

THE SEMAPHORE

September 2020

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



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“It’s a Whole New MRR World”

Mike’s Minute by FVD Superintendent Mike Hirvela

In my last Mike’s Minute, I expressed some optimism regarding our lives returning to “normal” once the COVID-19 situation is resolved. Well, here is September and while I am still optimistic for the future, we are still dealing with unresolved COVID issues and trying to understand where we go from here. The imposition of precautions, limitations, some travel restrictions, etc., have us in a whole new world of model railroading. A lot of things we were used to were cancelled and remain so, with questionable future starts. You know what they are, and I don’t need to go into detail here. But there is light at the end of the tunnel, and it is a train! Our fellow modelers in this great hobby have embraced computer technology to enable “face-to-face” meetings, clinics and educational sessions and other interesting things, over the internet. The FVD Board, the Mid-West Region and National BoD have all conducted virtual many meetings with success. It is truly an amazing time in our hobby! I hope you have discovered this new way of getting information and have watched some of it. If you haven’t, you’re missing out.

As we’ve noted, the FVD will be conducting all our member meetings this next season over the internet using the ZOOM system. Our first meeting of the season is on September 20th starting at 1 pm. We will first hold the Annual Meeting of the Members—postponed from April—with election of Superintendent and Chief Clerk. We have candidates for both positions. Then we will hold our regular meeting for the month, with a LOT of news, a feature presentation, contest results and a look ahead. This ZOOM meeting stuff will be a work in progress and your understanding and patience may be requested! ZOOM was new to me too, but I found it works pretty well.

Information on how to get the system, log onto the system, and helpful hints on how to participate (like how to vote for the contest), are on page 2 of this issue. Never fear, we will also have this information available in several places, and help is here if you need it. One last thing: Sorry, our FVD ZOOM meets cannot be recorded for future viewing at this time.

“See you” at 1:00 pm, September 20, in the comfort of your own home, on ZOOM!

Next FVD Meeting:
Sunday, September 20*
1:00 pm via ZOOM
See page 2 of this Semaphore
for information about our new
ZOOM meets.

Contest: 1 Passenger Car

Clinic: Member “Sheltered in Place” Projects by Walt Herrick

***Make up FVD annual elections to be held at this meet.**

The Midwest Region Elections
Nomination Deadline for
President, Vice-president and
Directors-at-Large is
September 11.
At present we have no candidates
for President or Vice-president!
For information contact Steve
Studley at: studley@indiana.edu
or 812-876-9726.

See page 2 for complete information about the new FVD Zoom meetings, and how clinics & contests will be held via ZOOM.

Fox Valley Division ZOOM Meeting Instructions

On September 20, we will restart our monthly FVD meetings using the popular virtual meeting technology called ZOOM. Now any of us with a personal computer, notebook or smart phone should be able to attend the meet without having to worry about being contaminated by any disease! Your FVD Board believes ZOOM meetings could really boost meeting attendance and contest participation. Here's the info you need to participate in our ZOOM meets:

Email Address needed

- We must have your email address in order to send you the login credentials for each ZOOM meet. (If you do not receive the Semaphore notice each month via email, then we do not have your email address on file.)
- To add or change your email address, point your browser to the FVD web site <http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/>
- Click on the link at the top of the page just below the blue banner.
- Complete the form to add your email address to our address list.

ZOOM Meeting Procedures

- If you do not have the ZOOM app installed on your computer, please download it and test it out at one of the webmaster's Orientation Sessions prior to the September 20 meet. The ZOOM app is FREE. **Orientation sessions will be held Sunday, September 13 at 1:30 pm, and Wednesday, September 16 at 7:00 pm.**
- You will follow the same ZOOM procedures for each meet you attend.
- About a week before the meeting date, the FVD Webmaster will email you an invitation to the meet that will include a link to the meeting with your login credentials.
- Also included in the email will be a link to the FVD Timetable web page where you will find PDF downloads for a 1 page "FVD ZOOM Meeting Quick Guide", "ZOOM Meeting Procedures", and other help topics you may find useful. Tip: you may want print the Quick Guide to have for reference at the meeting.
- For security purposes, please do not post these credentials on any social media sites.
- Note: FVD meets are not being recorded and will not be available for later viewing.

Meeting Day

- The meeting "window" will be open about 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the meet.
- To join the meeting, click on the link in the email meeting invitation. You may be asked to do a short download or update, and you may be put in a ZOOM waiting room prior to the meeting. If so, the meeting host will shortly admit you to the meeting.
- After you are admitted, sit back and "enjoy the show".
- If you get stuck, email the webmaster at website@foxvalleydivision.org
- When the meeting is over, click the "Leave Meeting" button and you will go back to your computer's normal operation.

ZOOM Contest Entries

- With each meet invitation you will also be given instructions on how to submit a contest entry, and how to vote for the entry of your choice. Note that submitting a contest entry and voting will be done before each meet with our ZOOM meetings, not during the meet as we do when we are meeting live.
- With ZOOM meets, contest entries are limited to 1 model per contest. So, if the contest is "locomotives" you may enter one locomotive and no more.
- To submit an entry, take 1 - 3 photos at different angles of your model. Email your photos to the special contest link provided in your invitation email. Photo Tips: 1) Phone camera photos are fine, 2) Make sure there is enough light on your model, 3) "Fill the frame" with your model—in other words, don't take "long shots" of the model.
- Contest Entry Deadline: Noon the Friday before the Sunday meet. Early entries are encouraged.

ZOOM Contest Voting

- About two days before the meeting you will be emailed a meeting reminder and contest voting instructions.
- All contest entries will be anonymous.
- Members may vote for any time from 3:00 pm the Friday before the meet, to 11:00 am the morning of the meet. Voting is done on line by clicking on the special link provided in the meeting reminder email.
- Winners announced at the meet.

Done! See the FVD web site www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.V2.html for full ZOOM info.

Rich Sieben's Chicago Industrial Terminal

Layout of the Month article & photos by Walt Herrick

Rich Sieben loves the operations side of model railroading and his N scale Chicago Industrial Terminal layout shows it. It is a maze of yards, industrial sidings and interchange tracks. Make no mistake, this is an industrial switching layout, a big time, *Chicago* industrial switching layout with 9 yards, about 118 industrial sidings, 29 interchange tracks, 60 locomotives, 700 cars and 500 feet of track. Thirty prototype railroads are represented on the layout. Rich has selectively compressed a good chunk of Chicago's industrial railroading into his two car garage. Currently the railroad takes up about 20 x 22 feet of the garage's space, and there is more railroad being built.

Rich grew up in Chicago and is a die-hard Chicago industrial railroad fan. He is very knowledgeable about the city's industrial base and the massive spider web of railroad trackage and numerous rail yards and railroads that serve it. As Metra's Energy Manager, Rich has had insider access to many of the railroads he is modeling. When it came to building a model railroad, modeling the urban industrial railroads of his native Chicago was a natural choice.

The only question was what scale he should model in. That problem was solved when Rich's wife discovered N scale on a hobby shop visit with Rich. She loved the "cute little" scale and Rich ended up building a trial 2 x 8 foot N scale layout instead of the HO scale switching layout he had originally planned. The rest, they say, is history. The 2 x 8 footer was a success and it eventually became part of his large layout. N scale had proved to be quite reliable for operations and the locomotives were quiet and smooth runners. Rich was soon starting to fill the rest of his garage with more N scale Chicago industrial railroading.

Rich's layout is what is termed a *con't on page 3*



Rich Sieben is holding the portable North Pier Terminal section of his layout in the above right photo. During an operating session this section is an integral part of operations and positioned on the far side room apart from the rest of the layout. Car floats bring rolling stock to and from the terminal. The brewery sign above Rich's head is from Rich's family business started in 1865 on the north side of Chicago. Today the Sieben Brewery business is only seen on certain notable model railroads such as Rich's (right photo) and Mike Ritschdorf's N&W which was featured in the January 2018 *Semaphore*.



Rich Sieben's N Scale Chicago Industrial Terminal con't

termed a "proto-freelanced" model railroad. It is heavily based on Chicago's industrial railroads, but is not an exact copy of them or the industries they serve. For example, a prominent industry on the layout is Sieben's Brewery named after the brewery Rich's great, great grandfather started in 1895 on the north side of Chicago. The original Sieben Brewery had no rail siding but Rich's model does. The CIT incorporates many of the notable railroads that serve the city such as the Belt Railway of Chicago, the Chicago Junction RR, Norfolk Southern, CSX, Union Pacific, and Canadian National. Well known Chicago industries and railroad facilities are also featured like International Harvester, Thompson Firearms (makers of the "Tommy Gun"), Robey Street Float, Elsdon Yard and 33rd Street Yard.

Despite being built in his garage, Rich says his layout operates well. The garage is heated and air-conditioned, and precautions are taken to keep dust from getting into the layout room. Rich is pleased with his choice of N scale. It has operated nearly flawlessly for him. Derailments are almost always caused by operator error he says. Now that most of the layout is finished from an operating stand point, he has started doing some scenery. He has many placeholder structures on the layout that look good and are made of Gatorboard shells with photos of actual industries cemented to them. A new 2 x 14 foot section of layout is in the works which will add even more industrial operations to the Chicago Industrial Terminal. This very busy industrial switching layout is about to get even busier!



The Chicago Industrial Terminal's structures (above) have the look and feel of actual modern era industrial structures because they are photos of actual industrial structures cemented to Gatorboard shells. The shot of 26th Street Yard to the right, shows how Rich Sieben has really captured the look and feel of big time Chicago industrial railroading in N scale.

Basic Layout Information

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Layout Name: | Chicago Industrial Terminal |
| Layout Builder: | Rich Sieben |
| Layout Location: | Rich's garage |
| Scale: | N scale |
| Layout Size: | 20 x 22 feet and expanding |
| Layout Style: | Around the walls/walk-in |
| Layout Concept/ Locale: | Industrial Railroading in Chicago |
| Layout Era: Construction began: | 1960s to 1990s 2010 |
| Bench Work: | L girder/open grid/steel studs |
| Sub Roadbed: | Plywood |
| Roadbed: | Cork |
| Track: | 500 feet of Atlas code 80 flex track |
| Turnouts: | 200+ mostly Peco turnouts with some Atlas; all are manual |
| Track specs: | 9 inch minimum radius; no grades |
| Scenery: | Urban scenery and ballasting in the beginning stages |
| Structures: | Photos on foam board serve as place holder structures. |
| Locomotives: | All diesel; mostly Atlas; four with sound; 60+ total |
| Rolling Stock: Control: | Mixed manufacturers; 700+ total Digitrax DCC; tethered and wireless throttles |
| Operations: | Color coded car cards and layout diagrams |
| Op sessions: | Regular operating sessions; the layout can be operated with between 1 to 14 operators |
| Favorite Aspects of the Hobby: | Operations; scenery |
| Other: | A 2 x 14 foot addition has been started that will include a mini steel mill, glass plant and yard. |



Rich Sieben's N Scale Chicago Industrial Terminal con't



Above left is the Robey Street float Yard. Cars are sent via car float (the wood box pictured) to three other locations on the layout creating a unique form of interchange on the model railroad. A Penn Central geep is patiently waiting for its next assignment switching the Vantage Chemical Plant in the upper right photo. Both the Santa Fe and Milwaukee Road are busy working the huge paper plant in the Central Manufacturing District. The Central Manufacturing District has the distinction of being the first industrial park in the U.S. Once again Rich Sieben has effectively used photos of large modern industrial buildings over Gatorboard bases to produce a nice backdrop flat for this scene. In the lower right photo a mix of second generation road power is seen at the large service facility at Ashland Avenue Yard. Given its position as the nation's foremost railroad hub, it is no surprise that thirty railroads are represented on the Chicago Industrial Terminal layout either by having actual trackage on the layout, trackage rights, run through agreements, interchange arrangements, etc.



Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

This is a repurposed ATSF covered hopper located in LaJunta, CO. The hopper would make a great kit-bashing project.

Editor's note: It just so happens our May 2021 FVD meet's contest is 12" x 12" Diorama with Retired or Repurposed Rolling Stock hint, hint!



Member News

Welcome to the 2020-2021 modeling season everyone! We hope your summer was a good one and you are ready for some excellent fall model railroading....Long time FVD member, **Ron Fedor**, was featured in a page 1 Daily Herald article along with his photo on August 2....Good bye, David! FVD MMR **David Leider** (right) and his wife moved to Largo, FL over the summer. Largo is just north of St. Petersburg. FYI, David has a new book out, “**The B&O Chicago Terminal History**”. See page 7 of this newsletter for info about the book.... Membership Services Trainmaster, **Erich Abens**, reports that the division’s membership stands at 178 as of July....**Join us for our historic, first ever ZOOM meeting Sept. 20!**



FVD Annual Elections. Due to Covid 19 our Annual Officer Elections for Superintendent and Chief Clerk were rescheduled from April 19 to the regular September 20 ZOOM meet. Please attend & vote!

2020 - 2021 Fox Valley Division Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held from **1:30 to about 4:00 pm** (except as noted under “Other” below). **This year all meetings will be presented on line using ZOOM virtual meeting technology.** See page 2 of the newsletter or the division’s web site for complete instructions on how to use ZOOM and participate in the meetings. For the latest clinic and all FVD news and information, visit FVD’s web site at www.foxvalleydivision.org.

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Clinic</u> | <u>Contest</u> | <u>Other</u> |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| September 20 | MRR Projects We Did While Sheltered in Place by Walt Herrick | 1 Passenger Car | 1st meet of 2019-20 on ZOOM Makeup Officer Elections |
| October 18 | LCC by Paul Wussow | 1 Weathered Structure | 1:30 Start on ZOOM |
| November 22 | LCL Traffic before UPS and FedEx by Mark Vaughn | 1 Unfinished Project | 1:30 Start on ZOOM |
| December 20 | Layout Wiring by Eric Peterson | 1 Yard Switcher | 1:30 Start on ZOOM |
| January 17, 2021 | 3D Printing by Phillip Burnside | 1 Open Load | 1:30 Start on ZOOM |
| February 17 | Flat Buildings for Your Layout by Charles Malinowski | 1 Over, Under, Around & Through | 1:30 Start on ZOOM |
| March 21 | The Pursuit of Realism by Lance Mindheim; facilitated by Gary Saxton | 1 Locomotive | 1:30 Start on ZOOM |
| April 18 | 1906 Crystal Lake, IL Depot Diorama by Walt Herrick | 1 Illuminated Model | 1:00 pm Start on ZOOM Annual Officer Elections |
| May 16 | Scratch Building Cars for the AP Program by Jim Osborn | 12” x 12” Diorama with Repurposed or Retired Rolling Stock | 1:30 Start on ZOOM |
| May 20—23 | Midwest Region Annual Convention, “ The Rockford Railroad Convention ” in Rockford, IL. for information see the Rock River Valley Division’s web site: www.rrvd-nmra.com | | |
| July 4 - 11 | NMRA 2021 National Convention, “ Rails by the Bay ” in Santa Clara, CA. See the web site for more information: www.nmra.2021.com | | |



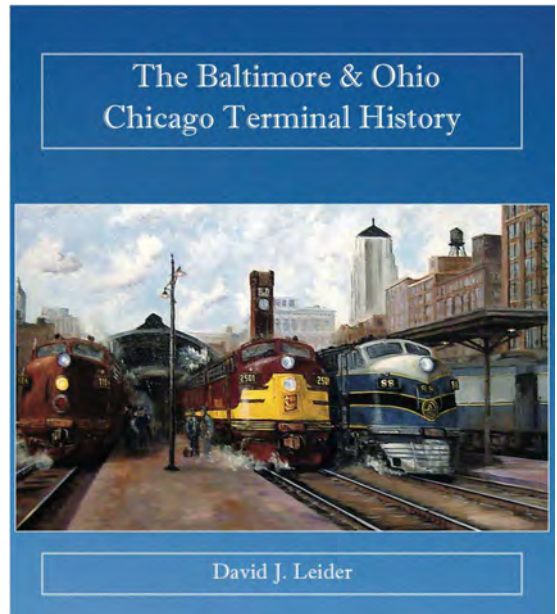
About the Fox Valley Division

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 Lake and McHenry, and parts of Cook and Kane Counties in northeast Illinois. About 180 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.

2020 –2021 FVD monthly meetings will be held September through May on line via ZOOM virtual technology per the schedule on page 6. Each meeting features a clinic, model contest, and information of interest to the membership. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions may also be held when Covid 19 protocols are lifted.

We encourage you to take advantage of all the FVD has to offer. We are here to answer your questions, help improve your modeling, and help you better enjoy the great hobby of model railroading. Visit us on the web at:

www.foxvalleydivision.org.



David Leider's new book "The B&O Chicago Terminal History" is now available! To purchase the book directly from David, or for more info email him at: sooauthor@netzero.net

The FVD's monthly meeting is at the :

- Our regular meeting time is: 1:30 to about 4:00 p.m.
- 2020 – 2021 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org

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Ways & Means, **Vacant**

Modeling Tip: Backdrop in a Day (or Two!) by Bob Didomenico

With a few friends I had been pondering what to do about a back drop on my layout for a long time. While a painted backdrop would be nice--you could get whatever scene you wanted-- it would require an artist or skilled painter. We then had to decide if the backdrop would be installed in place on the wall, or separately on masonite, aluminum, etc. and then installed. We decided to not have the backdrop directly on the wall even though we needed to cover about 90 linear feet with it.

After a couple of months of trying to figure out the best way to do our backdrop (and still no backdrop!), we were referred to an individual selling back drops on the internet. His backdrops were printed on paper roughly 24" tall X 96" in length and coiled up in rolls. He had several scenes to choose from including just plain sky and clouds. We decided his backdrops would fulfill our needs nicely! (See the link to our backdrop source at the end of the article.) We placed an order for plain sky & clouds, and sky & trees backdrop scenes. As these backdrops are printed, we thought placing the order all at once may keep the colors close. To make the backdrop easily removable, we decided to mount it to ½ inch extruded pink foam sheets. Then it was off to the store to purchase some 4 x 8, half inch thick, pink foam board.

Funny thing about the foam, while all the big box stores carry it, none of them will cut it on their panel saws. They claim it is a safety issue. Unfortunately half inch foam board isn't really strong enough to be strapped to your car's roof, flapping in the breeze while you are going down the road. So we cut it by hand in the store to make it easily transportable. Marking it in half we then cut it with a utility knife



which allowed the pieces to fit in a car with the rear seats folded down and the trunk pass through open. Let me add that store employees will show some real interest in what you are doing if you haven't paid for your foam board before you start slicing! Oh and another thing, look out for dents in your foam board as these will show through on your backdrop. The seller recommended using 3M 77 Super Spray Adhesive so we picked up a few cans of that plus some drop cloths. Now for some installation tips.

For the installation, here are a few things we did that you may want to consider:

1. We used the blank side of the foam board without printing on it just in case you might be able to see the printing though the backdrop paper.
2. Our foam came with a plastic film coating which we carefully peeled off.
3. We wiped down the foam board with a damp rag to remove any "stuff" that may have become attached by static electricity. We gave the foam board time to dry.
4. We decided to install the backdrop in my garage on the floor. The space was covered with LOTS of drop cloths and newspapers. Spray adhesive over spray is nasty stuff and it goes EVERYWHERE, so we felt doing the work outside with even a small breeze was asking for trouble.
5. We used 3M Super 77 spray adhesive per the backdrop manufacturer's recommendation.
6. We kept the garage door open a few inches while spraying the adhesive and then opened the door all the way to air out the room between installing the sections of backdrop.
7. If you haven't used spray adhesive before, my suggestion is to practice a little with it first.

That's it for the preliminaries. Follow my photos and captions on the next page to see how we made our backdrop. We were very pleased with the result, and how quickly the project went!

Con't on next page

Modeling Tip: Backdrop in a Day (or Two!) con't



Here's how we made our backdrop: **Step 1.** Put down drop cloths and lots of newspaper to protect from the spray glue's overspray which goes everywhere. **Step 2.** Lay the foam board on the drop cloth on a flat horizontal surface. Weight down the roll of backdrop at one end of the foam board. **Step 3.** Before spraying any glue, roll out the backdrop for several feet to make sure its top edge lines up well with the top edge of the pink foam. **Step 4.** Roll the backdrop back up. Evenly spray the about two feet of pink foam directly ahead of the rolled up backdrop. Wait a few minutes per the instructions on the can. **Step 5.** (Below left) Carefully and slowly roll out the backdrop over the adhesive. Make sure you are evenly following the top edge of the foam board. Make sure there are no air bubbles by going slowly and smoothing out bubbles right away as you go. We used 2 foot long piece of smooth, white painted 2 x2 inch lumber to smooth out the back drop. **Important!** You really only get one chance at laying the backdrop down on the glue. Once it's down, you will not be able to do any adjustments! The glue is just too tacky. **Step 6.** Continue rolling out, spraying and smoothing the back drop in 2 foot sections until you are done. **Step 7.** For the time being, we did not permanently install the backdrop on the wall, but just leaned it flat up against the wall. We may install it on the wall later.



Well, that's how we made our backdrop. It turned out great, and like I said, we are very please with it. Below is the link for our backdrop. Sorry, it's kind of long!

<https://www.ebay.com/itm/470-HO-scale-backdrop-trees-and-sky-8-ft-long-FREE-SHIPPING-/153907002552>