



THE SEMAPHORE

November 2016

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



Pete Walton's Great Midwestern Revisited article and photos by Walt Herrick

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Our next FVD meeting is
Sunday, November 20th
at 1:30 pm. The contest
is "Structure of your
Choice" (2000–5000
scale square feet). The
clinic is "Modeling Under
a Microscope" by Brian
Williams. See [you there!](#)

The Semaphore last visited Pete Walton's Great Midwestern HO layout in October 2013. At that time, the layout was about 60% finished. A year ago, Pete declared the GM "done" including track work, wiring, and scenery. He then invited model railroad author/photographer Dave Rickaby to do a story on the layout. The story should be appearing in *Model Railroader Magazine* sometime in 2017. Though complete, Pete is still adding details and doing track maintenance. The scenery is as beautiful as ever featuring large hills with massive rock outcroppings similar to the Palisades area of northwest Illinois, a tall waterfall, a new harbor scene, a long street-running scene, and a farm scene. Pete is now adding several of his signature "mini-scenes" to the new sections. Most of Pete's freight locos and rolling stock have been weathered, but he prefers to keep his beautiful early 1950's passenger trains in spotless condition. For this *Semaphore* article, Pete has fired up CB&Q 2-10-4 #6317 to lead us on a tour of the last completed sections of his GM layout.



Big CB&Q #6317 crosses the large concrete bridge over Collards Creek on Pete Walton's Great Midwestern Railroad. The tall waterfall scene was very much desired for the new 30 x 30 foot section of the GM. The new section was added to his original layout when Pete and wife Luann moved to Sun City Huntley in 2003.

Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

What you see to the right is an unusual *drawbridge* style track crossing. The crossing is near Bundaberg, Australia over the Queensland Rail (QR) main line. A sugar cane railway uses this drawbridge solution to cross *above* the cape gauge main line as opposed to a traditional diamond crossing at grade. Queensland Rail provides suburban and long distance passenger service and is government owned.



Layout of the Month: Pete Walton's Great Midwestern Revisited



The 6317 coasts by the Collards Creek Motor Park, while a '53 Ford "woody" station wagon crosses the one lane bridge into the park (above). Below left, a Gulf Mobile & Ohio caboose hop slowly makes its way down Porto Avenue. Almost all of the structures on this 6 foot long street running scene are wood craftsman kits built by Pete's friend Rich Porto. Below right is one of the last sections of layout to be completed. The section stood bare for several years because Pete didn't know exactly what he wanted to do (rural or urban?) in this area which is along a wall. The final result is a superb urban scene.



Layout of the Month: Pete Walton's Great Midwestern Revisited



A Walthers Milwaukee Road Everitt Street Depot kit serves as the City Hall for the city of Walton (above). Friend Rich Porto has built 30 some craftsman kits big and small for Pete's layout, but his first love is building wooden ship models. His "restored" paddle wheeler (upper right) now does excursions on the GM's Badger River. Pete's wife Luann grew up on a farm near Freeport, Illinois so a mid-west farm scene (middle right) was a must for the layout. Pete's scene, while not an exact copy of Luann's farm, never-the-less nicely captures the essence of her childhood farm home which no longer exists. In the lower right scene, we see the beginnings of several mini-scenes with a fire works dealer on the left, a barn, and Barlow's Smokehouse B-B-Q restaurant. All of these will be getting additional detailing.



Mike's Minute by FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela

We Tour Amtrak's Repair Shops

On Friday, July 8th during this summer's National Model Railroad Association Convention in Indianapolis, Jim Allen and I took a tour of Amtrak's Beech Grove Locomotive and Car Repair Shops. This was probably the most popular prototype tour of the convention and spots for the tour "sold out" quickly.

The shops are located on the southeast side of metro Indianapolis in Beech Grove, Indiana. They were originally constructed in 1904–1908 by the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railway, otherwise known as the "Big Four". The shops passed to the New York Central System in 1922 upon the NYC's formal acquisition of the Big Four. Penn Central took over the shops when the Pennsy and NYC merged in 1968. Amtrak purchased the facility in 1975 after the PC went bankrupt. Though built in the early 1900s, the shop buildings are still in pretty good shape. The facility is huge and is responsible for maintaining all of Amtrak's equipment except their equipment running in the Northeast corridor. Jim and I toured the locomotive shop, the passenger car shop, wheel shop, and final assembly/check-out facility.

A lot of work goes on in these shops. For example, each Amtrak passenger car is completely refurbished about every 4 years, with about 160 cars per year scheduled through the shop. This does not include accidentally damaged cars, wrecked cars and other surprises they didn't plan on. The cars come into the hoist building, get lifted, and the road trucks removed. A set of shop trucks are installed and are used through the refurbishing process until the car body is done. The trucks go to the truck shop to be disassembled, cleaned, inspected and repaired as necessary. The wheels are de-axled and sent off for turning. Trucks are re-built and set under the next appropriate completed out-bound car. The car body goes into another building to have its interior (seats, carpeting, tiles and luggage racks) removed, thoroughly vacuuming and cleaned, needed repairs made, and then the car is sanitized. All electrical and AC units are removed and changed out. Diners get all cooking equipment changed out. All running gear gets spec'd and if out of spec, the parts are changed out. Then the car is re-assembled, re-trucked, and checked out before being released back into service. The turn-around takes 30 to 45 days depending on what needs to be done. Similar rehabs and repairs are done on a regularly scheduled basis to Amtrak's fleet of locomotives in the locomotive shop. All in all, the Beech Grove Shops tour was a blast and one of the best NMRA convention prototype tours I've been on. My thanks to Jim Allen for providing info and the center photo for this Mike's Minute.

Not much going on Superintendent-wise this past month. I'll see you all at our regular FVD monthly meeting Sunday afternoon, November 20th! Mike Hirvela photos except as noted above.



October's Clinic

October's clinic, "Using Arduino Devices" was presented by **George K.** (right). George showed us how inexpensive Arduino devices can be used on our model railroads for controlling trains, signaling and a host of other uses. Arduino devices are compact computers, and interestingly the December 2016 issue of *Model Railroader Magazine* has an article on their use in developing a signaling system ("Build a signal system with Arduino micro-controllers on page 42). November's clinic is "Modeling Under a Microscope" and will be presented by **Brian Williams**. November's meeting will be on Sunday, November 20th at our regular start time of 1:30 pm at the Gary Morava Ree Center in Prospect Heights. WH



September's Contest Winners Contest Photos by Jim Osborn

September's Contest was "Concealed or Closed Load" (cannot see load). **Mike Hirvela** took **First Place** with his 1930's era, HO scale Budlong Pickle car (right) as it appeared straight out of the paint shop. **George K.** was our **Second Place** finisher with his unusual (for this country but not Europe!) flat waggons with boxes, one box of which is covered with a tarp (lower left). George's modeling scale is also unusual—it's TT! **Dave Johnson's** nicely weathered Monon box car took **Third Place** (lower right). All five contest entries can be seen on the FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.com. November's contest is "Structure of Your Choice"—2000 to 5000 scale square feet in size. WH



Member News

FVD Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan**, reports that our newest FVD members are **Kristin Dummler from Wauconda**, and **Thomas Smith from Lithonia**. *Welcome aboard Kristen and Thomas!...* Mike Hirvela manned the FVD's promotions booth at the DuPage County (Wheaton) Model Railroad Show on October 9th. Mike, Chuck Rita, and Dick Koch manned the FVD booth at different times at the Railroad Prototype Modelers meet in Lisle on October 21 and 22. Thanks for your service to the FVD, guys!...Jim Allen, Mike Hirvela and Walt Herrick attended this year's "Optoberfest" meet October 28th and 29th in southern Wisconsin. Optoberfest is a day and a half of model railroad operating fun on 17 (mostly) WISE Division operations oriented model railroads. This year's event had sessions Friday evening, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Saturday night. Each session was about 3 hours long. Former WISE Division super, Joe Russ, is the organizer of Optoberfest which has been going strong for some years now.

Modeling Tip: use mock ups

Pete Walton's Great Midwestern is a large 30 x 80 foot L shaped model railroad that Pete has declared "finished". All of the scenery work is done on the big layout except for some super detailing in the most recently completed sections. Despite its size, almost anywhere you look, the scenes—no matter if they are big city urban scenes, mountain scenes, water scenes, or rural scenes—*look right*. Everything just seems to be in its proper place. Asked how he achieves the "right" look for his scenes, Pete says he uses mock ups for structures and scenery. The mock ups are card board, or built or partially built structures, and cardboard/heavy paper mock ups for scenery. "I move the mock ups around until I get the look I want. Then I leave the scene alone for a few days or weeks. If it still looks good after that, I'll build it that way," says Pete. "If not, I'll start over. And if a completed scene turns out wrong, I'll tear it out and do it over." So that's how you get "right looking" scenes on your layout! WH



Completed and partially completed structures and a few cardboard mock ups were used to mock up this long street running scene before it was built on Pete Walton's layout. Walt Herrick photo.

2016 - 2017 Fox Valley Division Meeting Schedule

Except as noted under "Other", all meetings are held from 1:30 to about 4:00 pm at the Gary Morava Recreation Center, 110 W. Camp McDonald Road, Prospect Heights, IL 60070. Visitors are always welcome per the NMRA's visitor policy. Note that clinics are subject to change without notice. For the latest clinic and all FVD news and information, visit our web site at www.foxvalleydivision.org.

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Clinic</u> | <u>Contest</u> | <u>Other</u> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nov. 20, 2016 | "Modeling Under a Microscope" by Brian Williams | Structure of Your Choice—2000 min to 5000 max scale sq. feet | |
| Dec. 18, 2016 | "Midwest Modutrak" by Mike Skibbe | Odd Consist—max 4 units | 1:00 pm start. Pizza lunch. |
| Jan. 15, 2017 | "Operation Lifesaver" by Dave Phillips | Refrigerated Train—Mechanical or iced; 6 car max | |
| Feb. 19, 2017 | "Computer Modeling" by Carl Wagus | The exterior detail of a structure including walls and roof | |
| March 19, 2017 | "GN Ore Modeling" by Bob Hammer | Structure of Your Choice—any size or type | |
| April 23, 2017 | "A Ride on Africa's Blue Train, Rovos Rails Pride of Africa" by George Ferraro | Yard Switchers—max 2 | 1:00 pm start. Pizza lunch. FVD officer elections. |
| April 28–30, 2017 | 2017 Midwest Region Convention "Golden Rails" hosted by the Rock River Valley Division at the Holiday Inn in Rockford, IL. Complete information on the division's website: rverd-nmra.com. | | |
| May 21, 2017 | "Introduction to Operations Under Time Table and Train Order Authority" by Chris Czynewski | Exposed or Open Load of Your Choice | Last monthly meeting for 2015 –2016 |
| July 30–August 6, 2017 | 2017 NMRA National Convention "Orange Blossom Special" in Orlando, FL. See the convention's website for complete information: nmra2017orlando.org | | |



About the Fox Valley Division

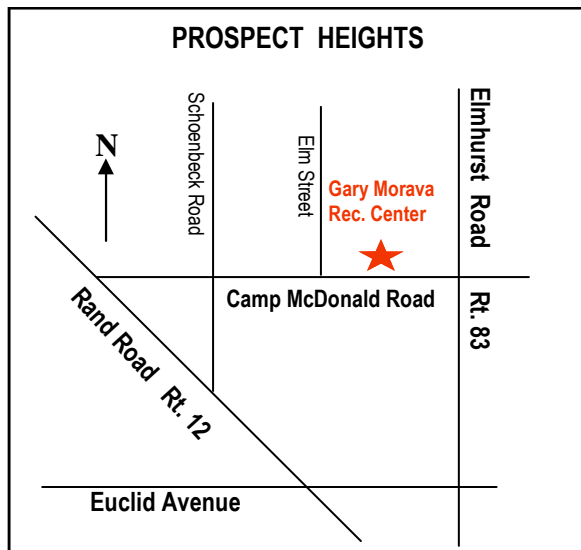
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 220 members of varied ages and modeling 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 normally sponsors and runs a large train show called "High Wheeler" in early March each year at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois. (Note: the 2017 High Wheeler is cancelled due to a major renovation of the Harper gymnasium used for the show.)

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to answer your questions 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.

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela, or any FVD Board member listed below. We're 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.
- 2016 – 2017 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org

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