



THE SEMAPHORE

September 2018

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



Greg Bedlek's Belt Railway of Chicago Article and photos by Walt Herrick

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Next FVD Meeting:
Sunday, September 16
1:30 pm at the
Morava Rec Center in
Prospect Heights

Contest: Favorite Locomotive
Clinic: Chicago Milk Traffic
by David Leider, MMR



BRC GP7 #472 and Alco C424 #600 are at rest near a service pad at the Clearing Yard engine terminal of Greg Bedlek's HO scale Belt Railway of Chicago. In the background is the yard's caboose track on which are two bobber, one transfer, and one standard eight wheel cupola caboose waiting for their next assignments. More on Greg's excellent BRC model railroad on pages 2 - 4.

Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

This Santa Fe Super Chief inspired bus was originally built for the 1948-1949 Chicago Railroad Fair that celebrated 100 years of American Railroading. Still in good condition, it is now used as a parade and party bus.



Greg Bedlek's Belt Railway of Chicago Layout of the Month, con't

This is the third and final “Layout of the Month” article the *Semaphore* will do on Greg Bedlek's huge basement Great Northern Pacific layout in HO scale. (See October 2017 for the Minneapolis section of the layout, and May 2017 for general coverage of the entire railroad.) Greg started building his GNP layout by first building the Belt Railway of Chicago as its own self contained, large switching layout. The layout takes up about a quarter of Greg's 60 x 60 foot basement. The basic design criteria for the layout was that it would appeal to those who love challenging switching, and take about five or six people to operate. When Greg moved to the Chicago area from Florida, he didn't know what to expect as far as finding local crew members who would enjoy the operations side of the hobby. He did not want to fill his large new basement with an operations oriented model railroad if there weren't going to be enough local people interested in operations. So, the BRC was built as a kind of “test bed” to measure local interest in the type of operations Greg liked. The layout proved to be a big success and Greg went ahead with building his much larger Great Northern Pacific layout.

Greg's BRC is inspired by the real BRC and its basic operational scheme, but it is a free-lanced version of the BRC and not intended to be a close replica of the prototype. The model railroad features BRC motive power and cabooses, and key parts of the BRC such as Clearing Yard, Wisconsin Steel in northwest Indiana, the Argo industrial area in Summit, Illinois, the Rheem/Nabisco industrial area, and Manufacturer's Junction with its large Western Electric plant. “A 13 track south staging yard, and 7 track north staging yard feed this monster”, says Greg. Transfer runs, switching jobs, local freights and industrial switching are the order of the day on the model BRC just as on the prototype. You won't find a long main line on the Bedlek BRC, just a lot of short switching runs.

The layout is primarily a two foot wide shelf layout with one large peninsula. Benchwork is L-girder with a *con't on p.3*



A BCR GP40 pushes a cut of cars past the Clearing yard tower (top). The middle photo shows the large Clearing yard. *Railroad Model Craftsman* columnist, Bill Navigoto, loves switching this yard, and travels three hours from his Champaign home for an op session! In the bottom photo, a weathered Burlington GP30 assisted by a Pennsy unit, brings a transfer run into Clearing. Note the “rope” LED lighting in the upper left.

Greg Bedlek's Belt Railway of Chicago Layout of the Month, con't

plywood deck. Atlas code 83 flex-track and #6 and #8 turnouts are laid on cork roadbed. Lighting comes from overhead fluorescents, and, as needed, cable LEDs strung below a second deck of railroad. The layout is controlled by Digitrax DCC tethered and wireless throttles. Just as it was originally planned, the BRC keeps 5 - 6 operators busy for an entire 4 hour operating session.

What started out started as a test layout 12 years ago, developed into an excellent model railroad which is still going strong today. Greg Bedlek's Belt Railway of Chicago is a really interesting, operationally challenging, and good looking layout based on a local prototype. It is nicely scened, a lot of fun, and mentally demanding to operate.



Basic Layout Information

Layout Name:	Belt Railway of Chicago
Layout Builder:	Greg Bedlek
Layout Location:	Greg's basement
Layout Scale:	HO
Layout Size:	One quarter of a 60 x 60 foot basement
Layout Style:	Around the walls with a peninsula
Layout Locale:	South Side of Chicago
Layout Era:	1970 just prior to the GN/NP merger
Construction begun:	2006
Bench Work:	L girder
Sub Roadbed/ Roadbed:	Cork on 3/4" cabinet grade plywood
Track:	Atlas code 83 flex with specially wired #6 and #8 turnouts
Scenery:	Real dirt, ground foam and static grass ground cover surrounded by large industrial structures.
Structures:	Kits, kit-bashed, and scratch built. Many large structures and backdrop flats.
Locomotives:	BCR and local roads equipped for DCC and sound
Rolling Stock:	Kits and RTR
Control:	Digitrax tethered and wireless throttles
Operations:	CTC with car card car forwarding and digital fast clocks. The BRC can handle up to six operators.



The top left photo shows the BCR's South Staging Yard. In the upper left photo, BCR GP40 #231 switches the Nabisco plant as part of the "Cookie Job" local's responsibilities. In the upper right photo is Argo, an industrial area in Summit, Illinois in which are large food processing plants. Note the big enclosed unloading shed at this plant. Such sheds are required by law in industries which unload food products used for human consumption.

Greg Bedlek's Belt Railway of Chicago Layout of the Month, con't

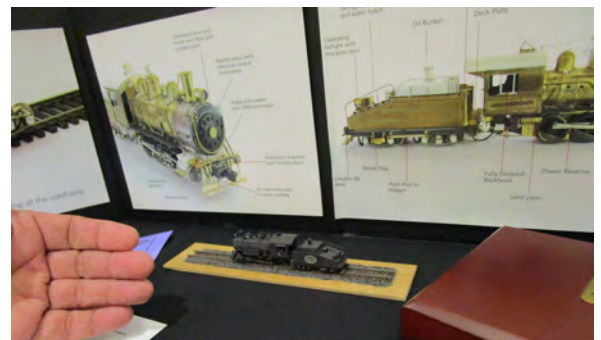


Wisconsin Steel's northwest Indiana mill occupies one side of a large peninsula on the BRC layout. The other side of the peninsula is occupied by the Argo industrial district. Above left is Wisconsin Steel's Baldwin plant switcher on (permanent?) loan from Mike Rischdorf because of its super slow running capabilities. The blue glow coming from the mill (upper right) means Wisconsin Steel's blast furnace is in operation today.

Mike's Minute by FVD Superintendent, Mike Hirvela The NMRA National Convention in KC, or How Spent My Summer Vacation, Part I

Photos by Mike Hirvela

It was a dark and stormy night . . . OK, OK. But it really was when I arrived in Kansas City late Tuesday night, August 6 for the NMRA National. I met and rode with the Chicago North Western Historical Society's, Dave Phillips, on Amtrak's Southwest Chief. We were more than an hour late departing Chicago due to unforeseen circumstances (not Amtrak's fault!). Upon arriving in KC, it was raining and the overhead covered walkway between the train station and the hotel was *closed*. A very brisk, long, two block walk made for a wet, miserable arrival at the hotel, especially after entering its cold, air-conditioned lobby in wet clothes! I noted the convention registration tables were set up and a sign that said registration opened at 7 am. I was third in line at 7 am when the tables opened for business. After having the contents of my convention bag explained, I was out by 7:15 am. I noted I had a tour ticket for Tuesday morning. But, a check of the bus tour assembly point showed the tour *had already departed*. This day had barely begun and was not going well at all! (Side note to the 2019 Salt Lake National Convention organizers: do NOT have the registration desk open and a bus tour depart at the same time.) On the good side, missing the bus tour gave me the chance to attend some interesting clinics I might not have attended, visit the SIG room and exhibits, visit the Celebration of Models contest room, get some photos for the *Semaphore*, and visit the seemingly endless silent auction tables, piled high with goodies. The first day of the convention went quickly! More about the rest of the convention next month!



Mike's first day convention activities included going to the contest room where he saw an incredible scratch built 0-6-0 locomotive built in *N* scale (top). Then it was off to see some layouts such as Jim Eudaly's large O scale C&O layout in its own building.

Trainfest 2018

Trainfest 2018 is coming soon! This year's event takes place Saturday, November 10 and Sunday November 11 again at the Wisconsin State Fair Park in West Allis, WI. Doors open at 9:00 am and close at 5:00 pm. Trainfest 2018 will have four football fields of model train layouts, exhibitors, vendors, family fun and more! This year's featured railroad is the Great Northern. To find out more about Trainfest 2018 go to:

www.trainfest.com



May's Clinic and Contest-photos by Jim Osborn; layout photo by Walt Herrick

May's clinic was presented by FVD member **Pete Walton** and was titled, "**How I Built My Great Midwestern Layout**". Pete's slide show covered the early stages of his railroad in three different cities and the final culmination of his dream layout in Huntley. The Great Midwestern was recently featured in the 2018 edition of *Great Model Railroads* by Kalmbach.



May's contest was, "Illuminated Structure—any size". Two HO entries were received with Leif Hansen placing First with his nicely scratch built "Miner's Supply" structure. Ben Nicholas took Second with his brightly lit "Palace Theater". Our next contest is at the **September 16 FVD monthly meeting**. The contest is: "**Favorite Locomotive**".

Cook Orchards Car Still Available!

There are still FVD special run **Cook Orchards reefer cars** available for purchase! The car is a close replica of the Cook Orchards cars that traveled on our late FVD member, MMR Don Cook's layout. 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. Go to the FVD's web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org for complete purchase and shipping information. (Cook Orchard car photo by Jim Osborn on his layout.) WH



Member News

This is year's FVD Monthly Meeting Schedule card ("Orange Card") should be in your hands shortly. Both it and this issue of the *Semaphore* are late in coming to you this year, and your *Semaphore* editor apologizes for this, and any inconvenience it may have caused any of our members....Harper College has completed the renovations of the gymnasium where our High Wheeler Train Show was formerly held. The division is waiting to hear if the space will be made available to us for future High Wheelers....The division has two BoD openings for **Ways & Means Trainmaster** and **Public Relations Trainmaster**. **Member Services Trainmaster, Bert Lattan**, has also expressed his desire to retire from his position after many years of service to the division. So, the division needs your help! If you have an interest in, or willingness to serve in any of these positions, please contact FVD Superintendent, **Mike Hirvela** at mhirvela@gmail.com or 847-360-9579....**The FVD's special run Cook's Orchards reefers are still available for \$23.00 and \$7.50 shipping for a single car. To purchase your car, you can contact Chuck Rita directly at carita@ameritech.net, or 847-5768-8315; or go to the FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org for more information.** WH

2018 - 2019 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.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Sept. 16, 2018	Chicago Milk Traffic by David Leider, MMR	Favorite Locomotive model	First monthly meeting for 2018 - 2019
Oct. 21, 2018	TBD	Favorite photo—model or prototype	
Nov. 18, 2018	Tank Cars by Steve Hile	Repurposed or retired Rolling Stock	
Dec. 16, 2018	Junctions, Interchanges, & Diamonds for your MRR by Rick Mahaney	Super Detailed Section of Track, 12—18 inches long	
Jan 21, 2019	Train communications in the 1940s by Bob Hamner	Trackside Industry—one structure only	
Feb. 18, 2019	Timetable for the Clinchfield by George Trandel	Kit-bashed structure or car	
Mar. 18, 2019	TBD	Over, under, around & through— bridges, signals, tunnels, etc.	
Apr. 28, 2019	Keeping Your RR in Focus by Jim Osborn	Humorous Open Load	1:00 pm start for Officer Elections
May 19, 2019	Midwest/Thousand Lakes Joint Regional Meet in LaCrosse, WI. Questions, email Reid Kahrs MWR Convention Chair at: rkahrs@charter.net		
June 2, 2019	Modular Construction of User Objects in AnyRail by Carl Wagus	Vehicles—limit 3	Last monthly meeting for 2018 – 2019
July 7—13, 2019	NMRA 2019 National Convention in Salt Lake City, UT. See the convention's web site for more information: www.nmra2019slc.org		



About the Fox Valley Division

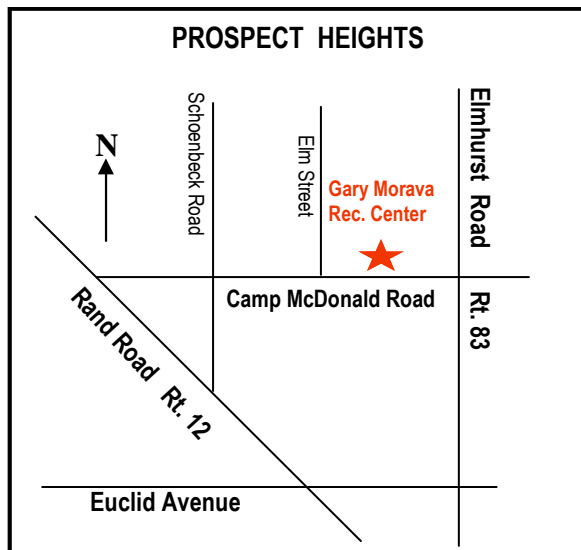
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 200 members of varied ages and modeling 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 and 2019 High Wheelers were 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.



- 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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Midwest Region-NMRA
P.O. Box 1535
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Ways & Means—High Wheeler Show Manager
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