

THE SEMAPHORE

June 2021

Fox Valley Division • MIDWEST REGION



A few Pictures of the G Scale Railway Garden at the Fernwood Botanical Gardens situated on the St. Joseph River in Niles, Michigan, near Buchanan in picturesque Berrien County. Continued on page 2.....

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Covid activities...

The cover pictures are from the Fernwood Gardens in southern Michigan. Mary & I took a brief trip to the area to meet with mutual friends from the area and Cleveland for a few days. It was early in the season and the outdoor RR was not operating, but I thought a few pictures could not hurt. The railroad was designed by Paul Busse in 2009 and tragically burned to the ground in 2015. With the help of local contributions, the railroad was re-constructed two years later. It features local land marks built from nearby organic material (similar to what can be seen at the Chicago Botanic Garden.)

Outdoor Railway Garden is approximately 50' x 50' and has about 550 feet of track. It has four circuits, each running at a different elevation: approximately ground level, one foot, six foot, and seven foot levels. The trains travel through three island gardens, under pedestrian walk-over bridges, and atop seven-foot-high trestle bridges. There is a seven-foot waterfall, two mountain tunnels and a pond to enhance the scene. Below is a picture from their website.



Fernwood, as a whole is attractive and well maintained. Ponds, streams and a grist mill are nestled among many varieties of trees, bushes and plants. The St. Joe river abuts the property, and there are plenty of hiking trails to enjoy the local fauna. Berrien is known as the "Red Bud" county, and the local red bud trees were just starting to bloom during our visit. Check it out for a relaxing get-a-way - it's only about a 2 & 1/2 hour drive from Chicago-land. You can also stop and see the Heston Steam Museum at the Indiana/Michigan border along I-94.

<https://www.fernwoodbotanical.org/railway-garden>

<https://www.hesston.org/>

Here is a fun prototype video. Reminds me of the helix on my layout. Check it out. <https://youtu.be/7yjoKE5n1LY>

On April 24, I received a letter from NMRA National granting the MMR™ Achievement Program award to me. It is nice to have one's work recognized. Michael Hirvela, our Super, recently received his Civil Engineering AP award - his 6th certificate. He only needs to complete either the "Cars" or "Motive Power" category for his MMR™. Keep the pace up Mike!

Although we have moved into a new phase of Covid rules and can take a breath, we are heading into interesting times. The Covid protocols are being sliced and diced by all the competing factions of politics, health officials, state officials, businesses, etc. Opinions abound. One thread on the OpSig web group was shut down because of a heated exchange about Op session protocols. Whatever you believe, please respect your fellow modelers' requests. Remember, model railroading is fun! In the meantime, stay safe and busy in the workshop! J. O.

Slow Order on the Covid route!

MEMORIES OF A PLACE AND TIME

by Michael Hirvela

I was in the basement the other day and passed by a familiar scene of the little red station along the tracks at a location I call Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin. I stopped in my tracks (pardon the pun) and reflected on how long I have had this little model. My memory is clear that I had made the station on one long weekend while a student at the U.S. Navy's Yeoman (Clerk) School in Bainbridge, MD.

Memory might be a tad faded, but after Recruit Training at Great Lakes through the winter of 1969-1970, I was assigned in January to the Navy Yeoman "A" School for follow-on training. The "A" School was located at the Training Center at Bainbridge, MD, located north of Baltimore on the north bank of the Susquehanna River. The nearest villages were Port Deposit on the river and Perryville along I-95. Bainbridge was a temporary WW II training base built in 1942 and still standing and operational in 1970. It has since closed and is now a state park.



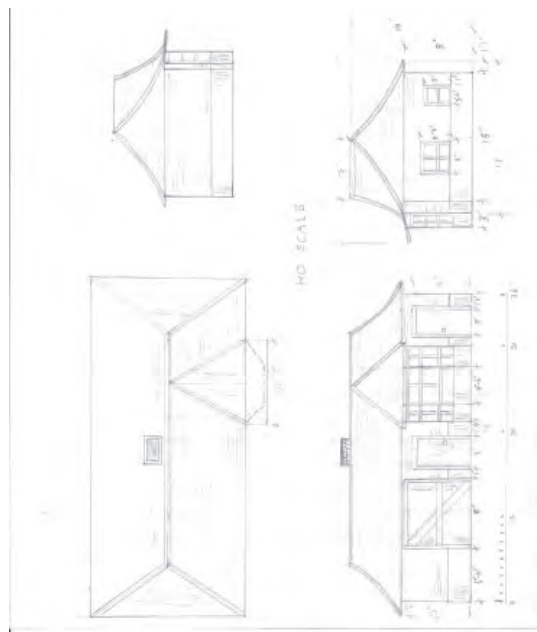
The Navy's Clerks are called Yeomen and do general office, legal, and support duties at every Navy facility world-wide. At times during my career, I was an office clerk, postal clerk, legal clerk, personnel clerk, Ship's Secretary and office manager. The "A" School was the basic entry-level school where the trainee learned the basic skills required, such as typing, files and records

and correspondence of various types. There were follow-on "B" and "C" Schools for advanced training (note 1) which could be attended only after several years of service. As the new trainee, I learned how to touch-type on a Royal 440 Manual typewriter (with the keys painted out with red nail polish) and had to get 30 words per minute on three 5-minute timed writings before I could start the academic portion of the school-which was six weeks long. On the weekend in between passing the typing tests and starting the academic classroom, I had the "duty." The students were divided into four groups, or duty sections, which meant every 4th day you were assigned to a four-hour "watch" time after class to provide security or patrol around the school buildings, etc. Also, you had to be available should any reason arise that needed manpower during the night. So, if you had duty, you could not leave the base nor your barracks and had to be available until 0600 the next morning. Duty on the weekend meant you had to be available from 0800 on Saturday morning to 0600 on Monday morning. I didn't have any watches assigned, so I used the time to get the homework assignments completed and actually did some reading ahead in the course books, and then was looking for something to do.



After writing a letter or two, I was doodling on some scratch paper and realized that I had the stationery box cardboard, a scissors, white glue, a 12-inch ruler and a design in my head. I also recalled that HO scale is about 1/7th of an inch, so I made an HO scale ruler on the edge of an envelope and I set to work. I could get two long walls and two ends out of the stationery box if I made a side and end together and folded the edge where they joined. That gave the basic shape.

I used the sharp point of the scissors and a straight edge to score the wainscoting and clapboards. I used the left-over cardboard to make the bay window area. That done, I looked for something to make window and door frames. And what about window glazing?



On Saturday night, I was gathering up trash to deposit in the outside dumpster and noticed someone had tossed in an empty cigarette carton (thinner and more flexible cardboard) and the plastic wrapper, along with a wrapper from a Mounds candy bar. Eureka! Window glazing and the cigarette cardboard gave me the roofing shape and the Mounds bar tray insert became the door and window frames and mullions. I made those and then used a sheet of writing paper to make strips for shingles. A few more paper strips folded the long way made the roof and building trim.



During the next week, I was remarking to another guy who lived in the same barracks that it would be nice if I had some model paints, and he mentioned one of his roommates had plastic model ships and he thought

he had some paints for them and would those work? Probably. So, when his roomie came back from his class that weekday, he let me use his model paints and brushes to add some color to my little creation. I set the building out to dry and it wound up sitting on a shelf on my study desk during room inspections during the remaining time in training. For those who doubt its origin, please see the bottom left photo.

Over the years, I have done nothing to this little building other than to carefully transport it to every duty station I was stationed at during my 24 years of active duty. And, it has graced several versions of the C&NW Railway in my basement. Lately, all I do is to keep the dust off. Today, I realized I have had this station building for 51 years.

Nowadays I would most likely use Evergreen styrene sheet and shapes (not cardboard), but as you have read, this little building brings back memories of a time, location and circumstance.

MH

Note 1: Navy advanced Yeoman training included passing a class on Gregg Short-hand and lessons on Diplomatic Protocol as those graduates usually would be assigned to work for an Admiral or on a Major Command Staff somewhere in the world, like a Fleet Hq, at SHAPE or NATO Hq, or on an Allied or Joint command.



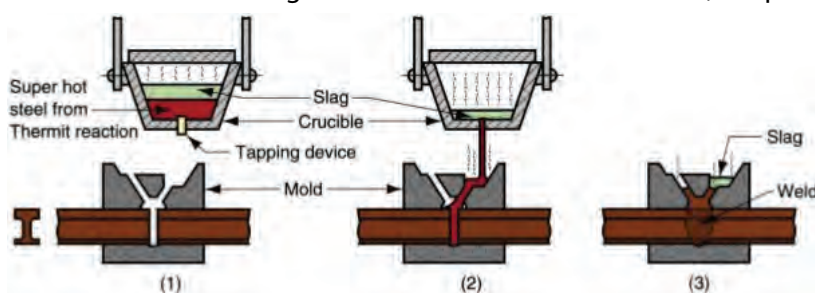
MH at the Throttle!

Fun Facts....

May 10, 1869 is the date of the driving of the golden spike at Promontory Summit, Utah - over 150 years ago. The Central Pacific and Union Pacific RRs were finally connected to allow transcontinental rail travel. The planned date was May 8th, but bad weather delayed the laying of the final 10 miles of track by the Chinese and Irish laborers. 12 hours after the weather cleared, the job was done. Here's a restored copy of Andrew J Russell's famous photo showing the presidents of the two Railroads shaking hands. [Being competitors, I wonder if that is the last time they shook hands?]



"March 16, 1897 is the date Thermit [sic]* welding was patented. That's 125 years ago, and it's still widely in use. This is the process that is used to permanently connect sections of rail on site into a smooth, continuous length of rail. The chemical mixture is made from aluminum, magnetic iron scale, manganese and a few other elements. When lit, the chemical reaction of the thermit powder produces a heat of 4880 degrees F. - rail steel melts at approximately 2460 degrees F. The process became popular because it was not explosive, was easily transported and could be used on site with the rail in place. The welding molds are also easily made from sand or graphite before being attached to the rails. The tensile strength of the thermit weld is about 61,000 pounds per square inch - similar to for rail steel. The



Thermit welding: (1) Thermit ignited; (2) crucible tapped, superheated metal flows into mold; (3) metal solidifies to produce weld joint.

process is also used for welding pipes, tie rods, wheels, crankshafts and other steel elements." The photo on the left is from the <https://www.mech4study.com/> website. It shows the mold and welding process for rails. Facts listed here are from **Thermit Welding** by Ethan Vial and reprinted by Lindsay Publications. This is a fascinating paperback read if you are interested in how things are made.

**Ed. note: Thermit is the original spelling of the contemporary spelling Thermite.*

Mike's Minute...



With our member meeting on May 16th, the FVD wrapped up our 2020-2021 season. I can tell you it has been challenging and one for the record books. We made it through the season and signs are encouraging that this country has

turned the corner on the COVID-19 pandemic and brighter things are down the track. My heartfelt thanks go to our Board of Directors for their input and support this past season. I can't do this alone, and I depend on these gents more than I let on. The average member does not see what transpires "behind the scenes" but I can tell ya, the folks on the board are dedicated to the betterment of the division and I know their efforts are appreciated by all the members, so that all the *plain ol' members* can continue to be *plain ol' members*, and someday be Board members, too. We are a volunteer organization, and it all depends on each of us.

My thanks also to all the members who participated in our monthly member meetings via the ZOOM computer system. I have been encouraged by those in attendance, and it has been most gratifying to "see" all those smiling faces. Yes, it is not the same as attending in person, but given the understandable circumstances, I continue to be thankful we can gather and continue to learn from each other. I hope you found the presentations and information enlightening and illuminating.

I need to mention a special thank you to our Clinics and Programs TM, Gary Saxton, who put together a great list of presentations and presenters for this past season. When you see him, thank him, too. [*p.s.*: Did you know a layout Gary built was featured in Model Railroad Planning 2003?] I know he is already working on next season, and with the Tri-Region Convention in Indy next May, the job is even bigger than last year. The Tri-Region Convention Coordinators are already calling for clinics and clinicians to get the calendar going.

For those who didn't have the ZOOM system, our Webmaster Jim Osborn can assist you in getting on board, and I look forward to adding you to the list

of attendees. We will be using the ZOOM system as the season gets started and have scheduled it for all of the 2021-2022 season. Any change will be forthcoming as we just don't know what will transpire in the fall and into the winter.

Last month, we posted the dates for our monthly meetings. Our Contest TM and Clinics & Programs TM are finalizing their schedules for our '21-'22 season. It appears at this writing, that certain restrictions are planned to be lifted or eased over the next several months. The DuPage swap should be re-starting in August; TRAINFEST, in November; holiday gatherings may be more like we remember, and Op Sessions might be commencing in the late summer / early fall. It all depends on things outside of our control. I am encouraged but cautiously optimistic. Grandpa Joe always said, "Hope for the Best; Plan for the Worst; and it all works out in the end."

I may seem like a broken record, but we still need a volunteer to staff our Publications Trainmaster position. I would ask you give serious consideration to being that volunteer who wants to contribute to and support the division's activities. It isn't all that difficult. Even I can do it!

See you all at the FVD Member Meeting on **September 26th** via the ZOOM Virtual Meeting System.

M. H.

Notice: The **Semaphore** will not be published the months of July and August.

March Contest Results & More...

Jeff Jarr's Crew Shed won 1st place honors in May as a repurposed RR equipment scene. Mike Hirvela grabbed 2nd place with his HO scale Engine Service Fuel Tank and Jim Osborn's HO Scale MoW Camp took 3rd place. Pictures are on the next page. These are all great scenes. See more photos of all the model entries on our web site at:

<http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contests.v2.html>



Captions:

Michael Hirvela's Engine Service Fuel Tank (above right).

















Jeff Jarr's Crew Shed (upper left).

Jim Osborn's MoW Camp (left).

During the Zoom meet Mike mentioned the **"Yard Distribution"** event where the division offered all the equipment donated to the FVD from estates, etc. to the membership for free. We did receive some voluntary donations. The event was fun - being one of the first person-to-person things we have done in a long time. About a dozen members showed up and about half of the equipment was distributed and many stories told. Here's a few pictures from the day:



What's Happening - or not ...

-  **Jim Osborn** summarized a year of scratch building with his clinic on building cars for the Achievement Program at the May meet. His clinic is available to download off the FVD website.
-  **Happy Birthday Amtrak!** The service turns 50 on May 1st. Click on: https://youtu.be/Jbxng_WJ2mM for an excellent summary of the evolution Amtrak over its years of service. Amtrak has had several locomotives painted in commemorative schemes and have put forth enhanced route plans through 2035. Bachmann will have HO models available later this year. Micro-Mark is featuring a whole slew of 50th Anniversary Amtrak Locomotives and sets in various scales.
-  Saturday-Sunday, June 19 -20, 2021 31st Annual Strawberry Fest Model Railroad Show in Waupaca, WI
<http://www.wamrltd.com/>
-  The **MWR** spring convention in Rockford has been canceled because of continued scheduling uncertainties caused by the pandemic. The Rock River Valley division will host the 2023 convention.
-  **NMRA 2021 Virtual National Convention, RAILS BY THE BAY** will now be held on July 6 – 10, 2021. See their website <http://www.pcrnmra.org/NMRA2021/> for more details and registration. The program looks super and you do not have to travel!
-  The MWR will hold a tri-regional convention in Indianapolis on May 18 - 22, 2022. See the FVD RR events web page for more details - it should be a dandy! There will be an RPM meet in conjunction with the event. <http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/rrevents.v2.html>
-  The **Illinois Railway Museum** has opened its 2021 season. Electric trains will be in operation. Throttle Time is back up and running - on **June 18, 19, 20**. Run the Shay! Call for dates and reservations. The steam Shop is working on getting UP 4-6-0 #428 finished. The diesel Shop is working on former UP Doodlebug M-35. July 4th may be the big celebration of the year. A full list of dates and activities can be found on their website www.irm.org/calendar.
-  The National N Scale Convention is planned for a Nashville venue on June 22-26, 2022. See: <http://www.nationalscaleconvention.com/> for details as they become available.
-  Milwaukee Road Historical Society 2021 convention, will be at the Airport Rd. Holiday Inn, Elgin, IL, August 12-15, 2021. Registration is now open. <https://www.mrha.com/convention.aspx>
-  National Railroad Historical Society will be holding their 2021 convention in Milwaukee, August 23-28, 2021 at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel. <https://nrhs.com/convention/>
-  The SOO line Historical & Technical Society will be holding their 2021 convention in Manitowoc, WI on September 9-12, 2021. See <https://www.sooline.org/Events/conventions.shtml> for more information.
-  Friends of the 2926 are completing operational restoration of ATSF 4-8-4 #2926 in New Mexico. Boiler has been steamed up and the crew is hopeful for excursions in late 2021.
-  The Canadian National Railway has upped their bid to acquire Kansas City Southern in a cash and stock transaction worth about US\$30 billion. The KCS is favoring the CN bid over the prior CP bid of \$25B -- even though there are regulatory risks with the CN offer.
-  The WISE division tells us that the 50th Anniversary **Trainfest** is a tentative go for **November 13 & 14, 2021** subject to Covid-19 issues. <https://trainfest.com/whats-new-at-trainfest/>
-  Metra is challenging the industry to create a zero-emission commuter locomotive by converting an older engine from diesel to one powered solely by batteries. They are currently seeking proposals.
-  **Great Midwest Train Show (aka: the Wheaton / DuPage Swap)** will have its first swap of the season on **August 8th** at the DuPage County Fairgrounds in Wheaton, IL. <https://www.trainshow.com/>

2021 - 2022 Fox Valley Division Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held from 1:30 to about 4:00 pm (except as noted). This season all meetings will be presented online using ZOOM virtual meeting technology. See the timetable tab on the division's web site <http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.v2.html> 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. Save the dates for now - details will follow.

Date	Presentation	Contest	Notes
Sept. 26, 2021	Building Billboards by Dave Ackmann	TBA	
Oct. 24, 2021	TBA	TBA	
Nov. 21, 2021	TBA	TBA	
Dec. 19, 2021	TBA	TBA	
Jan. 16, 2022	TBA	TBA	
Feb. 20, 2022	TBA	TBA	
Mar. 20, 2022	TBA	TBA	
Apr. 24, 2022	Railroads of International Harvester in Chicago by Richard Sieben	TBA	1:00 Start Business and member meeting
May 15, 2022	TBA	TBA	
May 18-21, 2022	TBA	TBA	

Note: Sept. 16-19, 2021 Midwest Region Annual Convention, IS NOW CANCELED. "As a result of continued scheduling uncertainties caused by the pandemic, the MWR Executive Committee has voted to cancel the "Rockford Railway Convention" that was to have been held September 16-19, 2021. For the second year in a row, we are not going to be able to meet and share our great hobby. Unfortunately, the efforts put forward by the 2020 and 2021 convention committees have not been able to be put to use." Stephen Studley, President, Midwest Region of the NMRA



Call for Articles....

Future Semaphore issues need interesting content. Consequently we are looking for model or prototype railroad related articles. Send us your content (words and photos) or even ideas. We'll take care of the editing and insertion in the publication. Contact us at:

<http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html>

About the Fox Valley Division

If you receive this newsletter, you live in the Midwest Region and Fox Valley Division area of the National Model Railroad Association or NMRA. The Fox Valley Division (FVD) includes all of Lake and McHenry, as well as 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. Subscriptions to the Semaphore newsletters are free. NMRA membership in the division is available through the NMRA at:

<https://www.nmra.org/>

2020 –2021 FVD monthly meetings are held September through May on-line via the ZOOM virtual meeting technology per the schedule in this issue. 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 allow gatherings.

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: <http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/>

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Until further notice, regular meetings are held virtually via Zoom generally from 1:30 until 4:00 PM per the schedule listed in this publication and on its website at:

<http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/timetable.v2.html>

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Need to contact any BoD members? Click this link to:

<http://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contactus.v2.html>