



Volume 34, Issue 1

Spring 2026

From the Superintendent's Desk

By Bob Miller, Superintendent, Gateway Division

Wow how Springtime has flown past us. I'm determined to make progress on several personal NMRA projects to complete several more NMRA Achievement Certifications by this year's end.

I would like to see our Division members become more active in our Clinics. Clinics help to enhance your skills on different aspects of Modeling Railroading or provide techniques to other members. If you feel you have something you'd like to share with our group, talk with Dan Knipp or drop him an e-mail at: dgknipp@att.net.

We need more people to enter the Fall Meet Contests and next year's Spring Meet contest in Marion, IL. If you participate in a

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Union Pacific's SD70ACe #1982 wearing it's Missouri Pacific heritage scheme crosses Greene River on Steven Hamilton's UP St. Marshall Sub. Check out his layout in this issue of the RPO.

Photo by Steven Hamilton.

From the Superintendent's Desk (continued from page 1)

Model Contest, you have a chance to show off your best models for a Peoples Choice Award or maybe you would like to have a structure judged by NMRA trained judges. You improve your skills and work to win merit awards and eventually complete your structure, locomotive, freight car, passenger car Achievement Certification. It's a great learning experience overall.

As many might know, the Gateway Division is co-hosting the Mid-Continent Region Convention here in Collinsville, IL at the Doubletree hotel. The cost of attending the RPM is included in your convention registration fees. The convention will have a contest room where 12"x 12" "square-footer" "pizza box" layouts, dioramas, and displays will be judged. The regional group will also host a banquet on Saturday evening and it should be interesting to hear some of the goals of the region's upcoming growth ideas! I will be looking for a few volunteers to man the NMRA table to answer any questions about the Division and Regional connection. It's a great time to draw some new people in!

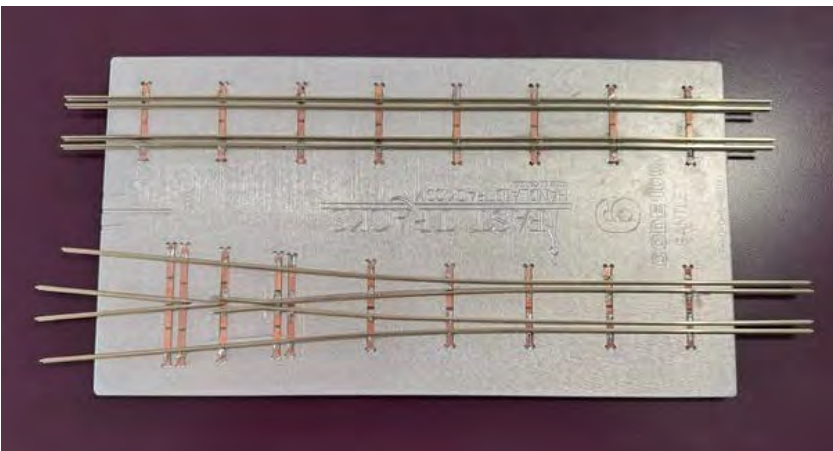
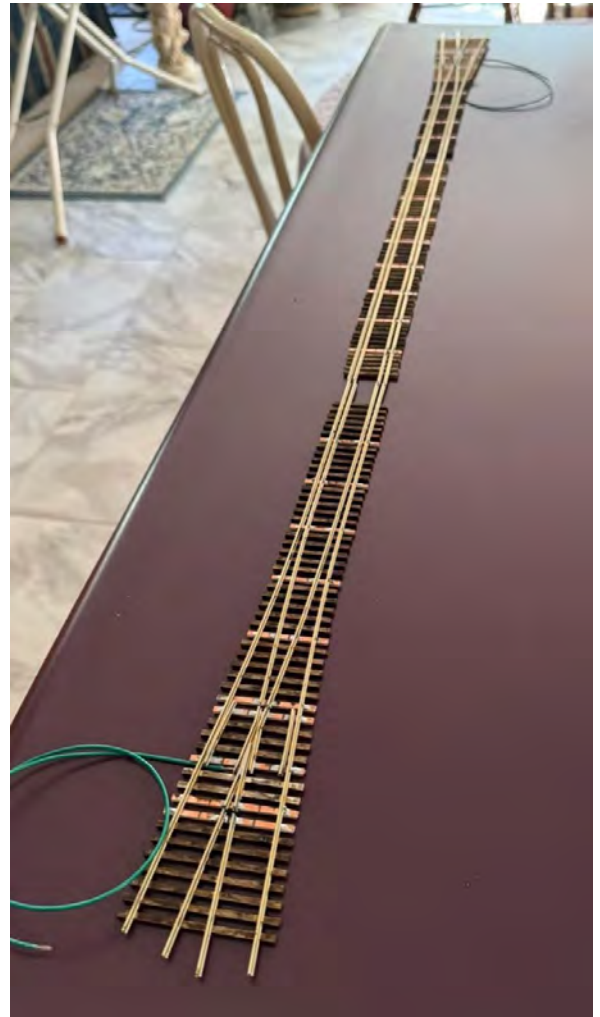
Have you checked out the Gateway Division Free-mo group? It's a new exciting way to start working on Certification towards Master Model Railroader. Check out the article and update in this issue of the RPO.

I know that some of you will be headed to the NMRA National Convention in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Unfortunately, with my schedule, I have to miss the National this year! I'm sure we will get a full update from those attending.

Respectfully, Bob Miller, Gateway Division Superintendent

Bob is about to finish his gauntlet track that he will have judged for a Merit Award as he works towards earning a Model Railroad Engineer - Civil Achievement Program Certificate. Bob is working on a #6 lefthand turnout and has finished a crossover in his journey to complete the work towards the certificate.

I would like to see our Division members become more active in our Clinics. Clinics help to enhance your skills on different aspects of Modeling Railroading or provide techniques to other members.



2026 Gateway Division Meeting Calendar



July 20, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Member Meeting with Presentation

Oakville Elks Lodge
2726 Oakville Elks Lane, St. Louis. MO

August 15, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

Hands-on Workshop with Free-Mo Layout Work Session Following Workshop

West Alton City Hall
111 Richard Drive, West Alton, MO

September 21, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Member Meeting with Presentation

Oakville Elks Lodge
2726 Oakville Elks Lane, St. Louis. MO

October 19, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Member Meeting with Presentation

Oakville Elks Lodge
2726 Oakville Elks Lane, St. Louis. MO

November 7, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

Fall Meet

VFW Post 5691
1234 Vandalia St, Collinsville, IL

November TBD, 2026, TBD p.m..

Holiday Party

Location TBD

December 21, 2026, 7:30 p.m.

Member Meeting with Bring and Brag and Mini Swap Meet

Oakville Elks Lodge
2726 Oakville Elks Lane, St. Louis. MO



July 18, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

Free-Mo Layout Work Session

West Alton City Hall
111 Richard Drive, West Alton, MO

August 15, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

Hands-on Workshop and Free-Mo Layout Work Session

West Alton City Hall
111 Richard Drive, West Alton, MO

September 19, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

Free-Mo Layout Work Session

West Alton City Hall
111 Richard Drive, West Alton, MO



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

The Gateway Division of the National Model Railroad Association

November 7, 2026

Annual Fall Meet

**VFW Post 5691
1234 Vandalia Street
Collinsville, IL**

May 1, 2027

Southern Illinois Model Train Meet

**The Pavilion
1602 Sioux Drive
Marion, IL**

**Model Train
Vendors
Presentations and
Workshops
Door Prizes
Silent Auctions
Operating Layouts
On Site
Layout Tours
Model Displays
and Contests
NMRA
Achievement
Program
Evaluations
And More....**

NMRA
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nmra.org



gatewaydivisionnmra.org

St. Louis RPM 2026

GATEWAY CONVENTION CENTER



COLLINSVILLE, ILLINOIS
JULY 23RD - 25TH, 2026
THURSDAY - SATURDAY



***Celebrating our 19th year as the
St. Louis Railroad Prototype Modelers meet!***

- **THUR/FRI NIGHT – LAYOUT TOURS & OPS SESSIONS**
- **Over 5,000 models on display for 2026**
- **21 clinics by renowned modelers**
- **Approximately 200 exhibitor tables by leading manufacturers, historical societies & exhibitors**
- **Operating layouts onsite each day**

Check our website for social events as well

For questions, contact

Lonnie Bathurst at Bathurst@litchfieldil.com or (217) 556-0314

FOR DETAILS, PLEASE VISIT:

www.stlrpm.com

2026 Mid-Continent Region Convention

**In Conjunction with the St. Louis RPM
July 23 - 25, 2026
Collinsville, Illinois**

- **Convention Registration Includes Entry into the RPM**
- **Enjoy all the benefits of the Region Convention and the St. Louis RPM**
 - Thousand of Models on Display**
 - Select Vendors and Historical Societies**
 - 30 Scheduled Clinics**
 - Layout Tours**
 - Operating Sessions**
 - Prizes**
- **Thursday Afternoon Clinics Exclusive to the Region Convention Attendees**
- **Contest Room**
- **“Square-footer” Contest**
- **Photo Match Contest**
- **Light Iron Award for the Model that Best Represents the Spirit of Narrow Gauge**
- **White Elephant Sale for Up to 10 of Your Items to Make a Little Extra Cash While You are There**
- **Saturday Night Banquet with Keynote Speaker Michelle Kempema, Executive Director of the Colorado Model Railroad Museum**



MID – CONTINENT
REGION

MCoR 2026 Convention Registration Form

July 23-25, 2026

Collinsville Convention Center, Collinsville, IL

Name of Primary Registrant: _____

NMRA Number: _____

Spouse or other Additional Registrant: _____

Your spouse is considered and NMRA member for convention registration

Spouse NMRA Number if also a Member: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email: _____ Phone #: _____

Registration Fee NMRA # Required for Reduced Registration Fee

Check your Banquet Choice:

Chicken Mudega _____ Herb Pork Tenderloin _____ Vegetarian _____

	<u>COST</u>	<u># Persons</u>	<u>Total Cost</u>
<u>NMRA Member (includes full RPM registration)</u>	<u>\$98</u>	_____	_____
<u>Non NMRA Member (includes full RPM registration)</u>	<u>\$130</u>	_____	_____
Total Registrations			_____

Send Completed Registration Forms and payment to:

Bill Humenczuk

8624 West 116th St

Overland Park, KS 66210-2828

NMRA National Convention



**July 27, 2026
through
August 2, 2026**

**Chattanooga Convention
Center**

1 Carter Street, Chattanooga, TN

<https://www.nmra2026.org/>

200+ Hours of Clinics

Rock City Barn Modeling Contest

Layout Tours

Operating Sessions

Prototype Tours

Steam Excursion

Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum Dinner Train, Backshop Tour, and Tea Room

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Railroad Historical Societies

Modeling With The Masters

Celebration of Models

Non-Rail Tours and Activities

Free Admission to the National Train Show

Exclusive Social Events

And More!!!

NMRA

Upcoming Events

Thanks to the Mississippi Valley N Sclers for Maintaining the Show Calendar

July 18, 2026 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.: **Trains at the Fenton Library:** 1501 San Simeon Way, Fenton, MO

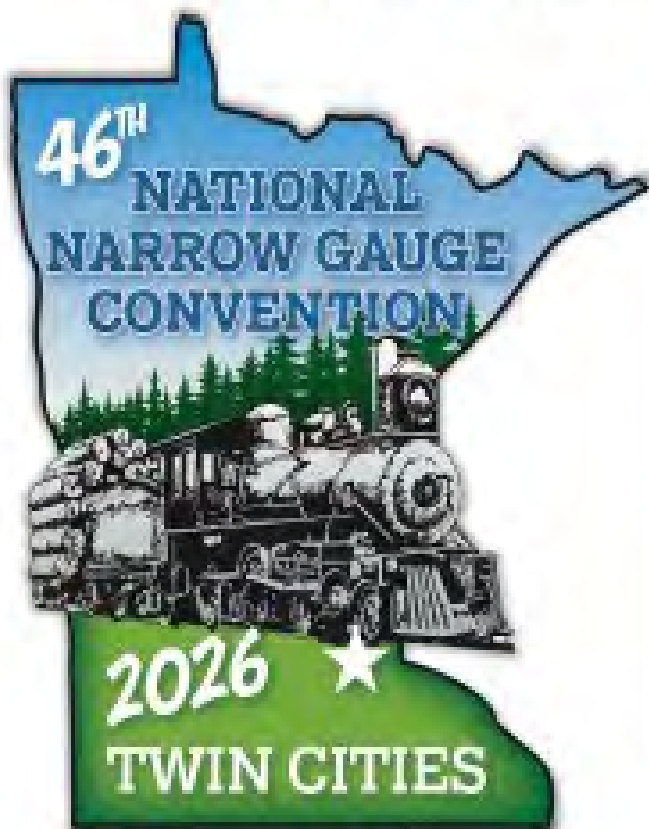
August 1, 2026 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.: **Model Train Tailgate Swap Meet:** The National Museum of Transportation, 2933 Barrett Station Rd, Parking Lot #2, St. Louis, MO

August 8, 2026 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: **Golden Valley Train Show:** Benson Convention Center, 1004 E Sedalia Avenue, Clinton, MO

August 22 & 23, 2026 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.: **Great Train Show:** Belle-Clair Fairgrounds Park, 200 South Belt E, Belleville, IL

August 29, 2026 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.: **Boeing Employees' Railroad Club - St. Louis Swap Meet:** Greensfelder Recreation Complex at Queeny Park, 550 Wiedman Road, St. Louis MO

September 2-5, 2026



November 7-8, 2026

Trainfest
America's Largest Operating Model Railroad Show

Location

**Baird Center
400 W Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53203**

Date & Time

**November 7, 2026, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
November 8, 2026, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

Trainfest Features

- **Dozens of major model railroad manufacturers**
- **Product Announcements**
- **Clinics**
- **Train dealers from across the country with amazing show specials**
- **50+ operating model train displays in many different sizes and scales**
- **Over 250 booths filling over 500 tables of the industry's leading manufacturers and retailers**
- **FREE riding train for kids**



TRAIN SHOW

Bring the kids to see the trains!

The 35th Annual
Greater St. Louis Metro Area
Train Show

Saturday October 3, 2026 10 am - 4 pm
NEW LOCATION, Saturday only!

Family Fun!
Operating Layouts!
Great Prices!
Don't Miss This Show!

KIRKWOOD
COMMUNITY CENTER

111 S. Geyer Road, Kirkwood, Missouri 63122
Take I-44 to Lindbergh N or I-40 to Lindbergh S
Turn West on West Adams Ave.
Go 4 blocks to S. Geyer
LOOK FOR THE SIGNS!!!

- ☒ ALL SCALES
- ☒ HANDS ON ACTIVITIES
- ☒ SWAP TABLES
- ☒ FREE PARKING
- ☒ GRAND PRIZE DRAWING

Admission for adults is \$10.00
All kids 12 and under are FREE!
One day only, be sure to attend!

Sponsored by the **MISSISSIPPI VALLEY N SCALERS**

See our Web Site at <https://mvns.railfan.net>

Gateway Division Hands-on Workshop: Making Classic Signs

By Greg Gramlich, MMR, Region Director, Gateway Division



The Gateway Division held its most recent Hands-on Workshop on Saturday, May 16, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at the West Alton City Hall in West Alton, Missouri. As the name states, this is a series of workshops whereby participants develop modeling skills while getting their hands dirty. This Hands-on Workshop saw Greg Gramlich, MMR and Dave Ackmann demonstrate how to make classic signs.

Why have signs on buildings on your layout? The answer: signs help show the period of time your layout is



representing. Outdoor advertisements are a quick and easy way to set a recognizable era on your layout as graphics, fonts, and content evolve over the years. They also make your buildings more authentic and realistic. Ever since the early years of advertising, building signs were very important getting your business name and product in front of the public. These building signs come in all shapes and sizes and fit into any modeling era.

A hallmark of the Division's Hands-on Workshops is to provide participants materials free of charge to learn and practice modeling techniques. As such, Greg Gramlich, MMR, brought 10 packs of signs, dating from the 1950s' to the 1970's, for the members to select. What good is a building sign without a building? The Division had that covered, too. To practice attaching signs on buildings, there were buildings on hand from American Model Builders, Inc. that needed that little extra something that a good sign brings to it. Greg demonstrated that after cutting out the sign, it was now time for the modeler to apply white glue, spread it evenly, and place it on the building. Once the modeler ensured it was straight, it was time to gently rub the sign with a finger to smooth it out and settle it onto the structure.



***“Sign, sign
Everywhere a sign
Blockin' out the scenery
Breakin' my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign?”***

**Written by Les Emmerson, the lead vocalist and primary
songwriter for the Canadian rock group
Five Man Electrical Band**

The first modern, large scale posters used for advertising appeared in 1830's. With these types of signs being in use for almost two centuries to advertise products and services, there has to be room set aside on the layout for this purpose. To assist in filling that empty spot on the layout, Dave Ackmann supplied billboard kits for the participants to build. Dave showed how to assemble his billboard signs using a jig that he designed specifically for that purpose. Dave created both the sign structures and the assembly jig and printed them on his 3D printer. There were a number of different advertisements to pick from plus two different sizes and colors of signs. Dave provided step by step instructions and worked with the participants while they assembled the signs.

The Division Hands-on Workshops are held three times per year, February, May, and August on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 a.m. at West Alton City Hall at 111 Richard Drive in West Alton, Missouri. The goal is to make these workshops no-cost to the participants if at all possible. The Division provides the materials and supplies and the modelers bring their tools and desire to develop new skills. In many cases, participants bring extra tools to loan out during the workshop for those models who may not have them that day. Everyone is welcome and we hope to see you there.

Achievement Program Update: Rivets and Eating an Elephant

By Dave Ackmann, Achievement Program Chair, Gateway Division

In November of 2025, I was awarded my 4th certificate in the NMRA's Achievement Program, the one for Structures. It took me 3 years to complete, and I learned a lot along the way. But now I am on to the certificate for "Cars", something I have never even attempted before. How to begin?

In Engineering School, I learned that if you have a big problem, break it down into a bunch of smaller problems, and if you don't know how to solve a smaller problem, think about what you need to learn to solve it, and then go learn how to do that. It's kind of like eating an elephant, "carve it up, and eat one bite at a time". And so it was with rivets for Tank Cars, the first of 8 scratchbuilt cars I hope to complete for the Cars certificate.

An on-line article by Eric Hansmann led me to a book by Ed Kaminski on tank cars from the first half of the 20th century, and my local library found a copy on inter-library loan. I learned that in the 1927 design of a tank car from American Car and Foundry, there are rivets everywhere. The ends are riveted to the tank. There is a horizontal line of rivets running down each side. But how was I going to wrap that ring of rivets that secure the dome to the tank, a round plate wrapped around the cylindrical tank? I was stumped!

Be it structures or rolling stock, I create objects using 3D printing, and my tool of choice for Computer Aided Design is TinkerCAD. So I asked "Professor Google" how to wrap an object around a cylinder in TinkerCAD, and the Professor directed me to several possible solutions, one of which worked for me. Yes, it took several tries to learn the nuances, but in the end, I learned something new.

But Wait, There's More! How was I going to make the rivets at the tank ends, and make them perfectly spaced by the same number of degrees? Or how would I make the horizontal line of rivets spaced the same number of inches? Another learning



experience led me to videos describing the "Duplicate and Repeat" tool in TinkerCAD, which also proved useful in designing the grid for the frame.

The point is, don't let your lack of knowledge prevent you from attempting something new. There are always people and resources that are available. Just break the problem down into bite-sized chunks and search for what you need to learn.

Maybe next I'll chew on the gory details of Westinghouse air braking systems.

If you are interested in the Achievement Program, just drop me an email: Ackmanns@charter.net.

Director's Vision

By Greg Gramlich, MMR, Region Director, Gateway Division

The Gateway Division is growing with new members every month. With the increase in membership many questions are being asked about our Modular Layout, the Achievement Program, how to build a layout, and where the Gateway Division is headed. Additionally, as the Division's Director for the Mid-Continent Region, it is my assumption that many of you have questions regarding the activities of the Region or have thoughts on how the Region can support the activities of the Divisions within the Region. I could go on and answer questions that I think are on the minds of our members, but I would like to hear directly from you on any questions or comments. I am sure I don't have the answers to everything, but I am sure I can find someone that does and get it back to you. Please use my e-mail address headbigbear@yahoo.com and I will get back with you. Thanks!



Greg Gramlich, MMR , Gateway Division Region Director

Two Division Members Earn AP Certificates

By Jeff Cooper, Clerk and RPO Editor, Gateway Division



At the March Membership Meeting, two Gateway Division members took another step closer to becoming Master Model Railroaders (MMR).

Left: Greg Gramlich, MMR presents Dave Ackmann with his Achievement Program Certificate for Master Builder - Structures.

Right: Dave Ackmann presents Fred Wilke with his Achievement Program Certificate for Master Builder - Structures.

Congratulations Dave and Fred!



Steven Hamilton's Union Pacific St. Marshall Sub

By Steven Hamilton, Member, Gateway Division



Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Steven Hamilton and I am a life-long train enthusiast and a member of the Gateway Division of the NMRA. My mom introduced me to model railroading from as early as I can remember. She enjoyed crafty type things and had a sheet of plywood with buildings, scenery, and details. The HO scale Tyco trainset just added eye-catching movement. I, along with my wife Judy and our 6 children, live in Southern Illinois. While none of them are engaged as much as I am with the railroad hobby, they do enjoy chasing steam locomotives, riding tourist railroads on family vacations, and helping build the layout.





Modeling Background

I have been an active model railroader for as long as I can remember. I received my first X-acto knife around age 8 (with the words, please be careful with this, it's very sharp!) By age 9, I built a simple shelf layout in my bedroom using reclaimed wood from the barn, cardboard strips for the roadbed, cat litter for the ballast, natural plant material from the yard for scenery, and Legos to build a "signal" lit with some light bulbs rescued from old Christmas lights with slide switches to manually change it from green to red.

As I came into my teen years, money and skill allowed for better projects, like Athearn Blue Box engines and Atlas nickel silver track. By age 18, I was custom building and painting highly detailed HO scale locomotives and selling them on consignment in the gift shop at the Rochelle Railfan park. Over the years, I had built several dioramas, modules, and layouts, refining skills and learning new techniques. I remember attending the NMRA regional convention in St. Louis in 1998. There, I learned of the NMRA



Photos of the home of the UP St. Marshall Sub being built. The layout started out in the basement but moved to this newly constructed shed.





Achievement Program, and now have my sights set on earning the MMR.

Getting Started

In anticipation of starting the current layout and using it to earn many of the AP certificates, I spent time visiting and operating on dozens of layouts throughout the Midwest. The time finally came when finances, schedule, and knowledge lined up for me to start on a layout that would stick around for awhile! My plan includes many features that were necessary to satisfy the requirements of some of the AP categories. I knew I wanted a continuous loop for railfanning and breaking in new locomotives, a variety of scenes for videos and photos, a basic representation of many common railroad operations roles, and it had to fit in the space available in the basement of my old farmhouse. I knew that

sometime in the near future I would have a better space, so I planned to have the layout movable and expandable. I started on the main portion of the layout in March of 2024. I cleared my schedule and spent 2 solid weeks from morning to evening building the benchwork, laying track, and wiring. My primary goal was to get trains running. After that, I slowed down and was able to take a more relaxed pace.

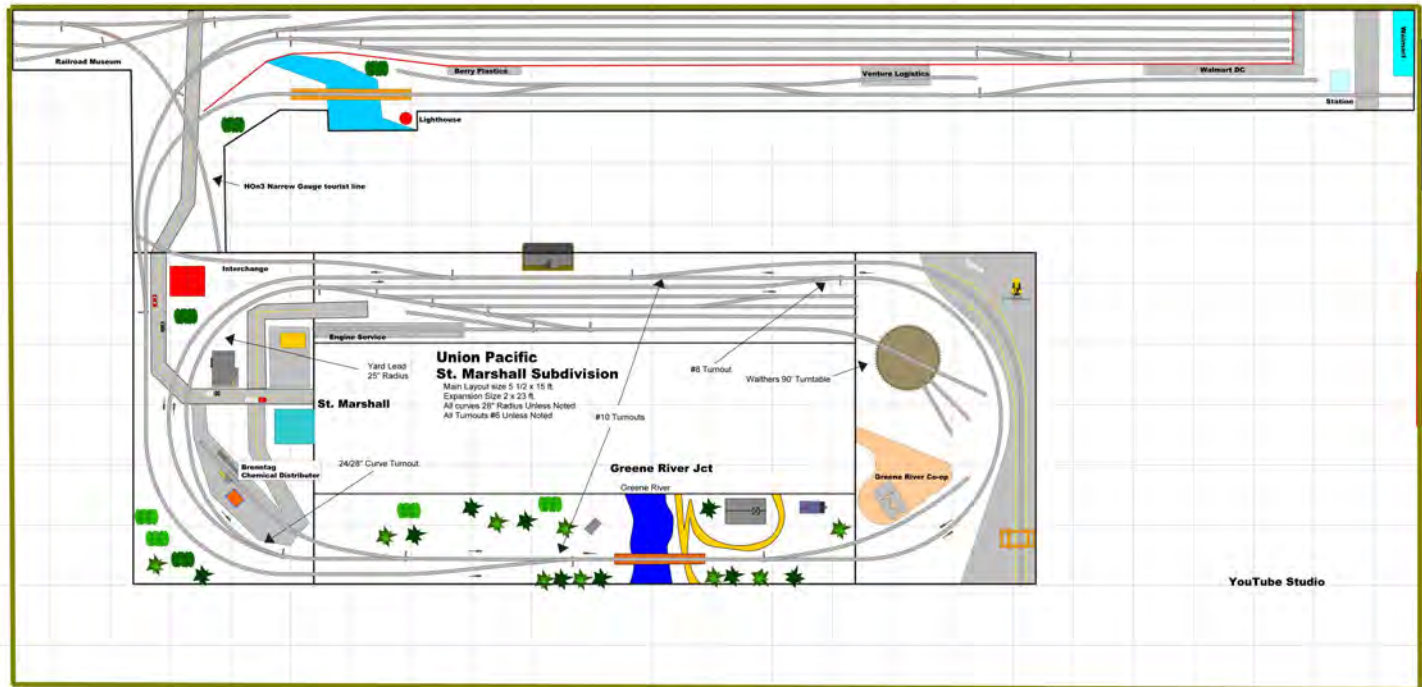
The Concept

Growing up in Southern Illinois, I spent a lot of time seeing Union Pacific trains in action. This left such an impression on me, and is the main focus of my model railroading efforts. I model present-day "PTC era" Union Pacific. The St. Marshall Subdivision is a proto-freelanced route. I wanted something that sounded like it could actually be a real main line without being held to the

idea that I had to model specific towns or industries. The layout is set in the modern era with PTC wayside and locomotive antenna farms prevalent. The geographic locale is loosely set in northern Illinois and the town of St. Marshall is considered a suburb of Chicago. The line hosts Amtrak, both the Texas Eagle and a state service train, as well as Metra. The old train depot is now the local historical society and doubles as the passenger stop for these trains. This subdivision also handles through trains carrying coal, grain, and intermodal. There is a daily manifest that serves the yard. This traffic is sorted into three locals which switch area customers.

Layout Infrastructure

The layout is 5 ½ x 15 feet. It was built in four sections, using plywood ripped into dimensional boards, nailed and glued together. The same



plywood sheet was used for the top, and it is also glued and nailed. For the sides of the layout, I laminated Masonite to the sides of the plywood. All the seams were filled with putty, sanded, painted black, bolted together, and leveled.

Roadbed, Track, and Ballast

For roadbed, I used Woodland Scenics Track Bed, with code 83 Peco Flex and Walther's turnouts glued with latex caulk. To paint and weather the track, I airbrushed it with acrylic paint. I blended Rail Brown with a few drops of rust to brighten it up and painted the rail sides. Then, from a top down angle, I airbrushed a light coat of earth brown on top of the ties. After the paint dried and the railhead cleaned, I painted individual ties a variety of colors. My next step is to ballast the track before adding grass and other scenery materials. The ballast is Woodland Scenics fine light gray mixed with fine gray in a 10:1 ratio. I then added a small



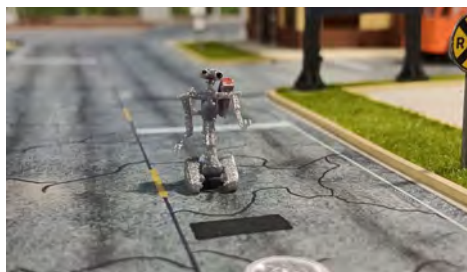
cup of medium size gray ballast to break up the uniformity. I used a pretty standard method of gluing the ballast. I spread and shape the ballast, tap the railhead with a paint brush handle to shake the ballast off the ties, then gently spray wet water until fully saturated, and then I added the glue to affix the ballast in place. The glue is diluted matte medium and I applied it using a dropper.

Wiring and Control

For wiring, I did not want to rely on rail joiners for power but I did not want to solder my rail joints so they could expand with temperature changes. Instead, I soldered 20 gauge solid feeders on every rail. The track feeders are soldered to a 14 gauge stranded bus with all the wires being properly color coded. Since I am installing a modern style CTC signal system using a Digitrax SE8c and BLD168, the main track is isolated into detection blocks. There are four power districts powered by a Digitrax DCS210+ running at 8 amps total capacity. Each power district is protected by circuit breakers made by Tam Valley.

Signals

For the signals, I installed a variety of brands and styles. I am somewhat of a signal enthusiast within the railroad hobby so I wanted to have an assortment to demonstrate the different types commonly seen on the prototype. I have signals made by Details West, Atlas, WeHonest (eBay), plus some scratchbuilt signals using Showcase Miniatures parts. Three of the turnouts are powered with Tortoise switch



machines and the rest are operated using Blue Point switch controllers. I wanted to reduce the need to reach into the layout to protect the many fine and delicate details so switches are thrown with either throttle commands over the DCC bus or fascia mounted controls.

Scenery

For scenery, I used a white styrofoam base. I experimented in great depth between white, pink, and blue foam. I found that when cut

with a hot wire cutting tool, the white foam wasn't any more messy than the other colors. It was also cheaper and easier to work with. After shaping the foam with the hot wire tool, some areas received Sculptamold to help better shape the desired landform. The landforms were then painted earth brown.

The turf is Woodland Scenics static grass. I mixed a bucket of mainly 4mm grass, with a small pinch of 7mm, using mostly light



green. I then added some regular green and straw color grass as well so the grass would not be all one color. I made a portion large enough to cover the entire layout so it all had a consistent shade. To apply the static grass, I used full strength matte medium painted onto the layout surface and then used a Woodland Scenics Static King to apply the grass mix. I removed the loose grass before the glue dried to capture and reuse the unglued grass by using a shop-vac with an old nylon stocking placed over the hose. The vacuum also helped the strands stand up better. After the static grass dried, I brushed on some more matte medium to the tips of the grass and then sprinkled on a variety of coarse turf in random patches. I like this multi-layered approach to scenery. I am using several different methods for the trees on the layout. Some of the trees are ready-made by Woodland Scenics and JTT, some of the trees are kits using Woodland Scenics

materials, and some of the trees are completely made from scratch. I wanted my scenery to represent late summer to early fall as I wanted an excuse to have some areas green while others areas in bright fall colors. I have only added a few trees at first, but plan to add many, many more!

Structures

Buildings are mostly Walthers Cornerstone. They have a really great selection of buildings that represent modern structures. All of the buildings have some degree of painting, weathering, and detailing that make them more than just "shake in the box". I do have a couple of Rix kits, as well as, a scratchbuilt Casey's gas station, and a 3D printed yard tower. The tower is based on the tower at Lesperanse St. Yard in St. Louis, MO. All of the buildings are scheduled to have interior lights added when I get around to it.

Details

On a smaller layout such as mine, I am pursuing a "quality over quantity" mindset so I am really focused on details. The track is detailed with switch stands, derails, joint bars, signal wires, shunt boxes, relay cabinets, and mile post signs. There are the many figures placed around the layout, all living their best HO scale lives. There are also animals, signs, and junk. The list could go on. I mainly enjoy taking photos and videos of my favorite locomotives and cars so I wanted scenes that really help sell the realism.

The Train Shed

I make YouTube videos for my channel "Signal Up Productions" The videos are all about trains. In many of these videos, I demonstrate various railroad techniques, product reviews, and how-to tutorials. In the basement location, any time my kids were upstairs playing, that sound would amplify in the basement.



Something needed done. So, in the summer of 2025, fifteen months after I started construction on the layout, I was in a position to build a more suitable home for the St. Marshall Sub. This came in the form of a backyard shed. There were several "off-the-shelf" sheds available for purchase from local dealers; however, I have a background in residential construction so I set out to build my own shed. Once again, I cleared my work schedule and began building the shed with the help of my oldest son and wife. I sized the building just large enough to house the current layout, a pre-planned expansion, and filming studio for my YouTube channel. It was steps away from my backdoor so it was still convenient for me to access.

In classic train buff fashion, I painted the exterior in the colors of a Union Pacific locomotive. There's no mistaking where visitors need to go to find the trains! Once the building was finished, my wife and I carefully moved the layout sections from the basement and around to the shed. Because this move was anticipated and planned for, it only took an hour to disconnect the sections, unhook the wiring, move, setup and level, reconnect the sections and reattach the wires. In a short amount of time, the trains were once again running.

Summary

I have an unusual work schedule and with 6 kids, my wife and I are always juggling

family activities. But, even with the work and family commitments, I still try to find time a few hours a week to hang out with train friends, work on the layout, build or weather models, and railfan my favorite spots. I get a lot of joy finishing new scenes and sharing photos on social media to help inspire others. It's also exciting to see faces of visitors light up when they walk into the shed and realize how much of a miniature world is packed into a relatively small space. Having a layout, even a small one, really helps keep me engaged in the hobby. I firmly believe something is better than nothing and my something is my proto-freelanced St. Marshall sub of the Union Pacific.











A Little Trouble Along the Way

By David Lowell, MMR #775, Gateway Division

As model railroaders we try to recreate myriad facets of our hobby interest in miniature as realistically as practicable. This allows us to use the engineering or artistic side of our brains, or maybe both as we build our empires, structures, locomotives, cars and countless other projects. We do this with varied skills sets at a wide spectrum of abilities. Like any other skill that you may possess, if you don't practice your game, you may not improve. Regardless of our innate or practiced attributes we should all just play for the love of the game. It is a hobby after all.

It is just a hobby, however some of us choose to challenge our skills by pursuing Merit Awards, AP certificates and even the NMRA's Master Model Railroader designation via the NMRA achievement program. For those of us who are goal oriented, okay and maybe a bit competitive, this can be a satisfying experience. For others the trek to Merit Awards, AP certificates, or becoming an MMR can be intimidating or just not important to them. Some have found these pursuits to be overburdensome with documentation or just

unnecessary for their enjoyment of the hobby. These opinions are understandable and okay. It is important that we all enjoy our hobbies the way we like. I would, however, urge you to keep in mind the whole concept of the achievement program is to provide a structured pathway to help us stretch our skill sets in our hobby, practice as it were, to expand our enjoyment. It is a way to track our progress along an established metric for ourselves, not against others, and hopefully help us enjoy our hobby more.

Some may balk at trying new skills. Perhaps some modelers get intimidated by what they see in the hobby press, at an RPM meet or Celebration of Models room at an NMRA event which is wholly understandable. We all like to be wowed by the creative

In life we all know that sometimes success takes perseverance and even failures to learn from before we find success. That was the case for me in my pursuit of my MMR.

ideas and the wonderful craftsmanship efforts of our fellow modelers, I know I constantly am. When viewing these exceptional subjects in the hobby press and at events we need to keep them in the proper perspective. Also, the enjoyment we derive from our hobby is not just about these wonderful finished examples. It is about the journey and the fellowship. If we turn out a finished model, all the better.

In life we all know that sometimes success takes perseverance and even failures to learn from before we find success. That was the case for me in my pursuit of my MMR. I have enjoyed writing several articles that have been published in the NMRA Magazine that cover projects I have completed for my Chicago & Illinois Midland Railroad (C&IM). A couple of which hinted about less than desirable results on the first go. This piece's purpose is to fully document a humbling recent failure that made me a better modeler, I hope, as well.

So, let's pull back the curtain in an effort to reduce the intimidation factor we may experience when viewing the models we see in the

magazines, at the RPMs or the Celebration of Models room and see how the sausage is really made. What I mean by this is, all we see is the impressive end products and may not fully understand that there may have been a little trouble along the way.

In modeling the C&IM, as I do, the color pallet is pretty limited, green or black and a few cabooses in yellow. For some variety I have taken on some projects for fellow modelers in the area to thank them for them generously in sharing their layouts for OPS sessions or

trading for some other hobby skill I was not able to do myself, and from time to time building car kits for foreign roads to place on my layout. You can never have too many freight cars, right? Well, for me that would be coal hoppers & gons.

One such project I undertook was making a batch of six Tichy wood outside braced cement cars. They are nice kits, not overly complicated to assemble, and well-engineered. Once assembled it was time to paint, letter and weather them. Pretty straight

forward, right? Having used up most of my strategic supply of paint from fallen flag model railroad paint manufacturers, I have been taking the opportunity to try some of the remaining paint manufactures products. For this project I chose to try Tamiya paint.

I wanted to put on a prime coat before the color coat. I searched high and low for flat clear finish in a bottle by Tamiya. I found the gloss, but no flat. Then a-ha! I found flat base, that's got to be the ticket. Slight variation in the terminology, but I was sure it



Houston, we have a problem. The cement car after the color coat was applied and it cured

was the same thing. To prep the cement car for paint, I gave it a bath in some warm water with a drip of mild soap and then some overnight drying time prior to spraying it with the flat base to create some tooth for the color coat. All went according to plan as I have done hundreds of times. When I finished spraying there was a milky film on the car which did not bother me as I assumed it would dry clear as clear coats typically do. I cleaned my airbrush and shut down my spray booth and moved on to some other endeavors. The flat base dried to a chalky white and had some tooth. It wasn't clear, but it appeared to be what I needed. So onward I pressed. After 24 hours of cure time, I sprayed the color coat in a

The paint was peeling off in sheets. suffice it to say, I was a bit taken aback. Immediately my mind started racing. What happened? What did I forget to do? Did I grab the wrong bottle of paint? Is this recoverable? I raced through the mental gymnastics of all these questions and more.

nice medium gray. Cement cars get cement dust on the outside when loaded. I wanted to be able to replicate this with pan pastels. The medium gray would be a great contrast to the white of the cement. Excited to see how it turned out, I checked on it early the next morning with coffee still in hand. Oh boy! Houston, we have a problem.

The paint was peeling off in sheets. suffice it to say, I was a bit taken aback. Immediately my mind started racing. What happened? What did I forget to do? Did I grab the wrong bottle of paint? Is this recoverable? I raced through the mental gymnastics of all these questions and more. I found that I did not have an immediate answer for where this train car went off the rails. It can't be me, I am an MMR, and I do this all the time. It , must be a material issue. Yeah, that's it, the paint must be bad. I used that bottle of gray before and it was good, but I tested it anyway and it was still good. Maybe the flat base was the issue. I tested it and it looked okay. One last thought. Maybe I should break the man code and read the instruction on the flat base..... since I was unfamiliar with the manufactures intended purpose. I went online and well, what do you know. Flat base is to be added to Tamyia

standard (gloss) colors to make them flat. Huh, how about that. Now what? I picked up the test sample of the flat base and scrubbed it with a damp Q-tip. It came right off. The moisture from the Q-tip had reactivated the flat base, that apparently has no binder in it since it is an additive to other paint!

On the upside, I have to admit that except for the out of scale areas the peeling paint looked pretty good for a long forgotten wooden car slowly decomposing on its trucks out in the weather. Now this was no experiment with an unintended outcome like the discovery of nylon or penicillin but there might be another weathering technique here. However, in the interim, I really did not want to throw the car out.

Based on my observation of what caused the issue I thought perhaps I could just wash all the paint and flat base off the car. I grabbed an old toothbrush and held the car under the slop sink faucet and started scrubbing. Easy enough, all the paint and flat base came right off. Once the paint and flat base were gone, I re-washed the car in a drop of soap and set it aside to dry.

I was now ready to paint the car and it was like Déjà vu all over again. However, this time I

decided to not only follow the instructions, I thought I would also save myself a step by just applying the gloss clear coat mixed with flat base per the manufacturer's instructions to the already gray plastic. The next day when I checked on it, a beautiful clear flat matte finish awaited me and this time it was fully adhered to the car.

I finished up the car, as well as the other five. I think the repaint and the others turned out pretty good. I model the transition era, so for some variety I decided these 6 cars, that are in regular service from the east coast to a local concrete plant in central Illinois, are from a class of cars being rebuilt after years of yeoman service. Two are in the old gray scheme with plenty of patina and the other four are

It's okay to fail. In fact, I feel that is a large part of how we become better modelers.

reasonably fresh in oxide red from a visit to the car shop.

I am sharing this not to pat myself on the back for resurrecting a mistake, but to encourage other that may not attempt a project because they are afraid they may fail. It's okay to fail. In fact, I feel that is a large part of how we become better modelers. Remembering to not do a particular process again and learning how to not get discouraged when things go awry and just figure out how to correct the less than desired outcomes.

Also, when contemplating having your work judged to get Merit Awards toward your AP Certificates think of it this way: Ryan Moats, former long time Mid-Continent Region Contest Chair, on many occasions espoused that 87 ½ points out of 125 is a C in an academic grading scale, or average. Now I know he is not belittling modelers who achieve that standard. He is making the point that good models are not far out of the reach for inexperienced or new modelers. Don't be intimidated. Get out there and fail, and then succeed. Maybe my next project will be to try and replicate the peeling paint, on purpose this time.

Happy Rails!



The cement car after the second try, weathered, and in revenue service.

Gateway Division Modular Project - 2026 Report

By Fred Wilke, Gateway Division Member

In 2025, The Gateway Division membership voted to approve the construction of a free-mo based modular layout that would benefit the Division by giving members an opportunity to build modules and thereby improving their skills, to promote the Division, create opportunities for operations, and to create a chance for fellowship and camaraderie.

The original goals of the Gateway Modular Project included:

Development of Railroad Skills for Members

Meeting monthly at the West Alton City Hall, the group has had sessions on wiring, track laying, buildings, lighting, interiors, signs, kits, corn fields, painting, JMRI, weathering, etc.

Show the hobby at Train Shows

Testing trains on the modular indicated readiness for a show. Willie Richter is our site manager at West Alton and he built carts to transfer the modules to sites. He used his trailer to load module and the control box for our first show on Feb 7th in Marion, IL. Nearly 500 railroad enthusiasts showed and indicted the show and modules were very well displayed. More Train Show are planned including a month-long festival in St. Charles, MO.

Select a prototype Railroad

The inception of the Modular idea quickly searched for a prototype railroad that would create a history lesson for members. Several ideas were discussed but after a group of Gateway members made a trip from West Alton to Hannibal, the CB&Q was selected. The towns and industries along Mo. Route 79 gave both industry and operations capabilities. This was the Hannibal Division from the 1950s into the late 60s. The Wabash and CB&Q yards in Hannibal along with a yard in West Alton helped the flow of cars on the layout. A GMO crossing at Louisiana provided another switching opportunity. Future expansion at Machens could represent the MKT and CB&Q interchange. The entire railroad parallels the Mississippi River and follows Missouri Highway 79 from West Alton to Hannibal. Barge traffic is another option to add to the layout. Key to future operation is every module has switching opportunities. Each Modular developer is researching the prototype industry, history, and Town operations.

Destinations and Modules for Hannibal Division – Module Developers - Industries

- Quincy IL - TBD
- West Quincy – Drew Mosey – Trailer Facility
- CB&Q Yard in Hannibal – Fred Wilke – Yard & Engine Terminal
- Wabash Yard in Hannibal – Greg Gramlich – Yard & Engine Terminal
- Louisiana – Dave Lowell & Jeff Cooper – Major Grain Elevator, GM&O Interchange, Cold Storage, Coal Trestle, Depot, Switcher Facilities, and Freighthouse
- Clarksville – Dave Ackmann – Town View and Industries
- Elsberry – Noah Oestreich – MFA, Elevator, Shoe Plant
- Winfield – John Kelly – Cobb Lumber Co.
- Old Monroe – Chris Oestreich – Elevator, Corn Field
- Machens – Willie Richter – MKT Interchange
- West Alton – Willie Richter & Charles Marshall – Warehouse, Yard

Recruit new members

As of this month, five new NMRA members have joined the Gateway Division.

Have Realistic Operations Frequently

Monthly Operations is still in the Planning Stage. The spur tracks and industries are in the building stage on the modules. However, some test runs have been accomplished using the JMRI software. Most of the cars needed for the industries have been donated and stay with the modules. Each operator will need to bring a throttle and an engine to sessions. Grain and farm related trains are planned for this farming area. Coal, Chemical, Lumber, Dairy, and general merchandise cars stopped in most of the towns. A strong passenger and mail services provided another operational challenge.

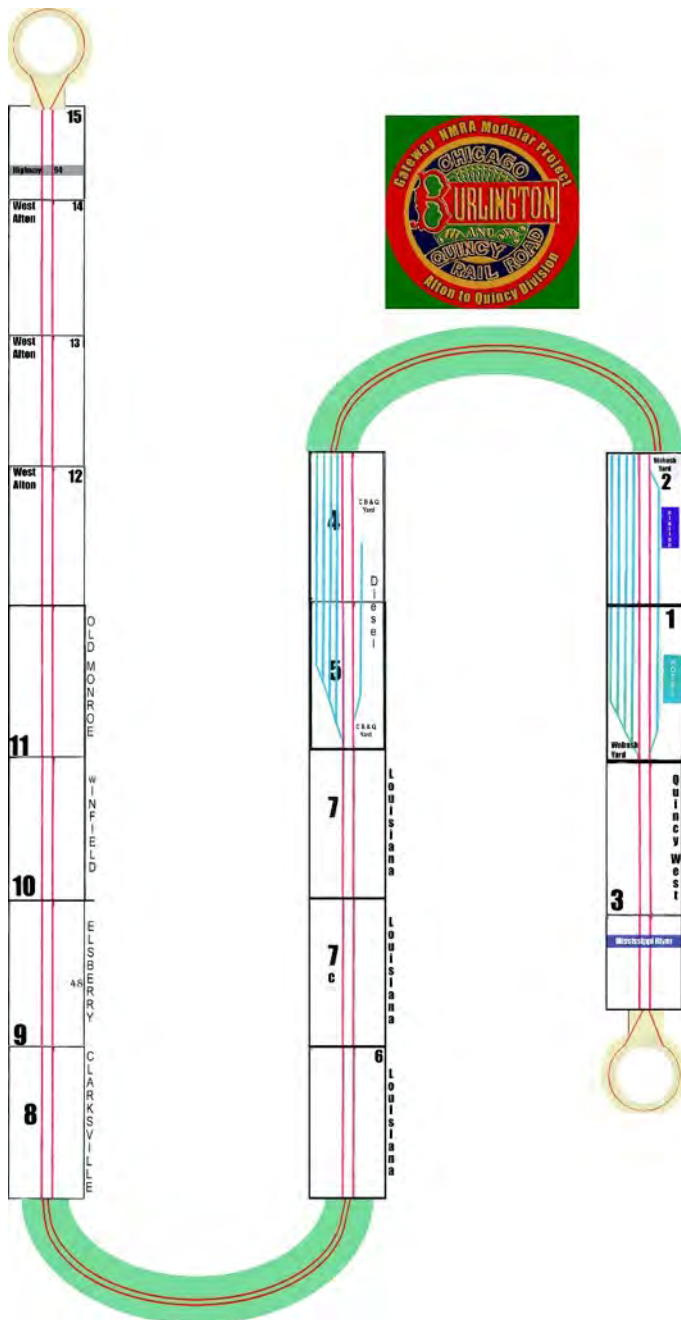
The group sincerely believe they have exceeded the original goals. Entering the second year of the Gateway Modular Project, the group has accomplished a number of successful milestones. The first and most important is the development of the modules which have a number of accomplishments.

Charles Marshall, a member of the Modular group is a professional cabinet builder who built the first fourteen modules. This was very important to meet the very exacting Free-MO standards. Folding legs, size, weight, and location of wiring were a must to have modules to transfer to shows.

The next milestone was the wiring which was researched by Don Perry and included the requirements for a Digitrax System. Each Module had to have reliable connectors to the five main wires that each module needed. The wires ran from the portable Digitrax and Electrical cabinet around the layout. The wiring bundle includes wires for the LocoNet which carries the commands from the throttle to the command station and out to engines, switches, or devices on the layout. Two wires from the command station to the track and wires to carry power to accessories were included in the wiring bundle.

It was determined that the group would purchase the best Digitrax equipment that had plenty of expansion capability and great voltage. DCS240 was selected as the Command Station and several DB220s Boosters to cover the power needs. The UP7 Universal plug to the Loconet was purchased for each Module. Wi-Fi capability, reversing loop, and accessory power was also purchased. This gave the group a great DCC layout and great expansion capabilities.

Thanks to Willie Richter, the site has a home at the West Alton City Hall. The crew cleaned-up the unused basement and expanded the plan to 21 modules. Several additional modules have been developed and will add to the Hannibal Division and include crossing the Mississippi River into Quincy, IL and beyond.



Current Configuration of the Layout

A future objective will be to get more Gateway individuals involved. Plenty of room for operators and new industries to switch. This should also recruit new NMRA members and expand the hobby in the St. Louis area.

A new project seeks to display the modules and content on a website. The website includes the following pages:

- Home – Main Page and Calendar
- Information – Events, Leadership, Contribution, History, & Frequently Asked Questions
- Photos – Actual Prototype and Session Photos
- Modules – Each Module has a page and description of its prototype use
- Operation – Rules, Industries, Crews, Session Information
- Clinics - wiring, track laying, buildings, lighting, interiors, signs, kits, corn fields, painting, weathering,
- Standards – Free-Mo, Digitrax, JMRI, and Operating Rules
- Community – A list of community organization they have interest
- Forms – Join NMRA, Propose New Module

The website is a work in progress, but go ahead and take a look at the progress at:

<https://sites.google.com/view/gw-nmra-mod/home>

Hannibal CB&Q Yard from Lover's Leap

Lover's Leap to the Left, CB&Q Yard below, Hannibal Mo. In top left corner, Mississippi River bridge to Illinois. Image courtesy of the Curt Teich Postcard Archives / DeGaris Post Card Co. (Circa 1937)



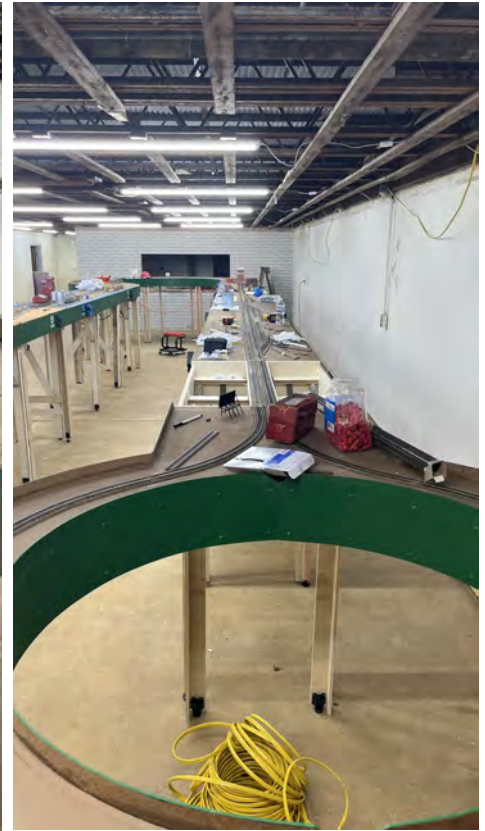
Building the Burlington: Update on the Gateway Division Layout

By Willie Richter, Gateway Division Member

Members continue their progress on the Gateway Division CB&Q Free-mo layout. Wiring continues with track drops and suitcase connectors on the newly added modules. Track has been laid at West Alton Yard again and fitter rails at the module joints have been installed as members work their way around the layout. The goal is to get all the mainlines operational, fitter rails installed, and wiring complete so that trains can circumnavigate the entire layout.

Pictures and messages have been exchanged with Ricky Keil of the Gateway Free-mo Group (not part of the Gateway Division) and it looks like we will be taking John Kelly's Winfield Module, the West Alton modules, one of the Hannibal yards, and possibly the reverse loops to connect to the free-mo layout on display at the RPM. Ricky said the double track area will be around 60 feet and will interchange with the single track area.

Regular work sessions are held the 3rd Saturday of each month starting at 9:30 a.m. at West Alton City Hall at 111 Richard Drive in West Alton, MO. If you are a NMRA member or might be considering joining the NMRA, stop by and check out the layout or lend us a hand. See you there!







Station to Station: Du Quoin, Illinois

By Jeff Cooper, Clerk and RPO Editor, Gateway Division

Station to Station is a regular feature that highlights depots and stations in the Gateway Division whether they still exist or have since faded into history.



This small station is located in DuQuoin, Illinois along the Canadian National (former Illinois Central charter line). Du Quoin is located in Perry County and is 86 miles southeast of St. Louis.

DuQuoin's first depot was built along Illinois Central's Charter Line in 1853. In 1901, an ornate brick structure was built and just survived into the Amtrak era when it burnt down in June 1971. By the time the station burnt, it had already been slated for demolition. Amtrak halted service to DuQuoin just a few months later in December 1971.

This simple brick and glass structure started life as a bank drive-through facility. The City of DuQuoin with the assistance of the Illinois Department of Transportation, remodeled the building, added on the waiting room, and built the platform. The station opened in August 1989. Today, it serves as a stop on Amtrak's *Saluki* and *Illini* routes. Amtrak's *City of New Orleans* passes by the station but does not stop. The structure is also home to the DuQuoin Chamber of Commerce and the DuQuoin Tourism Commission.



Structural Elements: John Brown Melons, Carmi, IL

By Jeff Cooper, Clerk and RPO Editor, Gateway Division

Structural Elements is a regular feature where we will examine both rail and non-rail structures and scenes to bring attention to the details that you can incorporate into your models and layout. Mundane details tend to be overlooked as our eyes are looking for the unusual or interesting. Through this feature, we want to highlight the ordinary and often overlooked details.



John Brown Melons is a roadside produce stand located on East Main Street in Carmi, Illinois. Carmi is located in White County and is 130 miles southeast of St. Louis.

Produce stands come in all shapes and sizes, from simple tables and wagons, to open air structures to fully enclosed structures. This particular structure in Carmi would make an interesting addition to your layout and is suitable for almost any era. A produce stand such as this could be modeled in almost any shape and size to fit that small plot of empty space on the layout. It can also be used to reinforce the time of year you are choosing to model based on what produce and signage you choose



A structure such as this offers the modeler an endless number of choices for detailing and decorating the model. This real life example includes many hand-crafted decorations and signs.

to include. At the end of this article is a listing of what fruits and vegetables are available at certain times of year to help you align your produce stand with your modeled season.

If you choose to model an open-air structure such as this, it would likely need to be a little more detailed with the structure since it would be visible, but much like the prototype, you could likely use piece, parts, and scraps to build it.

The prototype also provides additional modeling options for produce display with a covered farm wagon that can display crates, baskets, and boxes of fruits and vegetables.



It may be a simple structure but it is large on details. Here you can see brightly painted tables to hold the produce, a small storage shed to keep items out of the weather, a fan to provide a breeze on those hot, muggy days, and a metal rooster on the roof



Additional details include a hose, power meter, small wagon for more display space, hand-painted melons along the fascia, more metal roosters on the roof, and an empty container.



In this angle you can see that the produce stand was built around a tree and utility pole



A simple farm type wagon with a roof can serve as additional space for the fruits and vegetables or could even be a stand-alone produce stand for your layout.

Modeling a produce stand on your layout not only creates an interesting and unique structure, it can also be used to reinforce your modeled time of year. Various fruits and vegetables are grown and ripen at different times of year. Based on this, you can make your signs to advertise those specific produce items that would be available in your chosen time of year. Additionally, a completely empty produce could reinforce that you are modeling a time of year between growing seasons such as late fall, winter, or early spring.

Southern Illinois Farmer's Market Calendar as Prepared by the University of Illinois Extension

Spring (Late April, May, Early June)

- Asparagus (late April through early June)
- Spinach
- Peas (early June)
- Broccoli (early June)
- Cauliflower (early June)
- Cabbage (mid-June)
- Rhubarb (late April through May)
- Strawberries (late May through June)
- Apricots (late May through early July)
- Sweet Cherries (June)
- Sour Cherries (June)
- Raspberries (early June)

Summer (Late June, July, Early August)

- Cabbage (mid-June)
- Green Beans
- Pepper
- Tomato
- Eggplant
- Carrots (mid-June to July)
- Beets (June to October)
- Sweet Corn (July to frost)
- Okra (July)
- Watermelon (late June to late August)
- Melons (late June to early August)
- Sweet Cherries (June)
- Sour Cherries (June)
- Fresh Homemade Jam, Jellies, Preserves (starting late June)
- Plums (through early July)
- Apricots (through early July)
- Apples (early July to early November)
- Blackberry (late June through July)
- Fall Bearing Raspberries (late July through October)
- Peaches (early July to late August)
- Nectarines (mid-July to early September)
- Blueberries (mid-June to mid July)
- Plums (mid-July)
- Pear (early August)
- Grapes (early August)

Fall (Late August, September, and October)

- Tomatoes (winding down towards frost)
- Spinach
- Green Beans
- Peas
- Beets
- Turnips
- Kohlrabi
- Sweet Corn
- Winter Squash (mid-September to frost)
- Gourds (mid-September to frost)
- Pumpkins (mid-September to frost)
- Sweet Potatoes (late September to frost)
- Parsnips
- Everbearing Raspberries (through October)
- Peaches (through late August)
- Nectarines (through early September)
- Plums (through early September)
- Grapes (through mid-September)
- Pawpaw (September to October)
- Pears (through mid-October)
- Apples (through early November)
- Apple Cider (late September on)

All Season

- Radish
- Greens (beginning late May)
- Lettuce
- Zucchini
- Cucumber
- Summer Squash
- Leeks
- Potatoes
- Onions
- Dried Beans and Cereals
- Mushrooms
- Nuts
- Herbs
- Honey

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes for January 19, 2026

Call to Order

Superintendent Bob Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

New Members/Visitors Recognition

There were no new members or visitors to recognize.

Minutes from the December 15, 2025 Meeting

Mr. Miller presented the minutes from the December 15, 2025 meeting. *The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.*

Financial Reports

John Kelly presented the December 2025 financial statements and reported the balances in the bank account and CDs, as well as various expenses and receipts during the past month.

2026 Budget

John Kelly presented the 2026 budget. Mr. Kelly covered the various line items and noted that he needs to correct the budget line for the Division Free-mo layout from \$3,000 to \$500. Mr. Kelly noted that the cost of the facility for the Spring Meet in Marion is being covered upfront by donations. Walter Beckman added that the facility cost is being underwritten by private individuals but they will be reimbursed from proceeds from the meet up to their out-of-pocket amount based on the revenue generated by the meet. Mr. Beckman noted that the 2025 Fall Meet generated a profit.

AP Update

Dave Ackmann was unable attend the meeting so the update was tabled until the next membership meeting.

Southern Illinois Model Train Meet Update

Walter Beckman reported that the volunteer positions have been filled but we could use one more contest room judge. Mr. Beckman reported that 53 tables have been sold with an additional 7 to 10 tables being paid for on the day of the meet. Door prizes and silent auction items have been arranged and there will be no raffles. Operating layouts will consist of the Jefferson County & Southern, New Switzerland Model Railroad Club, Heartland Lego, and the Gateway Division Free-mo layout.

Division Free-mo Layout Update

Greg Gramlich provided an update on the Division Free-mo layout. Mr. Gramlich noted the layout was operations during the Christmas event at West Alton City Hall and operated very well with only one incident in 3.5 hours of operation. Mr. Gramlich noted that the yard is almost done and the layout will be going to the Marion meet for its debut outside of city hall. In Marion there will be no formal operating session, only running to show it off for meet attendees.

Club Updates

There we no club updates to report.

Ask Us Anything

There were no questions asked of the members.

Other Business

Jim Ables announced that the 2026 Mid-Continent Region Convention will coincide with the St. Louis RPM. Admission to the RPM will be included with the convention registration. Mr. Ables noted that volunteers are needed for registration and the contest room. Dave Roeder asked if this would conflict with the Gateway Division volunteers working at the RPM. Mr. Ables noted that the schedule of the convention and RPM will not present time conflicts for the volunteers.

Greg Gramlich noted that the next Hands-on Workshop will be February 21, 2026 and the topic will be JMRI. There will be a Free-mo layout work session following the workshop.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Miller announced the following upcoming events:

- **January 24 - 25, 2026, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Great Train Show:** St. Charles Convention Center, 1 Convention Center Blvd., St. Charles, MO
- **February 14, 2026, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Sons of the American Legion Train Show:** Dupo American Legion Post #485, 200 S. 5th Street, Dupo, IL

50/50 Drawing

No 50/50 drawing was held.

Presentation

Michael E. Hauk presented (via Zoom) "Introduction to Static Grass." This clinic introduced and demystified the use of static grass in creating model railroad scenery. It covered a bit of history, grass applicators, and a few tips and techniques that will hopefully encourage modelers who are unfamiliar with static grass to give it a try on their own layouts.

Next Meetings/Events

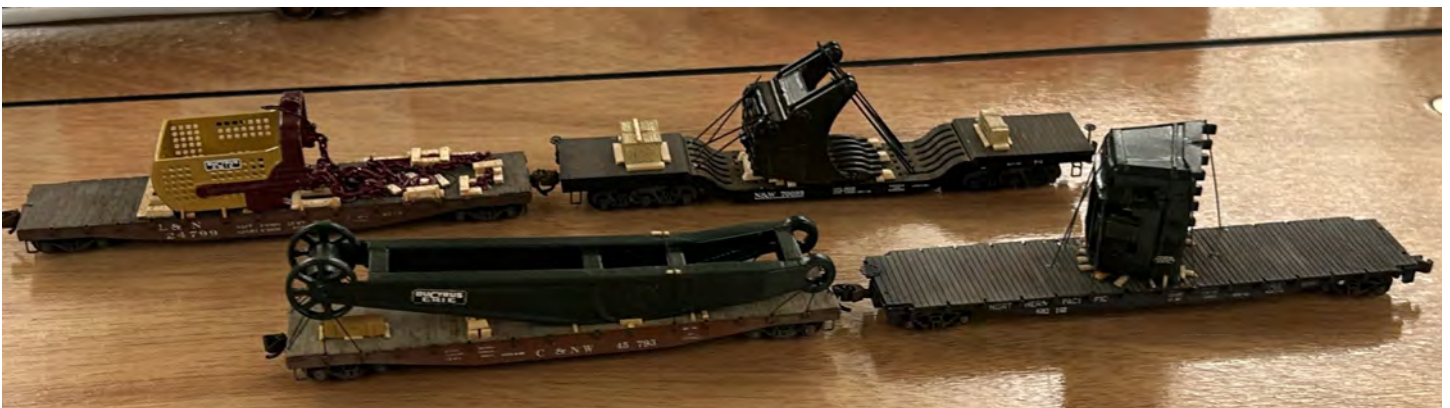
Mr. Miller announced the following upcoming Division event:

- **February 7, 9:00 a.m. Southern Illinois Model Train Meet,** The Pavilion, 1602 Sioux Drive, Marion, Illinois

Adjourn

Mr. Miller adjourned the business meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jeff Cooper, Clerk, Gateway Division



Freight cars by Keith Kohlmann of Racine, Wisconsin on display in the Contest Room at the 2025 NMRA National Convention in Novi, Michigan

Photo by Jeff Cooper

Meeting Minutes for March 16, 2026

Call to Order

Superintendent Bob Miller called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

New Members/Visitors Recognition

There were two new members who recently joined but were unable to attend the meeting.

Minutes from the January 19, 2026 Meeting

Mr. Miller presented the minutes from the January 19, 2026 meeting. Glenn Koproske motioned to approve the minutes from the January 19, 2026 meeting, Jim Ables seconded the motion. *The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.*

Financial Reports

John Kelly presented the January and February 2026 financial statements and reported the balances in the bank account and CDs, as well as various expenses and receipts during the past month.

Bank Account Signer

Mr. Kelly noted that Assistant Superintendent Dave Wehner needed to be added to the Division Bank account as a signer so that the Division will have backup in the event that Mr. Kelly is unavailable. Jim Ables motioned that Dave Wehner be added as a signer on the Division bank account. John Kelly seconded the motion. *The motion was approved with a unanimous vote.*

Division Volunteers Needed

Mr. Miller reported that the Division is still in need of a Publicity Chair and an Activities Coordinator and described the duties of each position. Fred Wilke volunteered to be the Publicity Chair. The Activities Coordinator remained unfilled.

Region Volunteer Needed

Mr. Miller reported that the Region is looking for a volunteer to serve as the NMRA Brand Ambassador who will work with the Region and Divisions on updating their logos to meet the requirements of the new NMRA branding. Fred Wilke volunteered.

2026 Region Convention Update

Mr. Ables reported that the 2026 Mid-Continent Region Convention will be held in conjunction with the St. Louis RPM. The contest room will be at the Doubletree Hotel while the clinics and layout tours will be arranged by the RPM. Registration for the Region Convention will include entry into the St. Louis RPM.

AP Update

Dave Ackmann presented Fred Wilke with the Achievement Program Structures certificate. Greg Gramlich, MMR presented Dave Ackmann with the Achievement Program Structures certificate.

Division Free-mo Layout Update

Greg Gramlich, MMR provided an update on the Division Free-mo layout. Mr. Gramlich reported that the modules have been moved to the basement of West Alton City Hall. As a result, the group reconfigured how the layout modules go together. Mr. Gramlich invited all Division members to the upcoming work session whether they are building one of the modules or not. Mr. Gramlich also reported that many of the structures that American Model Builders donated to the Division are in need of some repair and/or assembly. The buildings will be placed in the silent auctions in upcoming Division meets as they are key in generating revenue at the meets which ultimately is used to support Division activities throughout the year.

Club Updates

Mr. Koproske reported that the Mississippi Valley N Scale's Great St. Louis Metro Area Train Show will be moving back to the Kirkwood Community Center and will be a 1 day show. Mr. Koproske further reported that the club holds three activities every month and that their membership has tripled.

Ask Us Anything

There were no questions asked of the members.

Other Business

Mr. Miller reported that the Southern Illinois Model Train Meet held in February had a paid attendance of 419. That number does not include the kids 12 and under who got in free.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Miller announced the following upcoming events:

March 28, 2026 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.: Passenger Train Day at the Oak Bend Library: 842 S. Holmes Avenue, St. Louis, MO

April 11, 2026 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Lemay American Legion Train Show: 9305 S. Broadway, St. Louis, MO

April 18, 2026 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.: 11th Anniversary Railroad Swap Meet Sponsored by Iron Spike Model Train Museum: Washington City Auditorium, 211 High Street, Washington, MO

50/50 Drawing

The 50/50 drawing was held and the winner was John Kelly.

Presentation

Dave Ackmann presented "Round Things." As 3D printers become less expensive and more prevalent, leading edge modelers are making some fantastic custom industrial and commercial buildings, most of them flat walls glued into rectangular shapes. But the prototypical world is full of Round Things like water tanks, barns, silos, corrugated and arched roofing, circus tents, rotating signs, detail pieces and even rolling stock. 3D printing makes Round Things possible, and even fun. This clinic demonstrated how Round Things can be modeled in TinkerCAD, OpenSCAD, and custom Generator software developed by the presenter. It is suitable for beginners and intermediate modelers; some exposure to 3D printing is desirable, but not essential. Award winning models were shown.

Next Meetings/Events

Mr. Miller announced the following upcoming Division events:

March 21, 2026, 9:30 a.m. Division Free-mo Layout Work Session, West Alton City Hall, 111 Richard Drive, West Alton, MO

April 20, 2026, 7:30 p.m. Membership Meeting with Clinic/Presentation,
in-person and via Zoom, Oakville Elks Lodge, 2726 Oakville Elks Lane,
St. Louis, MO

Adjourn

Mr. Miller adjourned the business meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jeff Cooper, Clerk, Gateway Division

NMRA

Gateway Division

**Spring 2026:
Volume 34, Number 1**

The RPO is the official publication of the Gateway Division of the National Model Railroad Association

Editor: Jeff Cooper

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rpoeditor@outlook.com

If your submission will be by a method other than e-mail, please contact Jeff Cooper at 618-889-8907 by call or text.

Submission deadlines:
Spring: April 1
Summer: July 1
Fall: October 1
Winter: January 1

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Assistant Superintendent

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Division Free-Mo Layout

Greg Gramlich, MMR

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A KCS manifest freight just rolled past the depot on its way through town in Mena, Arkansas on August 17, 2023.

Photo by Jeff Cooper

Club Directory



Mississippi Valley N Scalpers

The **Mississippi Valley N Scalpers** LLC model railroad club was founded in April of 1990. It is

the oldest exclusive N scale club in the St. Louis Metro area. The club owns both fixed and modular (NTRAK and T-TRAK) layouts. Their members come from both sides of the Mississippi river. They share a common love of model railroading and a sincere interest in sharing their knowledge and expertise with fellow members. If you would like to join, you can attend a meeting or visit <http://mvns.railfan.net/> for more information.



The **Big Bend Railroad Club** is a 2-Rail O Scale model railroad club that started in 1938 and is located at the Frisco depot at 8833 Big Bend Boulevard in Webster Groves, MO. The club

operates for the public on the first Tuesday of the month (Except holidays) from 7:00 PM until around 8:30 PM, with extra nights in December, and other days for special occasions. They meet each Tuesday at the station. The public is welcome to drop by on any Tuesday evening and have a look around, but be aware that there may not be any activity on the layout other than the ongoing repair work. For more information, visit <http://www.bigbendrclub.org>



Gateway Free-Mo is a group of model railroaders in the Midwest centered around the St. Louis, MO area (100-200 mile radius). The group consists of

model railroaders that are interested in prototypical modeling using the Free-Mo modular concept to build, assemble, and operate a model railroad. Midwest railroad prototypes, such as MP, RI SLSF, Wabash, C&NW, L&N, and GM&O, as well as the modern empires such as NS, UP, and BNSF are emphasized and Midwest scenes are featured on the layout. The group has a Facebook Group called Gateway Free-Mo. For more information, contact Ricky Keil at 314-591-0152, message through the Facebook Group or e-mail rkeil6721@hotmail.com



The **Mudhens** are a club promoting narrow gauge railroading modeled in HO scale. They are dedicated to high quality modeling, improving skills,

and enhancing others enjoyment of model railroading. New members and visitors are always welcome. A featured sectional group of tables exists in St. Louis, MO and consists of an eight-table loop plus one table for connecting a branch line. Other fine modular and sectional groups exist in Arizona, Illinois, Texas, and Colorado. If you are interested in learning more about The Mudhens or becoming a member, visit <https://www.themudhens.org/>



Do you like to operate, collect, or just want to learn more about Lionel and other types of O-Gauge Model Trains? The **Lionel Railroad Club of St. Louis** may be the club for you! The Club has two portable layouts that they display at various

venues throughout the year. As a member you can work on and operate your trains on any of these layouts. Membership benefits also include access to train related DVDs, books, and magazines, programs on railroads of today and yesterday, and exclusive club products such as die cast vehicles, shirts, hats, mugs, and Club Lionel Licensed Cars. For more information visit <http://www.lionelrrclubstl.com>



The **St. Louis Live Steamers** is an organization interested in the construction of large scale model railroads, in steam railroad history and operations, and in steam technology generally. The SLLS seeks to share these interests with

the general public and provide opportunities in the community for everyone to learn about steam railroad history and technology. Their trains are 1/8 scale, also known as 1.5 inches to the foot. The rails are spaced 7.5 inches apart and a section of the railroad has an additional rail spacing of 4.75 inches to accommodate one-inch scale equipment.

For more information visit <http://www.stlouislivesteamers.org/>

Club Directory



The purpose of the **St. Charles Model Railroad Club** is to enjoy the hobby of Model Railroading in a group setting and promoting the hobby to the general public. It is their goal to enhance the enjoyment of the hobby for the members through the discussion of history and current events in the hobby, through the study of prototype railroads so that the members may apply that knowledge to their modeling, and to provide a forum where new ideas and techniques in modeling may be explored. The current club layout is the traditional permanent type. For more information visit <https://www.stcharlesrailroadclub.org/>.



The **Gateway Garden Railroad Club** continues to grow and includes the entire St. Louis area. There are even several out-of-town members. The club participates in many shows and special events each year. Also, the club currently maintains the

Large Scale Railroad that is suspended from the ceiling in the crossover from the garage entrance to Children's Hospital on Kingshighway in St. Louis. All big train enthusiasts are encouraged to join: Collectors, rivet counters, garden railroaders, indoor railroaders, live steamers, etc. We are an equal opportunity club; just bring your love of big trains. For more information visit <http://ggrrc.com/>.

K-10's Model Trains Maryville, Illinois

K-10's Model Trains is a hobby shop with a 60' x 81' layout attached to the shop. The purpose of the layout is to demonstrate new products and techniques. The layout room includes a dispatcher and observation platform that is handicapped accessible. The layout includes three major railroads (ATSF, UP & SP) that all interchange with each other, two short lines, and five major industries. Adult train running will start at 7 p.m. every Thursday night with the third Thursday night being "OPS" night. Saturday adult volunteer train running will start about 1 p.m. 2023 Sunday Kids Train Running is TBA depending on better local Covid and Flu conditions. For more information visit <https://www.k-10smodeltrains.com/>



The **Metro East Model Railroad Club** is located in Glen Carbon, IL. The HO scale layout is 18'6" wide by 27'6" long and has roughly 1000' of track on several levels. It includes a freight yard, a passenger yard, and a staging yard. The upper level features a depiction of the Glen Carbon area in the 1940's. The lower levels feature the club's fictitious 'Glen Carbon Central' Railroad, a large steel mill, and a coal mine. The club holds regular business meetings in the Glen Carbon Library on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. In addition, work/play sessions are held every non-1st Thursday at 6:30 p.m. For more information visit <http://www.trainweb.org/memrc/>.



The **Jefferson County and Southern Model Railroad Club** is an HO scale model railroad club that models the Bonne Terre Railroad (Missouri-Illinois/Missouri Pacific). The club's display layout is a 14-by-44-foot section of a larger layout. It features a dual main line and Jefferson County and Ozark-type scenery. They typically have monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of each month. Modelers interested in joining may become provisional members for a year and then may be promoted to club member. For more information, check out the club Facebook page. Those interested in joining can send an email to Bob Miller at bobnjoanstmo@gmail.com.

Don't see your club listed? Send us your club information to rpoeditor@outlook.com and we will include it in the next issue!

Local Hobby Shop Directory

Castle Trains and Treasures

4782 Old Jacksonville Road
Springfield, IL 62711
(217) 793-0407

Meadow Ridge Trains & Hobbies

520 E State Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101
(573) 395-4910
Follow on Facebook

Red Board Hobbies

2331 Old Collinsville Rd #C
Belleville, IL 62221
(618) 233-3618
redboardhobbies.com

Chuck's Depot

1913 West Rendleman
Marion, IL 62959
(618) 993-9179

Please Support Your Local Hobby Shop

Don't see your shop listed?
Send us your information to
rpoeditor@outlook.com and
we will include it in the next
issue!

Rodney's Trains & Toys

9622 Gravois Road
St. Louis, MO 63123
(314) 638-8250
Follow on Facebook

Frisco Train & Toy Store

24 Front Street
Valley Park, MO 63088
(636) 529-1660
friscotrainstore.com

Schaefer's Hobby Shop

11659 Gravois Road
St. Louis, MO 63126
(314) 729-7077
schaeferhobby.com

K-10's Model Trains

19 Schiber Court
Maryville, IL 62062
(618) 288-9720
k-10smodeltrains.com



TAG Trains

Flora, IL
Visit tagtrains.net or follow
on Facebook to see their
train show schedule or to
submit an inquiry

Mainline Model Railroad Products

2436 Denver Drive
Springfield, IL 62702
(217) 679-1945
Follow on Facebook



Target Model Train Company

3323 Lemay Ferry Road
Lemay, MO 63125
(314) 200-3021
Follow on Facebook

Mark Twain Hobby Center

2793 W Clay Street
St. Charles, MO 63301
(636) 946-2816
hobby1.com

Neal's N-Gauging Trains

100 W Main Street
Staunton, IL 62088
(618) 635-2525
nealsngauge.com

Train Town

9832 Manchester Road
St. Louis, MO 63119
(314) 716-2755
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