

# THE SEMAPHORE



May 2017

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



## Layout of the Month: Greg Bedlek's Great Northern Pacific

Article and photos by Walt Herrick

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### Next FVD Meeting:

Sunday, May 21

1:00 pm at the

Morava Rec Center in Prospect Heights

**Contest: Exposed or Open Load of your choice**

**Clinic: Intro to TT&TO operations by Chris Czyzewski**

**Note, this is the last meeting and last Semaphore of the 2016-17 modeling season. See you in September!**



In what could easily be a Great Northern Railway 1970 publicity shot, a trio of freshly painted GE diesel's pull a string of matching GN grain hoppers over the Ealean Gulch Trestle 10 miles southeast of Butte, Montana on Greg Bedlek's Great Northern Pacific HO layout. Greg took the above photo on his huge 60 x 60 foot home layout which he started building in 2006. To date the layout is 95% complete including bench work, track work, wiring, a full signal system, CTC "board", scenery, back drops, and structures. All of this work has been done by Greg alone. The main focus of the layout is prototype CTC operations, with beautiful western scenery and more than a hundred structures providing a great setting for train running. The layout is operated almost once per month with a crew of 30 operators running mainline freight trains, passenger trains, local freights, interchange trains, *con't on p. 2*

## New! A White Elephant Sale at our May Meeting!

Superintendent, Mike Hirvela, announced at our April regular meeting that the division would have a **White Elephant Sale at our May 21 regular meeting.** Complete sale rules are on our FVD web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org). The sale is for new, used, "as is" model railroad or railroad related items. Members are to price their items "reasonably" in even dollar amounts. There will be a sign up sheet for sellers. **The division will keep 10% of anything you sell.** Members with items to sell should get to the meeting early to prep. All members are advised to bring cash and your wish list to take advantage of some great deals! WH

**BIG  
FVD  
Train  
SALE  
May 21!**

## Layout of the Month: Greg Bedlek's Great Northern Pacific *con't*

from p.1 industrial switchers, yard switchers, and branch line trains. The GNP runs from Chicago to Seattle in the US's northern tier. The Great Northern and Northern Pacific are the layout's primary roads, but also modeled are the CB&Q, Chicago Belt Line, UP, and others. Greg credits well known Chicago modeler and model railroad operations guru, Mike Ritschdorff, with creating and maintaining the layout's extensive operational scheme. It takes about three days for Mike to stage the railroad. During an op session 50-55 scheduled trains are run on single track mainlines during a four hour period. Digital fast clocks are positioned in several key basement locations. Mike Ritschdorff has also done extensive work installing decoders and sound in the layout's locomotives, assembled rolling stock, and doing maintenance work on the locos and cars. This has left Greg free to do all the layout building and computer programming for the GNP. They say, "quantity doesn't always equal quality". That axiom does not apply to Greg Bedlek's Great Northern Pacific!



Top right, mixed GN blue, black and white, and orange and green power lead a freight across the tall Fish Creek Trestle near Cyr, Montana. In the center photo, the photographer couldn't resist taking a shot of a matched GN orange and green set of ABBBBA F units, waiting for a green board at Marshall. To the left is a CB&Q GP9 and caboose in local service sitting below the tall grain elevator at Montgomery, Illinois. The prototype for this elevator still stands on a BNSF double track main there today. Though the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads are the two primary roads on the GNP layout, the CB&Q also has significant trackage and importance.

## Layout of the Month: Greg Bedlek's Great Northern Pacific *con't*



Above, Greg Bedlek is at the GNP's dispatcher's desk. The layout's fully functional—including route locking—and fully displayed CTC machine is shown on two large computer screens. The layout is dispatched using this computer system. As one of the country's top computer programmers, Greg wrote all of the software that runs his CTC machine which, in turn, runs the railroad. Greg's software is similar to Dr. Bruce Chubb's.



The GNP is huge as seen in the top photo of its longest aisle which stretches almost 60 feet. Though huge, the GNP has a fully functional signal system including the semaphores in the center photo. NP F's depart Minneapolis in the last shot.

### Basic Layout Information

Layout name:	Great Northern Pacific
Layout builder:	Greg Bedlek
Construction started:	2006
Layout location:	Greg's basement
Layout scale:	HO
Layout size:	60 x 60 feet
Layout style:	Around the walls with peninsulas
Layout concept:	Prototype inspired GN/NP from Chicago to Seattle
Layout era:	1970 just prior to GN/NP's merger
Bench work:	L girder
Base/ roadbed:	Plywood base with cork roadbed
Track:	Commercial—mostly Atlas code 83 with some hand laid code 55 and 40
Turnouts:	Atlas code 83 #6 and #8
Min Radius:	42 inch mainline radius; 36 inch on secondary trackage
Max Grade:	3/4 % maximum grade
Main line length:	480 feet; 4,300+ feet of secondary trackage
Scenery:	95 % complete
Structures:	Kits, kit-bashed and scratch built
Locomotives:	Plastic diesels all with sound
Rolling stock:	Kits and RTR
Control:	Digitrax DCC with wireless and tethered throttles
Operations:	Regular op sessions under CTC control; car card forwarding; digital fast clocks; 30 operators
Influential Modelers:	Jon Addison, Dave Revelia, Brian Nolan, Roger Russell
Web Site:	<a href="http://gregbedleksgnp.yolasite.com/">http://gregbedleksgnp.yolasite.com/</a>

## Layout of the Month: Greg Bedlek's Great Northern Pacific *con't*



Not many home model railroads can devote 3 x 40 feet to a single track main line scene, but the GNP can. Greg loves long “S” curves and modeled them beautifully in the striking scene in the upper left photo. The upper right photo shows a rare GN NW5 switching the town of Hutchinson, MN. Note the extensive and excellent detailing in this scene which, remember, is on a 2,800 square foot layout! The layout's era depicts the months right before the GN/NP merger.



In the upper left photo, a Great Northern E unit leads its passenger train “the Gopher” under a signal bridge at Mandan, ND. In the center photo above, we see a Belt Railway of Chicago geep switching the large Wisconsin Steel mill southeast of Chicago. The photo shows only a fraction of the entire mill scene on the layout. The upper right photo shows the town of Grangeville, Idaho in the foreground, and in the background, the extensive double decked staging yards at the west end of the railroad. The west end staging yards are capable of holding 26 trains and 1,000 cars. The entire railroad holds 2,700 cars, 300 of which are passenger cars and non-revenue equipment. There are 300 locomotives of various manufacturers, and all with sound, on the layout.

## Election Results

**Congratulations! to Ingrid Drozdak and Tim Kleimeyer** for winning our April elections, Ingrid as Assistant Superintendent, and Tim as Paymaster. Both candidates were elected by acclamation and began serving their new terms immediately. Ingrid is new to the Assistant Super's job, while Tim has been our Paymaster for many years. WH

## Ways and Means Trainmaster still needed

**The division is *still* looking for an individual to assume its important Ways & Means Trainmaster position.** This position organizes and runs our High Wheeler Train Show held each year in early March. The FVD Board would like to have the Ways and Means position filled ASAP to help in finding a new location for High Wheeler and also helping to plan the 2018 show. **However, if no one steps forward to assume the Ways and Means job soon, there will be no High Wheeler 2018.** So, members, please consider serving as the FVD's Ways and Means Trainmaster and carrying on the great FVD High Wheeler Train Show tradition. Thank you! WH

## March Clinic and Contest—photos by Jim Osborn

Former Soo, CN and Amtrak railroader, **George Ferraro**, is now retired and one of the things he enjoys doing in retirement is traveling. In April's FVD clinic George shared amazing photos of his trip to South Africa last year where he and his wife toured the country on two of its luxury trains, the **Blue Train and the Rovos Rails "Pride of Africa" train**. George's many photos of the trains and the South African scenery and wildlife were both neat to see and educational. Big FVD "Thanks!" go to George for his great photos and commentary about his experiences on these once in a life time train tours. Next month **Chris Czyzeski** will give us an **"Introduction to Operations Under Time Table & Train Order Authority"**. This promises to be a really interesting and informative clinic. See you in May! WH



April's modeling contest was **"Switchers—maximum two units"**. **Jim Osborn's** CNW NW-2 cow and calf entry took **First Place**. Jim kit-bashed the calf unit and nicely weathered both units to match locomotives he watched as a youngster working Proviso Yard. **James Schmitz's** "out of the box" black Illinois Central SW9 took **Second**. James has had his SW for some time and was glad to enter it in a contest and then place second! **Third Place** went to **Denis Zamirowski** for his Rock Island SW9. Denis added Kadee couplers and some nice weathering to his loco lettered in Rock's red and yellow scheme. Great job everyone! **May's contest is "Exposed or Open Load of Your Choice"**. Let's keep those entries coming for the last regular meeting of the 2016 - 2017 season, FVD modelers! WH



## Modeling Tip

Greg Bedlek has scratch built several structures for his GNP layout that are close matches to the prototype such as Greg's Platt and Frees building photos seen on the right. To model this building's unique graphics he went to his public library which has *Adhesive!* brand vinyl that is cut with a *Silhouette* vinyl cutter. He used an Apple Mac to choose a matching font for the lettering he needed, and then transferred the lettering to the vinyl via computer. Greg cut out the words with the vinyl cutter. He discarded the letters and used the negative stencil to spray on the model's lettering. The result is authentic looking lettering based on the prototype's. WH



## Mike's Minute by FVD Superintendent Mike Hirvela

The 2016-17 modeling season is winding down. The excellent MWR Golden Rails Convention is now history as are our FVD elections—congratulations Ingrid (Ass't. Superintendent) and Tim (Paymaster)!— and our first year without a High Wheeler Train Show. As I look back on the past three months, there are only *two* Saturday nights that I wasn't busy operating on someone else's model railroad! Which brings me to the featured model railroad of the month in this Semaphore—Greg Bedlek's GNP railroad. I have been fortunate to have been an operator there over the last several years. I have been crew on road trains, a yard master at several of the towns, crew on several "feeder" lines from staging and the sawmill branch to Idaho. The passenger terminal job is also a challenge. This April's session at Greg's was a special Friday session hosting the OCC guys (Old Codgers Club—a round robin group of folks from the Milwaukee and northern Illinois areas). Greg's is one of the largest railroads the Codgers have operated on, and the size and scope of ops can be overwhelming. It takes 30 people to run his complete schedule of trains! But not to worry, we're all there to have fun, try our hand at new things, and appreciate what the layout owner has built. And maybe we'll come away with some new ideas, designs, techniques, or operating schemes, which we can use on our own railroads. It's a win-win for all, and isn't that what's it all about?

## Membership News

The recent Midwest Region Convention "Golden Rails" held recently in Rockford was excellent despite nasty weather all three days. **NMRA President, Charlie Getz**, attended the convention to honor the Rock River Division which was celebrating its 50th year as a division. FVD members **Jim Allen** and **Walt Herrick** won 4 or 5 contest awards each at the convention, Jim for his modeling efforts and Walt for his photography. Nice job, you guys!.....FVD Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan**, reports that FVD membership currently stands at 216. He also reports that **Douglas Dirks from Highland Park, Albert Hill from Algonquin and Mat Junge also from Algonquin** are the FVD's most recent new members. Welcome to the FVD!..... As Mike Hirvela's photo to the right shows, the major Harper College renovation project to building M—the building where our FVD train show High Wheeler was held for many years—has started in earnest! WH



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

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
May 21, 2017	"Introduction to Operations Under Time Table and Train Order Authority" by Chris Czyzewski	Exposed or Open Load of Your Choice	<b>New! White Elephant Sale</b> <b>See page 1 for details.</b> <b>Last 2016-2017 meeting</b>
<b>July 30–August 6, 2017</b>	<b>2017 NMRA National Convention "Orange Blossom Special" in Orlando, FL. See the convention's website for complete information: <a href="http://nmra2017orlando.org">nmra2017orlando.org</a></b>		
September 17, 2017	To be announced	To be announced	<b>First Monthly meeting for 2017– 2018</b>



### About the Fox Valley Division

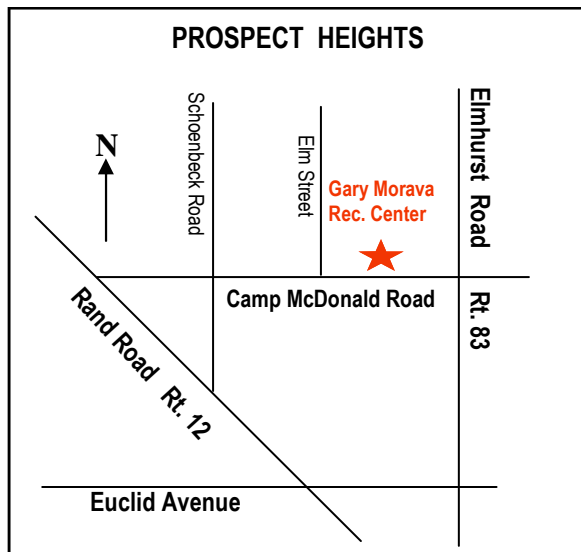
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 220 members of varied ages and modeling 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 suspended 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](http://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](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org)

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Ways & Means—High Wheeler Show Manager  
**VACANT**