

The

Relay

A publication of the Chesapeake Division of the Mid-Eastern Region of the NMRA

Volume 7 Issue 3

View From The Cupola

Summer 2017

By Bill Ataras



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Summer is upon us once again. Actually, the length of daylight has already begun to shrink. As much as I like summer, I'm already looking forward to the time a few months from now when the available daylight will no longer provide an excuse for not visiting the layout room and workshop.

Since I'm still a "working stiff", I wasn't able to attend the Canton Railroad Shop Tour earlier this month. But I've been copied on several emails by folks who did attend, and everyone said that had a very enjoyable and enlightening time.

I can recall a tour I took of the N&W Brewster yard and facilities in the late 60's. Unfortunately, my photos of the event, in 35mm format, are still packed in our Indiana home. If I had them here, I'd be able to should you a couple of interesting shots.

We were walking through the paint shop. Dean Freytag picked up a paint mask and walked out to a car side to show us all how he put his initials on freight cars. He was holding a "DF" stencil against the side of a boxcar! He really was a lot of fun to be with.

Later, we saw a dromedary shaped flat car. That's right. I was a car with a very big, walk under standing up hump in the middle. It seems that two crews were working opposite ends of a storage track, and thought there were other cars on the track in addition to the cars they were pushing. When their engines met some resistance in moving the cars, they thought that it was simply because the brakes hadn't been released. So, they just opened their throttles.

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And that's how the flat car in the middle became shaped like the St. Louis Arch! And two crews had some unexpected time off without pay.

All of which causes me to open a discussion on a possible Division activity that we may want to consider. I've been asked by Dick Schwanka of the Harford County modular group if Chesapeake Division would like to participate in a joint mini-convention some time after Labor Day. I'll be presenting this as new business at our Board Meeting on June 28. It's likely that one of our Internet surveys will check the membership to assess their interest.

I hope to see you soon.

Bill



IT'S TOUGH TO
SAY GOODBYE!

There come a time when everyone needs to "call it quits" and I am afraid that that time has come for me. I have been the current Editor of **The Relay** since the winter of 2010, and I have come to the decision that it is time to put away my eye shade, sleeve garters and type setting machine and retire.

I have really enjoyed being your Editor. The work has been confusing and difficult at times, but all in all I have had an enjoyable time. It has been fun to see what everyone else is doing within the Chesapeake Division, and I hope that each of you has gotten as much out of our quarterly **Relay** Newsletter as I have publishing it for you.

I know that the Board is actively trying to find a replacement, and I hope that one or two of you will step up to the plate and take on the job. If you have had any experience with a publishing program, the learning curve is easy. In fact, you may want to create your own template with different graphics, fonts and layout styles as I did when I took over. For those of you who are working toward you

MMR or other designations, it is a great way to get points!

With this job behind me, my wife and I can put the finishing touches on our 40th Wedding Anniversary vacation to Iceland in August.

Best regards to you all,

John

Membership, Subscriptions and Article Submissions

To become a member of the Chesapeake Division of the NMRA, please contact any Board Member, fill out the form for a free Railpass (page 20) or join us at our next Divisional meeting on Sunday,

To receive electronic versions of The Relay, send an e-mail message to Russell Forte at Web.chesdivmernmra@gmail.com

If you would prefer to receive printed copies, please send a check for \$6 (payable to the Chesapeake Division, MER, NMRA)

Dave Arday
P.O. Box 428
Fulton, MD. 20759-0428

To submit an article for future publication in The Relay, please send it to the Newsletter editor,

**No later than
Monday, September 18th**

MY SQUARE FOOT DIORAMA

By Martin K. ("Ken") Van Horn



Those who have read my past columns on On30 narrow gauge model railroading will know that I look forward to the Spring and Fall Mid-Hudson On30 Meets in Gardiner, N.Y.. Every meet I endeavor to have a new loco project to display and run on a Bachmann E-Z track "layout" put together by my friends, Wes White from New Jersey and Larry Rickert of Brooklyn, N.Y..

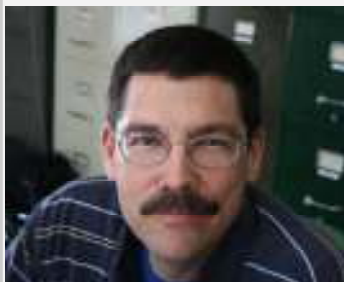
This year, however, I was laid up with a leg infection in January and February that kept me away from the workbench. So as the April date of the Spring meet approached, I lamented to my traveling buddy, John Weigel, that I had no new project for the meet. He said "Why don't you build something for the square foot diorama contest?". This was announced at the October, 2016 meet, the challenge to build anything you want on a 12" x 12" square. I never enter contests, saying I am a "muddler", not a modeler, and maybe that was proved out since my diorama won no award. So



with 1 week to go, I cut a one-foot square of 1/2" plywood, and a piece of 8-3/4" radius quarter of a circle of Homasote roadbed. My intent was to build a n On30 Traction diorama that would be incorporated into the streetcar line I am adding to my layout. The minimum radius prototype curve used by most traction companies was 35', hence 8-3/4" in 1/4" scale. The remaining area around the roadbed was covered with 1/2" Polystyrene foam. A curving 25' wide road would cut through the middle of the track arc, and a car stop shelter would be adjacent to the grade crossing. The photos show the result. The diorama was one of 11 entered in the contest. I believe it's the first time narrow gauge traction was displayed at the Mid-Hudson that had working overhead trolley. The diorama will "run", the length of the trip being 3 car lengths of a Bachmann 4-wheel "bobber" streetcar! Contest entries were numbered so no one was supposed to know who built what. Votes cast by attendees determined the winner. So while I did not win, I heard one comment of kudos: "Anyone who has the guts to make working catenary has my vote!" Well, technically it's not catenary, it's simple trolley overhead, but I'll take it!



Ken



MID-EASTERN REGION BYLAWS VOTE

Re-Print Provided By
Kurt Thompson
Vice President MER

So, this happened. Last Fall President PJ Mattson appointed a committee to review and recommend necessary and desirable changes to the MER Bylaws. The committee is chaired by Director Ken Montero and assisted by Director Martin Brechbiel, Business Manager Bob Price, and Treasurer Brian Kampschroer. The committee proved to have excellent synergy, with Ken's law experience, Martin's editorial expertise, Bob's practical knowledge of how everything actually works and Brian's previous bylaws experiences and corporate memory. We met three times in person for at least four hours each time, had two conference calls of one hour or longer, exchanged hundreds of emails and used reams of paper printing drafts of revisions.

On April 22, the committee met with the Board of Directors of the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA, Inc. and explained in detail, line-by-line, the many changes the committee presented for adoption. Some changes are necessary to bring the Bylaws into compliance with the statutes of Maryland, where the MER is incorporated. Quite a few are to simply streamline the running of the organization and to recognize that we are operating in the modern age. By far the greatest number of changes were to correct formatting, syntax and editorial errors that accumulated over the years and to better organize the various Bylaws articles and sections. After more than five hours and just a small number of changes, the Board of Directors recommended the committee's findings for a vote of the membership on the next ballot. Even after all that, a later special vote on April 30 was required to eliminate some redundancies.

If the membership of the MER approves the Bylaws as amended, the committee will then ensure compliance of the MER Executive Handbook with the mandated changes. Much of the work on the Handbook the committee found easier to do as it labored on the Bylaws, so these are nearly ready to be presented to the board for a vote, following the approval of the Bylaws by the membership. It is possible that by the Susquehannock 2017 MER convention in October, the Mid-Eastern Region will finally be ready to work for you in the 21st century as a modern, streamlined and efficient organization.

So, please look for more information in the print and electronic versions of The Local this Summer, read and consider carefully the new Bylaws and then vote **YES** on the revised version when you receive your ballot in a few months.



The Canton Railroad Tour

Edited by Rick Uskert

*Contributions by Tom Casey, Alan Frame, Jeff Kuta and Travers Stavac
Photographs by Alan Frame, Mike Shylanski, John Darlington, and Rick Uskert*



On June 9th, over 20 members of the Chesapeake and other Divisions were warmly welcomed, regarded as ambassadors for the railroad industry and treated to a phenomenal tour of the Canton Railroad office, yard, and shop facilities at the railroad's Port of Baltimore headquarters. We were greeted by President and CEO John Magness who gave an excellent talk on the current operations of the railroad; its current challenges from an economic geographical standpoint; and graciously answering all of the questions of our tour group.



LEARNING THE HISTORY—Darlington Photo



JOHN MAGNESS—Uskert Photo



NEW OFFICE BUILDING—Darlington Photo

John, who joined the Canton from CSX in 1995, detailed the railroad's assets simply: (2) SW1200; (2) SW1500 and (2) first generation GP7s; no revenue freight cars. The railroad currently has 24 employees and operates five days per week, primarily during daylight hours. Over the years, a building for maintenance of engines and equipment and a new office building, located directly under the soon to be rebuilt Harbor Tunnel Thruway, has been added. In the maintenance shop we saw GP7U #1364 and a ballast spreader. It can hold one and maybe 2 engines, with room for tools and supplies.



MAINTENANCE SHED— Uskert Photo



SERVICING ON THE GP7U - Frames Photo

The locomotive fleet appears to be immaculate and well-maintained. The locomotive paint scheme continues to use the red and white cross insignia denoting its location in the State of Maryland. In addition, it includes a large silhouette of the Baltimore skyline, further pinpointing its headquarters in the City of Baltimore, and the words “Canton Railroad Pulling for Maryland” with an emblem of the Maryland state flag.



THE NEW PAINT SCHEME—Shylanski Photo

The Canton Railroad (reporting marks CTN), situated at interchanges with the Norfolk Southern (75% of traffic) and CSX (25%) Railroads, handles a diverse set of cargoes such as propane, lumber, grains, dry cement, finished products, paper, and metals for a number of facilities at Baltimore, including the

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GOING FOR A LOAD—Shylanski Photo

Seagirt container port, Point Breeze, the Clinton Street terminal, and Rolling Mill Road. The largest customer, Boise Cascade, takes about 7 centerbeam flatcars of lumber for local home improvement stores and lumberyards. Most of the rest of the 20 active customers are distribution business, with virtually no manufacturing, which contrasts with 25 years ago, when most customers were manufacturing facilities. At one time, NS wanted CTN to pick up interchange cars at Bayview, but found that the interruptions to yard switching was disruptive, and went back to delivering cars to the NS-CTN interchange track.



A YARD PERSPECTIVE—Darlington Photo

The Canton Railroad owns about half of the former (reconfigured for Fort McHenry Tunnel) B&O Penn Mary yard and operates the entire yard. Although the yard contains tracks which are owned by CSX, Canton Railroad has the responsibility to maintain the tracks throughout the yard. Rail maintenance projects are staggered so that the trackage doesn't age all at once. During our visit, track maintenance was actively being conducted on the normally used #7 track for access to the port. Access was shifted to #4 track. They own and maintain the crossing (diamonds) with the NS at the south end of the yard. The diamonds periodically require welding of the rails especially near the rail intersections for ear. An old diamond was found nearby in the weeds, which are sprayed for about quarterly.



CAST OFF—Uskert Photo

that will translate into.

The area was gentrifying, and the 'Enterprise' needed to prevent loss of truck access to the terminal. The continuing encroachment of the gentrified neighborhood of Canton has created a challenging operating and public relations environment. The Railroad has attempted to alleviate the concerns of nearby residents, which includes noise generation and roadway congestion arising from their daytime-only operations. Flashing signals well ahead of the grade crossing on Boston Street were erected a few years ago giving drivers an opportunity to detour



OUR GUIDE, Tyler Horner, Rail Coordinator - Darlington Photo



DOUBLE DIAMONDS—Uskert Photo



LEAD INTO THE DOUBLE DIANONDS—Frames Photo

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away from the grade crossing at times when switching movements are occurring. Signage in this area was enacted in a confusing manner, so its effectively is significantly reduced.

After Mr. Magness' discussion, we were greeted by Rail Coordinator Tyler Horner who proceeded to give us a guided tour of the Penn-Mary yard. The Rail Coordinator at Canton Railroad serves a dual-hatted purpose in that he serves in the Yardmaster role as well as fulfilling a Customer Service role. When he mentioned that he heard that a person was modeling the railroad, one of our local members responded, 'I am.'



TYLER HORNER ON TOUR— Uskert Photo



FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE— Uskert Photo

The Canton RR possesses great modeling potential, right down to the small yard with a grade crossing at one end and a double diamond at the other, enabling Norfolk Southern track to transit to one of the marine terminals it serves. With a six mile length, a large compression factor is not required. Ed David, our local Canton RR modeler responding to Mr. Horner, can attest to this fact, having built most of the RR in his basement. A tour of Ed's railroad can be viewed on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCfGVbg43g&t=137s>), thanks to Fred Eisen and M B Klein's.



MAINTENANCE OF WAY— Frames Photo

Stepping back from the current period, modeling in the steam or transition, pre-1950 era, would create a small railroad with a lot of operating potential. It can only be guessed the disbelief of the highway engineer who was planning the roads in the area when he saw all of the railroad tracks which had to build around. The overpass immediately adjacent to the diamonds had an elevated intersection with stoplights--an interesting modeling detail. Researchers should contact the Baltimore Museum of Industry to review railroad records prior to 1987.



LIQUID PROPANE TANKERS—Uskert Photo



CLEARANCE POINT TIES—Uskert Photo

While hiking through the yard under Mr. Horner's guidance, a string of large tank cars for storing liquid propane was observed, along with a pair of flat cars loaded with rectangular aluminum billets from Russia, each set weighting approximately 160,000 pounds. The yard, with what appears to be slag ballast, has steel ties placed every third tie or so on the curved track at the south end of the yard. Yard tracks are painted yellow at the tie signifying the clearance point as the FRA assesses hefty fines for placing cars within the clearance area of turnouts.

Mr. Horner's time spent talking with us was greatly appreciated, giving us the insight in the problems of running a railroad these days. Everyone with the railroad went out of their way to answer any questions we had. Being allowed to venture in the yard with active switching going on was another treat. How often can one be allowed into an active railroad shop and have the luck to photograph the inside engine compartment? Compliments to the railroad on how clean the locomotives were out in the yard and a grand thank you for the opportunities.

Rick



Railfanning the Canton Railroad with a Drone

by John Stralka

On Friday June 9th, 2017 the Canton Railroad in Baltimore, MD hosted a group of NMRA members from the Chesapeake Division for a tour of their headquarters and adjacent Penn-Mary Yard. I would like to thank Rick Uskert, Assistant Superintendent of the Chesapeake Division, for arranging this rare opportunity. With the heightened security in the post-9/11 era, it is not often that modelers and railfans can get such phenomenal access to an operating railroad in a major city!

Our tour started off with an introduction to the railroad, along with a discussion of its history and operations, given by the Canton Railroad's President and CEO John Magness. He was extremely knowledgeable and was an engaging speaker. After a question and answer session, Rail Coordinator Tyler Horner took the group for a tour of Penn-Mary Yard. Tyler also provided a great deal of information about the day-to-day operations of the railroad. The group was able to capture some great photographs because it was a gorgeous day.

After the tour was over, I inquired about the possibility of taking some aerial railfan shots from my recently acquired DJI Mavic Pro quadcopter drone. I was fully prepared for a negative reaction, but, to my pleasant surprise, John and Tyler approved my request! With my friends and fellow modelers Jim Beuchel and Gary Boardley, we set up a base of flight operations right outside the yard office and got the drone airborne.

The recently released DJI Mavic Pro (<http://www.dji.com/mavic>) is an incredible piece of technology. It comes from the relatively long legacy of the DJI Phantom line, which are somewhat high-end, ready-to-fly hobbyist quadcopters meant for taking aerial photographs and videos. The best feature of the Mavic Pro is that it can be easily folded up into a compact package for convenient transport and storage. The gimbal-stabilized 12 megapixel camera is capable of shooting 4k videos at 24 frames per second). The handheld wireless controller has a display for crucial flight parameters, while the camera is controlled by an attached smart phone, which also displays the drone camera's field-of-view. The drone is extremely easy to fly and provides a rock-solid base for photography even when buffeted by wind gusts. I get about 20 minutes of flying time for a single battery. I typically land before the battery has less than 33% of charge left. I had three batteries on hand for this outing. I'm still learning how to use this system, but have found that most of the work is in operating the camera. While flying drones is easy, I recommend having a friend with you as a "copilot" to monitor the surroundings while you are focused on operating the drone. While the requirement to register hobbyist drones with the FAA has been lifted, you still have to follow airspace rules. You should also fly safely with common sense and be respectful of others.

I was able to capture footage of several Canton Railroad trains coming back into Penn-Mary Yard with cuts of freight cars. A CSX intermodal freight also passed through the yard via trackage rights to get to Seagirt Marine Terminal.

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Some of the aerial pictures I took are provided here. I also posted three videos on YouTube for your viewing pleasure. The video titles and links are:



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“Baltimore, MD - Canton Railroad #1203 Entering Penn-Mary Yard”

<https://youtu.be/hvRR0xyrGKI>

“Baltimore, MD - CSX Intermodal Freight Passing Through Penn-Mary Yard”

<https://youtu.be/CIHGG4sgjjg>

“Baltimore, MD - Canton Railroad #1501 Entering Penn-Mary Yard”

<https://youtu.be/qnKSdAW-sJM>

Railfanning with drones is a great way to get an interesting perspective of real railroads. This perspective mimics the viewpoint we typically have with model railroads. As a result, drone-based photography allows a modeler the means to capture the essence of prototype railroad scenes in order to more faithfully recreate them in miniature.

John

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A Day Out – Havre de Grace, Maryland

By Greg Meeks

On a bright and sunny day in May, 2017, I visited Havre De Grace, Maryland. I had driven past it on I-95 many times, but never actually went there. So, on a rare free day off, I headed up the Northeast Corridor on A Day Out.

There are two main rail lines that traverse Havre de Grace: Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor with Norfolk Southern’s trackage rights and CSX. There are places to access both, but my one day trip focused on Amtrak. I never found a really good spot for CSX crossing the Susquehanna River. On the Northern side of the river, NS has a line that runs up to Harrisburg through Perryville. I also stopped a few places off Route 40 along the way, but the best shots I got were either right along the River or at the Amtrak platform in Perryville.



There is quite a bit of Amtrak traffic on the Corridor. CSX ran a couple trains as well. One nice aspect of Havre de Grace is there is plenty else to do there. There are several museums, numerous restaurants, and a couple parks along the river front. A couple parks have picnic and bathroom facilities. These are seasonal. I also took a short tour of the Harbormasters House historical site. It’s quaint, but that’s the charm you get in Havre de Grace. And if you like boats, well, there are quite a few around.



Next chance you get a free day, head out for some railfanning. Havre de Grace is a place you can take the whole family. Just remember to head across the bridge, visit the Perryville station, and then grab an ice cream down the street!

Greg



e sign me up for a

The Relay

National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Mid-Eastern Region Application for Free “Railpass” Trial Membership

YES, please sign me up for a free six-month Railpass Trial Membership in the NMRA, which includes membership in the Mid-Eastern Region and my local Division. During the six-month period, I understand that I may attend conventions, meets, and participate in contests. I will receive the NMRA Magazine, the monthly national publication, and The Local, the bi-monthly regional newsletter. I will not be eligible to vote, hold office or receive a New Member Pack.

I also understand that the \$9.95 cost of this six-month Railpass Trial Membership is being paid by the Mid-Eastern Region. (Note: Regardless of who pays, the six-month \$9.95 memberships are available only once to each person) At the end of the six month period, I may join the NMRA by paying the regular active member dues.

During the past thirty months, I have not been a member of the NMRA.

Name: _____

Street Address _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____

E-Mail: _____

Scale (s): _____

Signature of Applicant: _____

Signature of “Recruiter:” _____

(a Regional Officer or Board Member)

When this form is completed,

mail to:

Bob Price
MER Business Manager
801 S. Newton Lake Drive
Collingswood, NJ 08108

Please do not mail this form
Directly to the NMRA Headquarters
In Chattanooga, TN.

free six-month Railpass Trial Membership in the NMRA, which includes membership in the Mid-Eastern Region and my local Division. During the six-month period, I understand that I may attend conventions, meets, and participate in contests. I will receive the NMRA Magazine, the monthly national publication, and The Local, the bi-monthly regional newsletter. I will not be eligible to vote, hold office or receive a New Member Pack.