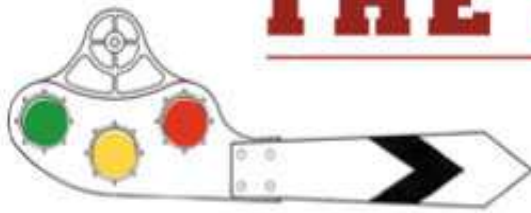


# THE SEMAPHORE



JANUARY 2015

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



## Layout of the Month: MMR Don Cook's GN Switching Layout

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**Happy New Year Everyone!**  
**January's regular meeting is January 18th at 1:30 pm at the Gary Morava Recreation Center in Prospect Heights.**  
**The contest is "Large Structure-5000 scale feet or more".**  
**The clinic is "Custom Transfer Cabooses" by the FVD's John Drozdak. Be there or be square!**



It's 11:00 am as GN RS1 #183 pulls into town with today's local freight on MMR Don Cook's Mansfield Switching Layout. Layout photos by Don Cook.

MMR Don Cook has a beautiful, complete 17 x 28 foot Great Northern Ry. HO Spokane Division layout in his basement. It has been featured several times in the Semaphore over the years. So why would he build a separate 6' x 9'6" switching layout in another room of his basement? Don says, "If one is good, two are better," and it's proven to be true. The compact layout is very nicely done and a lot of fun to operate. In fact, during op sessions at his house, both his Spokane Division and Mansfield layouts are operated. This month we're going to follow the daily local around the town of Mansfield while it does its work. WH

## Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

The logging industry had unique ways of hauling logs out of the forest including the one at the right. What you are looking at is a Mack "pole road locomotive" and its load. While not exactly a piece of rail road equipment, it's close and would make a really neat model don't you think?



## Layout of the Month: Don Cook's GN Switching Layout

The Mansfield Local runs daily except Sunday to its namesake of Mansfield, Washington located at the end of the GN's Mansfield Branch Line. The line is theoretically a part of Don's Great Northern Spokane layout, but in actuality, the layouts are not connected. The name of the game in Mansfield is agriculture and its industrial base is dominated by grain elevators. To the right, #183 makes its first moves of the day switching box cars at the Farmer's Cooperative elevator.



An empty Western Fruit Express reefer is being spotted at the Grange (above). Next, to the upper right, the 183 picks up a Pennsy 40 foot box car loaded with pasta at Door 1 of Mike's Macaroni. A separate siding on the other side of the plant services Door 2. The big, modern Coop elevator (right) will be the final landing place for the empty, black P&VW box car. Once it is spotted the Local is finished with its work on the east side of town and will head over to the west side for one more pick up.



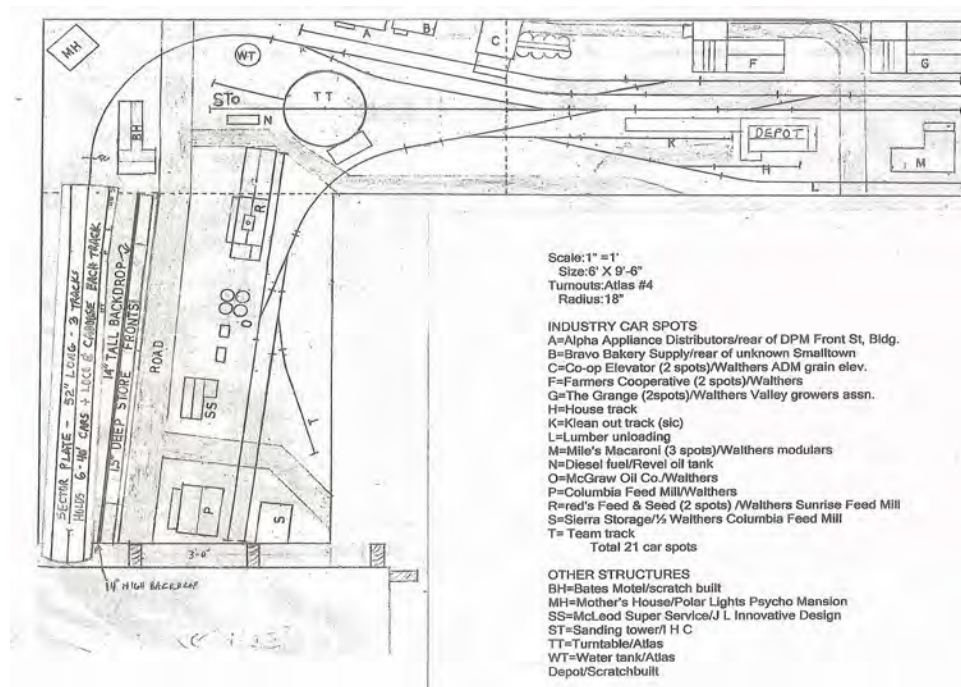
# Layout of the Month: Don Cook's GN Switching Layout

## Basic Layout Information



Layout name:	Mansfield, Washington
Layout builder:	Don Cook, MMR
Layout location:	Basement of Don's Waukegan home
Layout scale:	HO
Layout size:	6' x 9'6"
Layout style:	"L" shaped shelf layout
Layout theme:	Mansfield, Washington town site at the end of the GN's Mansfield Branch
Layout era:	1949
Construction started:	2005
Bench work:	2 inch foam sections that sit on a table
Sub road bed/roadbed:	Cork
Track and turnouts:	Atlas code 83 flex track with #4 turnouts
Scenery:	100% complete
Back drop:	Hand painted on walls with a separate 14 inch high section to hide sector plate
Structures:	Modified kits and scratch built
Locomotives:	Atlas and other manufacturers all detailed to represent GN prototypes
Rolling stock:	Various manufacturers kits and RTR
Control:	DC (only one loco operates at a time)
Operations:	2 cycle car card car/waybills. It usually takes an experienced operator about a half hour to switch Mansfield.

We're now on the west side of town (top) where the local is preparing to pick up a GN outside braced box car at Red's Feed and Seed (bottom). The local's brakeman is looking for Red before closing and locking the box car's door. Today's Mansfield Local has worked 8 of the town's 20 possible switching spots. Don Cook's hand drawn track plan below shows how much modeling and operation can be packed into a small track plan without overcrowding the layout.



## Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

After the November FVD Meeting, Walt asked me if I could shoot a snow scene for the December issue of the "Semaphore." Walt's question was timely as I still had one module to put away after Trainfest—my 2 x 2 foot asphalt plant module. I thought about how to put a snow scene together with this module. One of the shots I took ended up on the "cover" of December's Semaphore. Soon after that issue came out Walt asked if I could write an article on how I set up and shot the photo. I'm happy to oblige. Here's what I did.

After putting the asphalt plant module on a table behind the couch in my living room and viewing it through my digital camera's viewfinder, it was apparent the scene was not going to work without a backdrop. I called Jim Allen to ask if he still had the blue foam-core boards he had once offered me. At the time, I had no use for them, but now I had a need! I retrieved them from Jim and then stopped by Ron's Hobby Shop to take a look at the Woodland Scenics snow product. It looked like it would work for photo purposes.

Back at the house, I propped a spare shelf board between the couch and the back table to act as a support and then set a foam-core board against it. I used a clamp light on a 1x4 clamped to the table to provide some close-up light. After taking a couple of test shots, things were not looking right. I added a second piece of foam-core at 90 degrees to the first and another clamp light putting it high on the edge of the open basement door. I continued to take test shots and try different things. I found direct light created too many shadows, but indirect light bounced off the wall and ceiling worked well. I tried several different settings on the camera. More test shots showed the flash was not needed nor desired. After getting some good shots, I added the snow material using the "tap technique" with a spoon. I used a putty knife to 'plow' a road next to the track. I then added an Athearn C&NW SD40-2 and CNW (former-ConRail) SD-45 to the scene. Final touches were to lightly drop some snow material on the top of the units and add a pile of snow in front of the lead loco's pilot. After more shots I felt I had some good ones for the Semaphore and it turns out.....I did!



Here's another nice winter shot from Mike's asphalt module snow scene (top). Mike's basic photo set up (center). The spoon "tap technique" was used to make it snow (bottom). Mike Hirvela photos.

## Modeling Tip: Sector Plate Staging

A unique feature of Don Cook's Mansfield switching layout is its sector plate staging. Seen frequently on European switching layouts, you don't often see sector plates in general American model railroad practice. According to Don, "The key to operating the layout is the three track staging on a sector plate that is behind the main street backdrop. A train pulls out of staging onto the layout, does its switching and the train is made up to return in the opposite direction. It then pulls back into the same track that it left from." Each of the sector plate's three tracks holds 6 cars, a locomotive and caboose. "The plate is "pinned to the bench work at the back and swivels to line up one track at a time. It automatically provides track power only to the track that is lined up," says Don. So, while some of us in the US might think the sector plate is a bit "gimmicky", MMR Don Cook has proven that it can really work and provide an excellent solution for staging in tight quarters or on small layouts. WH

Don Cook's three track staging sector plate is hidden behind a 14 inch back drop with false front stores (top photo). In the bottom photo, the back drop has been removed to better see the sector plate. Don Cook photos.



## December's Clinic

Fox Valley Division Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, presented December's clinic on easily making asphalt or concrete roads and parking lots using Woodland Scenics foam "road making tape", 3M light weight spackle, and acrylic paint. Jeff thoroughly covered basic asphalt and concrete road making techniques, road detailing, painting and weathering, and road striping. He brought along his new 2 x 6 foot "Cardiac Avenue" module featuring a lot of fast food restaurants and their parking lots. The roads and parking lots on the module looked great and Jeff showed us how to produce the same results on our own layouts. His clinic notes are available on the FVD web site as a PDF. Jeff's photo by Jim Osborn.



## December's Contest Winners

Photos by Jim Osborn

December's contest, "Double or Triple Headed Diesels", drew eight fine entries. MMR Don Cook took first with an A-B-A lash-up of Great Northern F-7 units. Though the locos are old Athearn HO "blue box" models which Don built and detailed some years ago, they still compare very well to the new RTR models offered by Proto 2000, Intermountain, Broadway Limited, etc. Jim Landwehr's Athearn HO "modern era" MP-15s took second place. Jim lightly weathered his models to give them the appearance of fairly new locomotives. Bob DiDomenico's classic black and gold, Monon F-3, A/B units took third place. Bob's big Fs are three rail O scale models. Go to the FVD web site to see Jim Osborn's photos of all the December entries.



## Member News

First let us say, "**Have a Safe and Happy 2015**" to all our FVD members from everyone on the FVD Board!"...Membership Services Trainmaster, Bert Lattan reports the Fox Valley Division picked up a new member in November boosting its total membership to 219....Semaphore Editor, Walt Herrick and his 91 year old mother took Amtrak from Naperville to Salt Lake City and back early in November. The trip to Salt Lake City arrived a half hour early. The trip back was 6 hours late....The Kishwaukee Valley and Eakin Creek Model Railroad Club in Sun City Huntley had its most successful Holiday Display Layout showing and raffle ever this past December. The layout was open to the public and shown in Sun City Huntley's Prairie View Lodge November 22 to December 29....Mike Hirvela reports that the new Great Train Show held at the Lake County Fair Grounds December 27 and 28 went well for its first time out. He and Jim Allen manned the FVD NMRA booth at the show and also at the "DuPage" Show in December.... John and Ingrid Drozdak also had booths at the new Great Train Show with John displaying his rolling stock kit building and kit bashing skills, and Ingrid her "Tree Lady" trees. WH

## 2014-2015 Meeting Schedule

The remaining FVD/NMRA meeting schedule is given below and on the FVD's web site:  
[www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org).

Schedule changes or additions are posted on the FVD web site as soon as they are known. Our meeting place is the Gary Morova Recreation Center, 110 Camp McDonald Road in Prospect Heights, 60070. Our meeting time is 1:30 pm except in April as noted below.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Jan. 18, 2015	Custom Transfer Cabooses by John Drozdak	Large structure—5000 scale feet or more	
Feb.15, 2015	<u>TBD—check web site</u>	Double or triple headed steam	
<b>Feb. 28 &amp; March 1, 2015</b>	<b>High Wheeler 2015</b> Train Show at Harper College in Palatine sponsored by the FVD. 9 am to 5 pm each day. <u>FVD volunteers needed</u> . Contact Jeff Jarr at <a href="mailto:jjarr@comcast.net">jjarr@comcast.net</a> or 773-286-8755.		
<i><u>Note: there is no March FVD monthly meeting due to High Wheeler 2015.</u></i>			
April 13, 2015	<u>TBD check web site</u>	Open load spanning 2-3 cars	<b>1:00 pm start.</b> Officer elections
<b>April 17 - 19, 2015</b>	<b>Midwest Region Spring Convention</b> hosted by the Winnebago Land Division at the Holiday Inn, 4601 Calumet Ave. in Manitowoc, WI		
May 17, 2015	<u>TBD check web site</u>	Unfinished project of your choice	Last meeting until September
<i><u>Note: there are no FVD monthly meetings in June, July or August</u></i>			
<b>August 23 - 29, 2015</b>	<b>NMRA National Convention in Portland, OR.</b> Check the convention's web site: <a href="http://www.nmra2015portland.org">www.nmra2015portland.org</a> for complete information.		

## NMRA Web Sites

<b>Fox Valley Division</b>	<a href="http://www.foxvalleydivision.org">www.foxvalleydivision.org</a>
<b>Midwest Region</b>	<a href="http://www.mwr-nmra.org">www.mwr-nmra.org</a>
<b>National</b>	<a href="http://www.nmra.org">www.nmra.org</a>



### About the Fox Valley Division

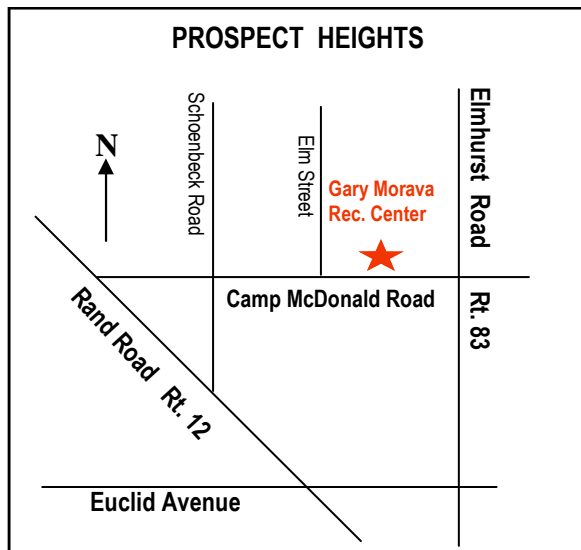
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 230 members of varied ages and modeling ability levels belong to the FVD. Almost all modeling scales are represented in our division. Membership in the division is free as are the Semaphore newsletters.

FVD monthly meetings are held September through May at the Gary Morava Center in Prospect Heights from 1:30 to about 4:00 pm. Each meeting features a clinic, model contest, information of interest to the membership, and a time for socializing. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions are also held periodically in addition to, or instead of, the monthly meetings. To promote the hobby of model railroading, the FVD sponsors and runs the large train show called "High Wheeler" in early March each year at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois.

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to answer your questions, help improve your modeling, and help you better enjoy the great hobby of model railroading. Join us at a FVD meeting or outing and bring a friend. We'd love to see you. Also visit us on the web at:

[www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org)

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, or any FVD Board member listed below. We are here to help!



- The FVD's monthly meeting is at the :  
**Gary Morava Recreation Center**  
110 Camp McDonald Road  
Prospect Heights, IL. 60070
- Our regular meeting time is:  
1:30 to about 4:00 p.m.
- 2014 – 2015 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org)

FVD mailing address: Fox Valley Division  
Midwest Region-NMRA  
P.O. Box 1535  
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