

# THE SEMAPHORE



May 2018

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



## Steve Field's LITH Lines

Article and photos by Walt Herrick

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**Next FVD Meeting:**

**Sunday, May 20**

**1:30 pm at the**

**Morava Rec Center in  
Prospect Heights**

**Contest: Illuminated Structure—any size**

**Clinic: Building My Great  
Midwestern Layout by Pete  
Walton**



Crossing gates have dropped and cross buck lights are alternately flashing red as a classic Santa Fe F unit pops out of a tunnel and across a grade crossing on Steve Fields LITH Lines layout. The fully lighted locomotive, lighted motorcycle headlight (behind the far crossing gate), lighted street light and working block signal add lots of interest to this great scene. See more of Steve's HO layout on pages 2 and 3.

## Fun Stuff and Photo by Jim Allen

Living in Baltimore during the 1970's, trips to Cass, WV were an easy day's drive. Usually several of my friends and I would go to Cass, in late spring at the start of their operations, and spend a weekend photographing trains. The really interesting part of our visits was taking the ride all the way to the top of Bald Knob, the highest elevation on the railroad at the time. Stops were made along the way for photo run-byes. One of my goals during those trips was to get a cab ride in a Shay. I would often see other rail fans getting that opportunity but could never figure out how they did it. On one trip I finally asked a rail fan how he got a cab ride.



His response was simple: "A pouch of chewing tobacco". On the next trip I was prepared. I did a little digging and found the locomotive, engineer and his favorite brand of tobacco. The result was a cab ride to the top of the mountain in the train you see in the photo. He even dropped me off for a photo run-bye! I'm sure today, with all the insurance and liability issues, that ride would never be possible. But that was a different time, and I'll never forget that spring.

## Steve Fields' LITH Lines Layout of the Month

FVD member Steve Fields' passion in the hobby of model railroading is anything having to do with electronics. Besides doing fine "basic" electrical work with switch machines, toggles, track wiring, etc., his HO, two room, basement layout is filled with all kinds of great lighting and animation effects. Working street lights, interior structure lighting, a coal mine that loads plastic coal, a concrete mixer truck that has front and back lights and a revolving mixing drum, and numerous other lighting and animation effects are found all over the layout. His locomotives and rolling stock are all beautifully lit and equipped with sound. Steve enjoys adding extra lighting and sound effects to his locos above and beyond what the manufacturer provides. But, he also enjoys the other parts of the hobby as well. His bench work is solid and well done. The structure and scenery work on his layout is excellent as you can see from this article's photos. His track work is equally excellent (with some much appreciated custom track work from his cousin Gary Cohn, owner and president of Good Deals DCC), as is his layout design. While Steve is a stickler in everything he builds for or on his layout, he is not a stickler when it comes to what era he models, a favorite railroad to model, or the geographic location of his railroad. "I don't like being tied to a particular era, or railroad or location. I just like too many different things!" So, you will find a variety of equipment, road names and eras on the layout at any one time. This usually stands out "like a sore thumb" on most layouts, but not so on Steve's. That's because the scenery and structures are so well done and the layout's era is "generic" with the visual ability to extend across several eras. The elements all work nicely together to produce an excellent, fascinating and truly unique model railroad. And most importantly, one which its builder enjoys a lot!



The upper right photo, shows some of Steve Fields excellent scenery work. Many rock molds were used to model the tall rock faces. A working coal mine with lots of lighting is seen in the middle photo. A locomotive servicing facility appears to the immediate right, while a pair of modern Santa Fe GE units cross a small canyon and waterfall to the far right.



# Steve Fields' LITH Lines Layout of the Month

## Some of the Lighting and Animation Artistry of Steve Fields



Steve Fields is a true artist with lighting and animation effects. From top left to bottom at left are: SF and UP diesels with full lighting and sound effects; a nicely lighted, "rail-roady" tower scene; lighted Via cars passing by on a cliff above a lighted fishing shack; and a depot with interior and exterior lighting including a lighted Coke machine. The concrete mixer at right has working head lights, back lights and a revolving concrete mixing drum.

### Basic Layout Information

Layout Name:	LITH Lines
Layout Builder:	Steve Fields
Layout Location:	Steve's basement
Layout Scale:	HO
Layout Size:	15 x 24 feet in two rooms
Layout Style:	Around the walls with peninsulas
Layout Locale:	"Anywhere USA"
Layout Era:	Mixed eras
Construction begun:	2012
Bench Work:	1 x 4 grid
Sub Roadbed/	3/4" cabinet grade plywood
Roadbed:	Homasote
Track:	Walthers code 83 and some custom built track by Gary Cohn
Scenery:	Plaster over cardboard web or foam board; rock molds; ground foam, real dirt; all scratch built trees
Structures:	Kits, kit-bashed, scratch built plastic or wood
Locomotives:	250 locos of different manufacturers & eras
Rolling Stock:	"Lots of all different mfrs. freight and passenger
Control:	Digitrax with custom made radio throttles
Electronics:	Lots of lighting effects and animation over entire layout; full signal system; JMRI used extensively
Favorite Hobby Tasks:	"I like it all, but I love anything with electronics."
Other:	Steve is the Master Installer for Bryan Vianco's SBS4DCC business which custom installs electronics, decoders, speakers, etc. in locos as well as many other projects for modelers.



## Mike's Minute by FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela

### A Frank Conversation About FVD Finances

I usually don't talk money in this column, but I think the members need to know the financial situation the division faces. It is not dire, but needs discussing. So, here goes. Two years ago, we had over 230 members including 52 Life Members, and a successful High Wheeler Train Show that generated income for the division. Money for us then was basically not a problem. But, we had been hearing rumors for couple of years that Harper College was planning on doing some renovations to Building M, including the gym where we held High Wheeler. The rumors proved to be true as Harper proceeded with *very extensive* renovations to the entire inside of the building, plus two additions outside, and two new elevators. These renovations began in the summer of 2016 and were to be completed in July of 2018, essentially knocking us out of two years of train shows. In May 2016, when Harper told us for certain renovations were going to happen, the FVD Board started looking for a replacement site to have High Wheeler. Unfortunately to this day for various reasons, we have not found a suitable replacement site for our train show. Nor have we found someone willing to take over the Ways and Means Trainmaster position that organizes and runs High Wheeler, basically the train show "manager".

Right now the division's financial situation is still on solid ground. But, having gone through two years without High Wheeler income, I do think we need to consider what the future holds without it. We don't exist on good wishes alone. Without High Wheeler we have muddled through the last two years as best we could, trying to sell FVD shirts and Cook Orchards memorial refrigerator cars to make a few dollars to at least pay for our room rent at the Park District's Morova Rec Center, but we haven't come close to doing that. We've put out a donation box for refreshments to partially help off set the cost of our meeting snacks. The Board of Directors also eliminated our two pizza lunches this year to cut expenses. This summer's outing will be a FVD Layout Tour which will not require a lot of our funds. So, your FVD Board works to be frugal so as to preserve the division's savings.

But our expenses continue to rise. The Park District this year charged us \$11 per hour for our room. Next year the rental goes up to \$15/hour. The district has told us in the next few years, it wants to continue to raise fees up to the "going rate" in our area of \$24 per hour. That's more than double our current rate. Other expenses are also rising such as refreshments for meetings, our web hosting provider costs, etc. **Bottom line? Without a train show or some other source of additional income, at our current rate of spending, we could go another 10 to 12 years before the current funds are exhausted.** We are a non-profit business not looking to make a ton of money. But to keep the division solvent long term, we need to either raise more funds or cut expenses even more, which is less favorable. In FVD BoD meetings this year, the board has had an ongoing conversation about ways to cut costs and/or generate income for the division. Some ideas discussed are:

- Finding a less costly meeting location
- Holding fewer meetings per year
- Doing less expensive summer outings
- Not spending as much for meeting snacks
- Try to stretch our savings as far as possible until they are gone in perhaps 12 or more years
- Finding other revenue sources for the division such as the Cook's Orchard car
- Starting up the High Wheeler Train Show if Harper allows us to use the gym in Building M again

**Be assured, nothing has been decided, only discussed at this point.** Holding High Wheeler again is something the board would love to do not only to generate income for the division, but to also promote the hobby which, as you all know, is a big reason the NMRA exists. The Harper folks now are talking about the future use of Building M. We are on the list of potential users *should* they decide to open up the facility to "outsiders" again. They may or may not; we don't really know yet. We'll keep you posted. Please also know that there is still a lot of interest in the High Wheeler show, and we receive inquiries about it frequently.

**I and your FVD Board would really like your input on the issues I've discussed in this column. How do you feel about any or all of them? Please let us know your thoughts or any ideas you may have.** Our current membership stands at about 200 with 40 Life members and continues to slowly erode. However, I am grateful to also have gained new members. I truly hope they are enjoying the NMRA. Thanks to all those who brought guests and future members to our meetings as this definitely helps us gain new members. And finally, thanks to all of our members who support the FVD and NMRA in so many ways. I, and the FVD Board greatly appreciates all you do. **I'm sorry this thing got so long!** Now I think its time to go down stairs and run some trains!

## Annual FVD Election Results

Mike Hirvela and Carl Wagus have been elected to the positions of Fox Valley Division Superintendent and Chief Clerk respectively. Both Mike and Carl were elected by proclamation at our April 22 regular division meeting. Denis Zamirowski was named Assistant Superintendent of the Fox Valley Division on April 22 taking over for Bob Shlemon who was forced to resign his position for health reasons. Denis will stand for election in the April 2019 election. Mike was reelected for his second term as our Superintendent. This will be Carl's first term as Chief Clerk. Mike, Denis and Carl take office immediately. "Congratulations and Thanks for Running!" to Mike and Carl, and "Thank You!" to Denis for stepping in as Assistant Superintendent!

## April's Clinics and Contest—photos by Walt Herrick

Thank you **Gary Saxton** for his April clinic on "**Multi Arduinos for APB Signals**"! This clinic will be presented by Gary at the NMRA Kansas City National in August. Gary was kind enough to give us a preview of his clinic at our April 22 meeting. In his clinic, Gary covered many of the basics of model railroad signaling using Arduinos. He had a video of his signal system in action which helped us see exactly what was going on with the signals on the railroad. Interestingly, Gary models in Z scale. Most of us thought his video was of an N or even HO scale locomotive! **In May's clinic Pete Walton** will tell us of the journey he took in building his outstanding **Great Midwestern Railroad**. Pete's Great Midwestern was featured in this year's "**Great Model Railroads—2018**". WH

April's contest was **Maintenance of Way Train**. It was won by **Art Jones** with his **B&O work train**. Art modeled his train as you would have seen it in the 1940's. Art's train, to the right, had 10 beautifully weathered cars and was powered by a B&O 2-8-2 steam locomotive.



**Second Place** went to **Mike Hirvela** with his **CNW work train** also powered by steam, in this case an 0-6-0 switcher which was prototypically placed toward the end of the train as if in "work mode". Mike's train appears below to the left. **Another CNW work train took Third Place** in the voting and that was **Denis Zamirowski's** 1960's era work train powered by a diesel switcher in the classic CNW yellow and green paint scheme. Denis' train appears below on the right. Congratulations! to all of last month's winners and all those who entered the contest. See all of the contest entries and display entries on the FVD's web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org). **May's contest is "Illuminated Structure—any size"**. Let's wrap up this modeling year with a bunch of "enlightening" entries! WH



## Member News

**Jim Allen** brought home **5 photography awards** at the Madison MWR Convention in April. **Jim won the Ingrid Drozdak Best of Show Award for his prototype color print of D&RG #476, Second Place and the CNW Moskal Award** for his prototype color print of Chicago's "Ogilvie Transportation Center", **Second Place** for his prototype color print "Cass #4" (this photo appears in this month's "Fun Stuff column" with a great story along with it), and **Fourth Place Prototype B&W** for his shot **D&RG #478**. Jim was presented his **Ingrid Drozdak Best of Show Photography Award by Ingrid's husband, John Drozdak**. "Congratulations and Great Job" Jim Allen!...Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan** reports that April's FVD membership was the same as March's at 199 members. Bert also says we have one new family member to welcome to the Fox Valley, **Meg Haddad, from Arlington Heights. Welcome aboard, Meg!**...Remember everyone, *this is your last Semaphore until next September*. Have great summer everyone, and go our FVD Layout Tour July 21st (see below)! WH

## Save the Dates: FVD Summer Outing and Trainfest 2018!

Jot these dates down on your calendars, everybody! **This summer's FVD Outing will be a "Super Boonies Layout Tour" on Saturday afternoon, July 21st.** More info to follow later on this! Also, **this year's Trainfest Train Show will take place November 10 and 11** at the **Wisconsin State Fair Park** in West Allis, WI just west of Milwaukee. The show will be open 9 am to 5 pm both Saturday and Sunday. This year's featured railroad is the **Great Northern**. Go to the Trainfest web site for complete information: [www.trainfest.com](http://www.trainfest.com) WH

## 2017 - 2018 Fox Valley Division Meeting Schedule

All meetings are held from 1:30 to about 3:30 pm (except as noted under "Other" below) 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](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org).

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
May 20, 2018	"Building My Great Midwestern Layout" by Pete Walton	Illuminated Structure—any size	Last monthly meeting for 2018—2019
<b>July 21, 2018</b>	<b>FVD Summer Outing—A "Super Boonies Layout Tour". More information to follow later.</b>		
<b>August 5—12, 2018</b>	<b>2018 NMRA National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. See the convention's web site for more information: <a href="http://www.kc2018.org">www.kc2018.org</a></b>		
Sept. 16, 2018	TBA	TBA	First meeting for the 2018—2019 season

## Cook Orchards Car Still Available!

The FVD reminds you that our **Cook Orchards reefer car** is still available for sale. This car is a replica of the Cook Orchards cars that traveled on our late FVD member, MMR Don Cook's, Great Northern—Spokane Division layout. The car is being sold as a fundraiser for the division and was produced by **Accurail** from artwork that faithfully represents Don's original design. Each car costs \$23.00 plus shipping and handling of \$7.50 for one car, and \$14.00 for 2 to 4 cars. Members may save shipping costs by purchasing their car at a FVD monthly meeting. Otherwise, go to the FVD's web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org) for complete purchase and shipping information. Only 100 of these cars were produced and more than half are sold! WH





### About the Fox Valley Division

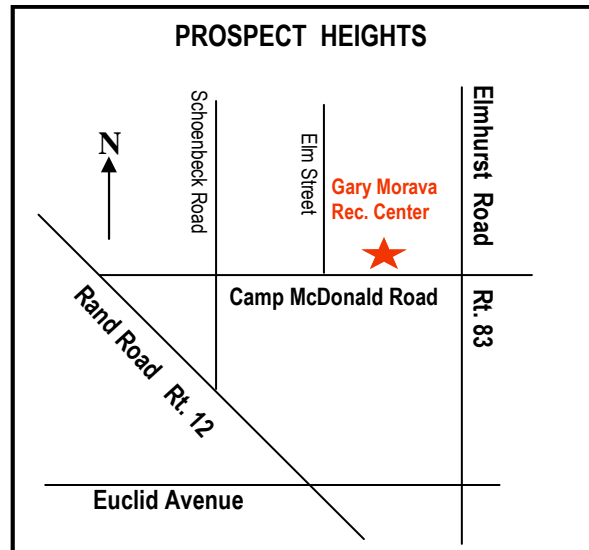
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 220 members of varied ages and modeling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



- 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**