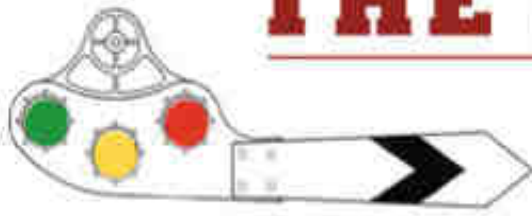


THE SEMAPHORE

January 2016

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



*Happy New Year
Everyone!*

Layout of the Month: Ted Voss's Valley View Model Railroad Article & photos by Walt Herrick

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Next FVD Meeting:

Sunday, January 17

1:30 pm at the

**Morava Rec Center in
Prospect Heights**

**Contest: Favorite Model or
Prototype Train Photo
taken by the member**

**Clinic: DCC Function
Mapping with JMRI De-
coder Pro by George K.**



Recognize this place? It's the Valley View Model Railroad barn located about two miles north of the Illinois Railway Museum in rural Union, Illinois. For 35 years, Valley View had regular open houses during the IRM's operating season.

Since 1980 Ted Voss's Valley View Model Railroad has hosted open houses regularly for the public during the Illinois Railway Museum's operating season. In recent years the open houses have been fewer and farther between. On December 5th, Ted held an Open House and said it probably would be his last. "We'd like to sell the place," *con't on p. 2*

Fun Stuff by Jim Allen

This is a unique modification of a backhoe to use in unloading gondolas. The designers of this un-loader had quite a balancing act to do, but it looks like things worked out well. The backhoe's slightly faded yellow paint would suggest the un-loader has been in service for a couple of years or more.



Layout of the Month: Valley View Model Railroad con't

con't from p.1 Ted says, “including the house, the railroad barn, layout, and 10 acres. We’ve had a lot of great fun up here, but it’s time to move on.” Great fun indeed. In its hey day during Ted’s weekend open houses, it was sometimes hard to find a parking place and the second story layout room could get quite crowded. A visit to the Valley View was a fun excursion on its own, or nice finale to a day at the Illinois Railway Museum.

Raised in Edison Park, Illinois, Ted is a dyed in the wool Chicago and Northwestern Railway fan and distinctive yellow and green CNW diesel motive power and passenger equipment is prevalent on his layout. Being a “city boy” Ted has chosen to model slices of the city including Chicago’s Loop, some of its neighborhoods and some suburban towns. Like so many modelers, Ted has sought to capture the feel and essence of the area rather than any exact scene. The layout is fully scened and detailed. The layout room is kept slightly dark to show off the lighted buildings and lighted animation including grade crossing flashers, raising and lowering crossing gates, police and emergency vehicle flashing lights, and, of course, the lighted trains. The layout has a 35 year old power and control system—MRC “copper” DC power packs and Atlas Controller switches for block control—but it still runs quite reliably and well.

Ted Voss is not an NMRA member, so I hope you don’t mind me taking this nostalgic look at his historic layout, one which I’m sure has inspired many modelers to try, or go further in our great hobby.

Ted has nicely captured the feel of down town Chicago in several areas of his layout. In the upper right photo is a small section of the Loop including a selectively compressed, scratch built Northwestern Station. In the center photo, familiar CNW yellow and green E and F units with their bi-level coaches stand ready to transport commuters out of the city to the suburbs. The bottom photo shows a wedding mini scene complete with a horse drawn carriage to take the bride and groom to the reception. Though not an exact copy of any particular Chicago scene, never the less, it captures the look of Chicago in the 1950s through 1970s with its raised tracks above street level, the CNW heralded underpass, station platform, signal bridge, and CNW E unit. In 1893 the City of Chicago passed an ordinance requiring railroads to eliminate grade crossings on busy main lines. As a result, scenes like the one at right are typical on the Northwestern and other railroads in the city.



Layout of the Month: Valley View Model Railroad con't

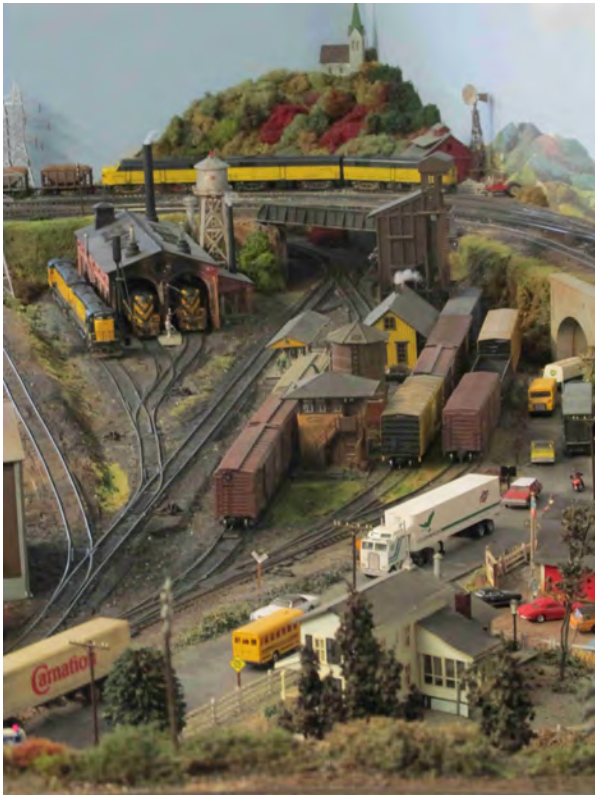


To the left is an overall shot of the Valley View Railroad's attic layout room. A large "dog bone" shaped mainline follows the side walls with the "ends" of the bone on either side of the photographer. An industrial branch surrounds an operating pit at the far end of the layout. Layout builder and owner, Ted Voss, smiles for the camera during what was likely the Valley View's last open house this past December.



Basic Layout Information

Layout name:	Valley View Model Railroad
Layout builder:	Ted Voss
Layout location:	Attic of Ted's "railroad barn"
Layout scale:	HO
Layout size:	16 x 32 feet
Layout style:	Walk in
Layout theme:	CNW Chicago city and suburban railroading
Layout era:	1950s to 1995
Construction started:	1978
Bench work:	1x4 box grid
Sub road bed/roadbed:	Cork on homasote and/or plywood
Track and turnouts:	Code 100 Atlas flex track with Customline turnouts
Minimum Radii:	24 inches
Maximum Grades:	1.5 %
Scenery:	Plaster newspaper on cardboard strips; ground foam, ballast, dirt, etc ground covers; lichen trees and shrubs
Structures:	Kits, kit-bashing, scratch built
Locos:	Yellow and green CNW diesels from 1950s to 1995
Rolling stock:	Mostly kit built
Control:	DC with dual cab control using MRC power packs and Atlas Controllers
Other:	The Valley View's last Open House probably occurred December 5, 2015.



In the photo directly above, three Alco FAs pull a heavy ore train over an overpass in one of several suburban towns on the Valley View layout. Note the CNW's left hand running on the double track main. In the photo to the right, two yellow and green SDs poke their heads out of an engine house located at a CNW service facility in Chicago. Going on its 38th year, the Valley View Model Railroad has stood the test of time occupying the same location on the second floor of the little red Valley View Model Railroad barn in Union, Illinois. If the Valley View's December 5th's Open House was indeed it's last, it will definitely be missed.



Mike's Minute by Mike Hirvela

Your First Op Session: You're the Engineer, pt. 2—Using Throttles

OK, you are at the op session described in last month's Mike's Minute, and your assignment is "engineer". You're handed a throttle, but you're not sure how the thing works. Again, have no fear. Control systems vary, but all achieve the end product: controlling the locomotive so as to get the train over the line. So, let's talk briefly about control systems and throttles. The one your host uses may be different from anything you've ever seen. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help understanding how it works. The first session I attended used a straight DC system with block controls. A little explanation of what toggles do what and we were off and running, and I had a great time. The second session I attended had a very elementary digital system with plug-in code plugs. The third railroad used CVP's Easy DCC system, and the 4th used a Digitrax system with a throttle that looked like a TV remote control with a kazillion buttons. In all of these subsequent op sessions I needed help learning how to operate the new (to me) throttles and control systems, so I asked!

Whichever throttle system the owner uses, the initial learning curve may seem steep, but hesitation to use the thing is easily overcome by asking for a brief review of how the throttle turns on and off, how to "acquire the loco" (that is, connect the throttle to the engine), how to get the locomotive to go forward or reverse, and how to speed up and slow down. I found I don't like the push button throttles – I'd rather have a knob throttle for speed settings, but that's just my preference. Other guys love the push buttons. Many DCC throttles have lots of numbered buttons on them. These buttons usually operate various sounds the locomotive can make when the locomotive has a sound decoder. Typically, #1 turns the bell on/off, #2 turns the horn on/off, the #8 turns the sound on/off (which is handy when you're parked). Other numbers will activate other sounds such as pump noise, coal shoveling, valve pop-off, and even coupling crunches. The numbers usually vary by system and by the brand of decoder chip in the locomotive.

Now a word or two about plug-in panels. Though wireless throttles are popular, they are also expensive. So, many layouts have "tethered" throttles with a connecting cord you plug in at various locations around the layout. As the engineer you will unplug your throttle when you run out of cord, and start looking for another place to plug in near where your train is headed. When you un-plug, your train will continue running at the same speed until you plug in again and regain control of your loco. Sometimes plug-in panels are not exactly where they are most convenient for you, forcing you to "make do" as best you can. Scoping out plug-in locations prior to the start of an op session on a new layout for you, is definitely a good idea. One last comment on throttles: after you've been to a few operating sessions and run with say a wireless throttle one month and gotten used to how it works, and then had to shift back to a plug-in throttle on another layout the next month, it is very easy to not remember you need to plug in to control the locomotive. Same thing goes with going from a DCC layout to a DC layout and forgetting flip the toggles to control the blocks. Don't ask how I came to understand these little nuances! See you next time.

Mike Hirvela is at work as an engineer on his own layout. He is using an NCE DCC tethered "Engineer Cab" to control the locomotive of his train. Mike will plug and unplug his throttle as needed as his train progresses around the layout. NCE's Engineer Cab is a smaller, simpler version of their larger "Pro Cab" hand held throttle.



Call for Candidates and a Volunteer!

FVD elections for Superintendent and Clerk will be held this year at our April monthly meeting. Members are encouraged to consider running for either of these two positions. Contact Leif Hansen (contact info on p.7) for information or to indicate your intention to run. The division is also looking for a volunteer to assume the Ways and Means Trainmaster position which is in charge of our Highwheeler Train Show in March. Contact Jeff Jarr (contact info on p.7) for information on this important job .

High Wheeler '16 Train Show Volunteers Needed!

The High Wheeler '16 Train Show at Harper College is now only two months away! This big FVD event takes place on Saturday, March 5th and Sunday March 6th this year, and **volunteers are needed** to do the many jobs necessary to put on a great show. No experience is necessary; you'll be trained as needed on what to do. In addition to knowing you played a vital role in High Wheeler's success, you will be rewarded with an excellent meal at our High Wheeler Recognition Dinner on Sunday, March 20th at Lou Malnati's in Buffalo Grove.

Contact Jeff Jarr at jjarr@comcast.net or 773-286-8755 to sign up and give us a much needed hand. Thank you!



December's Clinic and Contest

In December MMR, Don Cook, presented two slide shows (using actual *slides*!) featuring his excellent photography along with a few slides taken by others he's collected over the years. The first show was titled "BN Black Hills Coal Train". Taken in the 1970's, this show followed a BN coal train through some nice South Dakota scenery and had many nice shots. The second show was titled "EJ&E Combo" and had a lot of excellent local shots from the 1970's taken near the EJ&E. Thanks, Don for two great shows! **In January, George K. will present his clinic, "DCC Function Mapping with JMRI Decoder Pro."** Good stuff for our "DCCers"!

We had five entries for December's contest, "Holiday Theme—Train Related". Leif Hansen took first place for the third month in a row! Leif's three-peat was well deserved as he again brought in a nicely scened module that had lights and sound. Walt Herrick's "Western Maryland Christmas" module took second, and Branden Berry's "Coal Tower Landing Pad for Santa" module took third. Check the FVD web site to see all the entries. **January's contest is "Favorite Model or Prototype Photo taken by the member."** This promises to be another great, competitive contest due to the many skilled photographers we have in the FVD. WH



Leif Hansen's first place entry in December's contest (left) had lights and sound to compliment the excellent structures and scenery in his "Justin's Jeeps" module. Walt Herrick took second with festive Christmas decorations on and around his Western Maryland Providence Yard office (lower left). Santa needed a place to land his sleigh and Branden Barry's third place entry (below) provided one—on a 200 ton coaling tower! Great job everyone! All photos by Jim Osborn.



Member News

Membership Services Trainmaster, **Bert Lattan**, reports the FVD's total membership currently stands at 223, up 14 members from the last membership report. Bert says recent new members are: **William Barrett** from Harvard, **Timothy Bothe** from Mt. Prospect, **Steven Fields** from Lake in the Hills, **Charles Freilberger** from St. Charles, **John Fuja** from Chicago, **Robert Haley** from Antioch, **Robert Key** from Libertyville, **Luanne Macy** from Mt. Prospect, **Carl Niemann** from Union, and **Mark Shuttleworth** from Harvard. *"Welcome Aboard Everyone!"*.... Congratulations to **Leif Hansen** for winning December's FVD monthly contest and accomplishing a monthly contest "three-peat" which is not easy. Leif also won the November and October contests....Best FVD wishes go to **MMR David Crement** and his wife who have been dealing with some significant health issues since last spring. We miss seeing David at our regular monthly meetings (and he misses us!). We hope to see him at a meeting in the new year....Members are encouraged to consider running for Superintendent or Clerk in our upcoming FVD elections in April. Also, we still need a new Ways and Means Trainmaster starting in March. Contact Jeff Jarr for info on any of these positions. Contact info for Jeff is on page 7....*Finally, the entire Fox Valley Division Board, wishes you a safe, happy, prosperous, and successful 2016, and a year filled with many hours of enjoyable model railroading!* WH

2015 - 2016 Fox Valley Division Meeting Schedule

Except as noted under "Other", all meetings are held from 1:30 to 4:00 pm at the Gary Morava Recreation Center, 110 W. Camp McDonald Road, Prospect Heights, IL 60070. Visitors are always welcome, but per the NMRA's new policy, must join after three visits. Important: clinics are subject to change without notice. For the latest clinic and all FVD information, visit our web site at www.foxvalleydivision.org.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Clinic</u>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Other</u>
Jan. 17, 2016	DCC Function Mapping with JMRI Decoder Pro by George K.	Favorite model or prototype photo <u>taken by the member.</u>	
Feb.21, 2016	<u>Clinic</u> on "Home built Plows and Flangers" by John Drozdak	Lighted railroad signal—signal bridge, grade crossing signal, etc. <u>in diorama format*</u>	
March 5 & 6 2016	High Wheeler 2016 Train Show at Harper College in Palatine sponsored and run by the Fox Valley Division. Hours are 9 am to 5 pm each day. <u>FVD member volunteers needed.</u> Contact Jeff Jarr at 773-286-8755, or jjarr@comcast.net to volunteer. Thank you!		
<u>Note: there is no regular March meeting, due to High Wheeler. Come to the show!</u>			
April 17, 2016	Prototype slide presentation by MMR Don Cook on "CNW System Wide"	12" x 12" mini diorama. Your choice of subject and scale. Diorama <u>must</u> be exactly 12 x 12 inches in this contest.	1:00 pm start. Pizza lunch. FVD officer elections.
May 15, 2016	<u>Clinic TBD</u> by MMR David Leider	Interlocking or street crossing tower <u>in diorama format *</u>	Last monthly meeting for 2015 –2016
July 3 – 10, 2016	National Convention " Highball to Indy " in Indianapolis, July 3-10 . See the web site: www.nmra2016.org for more information. Note there is no MWR convention this year because the CID, a Midwest Region division, is hosting the NMRA's National Convention.		



About the Fox Valley Division

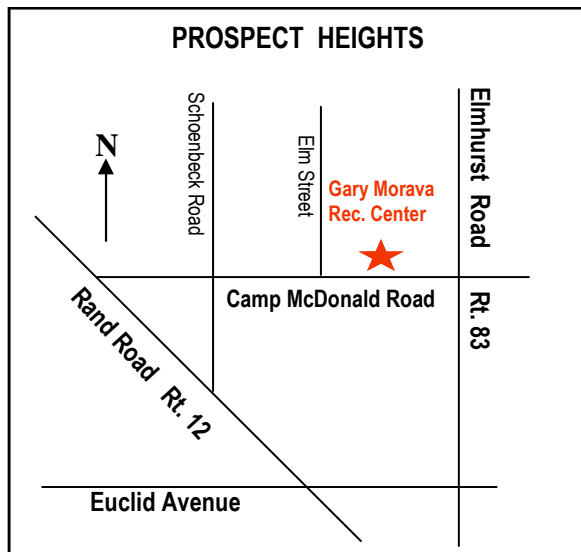
If you receive this newsletter you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of Lake and McHenry, and parts of Cook and Kane Counties in northeast Illinois. About 210 members of varied ages and modeling 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 Recreation 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 sponsors and runs the large train show called "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 and bring a friend. We'd love to see you. Also visit us on the web at:

www.foxvalleydivision.org

Questions? Contact FVD Superintendent, Jeff Jarr, or any FVD Board member listed below. We are here to help!



- 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.
- 2015 – 2016 meeting dates, contest and clinic info are on page 6 of this newsletter.

FVD web site: www.foxvalleydivision.org

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