



THE SEMAPHORE

February 2014

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



Layout of the Month: John Drozdak's Rock Island

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A red and yellow Rock Island geep leads an east bound extra through Iowa farm country on John Drozdak's Rock Island 4th Sub layout. Walt Herrick photos.

March 1 & 2
Harper College in Palatine
See you there!

John Drozdak's Rock Island 4th Sub, Illinois Division layout occupies the attic of his and wife Ingrid's Chicago brown stone. John's RI is a proto-freelanced version of that road's line from Attalissa, Iowa on the east, to Grinnell, Iowa on the west. John chose to model the Rock because "I wanted to do something different from everybody else." In the case of the Rock Island, "doing something different" translates into a bunch of scratch building and kit-bashing. That suits John just fine. He loves to build and will "scratch or bash" anything on the layout from track to rolling stock to structures. **John's Rock Island 4th Sub will be on tour for RailFun 2014 in May.** It is a neat layout to see in person, and you can preview it now on the **RailFun 2014 web site** under "Layout Tours. WH

Jim Allen's Fun Stuff

How's this for one gigantic train load? The photo was shot by Kevin Morgan at Sedalia, CO in 2005. As a model, it's not something that would easily lend itself to your typical 4 x 8 layout with 18 inch radius curves!



Copyright 2005 - Kevin Morgan - 3-PTRCEN1-28A at Sedalia, CO on April 15, 2005

John Drozdak's Layout of the Month con't

East bound Rock Island Extra 323 now crosses the muddy Cedar River on a nicely scratch built deck girder bridge. It took John 30 coats of polyurethane varnish before he was satisfied with the way the river looked!



An hour after the 323 passes, a westbound freight crosses the Cedar River bridge. The dense foliage and beautiful trees in this scene and elsewhere on the layout were made by John's wife, Ingrid, aka the "Tree Lady". Ingrid's tree business (and Ingrid) make frequent appearances at train shows around the Chicago area and mid west.



RI 1256 carefully spots a fifty foot Great Northern box car indoors at one of Iowa City's larger industries. John chose the early 1970's as the era for his railroad because the Rock Island at that time ran a wide variety of equipment with paint schemes from several different eras. This GP7 still wears its solid maroon scheme from the 1950s.



John Drozdak's Layout of the Month con't



"Hey Al, did ya know this here Drozdak layout is gonna be on a RailFun 2014 layout tour?"

"Yep, it and more than 30 super ones just like it, Winfred."

"This is gonna be a really great convention, Al, a really great convention, yessiree."



Marengo, Iowa is the home of Sullivan Printing's large printing plant. A bright red Rock Island transfer caboose brings up the rear of the train that just delivered three SOO box car loads of paper to the plant. The caboose is one of more than 30 different styles of cabooses John Drozdak has scratch built.



Chopped nose GP7 #1275 and a GP9 ease their train past the huge hardwood lumber mill in Homestead, Iowa.



A RI yellow and red lash-up rolls through the partially completed town of Tiffan, Iowa on hand laid track.

At the locomotive facility in Iowa City today, rest RI locomotives in the road's solid maroon, maroon and yellow, and red and yellow paint schemes. John loves the performance of Proto Power West drives, and most of his engines have them. He uses Athearn or Front Range shells and details and paints them for specific Rock Island locomotives.



John Drozdak's Layout of the Month con't

A still blazing summer sun starts to set over the distant hill bringing to end an unbearably hot, muggy, August day in Ladora, Iowa. PRLX SD18 #1802 has pulled up to Ladora's train order office to get one last assignment. PRLX stands for "Park Ridge Leasing", a freelanced company created by John. Note the 1802's headlights, all-weather side cab windows, and "Paducah" style air filter.



Basic Layout Information

Layout Builder:	John Drozdak
Layout Location:	Attic of the Drozdak home on Chicago's north side
Layout Size:	14 x 46 feet
Layout style:	Double deck walk around with the decks connected by a helix
Layout scale:	HO
Layout theme/locale:	Rock Island RR fourth Sub, Illinois Division from Attalissa to Grinnell, Iowa
Layout era:	1973
Construction started:	1992 with several subsequent rebuilds
Type of bench work:	1 x 4 grid
Type of sub road bed/ road bed:	cork roadbed on 1/2 inch plywood
Type of track/turnouts:	Hand laid codes 100, 83, 70 with ties cut from skid lumber; #s 10, 8, and 6 turnouts; 26 inch minimum radius but most curves are larger
Layout scenery:	Styrofoam base with hard shell covering; ground foam and natural materials for ground cover; trees by the "Tree Lady", John's wife, Ingrid
Layout structures:	Scratch built as required; plastic kits and wood kits; kit-bashing as needed
Layout locomotives:	Proto Power West drives in most locomotives with Athearn or Front Range bodies painted an detailed for the Rock Island
Layout rolling stock:	Athearn "blue box", Accurail, Intermountain, etc. kits and kit bashes; scratch built cars especially of RI equipment and any road's cabooses
Layout control system:	DC with wireless throttles by Remote Control Systems of Illinois
Favorite aspect(s) of the hobby:	"I enjoy anything having to do with building on the layout."
Model railroad influences:	Former Batavia Club, MMR Ray Thomas, the late Charlie Martin, the Rock Island Technical Society, and several prototype Iowa Interstate RR locomotive engineers
Other:	John Drozdak is an accomplished scratch builder and kit basher who has custom built locomotives, rolling stock and structures for many modelers. Among his credits are scratch building 30 different styles of cabooses and modeling and painting many diesels, especially Rock Island diesels, not available commercially.

It's High Wheeler Time!

Yes, it's High Wheeler time again! We thank all of our terrific FVD members who are helping to put on this year's event. We invite every one else in the division to come out and support this worthwhile promotion of our division and the great hobby of model railroading. What better way to chase those cold (really cold this year) and snowy winter "blahs" away than with a lot of trains? High Wheeler has them in all scales, shapes, colors, and sizes. This year's High Wheeler promises to be the best one yet with many super layouts and lots of top notch vendors. And don't forget all the kid and grand kid activities for your favorite junior railroaders. So, plan on attending **High Wheeler 2014 at Harper College in Palatine on March 1st and 2nd**, and invite some family and friends to join you. The High Wheeler team and whole Fox Valley Division very much appreciates *your* support!

**Saturday, March 1 and
Sunday, March 2, 2014**

9:00am to 5:00pm
Harper College – Palatine, IL

Admission and Show Details at
HighWheelerTrainShow.com

*Tickets available at the door. Cash Only.










**Join the Fun,
Discover Model Railroading**

20 Spectacular Running Model Railroads!

- Door Prize
- Demos
- Free Parking

FREE Kids' Activities

- Make Your Own Train Craft
- Two Drawings Daily for a Starter Train Set
Compliments of Walthers
- **Sunday Only 10am -3pm**
 - Face Painting
 - Mad Science Fun Stations



"Goin' to High Wheeler this year, Winfred?"

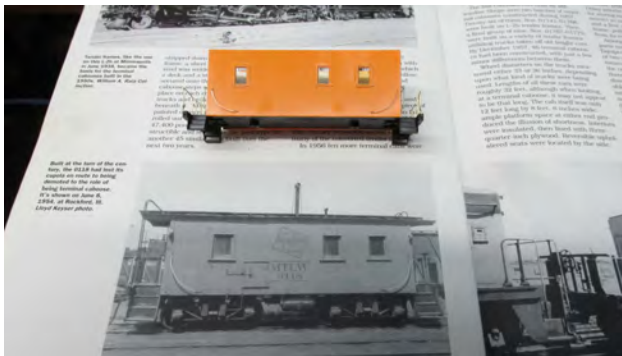
"Sure am, Al. I never miss it. This year I'm plannin' on using High Wheeler as a warm up for the '*really big shew*' coming to town May 16, 17, and 18.

"You mean RailFun 2014 in Schaumburg?"

"That's the one! It's gonna be a really great convention, Al, a really great convention, yessiree!"

Workin' on Our FVD RRs: John Drozdak's Caboosees

As a modeler, John Drozdak considers himself “a builder”. He’d much rather build something than run trains, design a layout, take photos, go to an op session, etc. One of John’s favorite things to model is the caboose. Over the years he’s built more than 30 different styles of cabooses for himself, friends and as a custom builder, for other modelers. Now that’s 30 different *styles* of cabooses, not actual cabooses of which he’s produced more than 30 since he’s been asked at times to build more than one caboose of a particular style. Before embarking on a caboose project John researches his subject and tries to come up with accurate plans and photos (hopefully one or two in color) of his subject. If he can find an article about the caboose he’s going to model like in the photos below, so much the better. Then its off to the work bench to start building. Styrene is a favorite material to use, but John has also built in wood and card stock. The results are always the same: a beautiful model of a caboose you can’t buy at your hobby shop or on line. Some say scratch building is a dying art, but don’t tell John Drozdak that. WH



Here are two caboose models being built by John Drozdak when the Semaphore visited him last November. Both are from the Milwaukee Road. The short, wooden, orange one on the left will be #0118 which was used in terminal service. The longer, box car red car on the right will be #01131 which sported a tall cupola and was also made of wood.

MadCity

MODEL RAILROAD SHOW & SALE

Catch The Trains!

Feb. 15-16, 2014, 9am-5pm
Alliant Energy Center, Exhibition Hall
Madison, Wisconsin

A GREAT FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT VALUE!

The 47th Annual Mad City
MODEL RAILROAD SHOW AND SALE
 Feb. 15-16, 2014 • 9AM-5PM
 Alliant Energy Center, Exhibition Hall, Madison, WI

One of the Midwest's best model RR events showcasing beautiful model train layouts in Z, N, HO, S, O and G scale; classic toy trains; historical exhibits & railroad videos. Kids can build a giant wooden train layout or run or ride a model train. **300+ vendor tables** of model train merchandise including tools, railroad collectibles, videos, books, clothing and artwork. Hourly door prizes for adults. Kids, age 5-11, can register to win a train set.

Four HO train sets given away each day!

Adults \$11 (12 & older), Seniors \$10 (65 & older)
 Children \$5 (age 5-11), Kids under 5 FREE

Active duty military \$10. Two day pass \$18. Parking fee not included.
 All children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

\$1 off advanced sale tickets—available at local hobby shops—see Web site for locations

For more information:
www.nmra-scwd.org



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January's Clinic: Early Steel Freight Cars by David Leider

The Fox Valley Division's David Leider, MMR, dug into his reserves of research materials and slides to give us a fascinating look at early steel freight car manufacturing focusing particularly on Chicago area companies that produced or helped produce these cars. David is a true historian and his clinics are always full of interesting information, stories, and vintage photographs. The FVD especially thanks him for another great job of clinic "pinch hitting", this time for a clinician who could not be present with us due to a serious family illness. Thanks, David!



January's "Rescue the Rolling Stock" Contest Winners

January's contest was "Rescue the Rolling Stock" in which members were asked to bring in models of rolling stock that had been repurposed for other uses thus sparing them from the scrapper's torch. Big Fox Valley Division "Congratulations!" from to our winners Bob Shlemon, Jr., Mike Hirvela and Bob's son, Eddie Shlemon. Jim Allen took the photos of Bob, Mike and Eddie's entries.

Bob Shlemon, Jr. placed first in January's "Rescue the Rolling Stock" contest with this nice farm scene featuring a forty foot flat car that was repurposed as a bridge for crossing a stream running through the farmer's property.



Mike Hirvela rescued this old wooden caboose and put it to good use as a make-shift depot complete with train order signal. Mike placed second.



Eddie Shlemon finished third by turning an old flat car into a dirt bike jump. Is that American Graffiti's Terry "the Toad" trying to make a jump on his Vespa scooter?

Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

This month we conclude Mike's article on kit-bashing the tank cars he entered (and placed second with!) in December's FVD "tank cars" modeling contest. The cars are shown in Jim Osborn's contest photo below. WH

Last month we built the first three cars on the left of the first row, in the photo below. This month we'll build the other three cars. These cars are all shortened Athearn 62 foot tank cars, and were made using the same basic construction process. What I wanted to model were the 50 to 55 foot cars I saw so often in trains rather than the longer 62 footers I did not see very often. The shorter cars weren't available commercially so I kit-bashed them. You'll need an Athearn 62 foot car to do this project. These can usually be found inexpensively at swap meets either as a kit or built up. If built up they can be easily "un-built" for our purposes. Check the Parts List at the end of the article on page 9, collect what you need, and then let's kit-bash some tank cars!



Step 1 Squarely cut the frame casting behind the truck as shown in Photo A. Use a razor saw for this.

Step 2 Drill a 1/16 inch deep hole into each corner of the frame casting where you made the cuts in Step 1 (see Photo B). Use a 0.025 inch bit.

Step 3 Remove the tank car ends with a razor saw. Make two cuts just inside the next weld seam toward the center of the tank (Photo C). You'll be removing 3/4 to 1 inch of material on each side.

Step 4 Square off and smooth the tank body cuts and ends with a large flat file. You can also use 100 grit sandpaper taped to glass. Be careful of the weld seams.

Step 5 Test fit first; file or sand as needed; then glue the ends to the body. Set aside to dry.

Step 6 Cut the lower tank casting in two places to fit the re-sized upper tank body. You may also need to cut the car weight to fit. Epoxy any extra sections of weights back on to the larger weight.

Step 7 When everything is dry, assemble the car per the original instructions.

Step 8 Now that the bolsters and end platforms are in position, take some 0.025 inch music wire and cut to fit into the 0.025 inch drilled holes on the bolster edges.

Cut them slightly longer than you think you need to. They should be tight, not bowed, not loose and not falling out either. Cut a second piece of wire the same length for the other side of the car. Do NOT glue. *Continued on page 9*

Photo A



Photo B

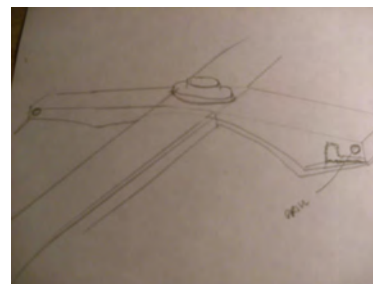


Photo C



Mike's Minute—Kit-bashing Tank Cars, con't

- Step 9** Take four Athearn diesel locomotive hand rail stanchions and form them over the 0.025 music wire, two on each wire, so that the base will be on the bottom of the tank car. Set the stanchions equally spaced from the bolsters. If you have the metal stanchions, drill two 0.025 holes in the tank bottom spaced in line with the stanchions for two of the stanchions to press fit. If you used the plastic stanchions, they can be glued on the tank body during final assembly. (And it is assembly time!)
- Step 10** Glue the weight into the tank bottom. Then glue the tank bottom into the upper tank. Screw the trucks into the bolsters making sure they don't hit the weight. Cut the screws to length if they do. Check to make sure everything is square.
- Step 11** Insert the 0.025" music wires and supports into the bolsters and into (or onto) the bottom of the tank.
- Step 12** Add couplers of your choice. Check coupler height with an NMRA gauge and adjust as needed.
- Step 13** Add the bottom outlet fittings in the holes provided. Cut the brake equipment off the frame. Install it on the end of the car along with the brake wheel all positioned in a prototype manner.
- Step 14** Take the handrails and cut them to fit around the ends of the tank, using end platform as a length guide, cutting the handrails just after the first side support. Glue on. Add the top platform details, railings and ladders as per the original instructions.
- Step 15** Paint, gloss coat, decal, dull coat and then weather to your liking.

You now have the basic construction techniques for creating tank cars of various lengths – shorter or longer as you desire. Trucks can be changed to Bettendorf type to back-date the car, or 100-ton trucks to modernize it. There axle Commonwealth type trucks can be used on heavy cars. Left over walk-way parts, ladders, locomotive stanchions and wire can be used to create alternate walkways, access points and other detailing. But what to do with the bigger left-over car cut-off parts, you ask? Well, see photo D.

Parts List

Athearn 62-ft tank car kit or a disassembled car
 HO freight car trucks of your choice
 Razor saw or fine tooth hack saw
 Mitre box (optional)
 Big flat mill file
 Sand paper on glass (optional)
 Sanding station (optional)
 0.025 music wire
 Wire cutters & needle nose pliers
 Screw drivers for 2-56 screws
 Couplers of your choice
 Plastic glue and epoxy of your choice
 Plastic paints for base coat, gloss coat, dull coat
 Decals of your choice
 Weathering materials of your choice

Photo D



Member News

Membership Records Trainmaster, Bert Lattan, reports that FVD membership in December stands at 217 with six renewals and two new members....Things continue to come together nicely for both the 2014 High Wheeler Train Show and Railfun Convention. Contact Jeff Jarr you'd like to help the division put on these two great events. Jeff's contact information is on page 11 of this newsletter.

Tip of the Month: Drying Rack

I brought 16 unpainted hoppers with me to Florida to paint, decal and weather. To organize the extensive drying process (wash/dry; paint/dry; gloss coat/dry; decal/dry; gloss coat/dry; dull coat/dry; weather/dry; dull coat/dry) with these cars, I made the simple drying rack seen in the photo using scrap 2x3 lumber and dowel rods. Holes were drilled for the dowels. The larger dowels were glued in, the smaller ones were left removable. I put my toilet paper tube car painting holders on the larger dowels for drying. The small dowel rods were sharpened in a pencil sharpener on one end. I put the car's trucks or couplers on the pointed end, paint them, and put the dowels in the small holes for drying. When I get back to Illinois I'll also use the rack for drying structures again using my trusty TP painting holders. WH



2013 – 2014 Meeting Schedule

2013-2014 orange Meeting Schedule cards were mailed to members the last week in August. The remaining months' schedule is given below and on the FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org. *Any schedule changes or additions are posted on the FVD web site as soon as they are made known to the web master.*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Feb.16, 2014	"How the CP Replaced the Duck Creek Bridge" by photographer Ed Oom.	Hopper Train, limit 6 cars	
March 1, 2, 2014	High Wheeler 2014 Train Show at Harper College in Palatine Sponsored by the FVD. 9 am to 5 pm each day. <u>FVD volunteers needed</u> . Contact Jeff Jarr at jjarr@comcast.net or 773-286-8755.		
April 13, 2014	TBA	Diorama	1:00 pm start. Lunch provided. FVD officer elections.
May 16, 17, 18, 2014	Rail Fun 2014 Mid West Region Convention hosted by the FVD In Schaumburg, IL. <u>FVD volunteers needed</u> . Contact Jeff Jarr at jjarr@comcast.net or 773-286-8755.		
Note: <u>there will be no May FVD monthly meeting in lieu of the Rail Fun convention being hosted by the FVD.</u>			
July 13 - 19, 2014	NMRA National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Check the national web site www.nmra.org and <i>NMRA Magazine</i> for further information.		

NMRA Web Sites

Fox Valley Division	www.foxvalleydivision.org
High Wheeler 2014	www.highwheelertrainshow.com
Railfun 2014	www.foxvalleydivision.org/2014railfun/welcome.html
Midwest Region	www.mwr-nmra.org
National	www.nmra.org
2014 National Convention	www.2014cleveland.org

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*Do you have a question or two? Visit our website at: www.foxvalleydivision.org.
 Or, call or email one of us above. We're here to help you!*



"3 1/2 days of trains for only \$45 bucks for early registrants! That's a deal, Al, a real deal, for such a great convention, yessiree!"

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 north-east Illinois. About 240 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.

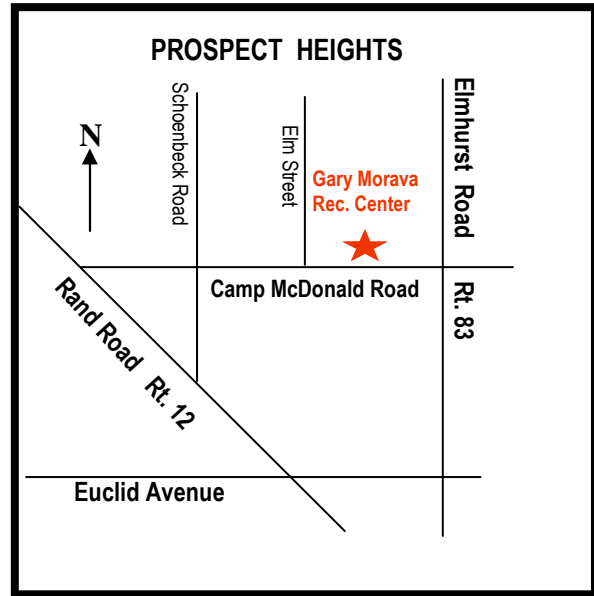
FVD general meetings are held September through May at the Gary Morava Center in Prospect Heights from 1:30 to about 4:00 pm. Each meeting features a clinic, model contest, information of interest to the membership, and a time for socializing. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions are also held periodically in addition to, or instead of, the general meetings. To promote the hobby of model railroading, the FVD sponsors and runs the large train show, "High Wheeler", in early March each year at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois.

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. Join us at a FVD meeting or outing. We'd love to see you.

Visit us on the web at:

www.foxvalleydivision.org.

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, or any FVD Board member listed on the previous page of this newsletter. We are here to help you!



Regular Meeting Location: Gary Morava Center, 110 Camp McDonald Road, Prospect Heights, IL

Regular Meeting Time: 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. See page 10 for the rest of this year's meeting schedule.



**Fox Valley Division
Midwest Region-NMRA
P.O. Box 1535
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