the *Tip of the Mitt* website. Over the last 90 days, we've had a total of ~2,400 page views spread across 765 user visits. Doing the math, that means that each visitor to our site viewed, on average, three (3) pages on the website during their visit. For a site with a relatively limited audience, that's pretty good. Here are the top 20 pages and their view counts over the last 90 days:

Website News by Paul Anderson

One of the big changes since last fall is the addition of a *Tip of the Mitt* channel on YouTube, where we host the video content that we capture during our monthly meetings. For the last 90 days, we've had 194 total views of our videos, amounting to 32.7 hours of viewing time. Here are the top 10 most viewed videos for the last 90 days:

Video title	Views	Watch time (hours)
Terminal of Toledo - Doug Tagsold	70	19.8779
Modeling Cardstock Buildings - Jim Gore MMR	24	5.868
Selling Your Trains - TRAINZ	18	2.0682
30 year old Atlas F7s - Keith Aleo	11	0.3624
Petoskey Coal Trestle - Bill McCary	9	0.5201
Monthly Meeting Room Location	9	0.0626
Introduction to Static Grass - Mike Hauk	7	1.7488
Future Layout Overview Paul Anderson	6	0.071
Modeling Water – John Campbell	4	0.3606
2026 Spring Open House Discussion	4	0.0719

Several of you have received a ***Spam email*** using our division name.
Don't click on any links or call the number when you suspect a Spam email. Just delete it!

Chief Clerk's Report

Membership Information from Keith Aleo

keith.aleo@interlochen.org

We have 42 Active Members

We have lost two and gained 2 members in the last 3 months.

Also, thank you to Al Johnson for reaching out to some of our members for being delinquent with their dues.

Paymaster's Report
North Central Region NMRA Division 2

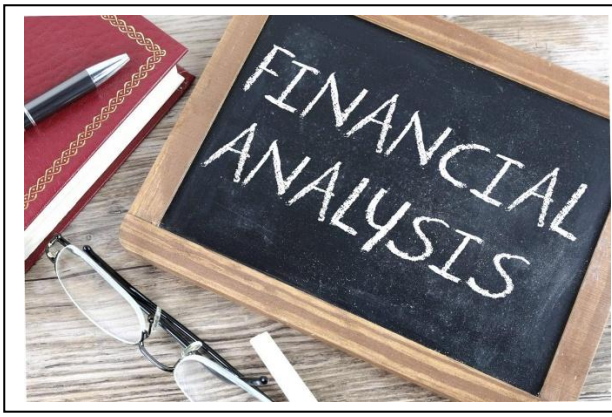
Financial Information

From David J. Zolnierek

treasurer@div2.ncrnmra.org

As of Jan 31, 2026

• **Regular Share Deposits-e-bonus, donations, div.**	**$0.50**
• **Regular Share (Savings) – ending Balance**	**$954.63**
• **Checking Account- Deposits for the year**	**$0.00**
• **Checking Account Balance - Total for the year**	**$1,261.98**
• **Withdrawals – Total for the year**	**$0.00**
• **Ending Balance in Account as of Oct 31,2025**	**$2,216.61**



Around the Division

Building a Florida Scrub and Hammock Backdrop for my Florida East Coast Railway Layout
by Keith Aleo

As I started taking more photos of my HO scale Florida East Coast Railway layout, I realized I needed to have a backdrop to give my layout a sense of depth, expansive perspective and an atmospheric feeling to enhance realism. Backdrops blend scenery and transform a model into a realistic, immersive scene by giving it a distant background. Backdrops also hide distractions by masking walls, joists, and electrical outlets, helping viewers focus on the model scene. They make a layout look much larger by simulating distant, unreachable scenery. These are all things I wanted to achieve in my backdrop.

Prototype Florida Scrub

Prototype Florida Hammock

I first began by deciding what side of the layout I wanted a backdrop on. Since I have an “old school” 4’x8’ layout, my first question was, which of the four sides of the layout would I put the backdrop on? Reviewing the layout experience as you walk in the train room, I determined that the far side would make a lovely backdrop spot. This backdrop would continue the feeling of Florida wilderness via modeling the Florida scrub and Florida hammocks that exist throughout Florida.

As I dug into the project, two questions arose – would I just paint the backdrop with the scene I'm looking for? Or would I have some 2-dimensional experience attached to the backdrop. As I thought about it, and looked at prototypes of the Florida scrub, I decided the best way to model this was via a two-dimensional backdrop.

I first began with two pieces of blue colored foam board that I attached to the end of the layout. I used a large washer and a bolt to secure the foam to the facia. There are easier and simpler methods to do this, but I already had the hardware and figured it would work the same. After securing the board to the end of the layout, I checked all the measurements and made sure it was level. Then drew a pencil line where on the horizon started and drew out a basic plan of underbrush height and the placement of the palms.

I then removed the board and began the process of mounting Woodland Scenics poly fiber and steel wool to match the Florida scrub and lower-level foliage. The poly fiber I added as is. The steel wool took a little more work. I shaped the steel wool into what I wanted to match the prototype, considering height, width and overall shape. I then painted the steel wool dark green.

Adding Underbrush

Materials

I used Woodland Scenics Hob-e-Tac adhesive to attach both the poly fiber and painted steel wool to the foam board. I find Hob-e-Tac an excellent adhesive, although it can become quite messy and difficult to work with. As I went horizontally down the foam board placing my underbrush, I made sure to keep both products above the horizon pencil line I had drawn before.

After I had created the underbrush, I started adding more details. First, I started with dead trees, something that is prominent in the prototype. I then added other trees that I had pressed flat, two types of palms (Royal Palms and Saw Palmettos) and several types of flock.

Finished Backdrop

After I was satisfied with the look, following the prototype photos, I glued everything down and to each other using Hob-e-Tac adhesive and a spray diluted glue mixture. When everything was dry, I lifted the foam boards and reattached them to the layout. I reviewed the backdrop and made some minor changes as well as adding a few more details. Also, I made sure the blue foam board did not show through on the horizon line and added a little more poly fiber if needed. Next step will be to add subtle clouds and contrast to the blue colored foam board. This will come later as I am very pleased with the look as it is now.

Finished Backdrop

Around the Division

Diode Matrix Track Routing Control

By Bill Horning

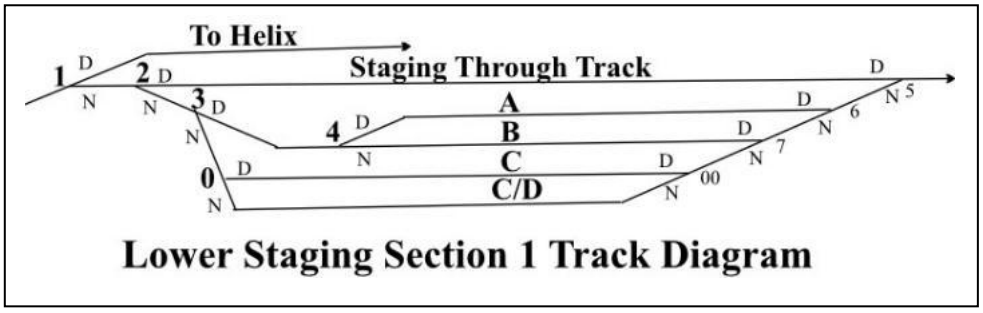
Master Woodworker Norm Abrams of “This Old House” and “New Yankee Workshop” fame said that “You can never have enough clamps”. To some degree the same can be said of our model railroading staging areas, you can never have enough staging tracks. I’ve found after setting up a new operating schedule on my Rio Grande Midland Railroad that I could use at least one more staging track in addition to the nineteen that are currently available. At first thought it sounded like a quick and easy task. Some of it was.

My Rio Grande Midland Railroad is a Colorado based two deck point to point railroad with staging at the two ends, one on the lower level and another directly over it on the upper level. Each level’s staging area is on a very long reverse loop divided into three sections with one through track and one to three sets of tracks in each section. Train routing is done using momentary push buttons and a diode matrix to operate Atlas #200 Snap Relays that control Tortoise by Circuitron switch motors to set routes into and out of the appropriate track. I’ve used this method since the beginning of this layout and will continue to do so. I realize technology changes may allow for easier ways to accomplish the task, but at a price. Diodes are cheap, and relatively inexpensive. I used Atlas #200 Snap Relays which can often be found at train shows. I like hard wiring to accomplish a task when possible and believe there is less chance of failure down the road.

With my operating system on the railroad, my lower staging area sees more activity than the upper, so I decided to add another staging track there with route control as in the rest of staging. Adding the turnouts, track, Tortoise switch motors, and track wiring was the easy part. Adding the push button route control forced me to go back and relearn how I did this in the past. Fortunately, I kept diagrams of how all of that was assembled; so a quick review led me through these steps to success.

My staging tracks in the lower level are always entered counterclockwise from left to right labeled A through H. Section 1 has A, B, C, while Section 2 has D, E, and Section 3 has F, G, H. The staging track is being added into section 1, the only place I had room for it, and is between track C and Track D. I assigned it the label C/D. After adding turnouts, tracks, and wiring the track, I added the Tortoise switch motors to the turnouts. Instead of soldering power leads to the Tortoise, I used a slip-on connector with wires only to pins 1 and 8 of the Tortoise. The reason for the slip-on connector is for ease in reversing the wiring and position of the turnout if a problem arises with a mismatch of the turnout’s positions entering and exiting track C/D.

Here is a diagram of just section 1 of the lower staging.

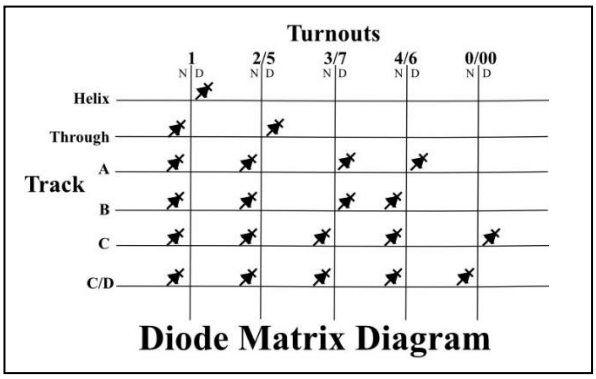


Lower Staging Section 1 Track Diagram

I set up my staging so that the turnouts for entry and exit from each staging track can be paired. Notice in the diagram that turnouts 2 and 5 are the entry to staging and exit from staging. The same is true for turnouts 3 and 7, 4 and 6, and the newly added turnouts 0 and 00. It is essential that these pairs of turnouts work in tandem as an entry and exit as their switch motors are both controlled by a single Atlas relay. It's easy to match the turnout positions since I used slip-on connectors on the Tortoise motors. Turnout 1 is the entry to a helix which is seldom used but must also be configured with the momentary push buttons.

Notice in the track diagram that at each turnout I have identified the direction of throw with an N or a D. Instead of assigning N as always normal and D as diverging I chose instead to use D as the entry to the staging track position and N as the through position no matter the orientation of the turnout. When I wrote this on the Atlas relays in the relay panel all of the H positions were on the #1 terminal of the relay while the D is always on the #3 terminal (#2 terminal is a common). It was easier for me to read the relay panel and attach diodes to the proper terminal this way.

On the new track C/D I can test the Tortoise motors for parity. I added one more Atlas relay, mounted horizontally to my Relay Panel, wired it for turnout control, and moved the relay to make sure both motors were working. I then checked the entry turnout "0" to be sure when the relay was set to the left position that it caused entry to track C/D. If the Tortoise motor did not set the turnout to track C/D I reversed its slip-on connector. Once that was working properly, I checked the turnout "00" to be sure it was set for the exit from track C/D, and if not, I reversed its slip-on connector.



Diode Matrix Diagram

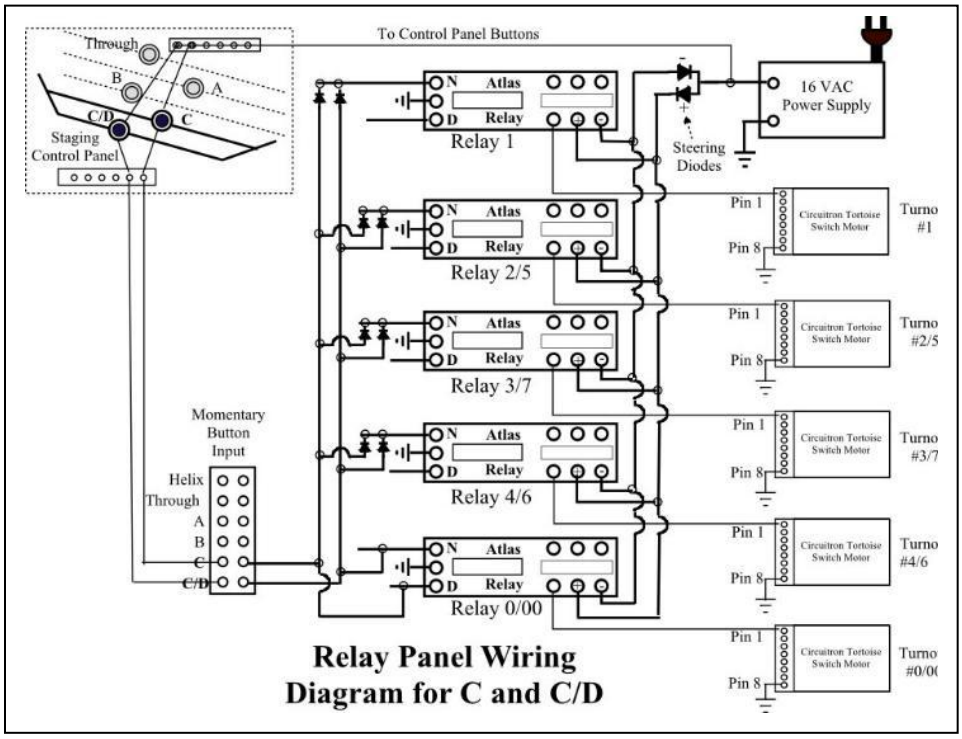
I set up a matrix for the track and turnouts as shown here. The track names are on the left side vertically while the Turnout numbers are named on the top of the matrix left to right. Note that the turnouts are paired for their entry and exit routes and must work in tandem. Why are there diodes? A diode only permits power flow in one direction unless it's overdriven.

When two or more power sources are connected to a single terminal, current from one source will flow back through the other sources unless it's blocked in some way. The diode will stop this from happening as a check valve in a drain line will stop water from back flowing into a sump. The electronics symbol for a diode is a line segment, a triangle, and a bar at the point of the triangle. I like to think of it as a funnel with a wall at one end. The funnel lets electrical flow pass through the wall while the wall stops electrical flow from getting to the funnel. Each physical diode used has a band on one end which is the end that should stop the power backflow issue. The banded end will be connected to the relay terminal. All of the diodes I have used are 1N4001 which have a continuous reverse voltage rating of 50 volts and are rated for currents of up to 1 amp with voltage drop of 1.1 volt.

Completing the Diode Matrix diagram is a fairly simple task when taken one step at a time. By just following the path into any one of the staging tracks you can see how the matrix was completed. For example, in the track diagram follow the path entry to staging track C and its exit to the Through Track. In my staging area entry is from the left so the path through staging track C is turnout 1 = N, 2 = N, 3 = N, and 0 = D, 00 =D, 7 = N, 6 = N, and 5 = N. In the diode matrix diagram check the row labeled C, going to the right a diode will be placed at turnout relay 1 to the N terminal, a diode at relay 2/5 to the N terminal, same at relay 3/7. Turnout 4/6 is not on the entry route but turnout 6 is on the exit portion so will have a diode at relay 4/6 on the N terminal, and turnout 0/00 will have a diode on the D terminal. Try it for yourself, select any staging track, write down the path (turnout # and D or N) through each turnout that leads you through your track and back to the thorough track, then go to the diagram and identify the diodes necessary for the row of your chosen staging track.

You will notice in the matrix diagram that turnouts 4/6 leading to track A have only one diode at track A (D). The same is true at turnouts 0/00, track C (D) and track C/D (N). If a terminal on the relay has only one input, then there will be no backflow of current so a diode is not needed, and a hookup wire can be used without a diode.

Now let's look at how to wire this to accomplish proper routing to a staging track with a single momentary push button. By the way, it's important to use good quality momentary push buttons. If a push button were to stick closed, then it's likely the relay will be burned out in short order.



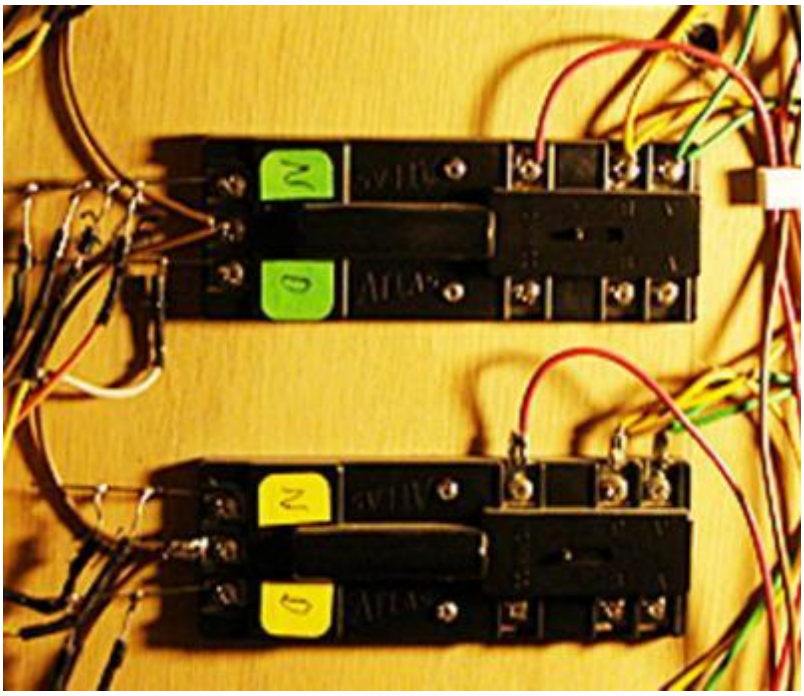
First, a note on the power supply. Although I have used separate power supplies for the Tortoise switch motors and the Atlas Relays, the same power supply could be used for both on a smaller layout. The Tortoise by Circuitron requires either a DC power supply or AC (with steering diodes to achieve "+" or "-" to the Tortoise) 12v to 16v power supply. The Atlas #200 Snap R relay requires a 16vac to 18vac power supply. If using the same power supply for both, a 16vac is likely best but a 14vac will likely work too. Since the relays only work when a button is pressed and the Tortoise has a very low stall current draw, the power supply amperage is not too significant, pretty much any 16vac power supply should work depending on the size of your staging area.

The Relay Panel Wiring Diagram looks kind of complicated but there are really just two circuits in the diagram, one for the Control Panel Buttons and diode matrix controlling the Atlas 200 relays and the other for control of the Tortoise by Circuitron switch motors. The diode matrix and Atlas relays are powered by the AC power supply in the top right. A wire is led from the power supply to the main control panel where the momentary push buttons are located (upper left of diagram). The power wire is routed to each push button individually, then the six button output wires are led to a bus bar. From the bus bar each button has a wire led to the large Relay Control Panel. For simplicity I've only shown the wires for tracks "C" and "C/D", but all six of the buttons (Helix, Through track, A, B, C, and C/D) have a lead to the Relay panel.

At the panel the diode matrix diagram is used to route a wire with a diode at the end from the "C" button input to the appropriate terminal on each of the relays. You can follow the wires from "C" to the "N" terminal of relays 1, 2/5, 3/7, 4/6, and the "D" terminal of relay 0/00. Also, you can follow the path of the wires from button "C/D" to the "N" terminal of relays 1, 2/5, 3/7, 4/6 and 0/00. In practice I attach a length of 0.020 spring wire to the two outer terminals, N and D, at the end of the Atlas relay and solder the hookup wire with diodes to the spring wire on the proper terminal.

When a button is pressed on the Staging Control Panel a signal is sent to the Relay Panel to change all of the relays that are connected to that button's input. The Atlas relays then change to the position demanded and route power to the Tortoise switch motors through the relays' auxiliary terminals. As a practice exercise, you could complete the Relay Diagram by drawing all of the remaining paths of the Matrix Diagram for the Helix, Through Track, staging track A, and staging track B.

The Tortoise turnout control portion of the circuit diagram is a bit easier to understand. Since AC power pulses positive and negative it's easy to split the pulse into two phases. The power supply is led through a pair of steering diodes, two diodes placed in opposite directions, that provide half wave AC either the top half of the wave (+) or the bottom half of the wave (-). These opposite polarity paths are connected to each Atlas relay at the auxiliary terminals on the side. In the Atlas relay diagram from left to right those pins are Common, "+" and "-". The two steering diode's power is fed to the "+" and "-" terminals on the side of the relay. The proper polarity for the Tortoise is determined by the position of the Atlas Relay according to the button pushed on the Staging Control Panel and the diodes attached to the end of the relay. The proper polarity signal is sent through the relay's Common terminal to the Tortoise causing it to move to either the N or D position shown in the track plan diagram.



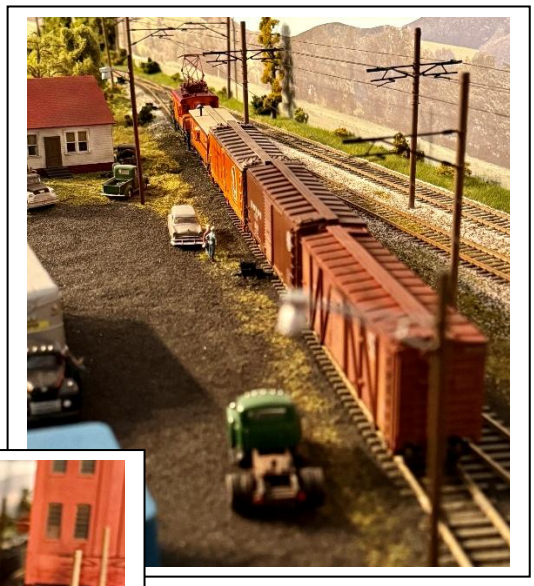
At first the whole task of setting up the diode matrix scheme seems somewhat daunting and confusing but if you break the task down into a sequence of logical steps and record information through diagrams as illustrated here eventually everything falls into place. Now all we need are the materials and a beginner's soldering skills.

Around the Division

East End Yard Action on my Monon Layout

by Jim Matuszak

Three photos showing some action at East End Yard on the South Shore portion of Dan Ramoie's and my Monon layout. The first photo shows old IC now South Shore electric #902 as it grabs a cut of cars to move to the freighthouse while an Eastbound passenger train goes by and Little Joe #803 waits in the siding. Photo 2 and photo 3 shows the cars lined up and being pushed into the freighthouse. Also visible in the yard is a string coal cars that #803 will soon be taking to NPSCO in Michigan City.



Around the Division

Petoskey 1913 Layout update
by Mike Collyer, Petoskey MI

The Petoskey 1913 group is an operating entity falling under the chartered “Historic Railroads of Northern Michigan” that has existed for the better part of almost 15 years. In April of 2023, we enjoyed hosting the NMRA Division 2 group when they came to visit our HO scale display. Our layout is built to represent Petoskey as it appeared in 1913, following the route of the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad which ran through the center of Petoskey. This is not to be confused by the other railroad in town, the Pere Marquette which operated along the waterfront of Petoskey. Though designed primarily as a display layout, it does offer some limited operational possibilities. Most of the track design and many of the structures are based on several historical references, the most significant being the Sanborn Insurance maps. Other important sources of information have been photo postcards and actual photographs from that period.

As with any layout which is based on historical data, time has passed with new information being discovered, we have found that selected areas of the layout could be improved. Approximately 2 years ago, discussions began about the engine facilities. When the layout was originally built this area of the layout included a roundhouse, turntable, locomotive servicing facilities, and a tiny yard. It was designed neither to reflect the GR&I nor to represent any historical data but built to simply help in the operation of the overall display. Aside from a lack of historical relevance, another issue was that the Walthers 90’ turntable was failing because of its age and was effectively inoperable. The yard had very limited capacity and was typically overcrowded. We also lacked any semblance of industries that were nearby on the prototype on the southern outskirts of Petoskey.

Collectively we felt we could do a lot better in this area of the layout so the decision was made in early 2024 that this area would be entirely ripped out and a completely new design would be undertaken. The underlying benchwork measuring 3 feet x 5 feet was retained and benchwork of an additional 5 feet in length was built to extend this area to a new length of 10 feet. In HO scale of 1:87, this translates into an area roughly 870 feet in length or nearly 3 football fields long! Given that freight trains of 1913 typically were 6 to 15 cars long and we use an average car length of 40 feet, a 15-car train of roughly 600 feet would easily fit into this new yard. The overall track plan was developed, being inspired by information found on the Sanborn maps. The new area would include a 3-stall roundhouse similar in style to the prototype, oriented correctly facing south, a new Walthers 90’ turntable, and a prototypically correct coal loading dock rather than a coaling tower. This new area would also include a correct representation of the railroad crossing over the Bear River and several of the prototypical industries. These industries would include the Standard Oil Company building (that entire structure still exists), a loading dock for the nearby brickworks (long gone), and at least a simplified representation of the powerhouse for the Maple Block Company (which was torn down in the summer of 2024). There would

also be a longer and more prototypical style small yard. Although the specific track design is not 100% accurate compared to the original GR&I track plan, it is heavily influenced and representative of the prototype. One interesting note that will be included in our model was discovered in some period photographs of the roundhouse area. It was concerning providing water to the locomotives. There was a water tower, however it did not have a spout. This tower served as a central elevated reservoir, supplying several trackside water columns by way of underground pipes.

That brings us today. You can see our progress to date in the accompanying pictures. The roadbed consists of 3/8" OSB covered with 1 1/2" pink insulation foam and then topped with ¼" sheet cork. All tracks are now installed and DCC powered, and the turntable is programmed for all leads and fully operational. We exclusively used Atlas code 83 track and Atlas Custom-Line number 6 turnouts. All turnouts in this area of the layout are operated using Caboose Industries ground throws for a greater "hands on" yard experience. The roundhouse, which has working interior lights, is nearing completion and soon will sport a clear see through roof so that visitors can see the detailed interior. The scratch built coaling dock with coal chutes from the Tichy Group is also nearing completion and final installation. Our next steps will involve construction and placement of additional structures, cutting in and detailing the Bear River water course, construction and installation of the Bear River bridges, the addition of extensive scenery, and ballasting track with the northern Michigan correct shade of light gray limestone.

We have learned several lessons and made a few discoveries along the way. One of those involved was how to hold the track down to the cork and pink foam roadbed. Traditional rail spikes and pins were simply too small and pulled out far too easily. One of our members discovered that Hobby Lobby sells all sorts and sizes of dress making pins, some being 1 1/4" or longer. These work remarkably well and come in packages of dozens or hundreds for only a few dollars. Although they have bright silver heads, and quick pass with a black sharpie make them almost invisible.

Another discovery that was made during the planning phase was found in the Kalmbach book "DCC and Model Railroading". In the older engine facility, all the tracks were powered all the time. Often steam locomotives sat idle for many hours but created "simmering sounds". It turns out that this will lead to premature failure of their DCC decoders. Although the locomotive is not actively working, it is still fully powered and operating. To address this and significantly extend the life of our decoders, there will be a separate power control panel for the shop area. This panel will have switches to independently turn DCC power on/off to each of the many tracks in the new roundhouse area. While we will lose the sounds, our locomotive decoders should last much longer.

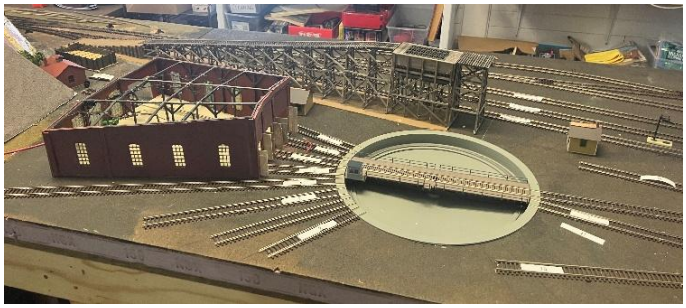
If you are interested and want to visit us some time, we are usually open to the public every Friday and Saturday from 1:00PM to 4:00PM. We are located at 621 Ingalls Ave in Petoskey MI. You can also reach us by email at: petoskey.1913@gmail.com

Around the Division

Petoskey 1913 Layout Addition Pictures
by Mike Collyer, Petoskey MI

Looking southwest, the entire new section can be seen. Industries will populate the left side.

The new coal dock being tested fitted into its final location. Notice that one stall in the roundhouse has a track extension through its rear wall per the prototype.



The new roundhouse and turntable, with the coal dock in the background. Although selectively compressed this area is very close to the prototype. A separate track power control panel, yet to be built, will be installed along this fascia to control power to the numerous shop tracks.

Looking northwest, the yard is seen with industry track leads in place along the right.

Around the Division

Random Pictures from T.J. Stratton

I was pleasantly surprised this morning (Feb. 10) to walk out of the barber shop and hear train horns! I found this very long train of stored coal hoppers heading north. The cars had been stored west of Selma Yard near the M-115 crossing. There had to be over 100 cars in the train. I'm thinking they will continue to be stored north of Cadillac, either on the TC branch or further north towards Petosky. Note the repainted cab numbers on the lead locomotive. This has recently been added since the ownership change of the GLC.

Guest Pages

Random Pictures from Rich Mahaney – NCR President

My brother, Jim Mahaney was driving through Shelby, MT today on his way to Banff, Canada for a skiing trip and saw this BNSF engine, all nice, clean, shiny and bright along US 2 and the northern BNSF Transcom main line tracks. Yes, it was sunny also on the correct side. Note the historical logos of the railroads that came together over the years to form the BNSF Railway. This engine can be purchased as a model. Great timing Jim!

Rich Mahaney

Guest Pages

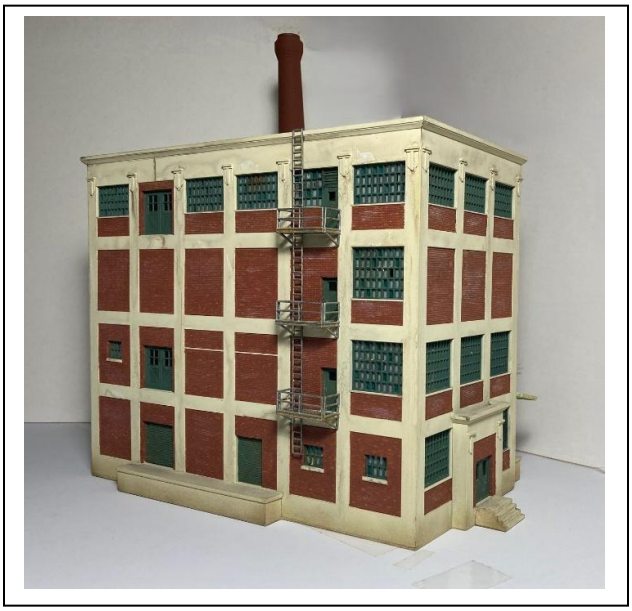
A Flour Mill Gets A Facelift

Simple, straightforward changes gave this plastic model kit a very different look.

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

Industrial buildings are important to model railroaders because they provide a believable purpose for having track sidings on a layout where freight cars can be dropped off and picked up during operating sessions. These structures can create visual interest in their own right by offering a variety of shapes, sizes and colors.

When Walthers introduced its HO-scale Red Wing flour mill kit several decades ago (still available in its Cornerstone Series as kit # 933-3026), I found its size and detail very appealing. Only problem was, I didn't really need or want a flour mill for my layout. I wanted a more generic factory building that would be appropriate for almost any kind of industry. Not to be deterred, I eagerly purchased the kit and resolved to give it some new purpose—and a new appearance.



My version of the Walthers flour mill is here. The picture above from the original kit box shows the difference my changes made. Note that I left off the dust collectors and the canopy above the track dock.

It occurred to me that the kit's large windows set in slightly recessed wall panels resembled a very common "daylight factory" architectural style prevalent in the first half of the 20th century. Typically, these structures featured a reinforced concrete frame, allowing the spaces between the vertical columns and spandrel beams of outer walls to be filled with windows, doors and other openings as required. Large, multi-paned windows above a low wall of bricks was the most common pattern because it maximized illumination of the interior. Such factories appeared in almost every industrial area or urban center across the United States.

That is exactly the type of factory I wanted my newly acquired flour mill to resemble. The conversion seemed simple. I just needed to add pieces of styrene sheet molded with a brick pattern to fill in the blank areas of the individual wall panels.

This factory building stands a few blocks from my boyhood home. It is one of the inspirations for my facelifting efforts. Loft apartments and a restaurant now make their home here.

The first step was to assemble the walls after making some changes such as eliminating the tower above the top floor. This change was easy. I simply used a razor saw to sever the part of the tower that came attached to one of the narrow end walls. This cut left a gap in the molded cornice at the top of the wall that could be filled in by trimming away a portion of the cornice from the tower wall I had just removed. I used portions of the remaining tower walls to create a more substantial main entrance to the building. Then I sprayed the assembly with a creamy white concrete color that had a flat finish.

Kit pieces left over from the unused tower became this enhanced main entrance.

My next step was to paint the entire sheet of styrene bricks with a reddish-brown color. Rustoleum red primer from a spray can will do. I used a fine brush to paint a random number of the bricks in a slightly lighter or darker color for variety. Applying a wash of diluted light gray paint brought out the brick pattern as it settled into the mortar lines while drying.

Then I cut the sheet of molded bricks into strips the same width as the panels between the vertical members of the concrete frame, which is about 1.25 inch. Then I scored the horizontal mortar lines closest to the height I needed to fill in the space below the window openings. Once scored, I snapped away the portions I needed so they could be glued in place. Many of the wall panels had no window, so I cut the strip to fit. Other panels had small windows or doors that required me to trace the openings and cut them out with a sharp hobby knife to match.

With its covered truck dock, boiler room and brick smokestack, this side of the factory is both visually interesting and colorful.

I decided that that squarish concrete smokestack that came with the kit had to go, too. I replaced it with the Walthers Cornerstone smokestack (Part # 933-3728), painting it to match the color of the brickwork elsewhere on the model. Because this was not going to be a flour mill, I left off the three cyclone dust collectors and canopy but retained the nearby fire escape.

Following many prototypes, I wanted to give the model a distinctive Art Deco touch. To this end, I created an “emblem” to be attached near the top of the walls. The design of this emblem is simple so I could make 24 copies, including two for the front entrance, from strip styrene. You can find numerous examples of such Art Deco decorations by searching on the internet. Most are bits of geometry using V shapes, diamonds, triangles or stylized human or animal forms. Eagles were especially popular in the 1930s.

These decorative emblems in the Art Deco style were common on industrial buildings constructed in the 1920s and ’30s.

The window inserts were painted a medium green. Glazing was simulated with plastic film that had a hazy, dull finish rather than the clear plastic kit pieces. After attaching this film, I used green and silver marking pens to color some of the panes on back side of the window. Because the assembled model is essentially an open box, the finished windows could be glued in place from the inside.

Finishing touches included weathering the walls with washes of various grimy hues. I had to make a new roof without a cutout for the unused tower. I never got around to adding ventilators, ductwork, skylights as details for the rooftop. It looks bare to me now, an omission that would be easy to fix with components from the Walthers Cornerstone Roof Details kit (933-3733).

So, what might be made in a factory like this? Just about anything that comes to mind, and this is the unlimited possibility that I in mind by giving it a facelift.

NCR Spring 2026 Happenings

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
Advance Registration is Available for 2026!!
https://smm.ncrnmra.org/registration/

Traverse City Area - 2026 Spring Open House

To benefit local Food Pantries

May 16 @ 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

The *Tip of the Mitt* (Division 2), of the North Central Region (NCR), of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) is hosting a special one-time, ***no-cost event***.

This is a free event, but we are asking that an at will donation be made to support our local Food Pantries: Leelanau Christian Neighbors and Father Fred Foundation of Traverse City. Donation containers will be available at each of the open railroads.

Reserve your spot now! Go to our website (or click here) to RSVP today! Space is limited.

For additional information click on https://div2.ncrnmra.org/event/2026-spring-open-house/

Mystery Spot

Winter's Newsletter's answers were:

1. **Pete Magoun's Son**
2. **Jens did**
3. **Elmwood, MA**
4. **Pete Magoun's**

No one won the $10,000 Prize which will *not* roll over to this quarter.

Where is the location (City and State) of this picture?

AP Corner – March 2026

Pete Magoun, MMR©

During the February 2026 Division Two meeting I had the pleasure of presenting Dr. John Campbell his Model Railroad Author certificate, which is the last of the seven he needs for his MMR. His MMR application went to the Region in Monday's mail, so we should have the plaques, certificate and such available in a couple of months. John has worked hard on this process, and the results are highly visible on his railroad.

Breaking news: The NMRA has just announced that Dr. John A. Campbell has been awarded MMR #817. Great job John!!!!!

In other news, the March 2026 NMRA Magazine's President's Column notes that the NMRA is eliminating the requirement for a caboose or passenger car to be included among the models evaluated for the Cars certificate. This should make it easier for those who model the "modern era" to obtain the certificate without "wasting time, space and money" on items that will not run in normal service on their railroads.

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….

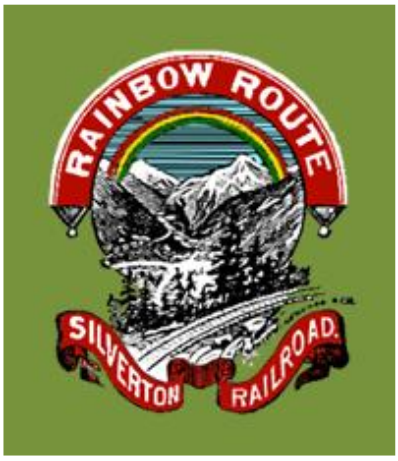
As I mentioned in our last Newsletter, if you have questions or comments on any of the AP stuff, I'm easy to find. Let's hear from you!
High Green!

02/24/26

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

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
(click on or cut and paste into your browser)

Division 2 Leadership

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Oh wait, there's more:

The Foley Railroad Museum in Alabama features a restored L&N EMC/EMD NW1 diesel locomotive.

Thanks to my brother, Joerg for sending me these pictures.