



THE SEMAPHORE

December 2025

FOX VALLEY DIVISION • MIDWEST REGION



FVD member, **Gail Ericksen**, recently completed the *Fine Scale Miniatures Coal Bunker* model kit. It is known as Burton's Coal on the Ericksen layout. At a recent visit, I snapped these pictures of the model. Don't get too close - the paint's still wet! There's over 200 of her structures on the **Milwaukee Railroad, Southwest Division** layout. She is an excellent detail modeler. *Ed.*

The November model Celebration featured Locomotives. Click on this link to see photos of all the models brought to the meet. <https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/contests.v2.html>

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Next Division Meet - December 21, 2025 at the Gary Morava Center - Back Exercise room 1:00 start.

Clinic Presentation: Patrick Golden returns to the FVD with part 2 of his excellent clinic on ***Tappets, dogs, bridles - Basics of Mechanical Interlocking***

December Model Celebration: *A Load spanning 2 or 3 cars*

Mike's Minute ...

In a way, I can't believe the holiday season is upon us already. Seems like we just had Halloween and now Christmas music is playing on store sound systems, holiday decorations are going up everywhere, and I had to use my snowblower in November due to a lake-effect snow event (8 inches). That was a surprise. Somewhere among those days was Thanksgiving. I hope you and yours had a nice one.

A big surprise was announced at TrainFest – The NMRA has a new logo, part of a reinvigorating effort by NMRA President Gordy Robinson and the national board. You'll see more of it in coming weeks. It will show in several colors - a red example is included below.

Our FVD season continues at the Gary Morava Recreation Center in Prospect Heights, IL, in the smaller (cozy?) meeting room. The park district folks were able to get a movie screen erected on a wall and they configured the room for our purposes. Even the presenter, Randy Allio from West Virginia, commented on the room arrangements. I learned from Randy's presentation that you could take pan pastel powder, mix the powder with isopropyl alcohol and make it into a paint. His techniques and the results on rolling stock, vehicles and buildings were eye-opening as was the dazzling array of color selections. The editor has included a number of photos of examples from the presentation on the following pages. His clinic notes are on the the FVD Program Clinic Notes webpage. <https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/clinics.v2.html>

Coming up in December, is the second part of a two-part clinic on mechanical interlocking -- a subject that has puzzled me for years. Come on over and catch the second part of Patrick Golden's presentation on December 21st and learn along with me about interlocking logic before there were computers.

Division opportunities: Your Help is needed. We still need a back-up person who can assist with equipment set-up for the meetings and Zoom sessions.

We also need an Editor for our newsletter, The Semaphore. Here is another opportunity to participate. It is not that tough and is very rewarding.

Mid-West Region is looking for candidates for Director-At-Large. Lately it seems the members of the Central Indiana Division (CID) are volunteering more than those of other divisions. A good spread of representation across the region would be nice. Could it be you?

I look forward to seeing many of you at the next meeting, whether in person or over the net. However you choose to participate, your being here makes all the difference.

You can see the full schedule, clinics and model celebration topics at:

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

Always check the Timetable on the website for the latest meeting updates and locations.



Also check out other RR events at:

<https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/rrevents.v2.html>

Looking forward to see you all at the next meeting. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of us at the Fox Valley Division. Mall your signals be green.

Regards, MH

New NMRA Logo >>



Painting with Pan Pastels - A clinic by Randy Allio, MMR®

I hope you saw Randy's clinic at the November meet. It was very interesting to me. I use Pan Pastels for weathering my models but I have never painted with them. Randy shared his tips for different applications and effects. The artistry and detailing Randy employs yields spectacular results. We want to thank Randy for making the trip to share his tips and tools with us.

You can download the tips and examples from the clinic page on the FVD website. Use the bottom of the page menu > Education > Program Clinic Notes. Here's the direct link you can click on:

<https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/clinics.v2.html>

Below are a few pictures of Randy's models using his techniques - give it a try! If you do not like a result just erase it with an art gum eraser or dilute the effect with 90% alcohol. Finally, if you want to seal the application, Randy recommends Vallejo Matt Varnish diluted 9 parts 90% alcohol to 1 part varnish. Apply it from a small spray bottle. A photo of the varnish is on page 4.





The 2025-2026 FVD meeting schedule:

Date	Clinic or Program	Model Celebration	Time & Location *
Sep. 21, 2025	Lighting basics for model Applications by Jim Osborn, MMR	Any Freight Car	1:00 at the GMC
Oct. 19, 2025	Tappets, dogs & bridles - Basics of Interlocking pt. 1 by Patrick Golden	Any Structure	1:00 at the GMC
Nov. 16, 2025	Pan Pastels by Randy Allio - Live Demonstrations	Any Locomotive	1:00 at the GMC
Dec. 21, 2026	Tappets, dogs & bridles - Basics of Interlocking pt. 2 by Patrick Golden	Load spanning 2-3 cars	1:00 at the GMC
Jan. 18, 2026	Meat Packing Plants: Protos & Models - by Douglas Harding, MMR®	1 Illuminated Structure	TBD
Feb. 15, 2026	Railroads & the Natural Ice Industry by Bruce DeYoung	Odd Consist - 4 unit max	TBD
Mar. 15, 2026	Revolutionizing Model Railroading with AI - by Pat Fleming	Billboard Reefers - 2 max	TBD
Apr. 19, 2026	TBA	A Kit-bashed structure	TBD
May 17, 2026	TBA	A Favorite Locomotive	TBD

*Location note: GMC = Gary Morava Center, Prospect Hts. - GPL = Glenview Public Library

Happenings:

GREAT MID-WEST TRAIN SHOW (aka: the DuPage Swap), at DuPage County Fairgrounds, Wheaton, IL, is scheduled to operate Dec 7, 2025 - 9am until 3 pm. 2026 dates: Jan 4, Feb 1, Mar 1, Apr 12, May 3 & Jun 7.

East Troy RR Museum Dec 6, 2025 - Christmas trains - see the RR events webpage for details.

CPKC Holiday Train Dec 9, 2025 - Christmas train - see the RR events webpage for details.

FVD DIVISION MEET DECEMBER 21. Clinic Presentation: *Tappets, dogs, bridles - Basics of Mechanical Interlocking - Part 2* - by Patrick Golden, DuPage Division. Part Two builds on Part One in that a mechanical interlocking "locking bed" is built step-by-step on the PowerPoint screen and then lineups are made to demonstrate how manipulating various levers lock out others and how levers are manipulated in a precise order to make lineups and clear signals. Trains are then "run" through the interlocking plant. A crossing (diamond) is introduced to demonstrate the need for "crossing" or "route" levers, trap circuits to protect the dead section of track at the diamond are discussed and time release mechanisms are discussed when it is necessary to take down a signal previously cleared in order to change a lineup. Don't miss this one! Bring a model of a load that spans 2 or 3 cars to show off your work.

IRM HOLIDAY TRAINS: The 2025 dates are Saturdays and Sundays, December 6th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 20th, 21st, and Monday the 22nd. Trips take place at 11:30am, 12:30pm, 1:30pm, 2:30pm, 4pm, 5pm and 6pm. For details and tickets see: <https://www.irm.org/> or

https://www.irm.org/event/happy-holiday-railway/?event_date=2025-12-21

ROCK RIVER VALLEY DIVISION MEET will be December 7th - 1:00 - 3:00. Contest: Switch Engines Clinics: Railroad Watches and the NMRA Achievement Program Tours: Ken Reinert's RR

The MAD CITY Train Show, at the Alliant Energy Center, Madison, Wis., February 21-22, 2026

ROCK RIVER VALLEY TRAIN SHOW. Harlem HS, Alpine Road, Machesney Park, IL, March 21 & 22, 2026

For more details on these and other events, please visit the FVD Railroad Events webpage

<https://www.foxvalleydivision.org/fvd2016/rrevents.v2.html>



Semaphore Content and Help Wanted

Interested in keeping the ***Semaphore*** alive? Send us your model or prototype pictures, stories, modeling tips, etc. to share with others in the hobby. **We are also looking for an editor!** Contact any officer with your interest at:

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

About the Fox Valley Division

If you receive this newsletter, you are an NMRA member & live in the Fox Valley Division area of the Midwest Region and of the National Model Railroad Association (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 130 members of varied ages and modeling ability levels are in the FVD. Almost all modeling scales are represented in our division. Subscriptions to the Semaphore newsletters are free. NMRA membership is available through the NMRA at:

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

2025-2026 FVD monthly meetings are held September through May on-line via the ZOOM virtual meeting technology & at various physical locations per the schedule in this issue. Each meeting features a clinic, modeling celebration of member projects, and information of interest to the membership. Outings, layout tours, and operating sessions may also be organized. 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:

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

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Regular meetings are held virtually via Zoom and in person at the Gary Morava Center generally from 1:00 until 4:00 PM per the schedule listed in this publication and on its website at:

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

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

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

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