

The Lantern

Newsletter of the Western New York Division
Niagara Frontier Region - National Model Railroad Association

Volume 5 - Issue 3
September 2025



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Please visit for more info:
www.wnydivisionnmra.com
www.nmra.org

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Division Meetings 2025:

20 September @ HDC

11 October @ HDC

25/26 October Layout Tours

November- no meeting

20 December @ HDC
(Holiday Party)

01 & 02 November- OPS
OPS OPS Weekend

From the Cab

Division,

Wow! This past year has been great. I attended two Regional Conventions and the NMRA National Convention.

Model railroading has so many facets that we need to have some knowledge of, and so many people are eager to share their area of expertise. Conventions are perfect for acquiring a great deal of knowledge in a short period of time. Some of the layouts at the Novi convention were jaw-dropping and certainly provided inspiration for all who saw them. Next year's National convention will be in Chattanooga TN. July 27 through August 2, and the NMRA awarded Rochester New York the 2028 National Convention at their annual meeting this past July.

The Niagara Frontier Region has scheduled a convention for May 1,2, and 3, 2026 in Hamilton. This will be the region's first convention in six years. The Division will do what we can to support the effort, and I hope you will attend. Watch for more information as it becomes available.

Another great aspect of the convention is the opportunity to talk with model railroaders. One evening during the Novi convention, Ray Persing, the NMRA's Achievement Program Manager talked about the new technologies impacting model railroading. They include Digital, Arduino, Raspberry Pi, 3D Printing, Laser cutting, and Dead Rail. These and others must be addressed as to how they will effect the achievement program going forward.

If you have thought about earning some of the NMRA's Achievement Program Certificates, talk to Gary Reynolds MMR. Gary is the WNY Division AP Program Chair.

By now, you will have received by e-mail a copy of meeting and other important dates for September 2025 through August 2026.

If you haven't been to a meeting in a while, I hope you'll join us soon. September 19th, would be perfect....Hot Dogs for lunch on us!

Ideas...Questions...Concerns? Feel free to reach out...my cell number is on page 2 of The Lantern!

Bill Wiedenbeck, Superintendent



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Division Contact for 2028 NMRA National Convention:

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Remember that the National NMRA and the Regions are not where the hobby works, it works locally. We are the NMRA. Come and join us!

The best part of being a member of the NMRA is the friends you meet along the way!



WNYNMRA Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held at the Heritage Discovery Center (HDC) located at 100 Lee Street, Buffalo, NY 14210. Parking and building entrance are at the back of the building. A handicap accessible entrance is available only at the front of the building. Hope to see you soon!

From the Cabin Car

Hello All,

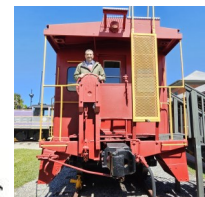
I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer despite the heat this summer! I'm looking forward to some cooler temperatures as we head into fall and spending time getting back to the layout...or in my case continuing to clear out the newly finished layout space, or as I like to call it, my "canvas".

As many of you as may know, the NMRA 2028 National Convention is going to be held in Rochester, NY. So I have some motivation to at least get backdrops, rough terrain, and track down and train's running, if not some partial scenery up by then.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the many members who have contributed to The Lantern over the past year. Thank you for sharing your interests, project status, experiences, or simply the "business" aspect of our WNY Division. It has all been for the better in keeping us engaged in the Division and informed with our hobby. Keep those articles, Division information, and project updates coming!

Looking forward, the Amherst Railway Society's 2026 Railroad Hobby Show, located in Springfield, Massachusetts, is just around the corner. I plan on attending, and will have more information to share at our September meeting. Based upon several of our members' past experiences, it's quite a show! For those who expressed interest to our Superintendent in attending, I plan to reach out to those members in the upcoming weeks as we look to gauge Division interest in attending the January 24/25 show.

Finally, in late August on our way to the Arcade & Arcade Railroad for a murder mystery dinner excursion train, my wife and I got caught by an eastbound Norfolk Southern freight train (possibly loaded with salt). It wasn't too long of a consist, but long enough to make us question whether we were going to make the 5:45pm All Aboard! I was able to capture the encounter and will upload/share as soon as possible. For those of you are fans of modern diesel motive power, I think you'll enjoy it, especially the single DPU further along in the video. For now, I'll leave you with a photo of the led engine below.



Gerry

Gerry DiPaola, Editor

National Model Railroad Association Turns 90!



A Message from our Superintendent

This Labor Day weekend the NMRA turns 90 years old. The organization was founded in Milwaukee in 1935. Standards to assure interchangeable equipment and the need for getting together with others interested in the hobby were the driving forces.

The convention banquet was simply a couple of tables pushed together in the YMCA cafeteria. The convention fan trip was a hike over to the Milwaukee Road station and roundhouse to watch the then-new streamlined Hiawatha steam locomotives in action (wouldn't we love to be able to do that today?).

Today the NMRA is over 10,000 members strong. Thank you for being a member of the Western New York Division of the NMRA!



WNY Division Membership Update - September 2025



Message from the Chief Clerk

We currently have 73 members as of the August 1, 2025 report from national. One new member that was referred by member Steve Bereziuk. Gary Henderson was invited to the September 20th meeting. I have been in contact with one member that expires August 31 and will not be renewing.

I continue to e-mail upcoming membership expirations 1-2 months prior. National also sends out notices to members. Periodically check your NMRA information for accuracy.

Membership can be renewed on-line, regular mail and by phone. If you have any problems during your renewal process, contact NMRA headquarters directly. I have had to occasionally contact national, they are extremely helpful and do respond within a few days. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at mgrabecki@icloud.com or 716-440-7685 (If no answer, please leave a message).

If you have any questions concerning your membership, please contact me. The reports come out at the beginning of the month and we review it immediately upon its arrival.

Thank you,

Mike Grabecki
Chief Clerk 📧



WNY Division Build Event - June 21, 2025

Our second build event took place on June 21 at the Lee Street Heritage Discovery Center. Previously ordered kits from JL Innovative were assembled with the help of JLI's own Chris Costello...thank you Chris! Lots of hard working participants below!! 🙌



Photos provided by Gerry DiPaola



WNY Division Picnic June 28, 2025 at the Depot

On June 28th, the WNY Division of the NMRA held their annual picnic at the Williamsville Depot just off South Long Street in the Village of Williamsville, NY. A great time had by all and many thanks to all the membership who donated items for the raffle, provided tents/tables, etc. for the day, brought a dish for passing, and cooked! And many thanks to the Western New York Railway Historical Society allowing us to hold our event at the depot! 📸



Photos by Gerry DiPaola

AP REPORT / What's On Your Workbench?



Previously at our October 2024 meeting, Gary Reynolds, MMR, our AP Manager, announced he would be leading a 4-car Work Train build project in support of members obtaining their AP Certificate. Construction includes building 2 flatcars and 2 gondolas (followed by either a boom, kitchen, engineering, or bunk car). An initial build kick-off meeting was held with Gary and sev-

eral follow-on remote work sessions have been completed to date.

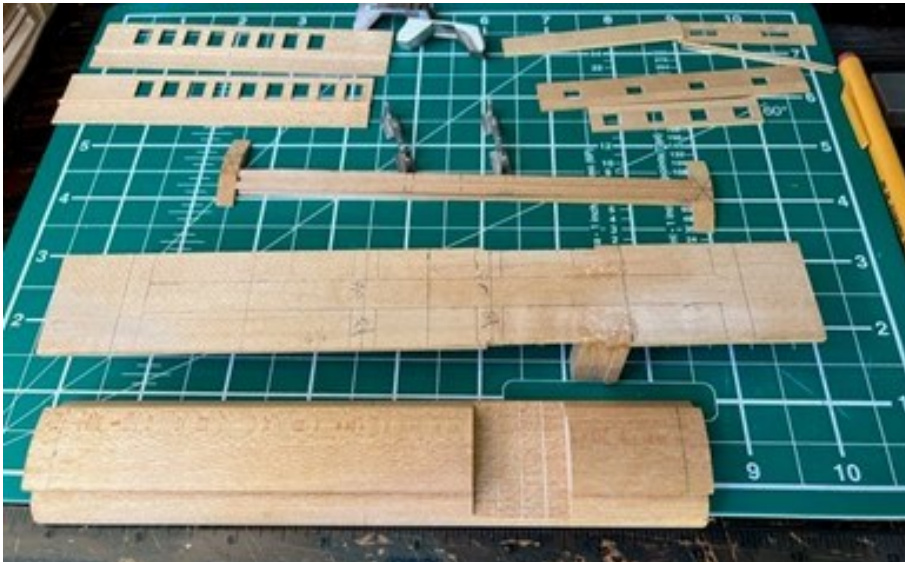
Member, and Chief Clerk, Mike Grabecki shares his progress through June 2025 his Work Train build. Looks great Mike!



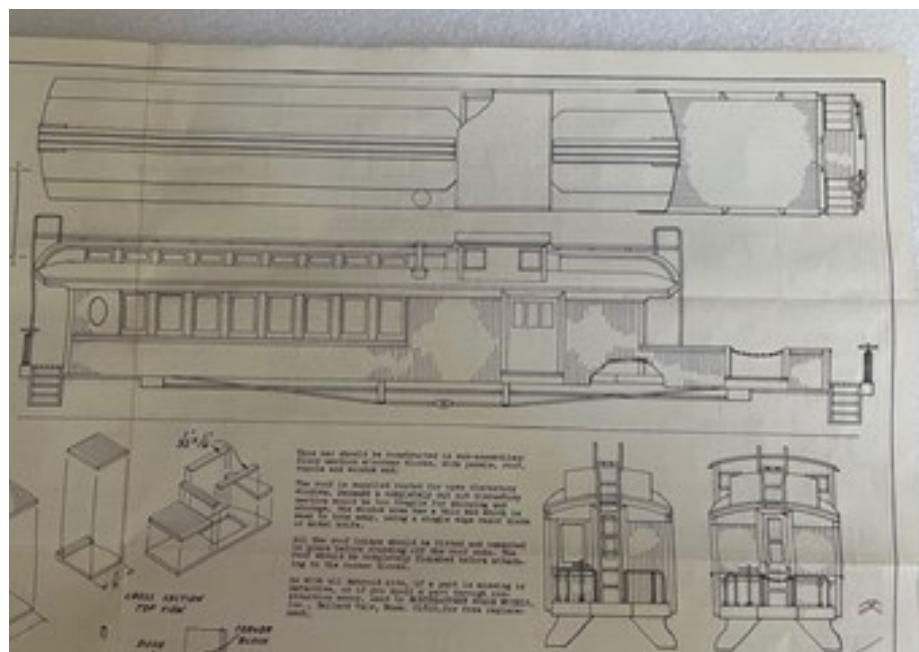
Photos by Mike Grabecki

AP REPORT / What's On Your Workbench? (cont'd)

Mike Grabecki found this old Ambroid kit at the Kenan Show which is a "Work, Combine Caboose". He will use this as his passenger car for the car build. While doing research, Mike found that these cars were referred to as "Drover's Caboose". Cars such as these were used to house both the train crew and handler crews for livestock cars carrying Sheep and Cattle. Stay tuned for updates on the progress. Gary Reynolds MMR has provided Brian Wallace, Bill Wiedenbeck & Mike Grabecki with guidance on completing the paperwork portion of the Achievement Program. Drawing, photo's, diagrams and material descriptions are important things to include for **each** car. 📷



Article and Photos
by Mike Grabecki



Pacific Coast Division Hosting May 2025

Back on May 16, 2025, Gary Pagels and Mike Grabecki hosted Stanley Keiser from the Pacific Coast Division in California. Stanley visited 2 layouts and did some "Railfanning" in areas suggested by Tom McQuillen. Stanley had reached out to Andy MacVie for ideas and possible layout visits while he was here for a graduation. He belongs to the Coast Division of the PCR and belongs to a multi scale club in San Leandro California. You can visit the San Leandro Historical Railway Society website at www.SLHRS.com which boasts a 9 level double track helix (2.25% grade) to a second story of the building. Chief Clerk Mike Grabecki presented Stanley with a Division Hat Pin, Ruler, and Pen to remind him of his visit. He was very thankful to all that helped arrange it.



Article and Photos pro-



My Friend, and the Dean Freytag Award

Article by Andy MacVie

History by Jim Herak

All photos by Jim Herak

Dean Freytag photo by Trains.com

Not everybody knows about the NMRA's Special Interest Groups, commonly called SIGs. They are precisely what the name implies: [Special Interest Groups](#) are groups of people that have an interest in areas like Operations, Layout Design, Civil War, and Steel Mills, to name a few. I am a member of Operations SIG and Steel Mills SIG. As a member of the Steel Mill Group, I have met some excellent modelers and seen some incredible layouts. Some of the layouts are just a Steel Mill in itself. There are numerous train movements in a mill, allowing for a wide range of operations on this type of layout.

Jim Herak is also a member of the Steel Mill SIG, and we have become great friends. We spent many hours discussing and touring the Steel Mills. Jim worked in the Steel Mill industry for most of his life, accumulating a wealth of knowledge in the field. He is also a great modeler. He and I took a trip to Cleveland to show me the Mills that were there during the heyday of steel making and the railroads that connected them. What a fantastic, guided tour I had.



Jim was just featured in the Steel Mill SIG Journal, where he was awarded the Dean Freytag Award for the Best Model as presented in Photographs. When you see the size of this model, you will realize why it was the *Best Model as presented in Photographs*.

Below is the history of Jim's Layout and Model as told by him.

Consolidated Steel Company

Consolidated Steel Company is a fictitious entity on an O-gauge high rail layout constructed by modeler Jim Herak. The blast furnace modeled herein is based on plans obtained from Mike Rabbitt, the source of many steel mill drawings. The drawings, in HO scale (3.5 mm to a foot), were characterized as blast furnaces typically constructed in the US,

My Friend, and the Dean Freytag Award (continued)

The height of the furnace is 64 inches, or 256 scale feet. Materials used in the model included styrene, PVC pipe, ABS pipe, bass wood, plywood, Mason board, construction paper, and paper-board. A number of Plastruct fittings were also used. The footprint of the model, excluding railroad approaches, is 10 ft x 3 ft. The entire area the layout is 270 square feet.

The layout includes a slag processing plant, a coke plant, an open hearth furnace shop, a forge shop, a scrap processing facility, and an oil refinery. All of these facilities are significantly “compressed” to accommodate the limited space available for the layout. The railroad serving these facilities is the Terminal Railway, also a fictitious name.

The name, “Central Furnace,” is derived from a facility that existed on the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, OH. In 1881, the Cleveland Rolling Mill Company established a blast furnace plant on the river and a steel works in nearby Newburgh Heights. Over the next 30 years, four blast furnaces were constructed, the most modern one in 1911. During that time, several mergers absorbed the facility, and it was eventually acquired and operated by US Steel. During the depression, two of the oldest furnaces (1881-1883) and the steel works were closed and scrapped out. The two remaining furnaces became a merchant pig iron plant serving foundry customers, especially Ford Motor Co. and Valley Mould Co., both located in the Cleveland area.

Sometime in the early 50s, the oldest blast furnace was demolished, leaving the 1911 furnace intact, and in 1954, a new furnace was constructed. The facility was still a merchant pig iron plant. During the 60s and competitiveness of the plant. In 1974, the 1911 furnace was blown out, leaving the 1954 furnace operational. At the time, the facility was known as “Central Furnace.” In September-October of 1978, the 24-year-old “Central Furnace” was blown out, and the facility was entirely shut down.

In April 1978, however, the last operational furnace was the site of filming the blast furnace scene for the movie “The Deer Hunter.”



Dean Freytag is considered the “Father of Steel Mill Modeling.” Dean worked with Walthers to help produce “The Works.” A Steel Mill series was introduced in 1996, and a second series was introduced somewhere around 2010.

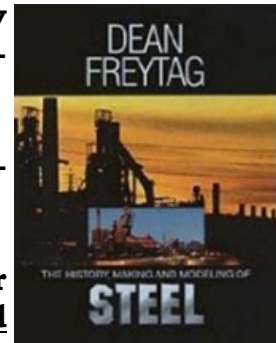
of

My Friend, and the Dean Freytag Award (continued)

Sometime in the 80s, the facility was demolished, probably about the same time as the US Steel Ohio Works in Youngstown, OH, was demolished.

The short history above is credited to the Historic American Engineering Record, dated 1979.

A photo of “Central Furnace” is located on the inside cover of Dean Freytag’s famous book, The History, Making, and Modeling of Steel.



This photo is why Jim was awarded the Dean Freytag Award for the Best Model as presented in Photographs.

Dean Freytag, Best Model, as presented in Photographs.



As you can see, this model is massive. Congratulations, my friend, your award is well deserved!



Ops Ops Ops Part 2

By Gary A. Reynolds, MMR (photos by author)

The date for the Beginners Operating Session (BOS) has been set for Saturday and Sunday, November 1st and 2nd. We also have the layouts you will be operating on, which have been selected (more on that later). What we need to know now is who plans to attend and operate at the BOS.

There will be four (4) operating sessions as follows:

BOS Saturday A – 12:00 to 2:00
BOS Saturday B – 3:30 to 5:30
BOS Sunday A – 12:00 to 2:00
BOS Sunday B – 3:30 to 5:30



If you wish to attend one or more BOS, please send me an email (gar2rey@gmail.com) with “Ops Ops Ops” in the subject line (this is so my spam detector does not accidentally throw out your email) and I will keep you informed via email. Also, when you email me, let me know which BOS time session(s) you would like to attend. Remember, you can attend one, two, three, or all four sessions.

Please submit your preferred session request(s) to me by October 20 at the above email.

Remember, each layout is different, and the owner can only accommodate a specific number of operators. I will pair up the operators, the layout, and the times once I have all the data. I will then email you all the information as to when and where you will be operating.

Also note that there will be five BOS sessions (two in Hamburg, two in Amherst, and one in North Tonawanda). This implies that at one or more times, two sessions will be running simultaneously. A general note of interest is that the BOS are being held one week after Frank Pastore’s layout tours on Saturday and Sunday, October 25/26, 2025, so you may want to visit them if you are planning to join the BOS the following week.

Ops Ops Ops Part 2 (continued)

Operator Guidelines:

1. Remember, you are a guest, be mindful and considerate during your visit.
2. Respect the Owner's Rules- every layout owner has their own set of rules, either based on a specific code or common sense. These should be respected and followed.
3. Safety First- this includes proper equipment handling, adhering to speed limits, and understanding how to operate switches and signals.
4. Prototypical Operation- strive for realistic train movements. This includes using prototypical speeds for different types of trains (e.g., slower in yards, faster on mainlines) and making realistic starts and stops.
5. Proper Communication- if the layout uses a dispatching system, understand how to communicate with the dispatcher and follow their instructions.
6. Handle Equipment Carefully- avoid touching locomotives or other equipment without permission. When handling rolling stock, be mindful of how you couple and uncouple cars.
7. Have Fun- model railroading should be an enjoyable experience. Be respectful of other operators and contribute to a positive operating session.

Layout Owners Guidelines:

1. Prepare the Layout- have a clean and tidy layout room to create a pleasant operating/working environment.
2. Make sure everything works- test locomotives to ensure they are operational, clean locomotive wheels and track.
3. Prepare Documentation for each Train- give starting and ending location, route, industries served, etc.; can be condensed to a single card.
4. Welcome Operators- remember these individuals are not experienced. Take a few minutes to discuss your operating principles and the documentation you use.
5. Explain Layout Rules- how to uncouple cars, how to throw switches, and how to use a throttle. Have experienced operators on hand to assist new operators.



Division Calendar/Upcoming/Future Events

2025:

September 7- Great Batavia Train Sale, Genesee Community College, 9am-3:30pm

September 20- Division meeting 100 Lee St., Buffalo 10:30 a.m.

October 11- Division meeting HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30 Note: 2nd Saturday

October 25/26- 8th Annual WNY Layout Tours

November 1/2- OPS...OPS...OPS...Weekend

November- No Division meeting...see Hamburg Train Show November 22/23

November 8- International Division Fall Model Railroad Event, Lock 3 Museum, St. Catharines, Ontario, CA (Clinics 9am-12pm / Layout Tours 1-4pm)

November 22/23- Train & Toy Show at Hamburg Fairgrounds Event Center (5820 South Park Ave., Hamburg, NY 14075).

November 24- Deadline for submissions to December Lantern

December 1- The Lantern publication

December 20- Division Meeting and Members Holiday Party at HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30

2026:

January 17- Division meeting HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30

January 24/25- Amherst Train Show

February 7- 3D3RX

February 14/15- Hamburg train show, No division meeting

February 23- Deadline for submissions to March Lantern

March 1- The Lantern publication

March 7- Annual planning meeting HDC 10:00 – 12:00

March 21- Division meeting HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30

April 18- Division meeting HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30

May 1/2/3- Niagara Frontier Region Convention Hamilton, Ontario

May 16- Division meeting HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30

May 25-Deadline for submissions to the June Lantern

June 1- The Lantern publication

June- Division Picnic TBD

July 27 to August 2- NMRA National Convention Chattanooga, Tn.

[Click here for NMRA National Conventions](#)

[Click here for NMRA Regional Conventions](#)

Division Calendar/Upcoming/Future Events (cont'd)

8th Annual WNY Layout Tours 2025

It's that time of year again...the 8th Annual WNY Layout Tours 2025 starts Saturday, October 25, 2025 (Niagara/Orleans Counties) and runs through Sunday, October 26, 2025 (Erie County).

Featuring some of the finest model railroads in the Western NY area. The tour is free to all model railroads enthusiasts, their family, and friends. The tour features N, HO and O scale layouts. Please note, this event IS NOT promoted on Facebook.

For a description of the layouts on tour, tour dates, tour times, and their GPS addresses, please refer to the website: wnylayouttours.com

The site is updated around the first week of October.

See you at the layouts!!



Photos by Frank Pastore

Division Calendar/Upcoming/Future Events (cont'd)

International Division Fall Model Railroad Event Flyer

Editors Note: Apologies for the poor scan quality, more to follow at our September Division

NMRA/International Division Fall Model Railroad Event

Lock 3 Museum

1932 Welland Canals Pkwy. St. Catharines, ON L2R 7K6



Saturday

November 8, 2025

Times approximate

Agenda subject to change

9:00-12:00 am Clinics

- Andy Panko: Michigan Central between Niagara Falls and NOTL
- Terry Hughes: 64 years of evolution in model railroading; history of railroads in the Niagara area.
- Paul Hurly: RMC's "The Layout Doctor" Building a medium-sized Industrial Switching Layout for maximum enjoyment.

1:00-4:00 pm Local Layout visits

- Richard Sparrow, MMR: TH&B/NYC layout viewing
- Keith Stamper, MMR: Colorado & Southern On3 layout viewing
- Jim & Barbara Tucker: Winger Junction, a totally separate building layout viewing
- Michael Scott: a 3-year old layout designed by Lance Mandhelm with White River Scenery and a house built to fit the track plan!

NOTE: Watch for NFR convention in Hamilton next May. Clinics, layout tours wanted. Information on both events: Ron Johnson: ronjohn.intldiv@gmail.com. 905-547-4135

For information on any of this please contact Ron Johnson at his email....intldivnmra.info@gmail.com or by phone at 905-547-4135.

Links and Notes



Heritage Discovery Center (HDC) Directions:

Get off the I-90 at the Smith Street Exit and go south on Smith Street to South Park Ave, turn left and head east on South Park to Lee Street, then turn left on to Lee Street and 100 Lee is on the left side of the street. Parking and an entrance are in the back of the building; however, a Handicap entrance is only available in the front of the building.

Use the QR Reader below to go to Western New York Division of the NMRA website. Yes fans we have our own webpage!
www.WNYDivisionNMRA.com



The Lantern Newsletter - Annual Publication Dates

Our Lantern is published monthly and is a great place to learn and share information. Contributions welcome! Consider adding to our Lantern newsletter by sending your ideas and articles to the editor, Gerry DiPaola, at:

Editor@wnydivisionnmra.com / 716-545-1740

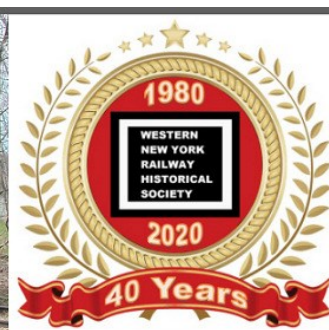
Publication date March 1st - Deadline for submissions is February 15th

Publication date June 1st - Deadline for submissions is May 15th

Publication date September 1st - Deadline for submissions is August 15th

Publication date December 1st - Deadline for submissions is November 15th

Thank you in advance for your contributions!



Links and Notes (continued)

Good Reasons to keep your membership!

Click the below link for the most current information.

THREE BIG BENEFITS OF NMRA MEMBERSHIP:



Those are the discounts that manufacturers and hobby shops in our Partnership Program are giving us right now. Partners like Micro-Mark®, Model Rectifier Corporation®, Badger Airbrush®, Unreal Details®, Hot Wire Foam Factory®, Logic Rail™ Technologies. And over 30 more companies. It's savings that can actually pay for your membership!

And are you taking advantage of our other big benefits? Like 150+ national convention clinic videos. Or over 15 hours of "how-to" videos produced by the biggest names in model railroading videos. Or our directory of model railroad layouts all over the world that you can visit. The list goes on and on.

If you haven't visited www.nmra.org lately, you're missing out on some really great stuff. Starting with a boatload of discounts!



We make it more fun.



PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

NMRA members can log in at www.nmra.org and click on the **Benefits** tab to view the **NMRA Partnership Program**. Please patronize all of our partners for some fantastic discounts as an NMRA member!

***NScaleWorks**

NScaleWorks offers N-scale scenery and rolling stock detail items, as well as custom designed and printed decals.

***Tichy Train Group**

Manufacturer of rolling stock and structure kits in N, HO, S, and O, as well as a wide array of detail & structural parts.

CatzPaw Innovations
Clever Models
Deluxe Materials
East Coast Circuits
Great Decals
Green Frog Productions
Hot Wire Foam Factory
Jason's Brass Poles
K.I.S.S. Method Inc
LARC Productions
Logic Rail Technologies
Micro-Mark
MinuteMan Scale Models

Modelers Decals & Paint
Model Railroad Benchwork
Model Train Catalogue
Motrak Models
MRC (Model Rectifier Corp)
OK Engines/Streamliners
Old West Scenery
Ram Track
RR-CirKits
Rusty Stumps
Scale Model Plans
Scalecoat Paint
Scenery Solutions

Showcase Miniatures
Team Track Models
The N Scale Architect
The Train Show, Inc.
Train Installations, LLC
Trainmaster TV/MRH Store
UGears
Unreal Details
USA Airbrush Supply/
Badger Airbrush
WiFi Model Railroad LLC

***Indicates newest Partner**

[Click here for the NMRA's Partnership Program](#)

Links and Notes (continued)

WNY Division Apparel

Thanks to Frank Pastore for his efforts working with area vendors for WNY Division name tags and apparel items. Please reach out to Frank directly if you have yet to either pay for and/or pick up a name tag. For apparel related offerings, please visit <https://selectlinesports.com/collections/national-model-railroad-association-wny> or use the QR Reader to the right to take you to the website (select Fan Cave, Team Stories, then National Model Railroad Association). Currently available are polos, sweatshirts, 1/4 zip top, and oxford shirts.



Great Connections - Check Out These Links for Additional Information:

- [NMRA Membership Information](#)
- [NMRA Beginners Guide](#)

