

# THE SEMAPHORE



November 2018

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



## Fred Soops's Chicago Amtrak Terminal Layout Article and photos by Walt Herrick

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#### Next FVD Meeting:

**Sunday, November 18**  
**1:30 pm at the**  
**Morava Rec Center in**  
**Prospect Heights, IL**

**Contest: Re-purposed or Re-**  
**tired Rolling Stock**

**Clinic: Tank Cars by Steve**  
**Hile**



With his HO scale, Amtrak Chicago Terminal layout, Fred Soop has created one of the most unique model railroads in the country. The layout models Amtrak in the 1980s in downtown Chicago and a bit of Metra on its BN (now BNSF) line to Aurora. What makes this layout so unique? Big, beautifully modeled Chicago city and Amtrak Yard structures, realistic passenger consists, passenger operations (with *no* freight trains), and fidelity to the prototype both in the modeling and operations. Above is a triple headed, thirteen car, Lake Shore Limited slowly pulling through Amtrak's 14th Street Chicago Yard on its way to downtown Chicago's Union Station. *con't on p. 2*

## Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

**Bob DiDomenico** submitted the "Thomas" photo to the right in last month's FVD contest, "Favorite Photo—Model or Prototype". The photo did not place in the contest, but it does have a humorous back story. It was taken as a joke on Bob's friend, MMR Bill Leider's (no relation to FVD MMR member David Leider), O scale layout. Says Bob, "Bill is an excellent scale modeler with a beautiful 2 rail, O scale layout down in the DuPage Division. He takes pride in his modeling and rightfully so. On a visit to his layout a while back, I couldn't resist setting up and taking this Thomas gag shot. When he wasn't looking, I set up the shot at his excellent scratch built roundhouse using my O scale Thomas locos. This is the result!" *Walt Herrick for Jim Allen with Bob DiDomenico photo.*



## Fred Soop's Amtrak Chicago Terminal Layout of the Month, con't



The Limited glides by Harrison Street Tower (above left) and will pass under the huge Post Office Building and 300 South River Place on its way to Union Station (above right). Ask him why he so loves passenger trains and their operations, and Fred Soop will tell you he grew up in Detroit near the C&O. There he had a ring side seat to C&O passenger operations. He also often traveled on C&O passenger trains. "I guess they just kind of got in my blood," he says of his strong interest in passenger trains and their operations. Before starting to build his current layout in 2006, Fred had built several others and had saved parts of them. These were effectively used in the new layout. This layout occupies almost all of his 30 x 36 foot basement. Bench work, fascia, track work, ballasting, structures, lighting and controls are all meticulously crafted. Scenery on this layout is distinctly urban and is seen in the buildings and track

which are beautifully built. Fred has sought to closely model Amtrak's Chicago Yard and its facilities, and a small part of the Loop including the iconic Post Office building, 300 South River Place and Union Station. Yes, necessary liberties were taken here and there, but the feeling and character of the area is unmistakable. Fred continues his fidelity to the prototype into the railroad's operations. Amtrak and Metra BN Aurora Line schedules are closely replicated, as are various types of passenger train switching. Fred's vast knowledge of the prototype shows on his railroad. It is a unique depiction of unique railroad operations seldom seen in model form. In a nutshell for me, this is one very neat layout!



Fred Soop's model of Chicago's Amtrak Yard is seen in the upper right photo. The yard's long inspection building (directly above) has been selectively compressed, but is still 7 feet long! Note the structure's interior lighting as well as the many yard lighting fixtures. The Repair Shop/Yard Tower are to the right.



## Fred Soop's Amtrak Chicago Terminal Layout of the Month, con't



### Basic Layout Information

Layout Name:	Amtrak Chicago Terminal
Layout Builder:	Fred Soop
Layout Location:	Fred's basement
Layout Scale:	H0
Layout Size:	30 x 36 feet
Layout Style:	Multi-level; around-the-walls with peninsulas
Layout Locale:	Chicago and southwest suburbs
Layout Era:	1980s (with a few deviations here and there)
Construction begun:	2006—with sections of previous layouts incorporated into the current layout
Bench Work:	1 x 4 grid
Sub Roadbed/ Roadbed:	1/2 inch A/C plywood 1/4 inch Luan plywood, pine lattice, or Tru Scale pine road bed
Track:	Code 83 Atlas flex track with Walthers turnouts
Scenery:	Urban; about 70% complete. Almost all scenery is devoted to track and structures.
Structures:	80% scratch built; 20% kit-bashed
Locomotives:	80 Walthers F40s; 8 P40s and P42s; 8 E units; 6 misc. switchers
Rolling Stock:	300 passenger cars 90% of which are Walthers models
Control:	EasyDCC with 8 radio and 8 tethered throttles
Operations:	Closely simulates Amtrak in Chicago and some BN Aurora Line Metra operations
Favorite Hobby Tasks:	Tweaking locos and rolling stock; structure building; electrical aspects of track work
Other:	This is a passenger only layout with no freight trains.

The top left photo shows the Chicago Yard's Amtrak engine terminal with a nice cross section of Amtrak power and one foreign road E unit. The next photo down is of Metra making a station stop at the nicely modeled Naperville depot. In the third photo down we see a free-lanced Santa Fe yard on the main deck and Wisconsin Central on the top deck. The bottom left photo shows Fred working the "mushroom" of his railroad. Staging is on the mushroom's top level, BN's four track main in the middle, and a main line reverse loop on the bottom level.

## Tip of the Month: Fred Soop's Color Coded Fascia

One of the neat things about Fred Soop's Amtrak Chicago Terminal layout is its color coded fascia. Eight railroads are modeled on the layout (several on only a short section of track) and wherever track for a particular railroad exists, the fascia below it is painted in that road's colors and labeled with its herald. Also included on the fascia are signs denoting towns, streets, bridges, etc. on the layout. Fred does this not only for aesthetics, but also to help operators know where they are on his large multi-deck layout. The fascia is expertly built and neatly painted with O scale decals and custom printing used for the sign lettering. It all makes for an impressive layout presentation and a big help for operators. WH



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

### Swap Meet Characters photo by Mike Hirvela

We all like a bargain, and there is no better place to find bargains on trains and train stuff than at a swap meet. Attendees to those "Train Shows," which are really swap meets, (I'll swap you my train for your money) yield some very interesting characters. Model Railroaders come in all sizes, shapes, heights, interests, financial capabilities, talents, skills, and other characteristics, all of which make them fascinating from a human interest standpoint. Some of you may know that Jim Allen and I purchased up some (actually a whole lot of) "train stuff" last May from a family whose elder train enthusiast had passed on to that "Great Train Room" in the sky. Ever since we have been taking it and our other "train stuff" to the DuPage Fairgrounds for their monthly train swap meet



Here's a small part of Mike and Jim's swap meet merchandise.

officially known as "The Great Midwest Train Show" or unofficially, the "Wheaton Train Show". Over the months at these shows, we have been quietly watching the shoppers and have observed some interesting activity indeed:

- Early one Sunday we brought in a load of boxes and put them behind our table and went out to get another load. When we returned there was a guy lifting the lids on the boxes and looking at what was in them. We asked him kindly if he could wait a few minutes until we brought in everything and got set up. He got huffy and abruptly left.
- One gentleman asked if we would consider \$4 per kit rather than the \$5 we were asking. We answered that we felt \$5 was more than fair, considering we load the vehicle the day before and get up at 4 am on swap day, drive 48 miles, and spend an hour setting up the table. (Note #1: the kits retail in the \$15-18 range! Note #2: at the swap in Racine last winter, another guy asked if I would sell him a \$5 kit for \$4. I said it took me 1-1/2 hours to drive 28 miles in a snow storm, so *I don't think so!* )
- Another gentleman one time opened a kit box, laid out all the parts over other boxes, checked the instruction sheet against the parts, then packed it all up into the kit box, and put it back without buying. After all that, not his "railroad of interest" he said!
- At the last swap, one guy opened the box of an expensive (\$20) fully assembled car and proceeded to lift the car out of the packaging, turned it six ways from Sunday, put it back in the box and put it back in the stack. When somebody does this (and they do!) you hope, they don't break anything, because if "You break it – you bought it!"
- There is one guy who wears a set of magnifying lenses and uses them to inspect items on the tables. His vision is slowly deteriorating, but he's giving it heck for now. There's another guy who wears the same exact clothes to every meet, I swear!
- A gentleman asked if we would be interested in buying what he had brought with him. He put several Overland, PFM and Tenshodo boxes on the table, brought out a list, and said he had researched the internet for comparable prices. For one item he was asking \$400. It was disassembled and in tarnished condition. Another item he valued at \$500. This one lacked many parts and looked like it had been dropped on the floor. We passed on the purchase and wished him luck.

Yes, we've seen some real "swap meet characters". I sometimes wonder if they have a railroad at home and how many swap meet "finds" are on it. But to be honest, for the most part, the vast majority of shoppers have manners, ask politely to look at things, handle them carefully, and are wonderful folks to deal with. Maybe I'll see you at a swap meet soon. If so, please show me your latest amazing acquisition! Now, let's go run some trains!

## Trainfest 2018

Trainfest 2018 is coming up very 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](http://www.trainfest.com)



## October's Clinic and Contest photos by Walt Herrick

October's clinic, "**Timetable for the Clinchfield**", was presented by the Fox Valley's own **George Trandell**. George (right) gave a great clinic showing how his model railroad club, the Garfield-Claredon Club in Chicago, adapted many elements of the real Clinchfield Railroad's timetable to their large HO layout. The result was more focused, more fun op sessions with trains operating with a purpose, and operators better enjoying their train running. At our next monthly meeting on **November 18**, **Steve Hile** will present his clinic "**Tank Cars**". Be sure to be there for this informative presentation on many modelers favorite type of rolling stock.



October's contest was, "**Favorite Photo—Model or Prototype**". **Walt Herrick's "BNSF in Rochelle"** was voted **First** in the contest. The photo was taken at a FVD outing to Rochelle's Railroad Park. **Dan Cahill** took **Second** with his "**Irish Yellow and Green**" and "**Late Afternoon Metra**" shots, as well as his "**Wheels**" shot (not shown.) A photo taken on his own layout "**Narrow Gauge in the Mountains**", earned **Leif Hansen Third Place** honors. See all the entries on the FVD web site: [foxvalleydivision.org](http://foxvalleydivision.org). **November's** contest is "**Repurposed or Retired Rolling Stock**".



## Honoring Don Cook with a Special Run Car

The FVD continues to honor our good friend and late MMR, Don Cook, with a special run **Cook Orchards reefer car**. This car was produced for the division by Accurail and is a close replica of the Cook Orchards cars that traveled on Don'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. You may save shipping costs by purchasing your car(s) at a FVD monthly meeting. Go to the FVD's web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org) for complete purchase and shipping information, and then buy one soon before they're gone! (Photo by Jim Osborn on his layout.)



## Member News

This year's FVD Monthly Meeting Schedule card ("Orange Card") should be in your hands by now. If you did NOT receive an orange card, please contact Publications Trainmaster, Walt Herrick. His contact info is on page 7 of this newsletter... **Membership Service Trainmaster Bert Lattan** reports that as of late September the FVD's membership stands at 192. He also reports we have three new members: **HP Labude from Woodstock, Joe Swiatek from Chicago, and Dan Cahill from Waukegan**. Welcome aboard HP, Joe and Dan!...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](mailto: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](mailto:carita@ameritech.net), or 847-5768-8315; or go to the FVD web site: [www.foxvalleydivision.org](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org) for more information..... FYI, **Model Railroader Video Plus** (or **MRVP** as it's known), the subscription video arm of *Model Railroader Magazine*, is running a track planning series by **MRVP Producer, David Popp**. The series focuses on the FVD town of, **Crystal Lake, IL**. Popp grew up in Crystal Lake as did several past and present FVD members (including the *Semaphore's* editor). We also have one or two members who live in Crystal Lake now. So far, the three episodes of the series have been very interesting and informative. 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](http://www.foxvalleydivision.org).

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



### About the Fox Valley Division

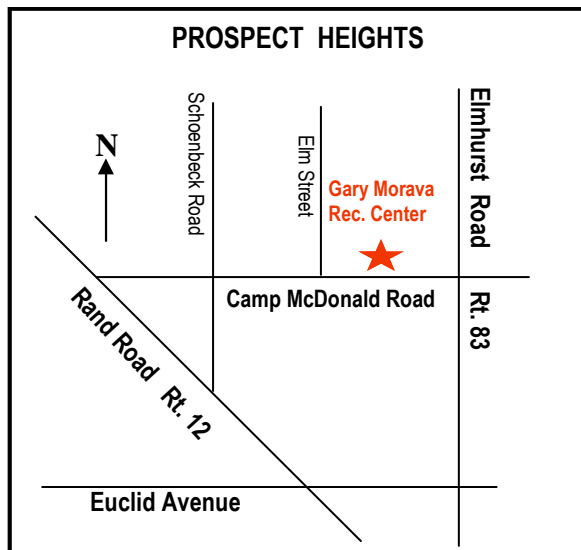
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of McHenry and parts of Cook, Kane, and Lake Counties in northeast Illinois. About 200 members of varied ages and modeling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

FVD mailing address: Fox Valley Division  
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