

THE SEMAPHORE

May 2026

The virtues of Scratch Building by Jim Osborn, MMR®

Last month I promised to show some detail of the chandelier project I did for Gail & Gordy Ericksen's Kansawaukee station. Below is a photo of the HO Scale station with the Superintendent approving its installation. (Continues on Page 6....)



The April model Celebration featured Kit-bashed Structures. Unfortunately there were no entries. Click on this link to see photos of models brought to past meets.

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

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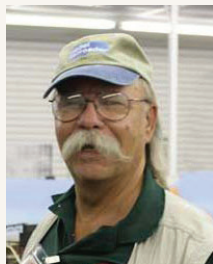
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Next Division Meet - May 17, 2026 at the Mt. Prospect Public Library - 1:00 start.

Clinic Presentation: **Wireless Physical Throttle** by George K.

April Model Celebration: **A Favorite Locomotive**

Mike's Minute ...



We have one meeting left on the Division calendar before we wrap up for the summer season: May 17 at the Prospect Heights Public Library at 1 pm. This will be the last member meeting until September. The Board has established the dates for the upcoming 2026-2027 season, which are:

2026: September 20, October 18, November 15, December 20

2027: January 17, February 21, March 21, April 18, May 16.

Exact meeting locations are being discussed and will be dependent on (sadly) our finances. Overall, we are in good shape financially, and like I noted last month, we are well aware that we have to be frugal and dollar-smart. The meetings will be held either at the Prospect Heights Park District (Morava) building on Camp McDonald Road; or at the Mount Prospect Public Library on Emerson Street in Mt. Prospect; at the Glenview Public Library on Glenview Road in Glenview. Or it could be a location suggested by a member – we're open to your ideas. Please let us know.

Per our By-Laws, we held the required Annual Meeting of the Members before the regular member meeting on April 19th at the Glenview Public Library. We had reports from each of the Division Directors and held elections for Superintendent and for Chief Clerk. We also discussed some future considerations, some of which are do-able like our Summer outing to the Milwaukee Light Engineering Society outside of Cedarburg, Wisconsin, on July 26th. About 25 miles NW of Milwaukee, this is a self-drive event. There is a \$5 donation to MLES collected at the park. The MLES has over a mile of track and ride-able trains and hosts groups of visitors during the summer. They have many quality models running and on display. We may have modelers from other local NMRA divisions attending as well. But if you have your heart set on attending the 2026 NMRA Convention in Chattanooga, TN, in July 27 – August 2, it looks to be a good one.

I continually gratified that we have the number of members who regularly participate at our meetings in person or over the net. I was hopeful more of our members would find the meetings worthy of participation and attend in person. I like to say, **"Bring a Friend,"** which is a little tough over the 'net,' but you can always ask. Whichever method you choose to participate, either in-person or over the 'net,' your presence and feedback is always appreciated. May all your signals be green.

Regards, MH, Superintendent

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>



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	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, 2025	Basics of Interlocking pt. 2 by Patrick Golden	Load span 2-3 cars	1:00 at the GMC
Jan. 18, 2026	Meat Packing: Protos & Models - by Douglas Harding, MMR®	1 Illuminated Structure	2:00 at the GPL
Feb. 15, 2026	Railroads & the Natural Ice Industry by Bruce DeYoung	2-4 unit Odd Consist	1:00 at the GMC
Mar. 15, 2026	Weathering As Layers by Eric Hansmann	2 max Billboard Reefers	1:00 at the MPL
Apr. 19, 2026 - Business Meeting and Officer Elections	The New York Division of the PRR by Edward M. Koehler	A Kit-bashed structure	2:00 at the GPL
May 17, 2026	Wireless Physical Throttle including buttons and "speed" knob by George K.	A Favorite Locomotive	1:00 at the MPL

*Location note: GMC = Gary Morava Center, Prospect Hts. - GPL = Glenview Public Library
New location -- MPL = Mt. Prospect Public Library: <https://mppl.org/>

Happenings:

The Big Boy is on the move in June:

Tuesday 06/02/26 1:30 PM - CDT 2:00 PM Sterling, IL, B Street Crossing

Tuesday 06/02/26 3:00 PM - CDT 3:15 PM Rochelle IL, RR Park, 124 W. 9th Street

Wednesday 06/03/26 9:00 AM CDT 3:00 PM W. Chicago, IL, UP Training Cent. RIDE METRA to event.

GREAT MID-WEST TRAIN SHOW (aka: the DuPage Swap), at DuPage County Fairgrounds, Wheaton, IL. 9 am to 3 pm, on the following 2026 date: Jun 7.

Rail Yard Sale - Mike Hirvela's Residence, 2013 W. Grove Ave, Waukegan, IL 60085

Saturday July 11, 2026 Noon-3pm. Rain Date: Sunday, July 12.

Engines, Rolling Stock, Buildings, Track, etc.

Fox Valley Division Outing July 26 - Milwaukee Light Engineering Society Visit - Noon-4PM

See the flyer in this issue.

National N Scale Convention June 23-27, 2026. Crown Plaza Airport Hotel, 6401 S. 13th Street, Milwaukee, WI.

2026 NMRA Convention in Chattanooga, TN July 27 to August 2, 2026

<https://www.nmra2026.org/>

2027 NMRA Convention in Tacoma, Washington August 10-15

2027 Midwest Region Convention Dates TBD

2028 NMRA Convention in Rochester, NY Dates TBD

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

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

NMRA



Midwest Region

Join the Fox Valley Division On Our Summer Outing to the

Milwaukee Light Engineering Society

Visit the 7 ½ inch Gauge
Railroad With Over 5,000
Feet of Track

Sunday July 26, 2026
12:00 noon – 4:00 pm



The MLES Railroad is located
near Cedarburg, Wisconsin
(about 25 Miles Northwest of
Milwaukee)

Watch for Further Information
and Details, from the FVD
An Entrance Fee of ~\$5 will be
collected by MLES



The Railroad

The members of M.L.E.S have constructed more than 5280 feet of 7 1/2 inch gauge track, with another 1800 feet of sidings, spurs, train yards and storage tracks. This gives Railroad Park one full mile of mainline: that is 8 scale miles in 1 1/2 scale railroading. There are several bridges spanning the creek that runs through the property, and a variety of routes that can be traveled by the trains.

Location

Railroad Park is located in the Town of Jackson, Wisconsin, North of Pioneer Road (CTY C) at 2620 North Country Aire Drive (CTY M). This is directly west of Cedarburg, Wisconsin.

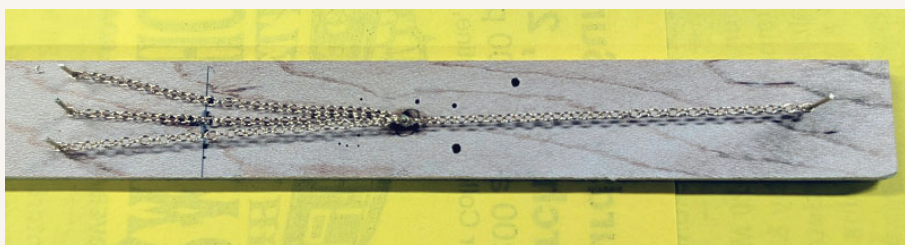
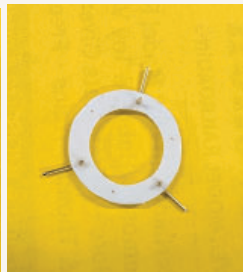
Background

The Milwaukee Light Engineering Society owns seven acres of land about 25 miles Northwest of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It provides members who own large scale steam and diesel locomotives a place to operate their equipment. This is not an amusement park for public entertainment, but is available for public visits on designated run days and special event evenings. Public visits are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather.

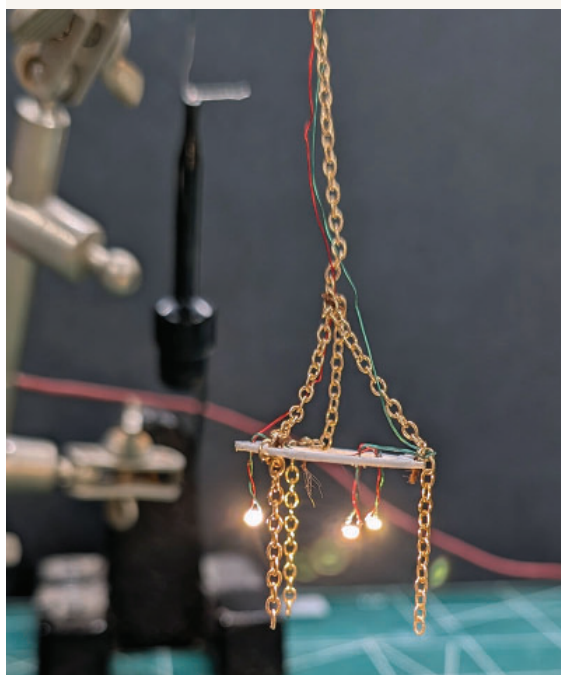




Projects always begin with brainstorming. I started with LED wires strung through a piece of shrink tubing shown on the left. I didn't like that system because the tubing did not hang freely. I decided to use some small gold colored chain I found at **Michael's Crafts**. Using the chain to suspend the chandeliers would require an armature to hold the LED lamps. I decided on a styrene ring about the size of a hose washer. I cut six out of 0.03 styrene. 6 holes were drilled for 3 LEDs and three chain mounts (shown on the right.) The ring with the chain mounting posts is shown on the left. The posts were super glued in place.



The next challenge came with the chain suspension system. I fabricated a jig to accurately measure, position and hold the chains to make the harness. I wanted a single chain from the ceiling of the station that branched into three supporting chains for the armature. I also wanted some of the chain to dangle below the LEDs for shiny bling on the chandelier. I soldered the joint at the 3-way branch. I found the chain to be very loose so I needed something to keep the chain taught, and ultimately, the LED wires from getting tangled.



I used a tall vertical fixture to hold the chandelier chain as I affixed the chain and LEDs to the armature (shown on the left.) I connected the three LEDs in series so I only had two wires to snake up the chain. At this point I found the wires that came with the LEDs were too stiff and they deformed the natural hang of the chain. Each of the two LED wires were 0.01 in diameter. I used red and green 0.004 diameter magnet wire to solve the



stiffness problem. Once I finished a chandelier, I hung it on a small brad on the edge of an unused space on my work bench to keep things from getting tangled up. After verifying the LEDs lit and everything was hanging okay, I super glued the LEDs in place. When they dried, I super glued the chains on the mounting posts - and finally trimmed the mounting posts flush with the chain. A couple of the hanging chandeliers are shown above on the right.

The loose chain, the super thin wires and the floating chandelier made this a very tedious project. I could only do one or two an evening before it was time for a break. After a week, the chandeliers were done and then I focused on the physical and electrical mounting system for the building.



I built a frame using 0.25 x 0.187 styrene strips to support the chandeliers. This frame sat under the flat roof of the station. 0.32 dia. brass rods were mounted through & across the styrene to hold the top loop of the chandelier chain. The rods are not connected to the power source. I used 3/16 wide copper foil tape to carry the + and - DC power to the chandeliers. The + DC was connected to each LED driver input. The drivers hung under the frame. Each LED driver output was connected to the + lead of each chandelier. The left picture shows the frame with masking tape at the copper foil connection points. The right picture shows a view of the frame painted black with the brass rods in place and mounted at the top of the station hall.

The lower left photo shows a top view of the frame & connected chandeliers hanging from brass rods over the floor detail that Gail created. Finally, the lower right photo is a close of the station with the chandeliers in view.

This was a challenging but rewarding project requiring some patience - but, we are all pleased with the result. This was my latest activity - tell me about yours. Jim Osborn, MMR®



Bill of materials:

- Miscellaneous gold colored jewelry chain - Michael's or other hobby store.
- 3/16 wide copper foil tape from Hobby Lobby - normally used for stained glass work.
- Qty. 18 - Nano Cool White LEDs from Evans Designs. <https://evandesigns.com/>
- 0.004 diameter magnet wire from Ngeineering. <https://www.ngeineering.com/>
- Qty. 6 - 20 milliamp LED drivers from Digikey. <https://www.digikey.com/> Part # CL2N3-G-ND
- A discarded 20 volt laptop power supply from my scrap box. You need 16 volts DC minimum. (3 white LEDs wired in series require 9.9 volts to power them. The LED driver needs about 6 volts to operate. Hence 16 volts minimum. The LED driver limits the LED circuit currents at 20 milliamps as long as the supply voltage is above 16 volts as in this application.)

NMRA



**FOX VALLEY
DIVISION**

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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Mailing address:

Fox Valley Division

P. O. Box 1535

Arlington Heights, IL 60005-1535

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

Regular meetings are held virtually via Zoom and in person at the Gary Morava Center, Mt. Prospect Library or the Glenview Library 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>

Temporary Editor: Jim Osborn, MMR®

Assistant Editor: Michael Hirvela

Assistant Editor: Keith Dart

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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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