



The Rock River Valley Division, RRVD, is a local division of the Midwest Region of the National Model Railroad Association, NMRA. The RRVD serves the NMRA members in areas of Green and Rock Counties of Wisconsin and Boone, Jo Davies, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside, and Winnebago counties in Illinois. The RRVD holds monthly meets typically the first Sunday afternoon of each month, September through May, in Rockford at the Midwest Museum Center. The RRVD also hosts an annual Model Train Show & Sale usually the last weekend in March.

Visit our website at: rrvd-nmra.com

Editor: Ken Reinert

Superintendent: TBA

Assistant Superintendent: G. Jay Kabitzke

Chief Clerk: Ken Peterson

Paymaster: E. Ken Mosny, Jr.

Reflections

By Tyrone Johnsen

The Rock River Valley Division finished its 2014 – 2015 season of events with monthly “Meets” in April and May. We hope you found this past season of events, the monthly Meets, the December Garage Sale, the annual bus trip to Trainfest, and the annual Model Railroad Show & Sale interesting, informative, useful, and entertaining. The summer offers much for the area model railroader. We are fortunate to have the world class Illinois Railway Museum, IRM, just a few miles east of Rockford, in Union, IL. The collection of railway equipment is probably not equaled anywhere else. Whatever your interest is you should be able to find some prototype equipment there to inspect, often see running, and sometimes to ride on or in.



To the west of Rockford is the smaller Silver Creek Museum in Freeport, IL with its Silver Creek & Stephenson Railroad and its 36 ton Heisler originally built in 1912. If you like steam engines this is certainly a place of interest where you can regularly see an operating steam locomotive and other operating steam engines.



Within Rockford catch the trolley that runs along the east side of the Rock River. All of these and more offer you the opportunity to enjoy and learn more about railroads. Along this vein, local authors Mike Schafer and Brian Landis have a new book in the Images of Rail series from Arcadia Publishing. Their latest is Rockford & Interurban Railway. Even if you do not think you are interested in interurban railways you may wish to check

this out. It primarily covers the R&I Railway in Rockford, Freeport, Beloit, and Belvidere and some connections with great photographic collections provided by some of the railroad enthusiasts in this area. Their previous book Rockford Area Railroads seems a must for all rail fans in this area.

The Rock River Valley Division is the local “chapter” of the National Model Railroad Association, NMRA. Membership in the NMRA makes one who lives in the general area of northwest Illinois and southwest Wisconsin a member of the RRVD and the Midwest Region (generally Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana) of the NMRA. The NMRA is a model railroad organization. Personally, I do not feel that model railroaders understand what the NMRA has done for them and what it continues to do for the hobby. The NMRA established the standards which allowed the various manufacturers to offer products which better conformed to prototypical configurations and insured compatibility of equipment from these different manufacturers within a scale. Without the NMRA Athearn equipment would not automatically operate with Atlas, Intermountain, and the many others without some amount of modifications by the buyer. Think about the Lionel of old; and of American Flyer. The same still exists with Marklin in HO today. These are older

examples but you should also consider DCC and our ability to use NMRA compliant decoders from numerous manufacturers and powered and controlled by the various manufactures of NMRA compliant suppliers of DCC systems and components. Remember the key is NMRA compliant. Acceptable levels of quality in the components are another matter.

I believe that NMRA lost its focus years ago and floundered in personal interests and social interaction but this has improved greatly in the past number of years. Most of us support organizations which contribute to our interests and hobby through membership in those organizations. The NMRA does offer much more to its members than I have mentioned; check it out.

Back to a recap of the recent RRVD events, the RRVD April “Meet” featured a two part coverage of the 1960s Chicago Great Western Railroad by Randy Garnhart with a great display of CGW models by Larry Whitsel.

In May the RRVD hosted the joint meet with the South Central Wisconsin Division, SCWD, of the NMRA based in Madison, WI. We were fortunate to have two great presentations. The first was on the Wisconsin & Southern, “Prototype and Modeling” by Cody Grivno of “Model Railroader” magazine. The second addressed the use of modules and association

with others to yield a much larger layout; this was presented by Bob and Mary Grigsby.



Cody Grivno talking on Wisconsin Southern prototype research before building layout.



Bob & Mary Grigsby setting their module layout before their presentation.

I want to thank all that helped to make this past season a success. I hope that visitors enjoyed the events, the presentation, and the great displays of models we had during the season. A special thanks to all who shared their models and pictures in popular vote contests. In particular I want to thank all for their great display of model tank cars in January when we had the great UTLX presentations. Also I must make a special mention of Dennis Blunt and John Mann for their displays of models finished and in progress. Finally, it was great to see the numerous displays of "open loads" at our May Meet. Thanks to all and have a great summer and 2015 -2016 season.

Editor's Note: Tyrone submitted his resignation at the board meeting following this May's meet. We want to thank Tyrone for the past year's effort and his personal drive to improve various aspects of the Rock River Valley Division.

AROUND THE ROUNDHOUSE CORNER

By Ken Reinert

After a break taken during the spring issue of the Flimzie I am back travelling throughout the Division on my quest to interview various members and travel their railroads.

This issue I visited Dennis Blunt and his Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha a wholly owned subsidiary of the CNW set for the time period of Labor Day weekend, 1956. (How is that for being specific?)

Dennis who is 81 years young grew up in Wisconsin and started his love of trains with an American Flyer O gauge train set he received for Christmas 1938 at the age of four. This set was followed by a 027 gauge Lionel train set and a 4ft x 8ft layout.

I found Dennis to be a truly renaissance man. He graduated in 1958 from the University of Wisconsin Madison with a degree in music. He stated that he wanted to be an engineer but did not like the math. He and his wife moved to Rockford in 1958 where Dennis started his career as a band director for the Rockford School System spending most of his time at Gilford High School. While continuing his career as band director, he also opened and owned hobby shops in Rockford, published as well as printed books on model railroading (he bought an offset press), and rebuilt a World War II 1943 Fairchild PT23 Army Air Force training plane. He rebuilt a second plane built for The Army Air Force in 1946, an Aeronca L 16A but received by the then Air force in 1947. He currently flies the Aeronca out of the Poplar Grove Airport. In addition to the above restorations and model

railroading he finished the interior of the house he had custom built, plus he has won awards for gardening and has a garden railroad. He was a friend of the late Linn Westcott the former editor of "Model Railroader." It was with him that he worked on the first transistor throttle which included such innovations as momentum and a feedback system to keep constant speed for a locomotive going up or down grade



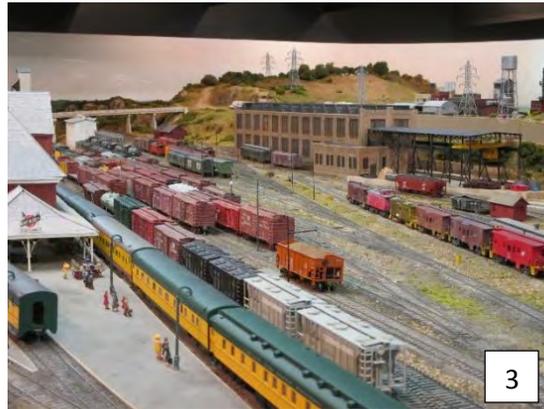
1. The original TAT IV throttle designed by Linn Westcott and Dennis Blunt

Dennis told me that he was offered a position working for Kalmbach Publishing but decided to stay in Rockford. He also published and wrote a book on early operation techniques for model railroads.



2. An example of Dennis's printing and editing techniques.

Dennis is a fan of large scenic vistas on a model railroad and enjoys seeing trains transverse the countryside and numerous small towns. He enjoys building structures which includes scratch building and kit bashing to set the scene or fit a particular space on the layout. Dennis said he also received advice on layout scenery from the late John Allen of Gorre & Daphetid fame when he visited Dennis's layout and told him to paint the ceiling black and install valances.



3. View of yard area showing hillside in the background



4. Panoramic view showing the use of kitbashed structures using both n-scale and HO scale buildings to set the scene.

Dennis holds operating sessions at least twice a month. While I was there, he was getting ready for a session that evening. The layout has large staging loops under the viewable scenery. He provides switch list and instruction as to which train runs and its

schedule per fast clock along with the work required by the train crew. He showed me a train sheet involving passenger train car swap-outs at the station seen in photo 3. Passenger car switching between trains is not seen on a more modern era model railroads.

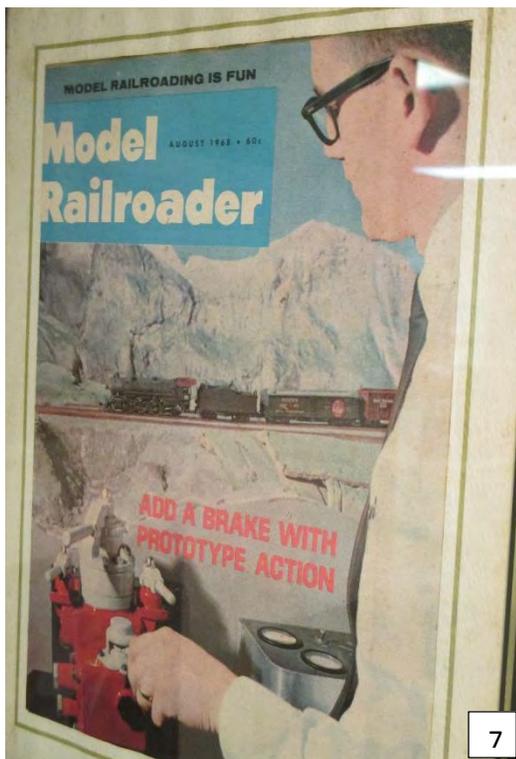


5. Another view looking across the layout.

Dennis started his current layout in 1963 even before his house was finished. He said that the back door of the house wasn't even installed. That is dedication to model railroading or just being crazy!



6. Dennis standing by first section of the layout started in 1963. He kept adding on from there.



7

7. He made the cover of the August 1965 "Model Railroader" pictured on Linn Westcott's layout.



8

8. The black engine is his original 1938 American Flyer and the brass is a custom made locomotive with every conceivable detail.



9

9. He has started a new switching layout because he likes to build structures.

At last but not least during the interview I found out that Dennis was the first editor of the "Flimzie." He got the job because he owned the printing press. He said it started in 1969. He said he got the name from Al Frease who gave in a copy of a CN&W Flimzie. Dennis says to this day no one knows exactly which spelling is correct. Who would have thought that the "Flimzie" would still exist after 46 years and be printed on a computer screen instead of paper? Thank God, because I don't have room for an offset press. See you next issue in the "Roundhouse Corner."

Contest Winners for April and May By Jim McQueeny

The contest for April was for "Stations and Depots." The winner was Bruce Giersch for his O gauge station with passenger figures with interior and lighting. He received a gift certificate from a local hobby shop for his efforts. A photos of his finally detail model work is shown below.



Station by Bruce Giersch



Two retired model railroaders solving the world's problems sitting outside waiting room.

The contest for May was held during the joint meet held with our friends from Madison. There were three contests, one for open loads, one for photographs prototype trains, and one for photographs model trains.

The open load contest ended in a tie with an On3 Dozer built by Bruce Giersch and a HO wrecked IC caboose on a flat car by Larry Whitsel. They both received gift certificates from a local hobby shops.

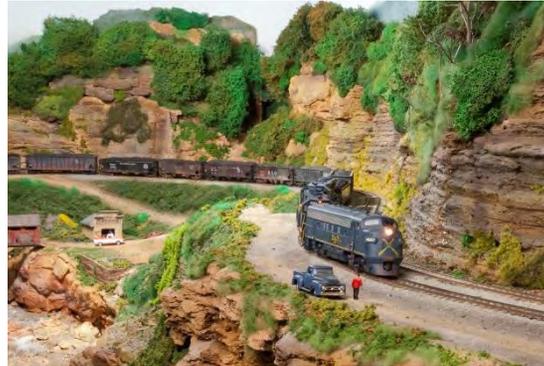


Dozer by Bruce Giersch



IC wrecked Caboose by Larry Whitsel

The photo contest for both the prototype and model was won by Joe Whinnery.



Model photo taken by Joe on his layout. It is hard to tell that this is not the prototype photo.



Prototype photo taken in Vail Arizona on the U.P. Looks like a model with the lighting so perfect.

March Show & Sale

By Doug Loy

The 2015 March Show and Sale is now history. The reworked gym of Jefferson High School certainly made the show a hit. There used to be three separate display areas, now just one huge area. I think all the vendors and displayers liked this new layout. Not all the figures are in, but it looks like we again are solvent. Thanks to all who helped over the three day period.

Again the door prizes were the hit of the kids who won them. Thanks to all people who donated them. Remember that again for next year we will be looking for prize donations.

Speaking of donations, a test track is hoped to be built for next year's show. All the two rail scales would be shown and maybe three rail tinplate track as well. Therefore a donation of 5 feet of track for each gauge would be appreciated. Power packs for the 2 rail and 3 rail would also be a nice donation. There were a few people who wanted to test their locomotives prior to buying. A layout could be used, but this may interrupt the running displays. Please let me or a board member know what you would like to donate.

Thanks again to all the volunteers who made this year Show & Sale a success. See all you next year.

Membership News

By Clarence Welte

The National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) for the Rock River Valley Division membership now stands at 92. Eighteen are Life members, one club (Blackhawk Oregon IL) and amazingly we have five who are members for over fifty years.

Help Wanted

Jim McQueeney our long standing Contest Chairman has decided to step down from his position after years of dedicated service. We all would like to thank Jim for a job well done. Now however, we are in need of a new Contest Chairman. Anyone interested in helping fill this open spot please contact a member of the board or Ken Reinert at sewtrain@foxvalley.net.

Along the Track- Meet Photos



The new large open space at the March show and sale.



Doug Loy and Don Brindle manning the NMRA booth at the show and sale.



Getting ready for the opening crowd at the show and sale. We had two entrance lines this year to speed up entry.



Large display of Chicago & Great Western freight and passenger cars by Larry Whitsel to accompany Randy Garnhart's Great Western presentation.



Open load display cars for contest at May's meet held with our friends from Madison.



Clarence Welte working the Illinois Railway Museum display at the Rockford Park District Trolley Day. It was rained out on Saturday May 30th but was held Sunday the 31st.



Young boy working the switching layout at Trolley Day in the Park District trolley station.

Don't forget the Rock River Valley Division of the NMRA meetings start again at 1:00 PM on September 13, 2015 at Midway Village in Rockford. Make sure you watch our web page rrvd-nmra.com for contest and clinic information.