



# THE TIMETABLE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE  
**ILLINOIS VALLEY DIVISION**

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION



**Volume 39, No.1 January 18, 2020**

WEBSITE: [nmra-ivd.org](http://nmra-ivd.org)

Hello IVD members,

Here it is once again, time for another gathering of IVD members to meet for fun, learning and most importantly FELLOWSHIP!

Here is what has happened since our last Meet in November and the last IVD board meeting.

The next Super Clinic will be on Feb 8<sup>th</sup> from 1pm to 4pm at the Peoria Library, North Branch. This clinic will be on weathering with Pan Pastel presented by Minton Dings. If you have freight cars or a locomotive you wish to weather, please bring it to the clinic.

The IVD Board has set Feb 1<sup>st</sup> as the date for our next IVD Potluck dinner. All members are invited plus 1 guest. The Board will provide the meat (chicken and pulled pork), ice tea and bottled water. We ask that those who attend bring a side dish or dessert. Location yet to be determined. Watch for an email blast with more information and RSVP request.

The 2020 MWR Convention planning is well underway and led by Mike Shockley. If you haven't heard, the Convention name is The Peoria Rocket. And again, we are needing IVD members to step up and volunteer for various positions before and during the convention. We are definitely looking for volunteers now, as we are getting closer to the May Convention dates. Please consider volunteering if possible. If you are interested, please contact an IVD board member or Mike Shockley, Convention Chair at [docshock31@yahoo.com](mailto:docshock31@yahoo.com).

At the last IVD Meet in November I had announced I wouldn't be running for a second term, but I received some feedback from a couple of board members and several IVD members encouraging me to run again. After some thought I have chosen to run again, in hopes that we as an organization will continue to grow and bring more of our members to participate in IVD Meets and functions. If you have any ideas or suggestions on how we can improve or what would interest you, please feel free to reach out to me or any of our board members.

Speaking of elections, ours is coming up this March and we are in need of members who are interested in serving on our board. At this time, we still have vacancies to fill and look for anyone willing to fill those positions in the interim. And we have a few positions that will be voted on this March.

Superintendent – Election

Assistant Superintendent—Vacant

Chief Clerk - Election

District 1 – Vacant

District 2 – Election

District 4 - Election

Well that's all for now, until we see each other at the meet.

Highball!!!

Jim Tatum  
IVD Superintendent

**NEXT SUPER CLINIC**  
**Weathering with Pan Pastels**  
**February 8, 2020, 1pm to 4 pm**  
**Peoria Public Library North Branch**  
**See Superintendent's Report on this page**  
**and the article on Page 8.**

Information compiled herein is presented to the membership on an "as submitted by the authors" basis, and is assumed complete and accurate by the Editor as of the "Deadline For Submissions" date for inclusion in this edition of the newsletter, as posted in the previous, most recent edition of the TIMETABLE. Statements contained in this document are strictly the beliefs and/or opinions of the writer presenting them and not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) of Soddy Daisy, TN, USA, its Midwest Region, or its Illinois Valley Division of the NMRA or their officers, agents and desig-

## DIVISION OFFICERS



### SUPERINTENDENT (2020)

Jim Tatum  
(309)-547-0312  
superintendent@nmra-ivd.org

To Be  
Appointed



### CHIEF CLERK (2020)

John Moore  
(815)324-9165  
chief.clerk@nmra-ivd.org



### PAYMASTER (2021)

Ken Burr  
(309)230-9202  
paymaster@nmra-ive.org

## TRAINMASTERS

To Be  
Appointed

### TRAINMASTER AT-LARGE (2020) - REPRESENTING District 1, Peoria & Tazewell Co.

To Be  
Appointed

### DISTRICT 2 (2020) - Grundy, Livingston, McLean & Woodford Co.



### DISTRICT 3 (2021) - Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall, Putnam & Stark Co.

David Hawkey  
(309)274-6150  
district3@nmra-ivd.org



### DISTRICT 4 (2020) - Fulton, Henry, Knox, Mercer, Rock Island & Warren Co.

Jeremy Bubb  
(309)-221-7865  
district4@nmra-ivd.org



### DISTRICT 5 (2021) - Adams, Brown, Cass, Hancock, Logan, Mason, McDonough, Menard, Morgan, Pike, Sangamon, Schuyler & Scott Co.

Michael Yurjec  
(217)-3068427

2019 Illinois Valley Division, Midwest Region, NMRA

Photos by the contributors and editor

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Contact editor at greenriverbranch1957@gmail.com

## NEWSLETTER



### TIMETABLE EDITOR

Minton Dings, MMR®  
(309)-241-4504  
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## ILLINOIS VALLEY MEETING

**January 18, 2020**

**Auditorium  
Peoria Public Library, North Branch  
3001 North Grand Parkway  
Peoria, Illinois**

**Doors Open at 12:00 pm**

**Meeting Begins at 1:00 pm**

The January meeting of the Illinois Valley Division is to be held in the auditorium of the Peoria Public Library, North Branch. The auditorium is located on the first floor, immediately to the right inside the entry doors to the west side of the building. Parking is located on the west side of the library and entry is handclapped accessible.

The library is located behind Menard's off of Allen Road on the south side of IL-6. See the map on the back cover page of this newsletter.

There will be a short business meeting followed by clinics by Alan Saatkamp on Trestles and the NMRA Achievement Program and Roger Kujawa on the IVD Social Media Programs. Contests for September will be (1) Scenery, any season (2) Photos of prototype railroading.

NOTE: The donation request of \$3.00 per member helps to defray meeting place cost.

## Upcoming 2019-2020 IVD Meetings

### Membership Meetings:

Membership meetings are held on the third Saturday of January, March, May, September and November at the Peoria Public Library, North Branch, 3001 West Grand Avenue, Peoria at 1:00 pm. Doors open at 12 noon.

### Meeting Schedule and Contests:

March 21, 2020, Scratchbuilt Structures and Kit bashed Structures

May 16, 2020, Brief Meeting at the Midwest Region Convention, Holiday Inn, East Peoria, Illinois

No Division Contest

Consider Entering a Convention Contest

### Board of Directors Meetings:

Directors will meet at the Peoria Public Library, North Branch on Saturday, **February 8 and April 11, 2020**, at 10:00 am. Members of the IVD are welcomed to attend board meetings. Members do not have a vote, but are welcomed to voice their concerns. and make suggestions

# WANDERINGS

## BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK

by Marion Brasher, MMR®

They say I have been around the block a couple of times. I guess they may be right. The NMRA has been good to me. I joined during my sophomore year in college. Time seems to fly and after 64 years, it seems like yesterday.

There have been a number of people that guided me through the years. Paul Shimota, from California, was very big on the NMRA. He was a member of almost every region of the organization. Another was Jim Hammer of St. Louis. He was a real supporter for joining the NMRA. They were real promoters.

Two Texans made an impression on me. One was Bobby Hall, who ran Hall's Hobby Shop and Hallmark Models in Dallas. She would treat every customer in her shop as a long lost family member. She also had a great memory, recognizing me each year when I would stop in. The other was a gentleman named Frank Potter. He was always ready to help you.

The 1963 national convention was held in Indianapolis, sponsored by the Central Indiana Division of the Midwest Region. Bob Bunch of Mossville and I thought we needed to start a division in our area. Meeting in the old Signal House Hobby Shop, the idea came to fruition and the Illinois Valley Division was formed on October 14, 1964.

Over the years the IVD has had its ups and downs. Early meets held in the basement of my house would have 40 to 50 people in attendance with standing room only. Another meet held in Dunlap some years later had only seven. Five were members of the Board of Directors and two members from the area.

The division grew when we included the area around Springfield and the Quad Cities. As time went on the BoD felt we were too large and these areas were split off into separate divisions. About the time of my second term as superintendent, there was no activity in these two divisions and they were reunited with the IVD. At this time we came up with IVD clothing and name tags. My philosophy was to be a unit divided into five districts of about equal size and each district would host a meet once a year. Not everyone could travel 200 miles to Quincy, so we tried to put activity in their area once a year. Clinics were to be topics that helped the new/novice members and layouts of our member from the small to large, finished to the Plywood Central. Attendance became about 24/25 at each meet. Those model railroads were an inspiration for each of us. New ideas were gleaned from what we saw.

Over the years I have been able to see and operate many of those railroads that have appeared in the model railroad press. Every time I visit a model railroad, there are new ideas on doing things. Sometimes they are old ideas with a new twist.

Yes, I have been around the block of model railroading several times.



### Midwest Region Convention

May 14-17, 2020

Holiday Inn & Suites

101 Holiday Street

East Peoria, IL 61611

(309)698-3333

#### Registration Fees:

**NMRA Member**                      **\$60.00**

**With Immediate Family**        **\$90.00**

**Non Member**                        **\$80.00**

**With Immediate Family**        **\$110.00**

**Includes 9 Mo. Rail Pass Membership**

**Clinics**

**Contests**

**Layouts**

**Prototype Industries**

**Operating Sessions**

**Banquet**

**Hotel Rate: \$129.00 plus tax**  
**Free Parking**

**Registration Form will be available in the March TIMETABLE. Also watch the [nmra-ivd.org](http://nmra-ivd.org) Website for Forms and Information**

**Hotel Reservations—Contact Hotel  
State You are Attending the NMRA Convention**

# 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

Each year the Illinois Valley Division elects half of its Board of Directors to serve two year terms. In 2020 the offices of Superintendent, Chief Clerk and Trainmasters for District 2 and 4 will be elected.

Members of the division are encouraged to stand for election for one of the offices. Although there is a Nominations Committee, individuals may run for an office by declaring the fact by submitting a simple statement of the fact to the Assistant Superintendent, who is the Nominations Chairperson, and submitting a picture and biographical statement to the editor of the newsletter, the TIMETABLE. Presently, the Editor and Nominations Chair is the same person.

Send the statement of intention, the biographical statement and picture to:

Minton Dings, Editor  
IVD TIMETABLE  
15548 SR 78  
Havana, Illinois 62644-6803

## **Job Descriptions of Officers to be Elected in 2018:**

What follows is a somewhat abbreviated list of the duties of the officers and trainmasters to be elected. See the division by-laws for a complete description.

### **Superintendent:**

1. Shall prepare the agenda for and preside over all meetings of the Division and the Board of Directors.
2. Shall sign the minutes of all business and Board meetings after the proper bodies have approved them.
3. Shall see to it that all resolutions passed at meetings are carried out and that all sections of the constitution and its by-laws are enforced.
4. Shall coordinate the work and efforts of all Officers and Trainmasters of the Division.
5. Shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.
6. Shall provide for representation of the Division on the Midwest Region Board of Directors, either by personal attendance at Region Board meetings, by written proxy sent to the Secretary of the Midwest Region, or by appointment of a voting member of the Division to serve as Division representative to the Region Board of Directors. While serving on the Region Board of Directors, the Superintendent or designated appointee will respect the directives and wishes of the majority of the Division Board on matters of importance to the well being of the Division. It is the responsibility of the Region Board member to appraise the Division Board on

such matters.

7. Shall have the power to appoint up to five additional Trainmasters for service on special committees, subject to Board approval.
8. Shall have the power to act in emergency situations in place of any Division Officer who is unable to perform his/her duties, such action to last only until the Board can meet to make interim arrangements.

### **Chief Clerk:**

1. Shall keep a permanent record or copy of all minutes of Board and business meetings.
2. Shall compile a complete and up-to-date list of the names and addresses of all voting members.
3. Shall report all communications received by him/her to the Division.
4. Shall perform all such secretarial duties as provided for in the constitution and by-laws and as may be assigned by the Board from time to time.

### **Trainmaster (Districts 2 and 4):**

***District 2 Trainmaster represents members from Grundy, Livingston, McLean and Woodford Counties.***

***District 4 Trainmaster represents members from Fulton, Henry, Knox, Mercer, Rock Island and Warren Counties.***

1. Each shall be elected to represent the members of the respective areas of the Division on the Board. Not more than one Trainmaster shall be elected from each district, however, each district or area shall elect a Trainmaster, regardless of the number of Officers or appointees from that area. If, for any reason, no one wishes to run for Trainmaster of a given area, then the Superintendent may appoint a member from that area to serve as Trainmaster, with all powers and rights of an elected Trainmaster. If no one within an area will accept an appointment, the Superintendent will appoint a Trainmaster-at-Large to represent that area, with all powers and rights of an elected Trainmaster.
2. The District Trainmaster shall be responsible to coordinate the place of the meeting, clinics and layouts on tour for the annual meeting in their district. The trainmaster may appoint a member(s) to assist in the planning for the meet. The trainmaster may request the assistance of the Superintendent or other officers for resources available to complete the plans for the meet. The trainmaster shall report to the Superintendent the plans for the meet.

**ELECTION BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENTS and PHOTOS**  
**DUE February 14, 2020**

Members of the Illinois Valley Division who wish to run for election to the Division Board of Directors need to submit their Biographical Statements and a Picture to Minton Dings, Editor, IVD TIMETABLE, 15548 State Route 78, Havana, Illinois 62644-6803.

Biographical statements may be submitted electronically as a Word document with a picture as a separate attachment. Written submissions are acceptable with a picture. Pictures which have to be scanned produce a lesser quality image, making electronic submission preferable.

Offices open for election are listed in the superintendent's column on page 1 and position descriptions are found on page 4 of this newsletter.

**MAILED TIMETABLE SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE IN JANUARY**

Make checks to Illinois Valley Division, NMRA, Send checks to Minton Dings, 15548 State Route 78, Havana, IL 62644-6803

**Subscription for one year, five issues, is \$10.00**

**PERSONAL AND BUSINESS ADVERTISEMENTS DUE IN JANUARY**

Make checks to Illinois Valley Division, NMRA. Send to Minton Dings, 15548 State Route 78, Havana, IL 62644-6803

**Website Timetable Both**

**Personal:**

Business Card Size: \$10.00 \$5.00 \$12.50

**Business:**

Business Card Size: \$20.00 \$12.50 \$30.00

Business Card X2: \$30.00 \$25.00 \$45.00

Assistance with design of new ads is available.



Minton Dings, MMR®  
 15548 State Route 78  
 Havana, Illinois 62644  
 (309)241-4504

**GREEN RIVER BRANCH**  
**Kentucky Division**  
**Illinois Central Railroad, 1957**

**Affiliated with:**  
 Illinois Valley Division, NMRA  
 National Model Railroad Association  
 Illinois Central Historical Society  
 Illinois Central Historical Association  
 GM&O Historical Association  
 RealRail, Bradenton, Florida

e-mail: [greenriverbranch1957@gmail.com](mailto:greenriverbranch1957@gmail.com)

**2020 DIVISION MEETING and POPULAR VOTE CONTEST SCHEDULE**

**January 18, 2020**

Scenery—Any Season  
 Photos—Prototype

**March 21, 2020—Election Meeting**

Scratchbuilt—Structures  
 Kitbashed—Structures

**May 14-17, 2020**

No Division Contests  
 Regional Convention, Peoria Rocket, East Peoria

**September 19, 2020**

Hand Laid Track and Track Structures  
 Buildings—On Line

**November 21, 2020**

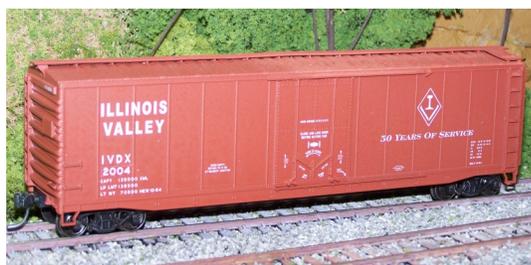
Steam Locomotives  
 Traction—Locomotives and Cars

**50TH ANNIVERSARY HOPPER AND BOXCARS PRICE REDUCED**

The Fifty Year Anniversary cars are still available. If you are considering purchasing one or more of these IVD cars, you may purchase them at division meet or at area train shows where the IVD has a NMRA/IVD promotional display. There are now

only about 17 hoppers and 53 boxcars left. Both cars are for sale at the division meetings. The cost are reduced to \$15.00 each.

Those who cannot be at the meet can order the cars through Tom Ludlam at the McLean Depot, 200 East Dixie Road, McLean, IL, 61754; telephone 309-244-5900. The cost by mail is \$15.00 for each car plus \$5.00 shipping, or \$6.50 for shipping of two or three cars.



# The Clickety-Clack is Back !!

by Gary Baker

.....18 years ago when my grandson was three years old, he became interested in Thomas the Tank Engine so we bought him a small wooden set. Later, as his interest grew, we made the move to HO and built a starter layout on a 4 x 8 sheet of plywood in the basement. Of course we had to have some Thomas HO pieces at first, but the layout quickly expanded to non-Thomas related diesels, a steam loco, sidings, and several cars. Then one day we received our monthly issue of Model Railroader and it had a DVD inside showing how to build a 4 x 8 landscaped layout step by step. He about wore out the DVD watching it so we built the Madison Central and it now occupies a prime piece of real estate on the larger Culpepper & Western RR.

As the C&W Railroad grew and took over more and more of the basement, the first major investment was a GML walk around cab control system with memory so we could plug and unplug our throttles as we followed our trains around the layout. The layout was divided into 65 blocks with 4 throttles and the system worked very well. Then came the car card system and the fast clocks so we could organize switch lists, run the trains on schedules, and use the passing sidings for meets & passes.

DCC was in its infancy then, but it was improving by leaps and bounds so eventually I took the plunge and converted a few engines to run on specific DCC sections of the layout while the main lines with the largest number of engines stayed on DC. We started with a tethered MRC system and switched over to wireless when the technology became available. The slow conversion of the rest of the motive power took a few years but after spending a lot of money, the block switch distraction was gone and we could finally run the trains the way we always wanted to. Now all we had to worry about was the real possibility of having head on collisions with our trains, right? .....

..... **WRONG !!** .....

About a year ago I started having trouble with communications and losing control of engines all over the layout. I checked and rechecked all the connections and wiring and then added more connection points between the 14 gauge buss and the track, thinking that after all the years, corrosion was finally taking its toll on the rail joiners and disrupting the digital signals. The problem still persisted so I started a routine of regularly cleaning the track and engine wheels, but even with regular cleanings, the engines would still only run for a short period before the headlights would start flickering and I'd start having problems again. And to add insult to injury, the amount of gunk on the engine wheels seemed to be getting worse the more I cleaned everything. All of a sudden the 600 square feet of layout was turning into a maintenance Frankenstein that really reduced the fun of running trains. WHERE was all the gunk coming from?

Then one day I was running a train on a long straightaway and it occurred to me how quiet the cars were as they moved down the track. I remembered that when everything was new, the pleasant clickety-clack of the wheels going over the rail joints was distinct and it was amazing how well it mimicked the prototype .... but now it was quiet.

Then it dawned on me. A quick calculation revealed that a 33 inch car wheel makes 2264 revolutions in one trip around the 3.7 scale miles of main line and I had never cleaned a single car wheel !! ... In a moment of panic, I realized that with 191 cars on the layout and 8 wheels per car, I had a huge problem on my hands, and after looking at just a few cars my worst fears were realized. Almost all of the wheels were caked with the same gunk, some almost all the way up to the flanges, so with all the cleaning fluid I was putting on the track, the car wheels were just laying the gunk back down on the track as fast as I could clean it off. I was fighting a losing battle.

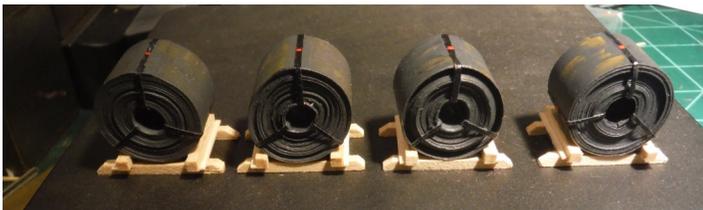
So for the next several months I undertook the Herculean task of cleaning every wheel on every car. First I would scrape the heavy gunk off with an exacto knife and then scrub the rest off with Q-tips and micro brushes dipped in goo gone and 90% IPA. The plastic wheels were by far the worst so as I cleaned them I made a list so I could replace them with metal wheels as funds became available. Finally, after a jumbo box of Q-tips, untold numbers of micro brushes, nearly a whole bottle of goo gone, and a half bottle of 90% IPA, all of the car wheels were cleaned.

To keep the track up to snuff I decided to invest in the CMX tank car cleaning system which is a heavy brass tank car filled with cleaning fluid that continuously drips a controlled amount of fluid on the cleaning pad as it rides around the layout. I was amazed at how much gunk it cleaned off the track after just ONE trip around the main line! The cost of the car was a hard pill to swallow, but after using it for just a few days I wished I had done it sooner because of all the tunnels and hard to get at areas on my layout. After running it around the layout and on all the sidings about a half dozen times, the pad was staying pretty clean so now that the car wheels are clean, I'll start out with monthly track cleanings and adjust the frequency based on what I see on the cleaning pads. I'm a big fan of record keeping and with almost 200 cars on the layout it was a necessity, so I documented the wheel cleaning on the back of each car card and now I'm working on developing a system to periodically clean small groups of cars at a time and then track the car histories so I don't overlook any. That way I can stay ahead of the gunk and keep the ongoing maintenance at a reasonable level.

So after months of operating frustration and many nights spent cleaning years of gunk off 1528 car wheels, I learned the hard way that not only is clean track and clean engine wheels vital to problem free operation of DCC systems, clean wheels on the cars is just as vital. Now, with the CMX cleaning car and a plan to stay ahead of the gunk on my fleet of cars, I'm happy to say that the clickety-clack is back on my railroad ..... and running trains is fun again.

# COILED STEEL LOADS

By Larry Nelson



More open loads is a good thing, as Martha Stewart might say. In this article I am going to show an easy way to build coiled steel loads. I think this method produces a much more interesting looking load than some that I have purchased. If you look at pictures of steel coils, you will see that most are almost perfectly aligned on the side of the roll. That look in HO scale isn't at all interesting. No coiling of the roll is at all discernable in HO scale. I kept looking for pictures which showed a much more uneven side of the coil. Hooray! Now I can say this is prototypical. It is definitely more interesting to look at and I think more realistic looking.

The average person, and I think that I'm average, will only spend a second or less looking at each car in a train. It doesn't matter if the train is moving or sitting still. However, some cars will grab our attention. Those cars have something interesting to look at. It might be an unusual paint scheme or maybe graffiti. Many times it is that open load that catches our eye. As a modeler I think it is great when someone pauses to take a second to look at something that I have built. It is even greater when someone asks me, "How did you do that?"

Let's get started building some coils. Although these coils appear to be steel, they are really just rolled copy paper that I salvaged from the waste basket. It does not matter if there are misspelled words or spilled coffee on it. Start by cutting several strips of paper long ways from the sheet. I made mine a scale four and a half feet wide. There is more than one way to do this. I cut mine with a hundred year old paper cutter which I salvaged from the trash. I guess somebody did not know it could be easily sharpened! You could cut yours with scissors or with a sharp knife and one of those straight line drawing thingies with numbers on it. Now that you have got your strips cut, it is time to start rolling the coil. I used a one quarter inch dowel rod to wrap the paper around. Start by making one and half wraps around the rod. I used a small dab of carpenter's glue at this point to keep the roll from unrolling back into the center later when the dowel is removed. Be careful to not glue the

paper to the dowel. Give this a couple of minutes to dry. Now finish wrapping this strip and lightly glue it at the end. Let it dry. Start a new strip by gluing it butted up to the first strip. Let it dry. Continue wrapping strips until you have a coil about six scale feet in diameter. Remove the dowel rod from the center of the coil. (If you have not permanently glued the coil on it!) Make as many coils as you want for your load. Next, paint the coils with flat black spray paint. Let this dry overnight. Then, using my secret formula of acrylic paint, finish the top coat to make it look like steel. This is the most important step to make the coils believable. What? You don't know my secret formula? Things are rough all over! You could spend years experimenting like I did. Or, you can try this, some black and some rust with just a couple drops of silver. When it dries, it is like magic. It catches light just like steel. When this has dried, I add banding which I make using black electrical tape. Clean a spot on your cutting mat or a piece of glass. Put a length of tape on the clean spot and cut it with a very sharp knife. Keep the strips as narrow as possible. Throw away any strips that are too wide. I used three bands, evenly spaced through the center hole and around the outside of the coil. Using a tooth pick (available at your favorite restaurant) put a tiny spot of red paint on each band to simulate a band clamp. Add shipping labels made from tiny pieces of paper. I



also noticed that pictures of coils had some numbers painted on them. I used medium gray paint to simulate these markings which looked like they had been hand painted at the foundry. This finished the coils.

Now build cradles to attach to the deck of your flatcar or gondola. Make sure these are set so that the coil will not roll forward or backward when the train starts or stops. Add forty link to the inch chain through the center of the coil down to the car so that the coil stays on the car. You are now finished. Quit reading.



## UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MODEL RAILRODERS

**Great Midwest Train Show**, Sunday, January 12, February 9 and March 8, 2020, 9am to 3 pm., DuPage County Fairgrounds, 2015 West Manchester Road, Wheaton, IL. Admission: \$7.00, children under 12 free. Free parking, handicapped accessible.

**La Crosse 29th Annual Great Tri-State Rail Sale**, Saturday, January 25, 2020, 9am to 3pm, La Crosse Center, 2nd & Pearl Streets, La Crosse, WI. Admission: \$5.00, children under 12 free. Free parking, handicapped accessible.

**Great Train Show**, Saturday & Sunday, February 1-2, 10am to 4pm, St. Charles Convention Center, 1 Convention Center Plaza, St Charles, MO. Admission \$11.00 Saturday, \$10.00 Sunday, children under 12 free. No Parking information, Handicapped Accessible.

**Peoria Train Fair**, Sunday, February 16, 2020, 10 am to 3 pm, Illinois Central College, Rt. US-24, east of IL-116, East Peoria. Admission \$3.00, children under 12 free with an adult. Free parking, handicap accessible. The IVD portable layout and NMRA display table are planned to be there.

**Springfield Railroad Society Train Fair**, Sunday, March 15, 2020, 10am to 4pm, Orr Building, Illinois State Fairgrounds, 66 4H Road, Springfield, IL. Admission: \$5.00, children under 11 free; Early bird admission (9am) \$10.00. Free parking, handicapped accessible.

**Urbana Train Show**, Saturday & Sunday, March 28-29, 2020, Lincoln Square Village Mall, 100 West High Street, Urbana, IL. Admission: Free.



**NMRA CONVENTION 2020**

**GATEWAY 2020**

**July 12—18, 2020**

**St. Louis, Missouri**

**CONVENTION: Hilton St. Louis Hotel at the Ball Park**

**TRAIN SHOW: America's Center, St. Louis, July 17-19, 2020**

**More Information:**  
[info@gateway2020.org](mailto:info@gateway2020.org)

## PAN PASTELS WEATHERING SUPERCLINIC

1:00 to 4:00 pm, Saturday, February 8, 2020

The clinic will held in the auditorium of the Peoria Public Library, North Branch. Participants need only bring freight, passenger cars or locomotives they want to weather. Participants who have



their own Pan Pastels which they would like to use during the clinic are encouraged to bring them. Instructional handouts will be provided.

# TO HELIX or NOT TO HELIX

by Minton Dings, MMR®

In the previous version of the Green River Branch of the Illinois Central RR, I constructed it to be a double deck model railroad. It was built in a small space, barely 8' by 14' and large enough for only two people to be operators. In order to have two levels, there had to be a partial helix to gain elevation in the tight space of it's around the walls design.

The latest version of the Green River Branch is built in a 13.5' by 26' area, slightly more than 2.5 times the available square footage. This version of the GRB is a three-level extended version of the above model. With this space I had second thoughts about using a helix.

The following are my thoughts about the whys and why nots of the use of a helix. This is not a tutorial on how to build helixes. I might try that another day. But I will give information on where to go to find instructions on building a helix if you would so choose.

## What is a Helix and a Nolix?

Although I am certain that most of us know what a helix is in model railroad terms, I want to be certain that readers and I are understanding the same concept of what is being presented.

A helix is a structure upon which track is mounted in an ascending (or descending) circular pattern, stacked to gain height to facilitate continuous operation between levels of a model railroad.

A new term to me is "nolix." A nolix is the presence of track which ascends or descends between levels of a model railroad without the aid of a helix. The best example of a nolix I know is my Green River Branch, ICRR. It has three levels, each separated by 12 inches in height. Each level is connected by a long ascending/descending track without the aid of a helix. The levels 1 to 2 and 2 to 3 ascending/descending track are about 33 feet, 6 inches long, or about 3% average rise.

The thought of a helix was never a part of the track plan, since the branchline represents the climbing track through a steep narrow valley to a mine at the end of the track. The 13 and a half by 26-foot modeled area made the nolix possible.

## Why Have a Helix

A multi layered layout without the possibility of a long climbing track is a prime candidate for a helix. My suggestion is that a helix needs to be built with a 27" minimum radius track curvature. That requires a 5-foot by 5-foot (HO) diameter circle of roadbed and track within or beside the layout.

My helix experience with a 24" radius track in my previous layout proved the curvature to be too tight. Trains had to be very short. Longer trains with eight or more cars on a 3% track proved to be too much for a single engine to pull. Additional power on the head end in the helix would from time to time cause a "string line" derailment. I did not have room for a 5x5 foot helix in my 8x14 foot layout room.

For the modeler who wants more distance for running trains and operational opportunities, a helix may provide benefits in flexibility in design. An interesting design for a helix I have seen is a helix open to the outside. It began as a wide circle of track at the bottom with ever closer curvature to the top. The helix had rocky hillside scenery.

## When a Helix is not Feasible

There are other opportunities for a multi-level model railroad when a helix is not practical. The railroad can be designed with two non-connected levels, each operated separately. There are designs for shelf railroads which use a track/train elevator at one or both ends of the shelf. This design could be adapted to any configuration of a railroad.

A modeler with a small layout probably should put their efforts into development and detailing of their single level railroad.

## Drawbacks of a Helix

When considering building a helix, there are several considerations which should be made. First is the space consumed as discussed above, whether it be on the layout or the designated space allowed in the layout room. Another is the cost of construction materials and track and the time needed to construct the helix. A small layout may have more track distance within the helix than on either level of the layout.

Access to the center is necessary unless the helix is open to the outside. A center entry helix can be an issue to those who are handicapped or in their later years who have less flexibility and are less able to crawl under the layout to enter the helix for maintenance or rerailing a derailed train.

For those anticipating having operating sessions with an enclosed helix, there needs to be the expectation that operators will be concerned about their train because it takes a considerable amount of time for a train to ascend or descend the grade of the helix.

Locomotives operating in a helix need to be powerful enough to handle the desired size train, probably equipped with an axle with traction tires. Wherein a locomotive with insufficient power will stall ascending a helix, the same locomotive will become a runaway if it does not have enough weight and traction to control the decent. On the nolix ascending/descending tracks of the Green River Branch, I double head eleven car trains of coal hoppers with GP7s or GP9s to provide the necessary traction. Imagine an uncontrolled decent within an enclosed helix.

## Some Final Thoughts

Helixes are here to stay for those with a layout without the necessary distances available to climb at an acceptable rate of ascent/decent, 3% or lesser grade and space available to build such a layout. Some modelers may choose to use that climbing distance for more level trackage. To Quote Nicholas Kalis in the Aril 2004 Layout Design Special Interest Group (LDSIG), "Simply stated, try a helix if you have a mind to but be aware of their sizable drawbacks and you will be more likely to have a satisfactory experience with your helix."

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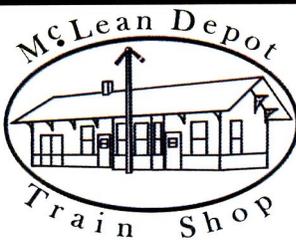
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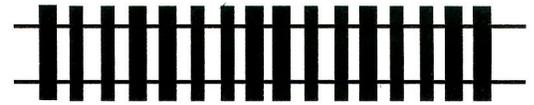
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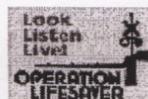
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