The Lantern

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

Volume 6 - Issue 3
September 2026

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

DIVISION MEETINGS:

19 September @ HDC
10 October @ HDC
21/22 Nov. @ WNYRHS Toy & Train Show, Hamburg, NY
19 December @ HDC

2027

16 January @ HDC
TBD Feb. @ WNYRHS Toy & Train Show, Hamburg, NY

From the Cab

Division,

So, the question of the summer was "Did you see Big Boy?" Yes, I did…from the Cemetery Road bridge over the tracks in Lancaster as the train headed out of Western New York. It was quite a sight!

Congratulations to Darby Marriott on receiving the division's Superintendent's Award for 2026 at our division picnic in June. Darby is our IT Director, responsible for our meetings being available on Zoom for those who can't attend in person. He also handles all the AV during meetings at the Heritage Discovery Center. Thank You, Darby.

Here are the dates for the Division's monthly meetings this year:

- September 19th
- October 10th
- November, no meeting. Activities at the Hamburg train show will take place on Nov. 21st & 22nd.
- December 19th

For 2027:

- January 16th
- February, no meeting. Activities at the Hamburg train show. Date TBA
- March 20th (no conflict with 'Old Neighborhood Parade' which takes place on the March 13th).
- April 17th
- May 15th

Meetings take place at The Heritage Discovery Center located at 100 Lee St. in Buffalo, beginning at 10:30 am.

See you there!

Bill

Bill Wiedenbeck, Superintendent

Western New York Division Contact Info:

Elected:

Superintendent: Bill Wiedenbeck
Superintendent@wnydivisionnmra.com
Radiobill@roadrunner.com
716-866-3732

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Assistantsuperintendent@wnydivisionnmra.com
716-261-8231

Chief Clerk: Ken Akerboom

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Paymaster@wnydivisionnmra.com / 716-517-0155

Appointed:

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Gar2rey@gmail.com / 716-225-2269

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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



Greetings,

Wow, what a summer it has been! So many goings on, what did you attend or travel to go see? Was it UP's Big Boy No. 4014 cross country tour, NMRA's 2026 Chattanooga Convention, the Lionel Operating Toy Train Society's (LOTS) Amherst, NY Convention, our WNY Division's trip to the Railroaders Memorial Museum/ Horseshoe Curve/East Broad Top, or any of the numerous excursion railroad semi quincentennial celebrations? The choices were almost too many to choose from...but I'm not complaining!

For 2026, my three "bucket list" items included joining our Division's trip to East Broad Top & Horseshoe Curve, a trip to Denver, CO (to visit 6 narrow gauge railroads), and finally, seeing Big Boy No. 4014 both at NS's Bison Yard and in Silver Springs, NY. I look forward to future issues of the Lantern where I can share more details on each of my railroad adventures. Feel free to share your railroad adventures with our WNY Division members by submitting an article for publication in *The Lantern* or sharing at one of our monthly meetings held at Lee Street!



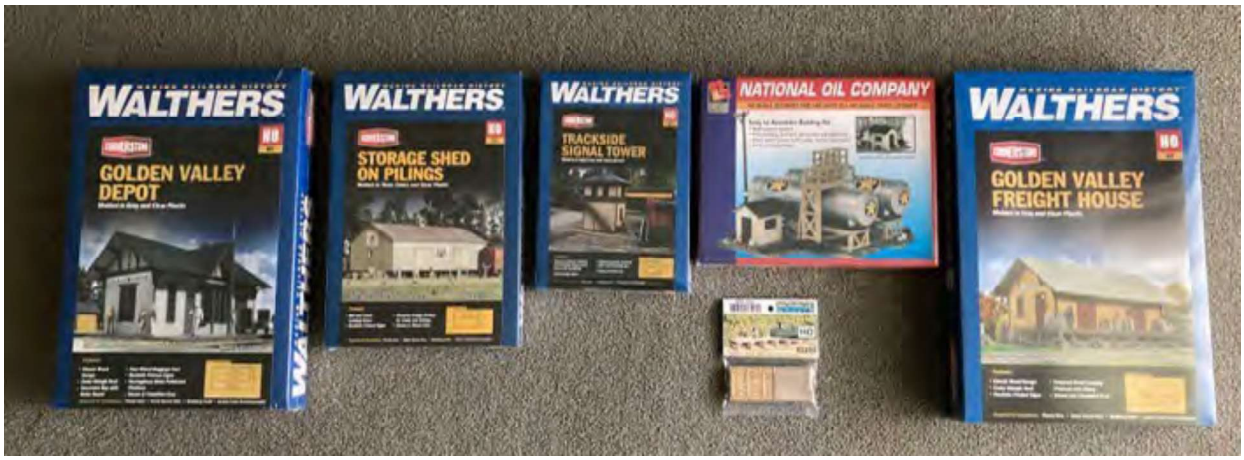
Photos by Gerry DiPaola



Gerry DiPaola, Editor

HELP WANTED!!

Needed are a few good WNY Division members to assemble and finish one (or more) of the HO structure kits obtained from Walthers both pictured and listed below. Note that the item numbers are Walthers stock numbers, provided for reference.



ITEM	DESCRIPTION
433-1331	National Oil Co. Kit
493-2203	Loading Ramp & Dock Kit
933-3529	Storage Shed on Pilings
933-3532	Golden Valley Depot Kit
933-3533	Golden Valley Frt Hse Kit
933-3556	Trackside Signal Tower

Once assembled, these structures will populate the Division's HO demonstration switching layout being developed by Mitch Friscia, Richard Collins, Gerry DiPaola, and Steve Cotten.

Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to obtain from Steve one (or more) of these kits and have it (them) assembled and perhaps "finished" (i.e., painted or weathered?) before the next WNY Division meeting on **Saturday, September 19th**. The objective at that meeting is to have the structures available to position them on the layout so that areas can be identified for subsequent application of very basic scenery materials (gravel and grass).

Election News for 2026

Special Election Message from Ron Tober

This October, the WNY Division will be holding elections for the following officer positions. According to our Division's constitution, these four positions are our only elected officials. All other positions/jobs are appointed as volunteers to accomplish a given task. **The positions up for election and the current candidates are as follows:**

- Division Superintendent- **Bill Wiedenbeck** **(incumbent)**
- Division Assistant Superintendent- **Steve Cotton** **(incumbent)**
- Chief Clerk (meeting minutes and membership)- **Ken Akerboom**
- Paymaster (Treasurer)- **Tom McQuillen** **(incumbent)**

Elections will take place at our October 17, 2026 meeting at the HDC on Lee Street.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Ron

Ron Tober, Election Chairman

Scenic City Express NMRA Convention 2026

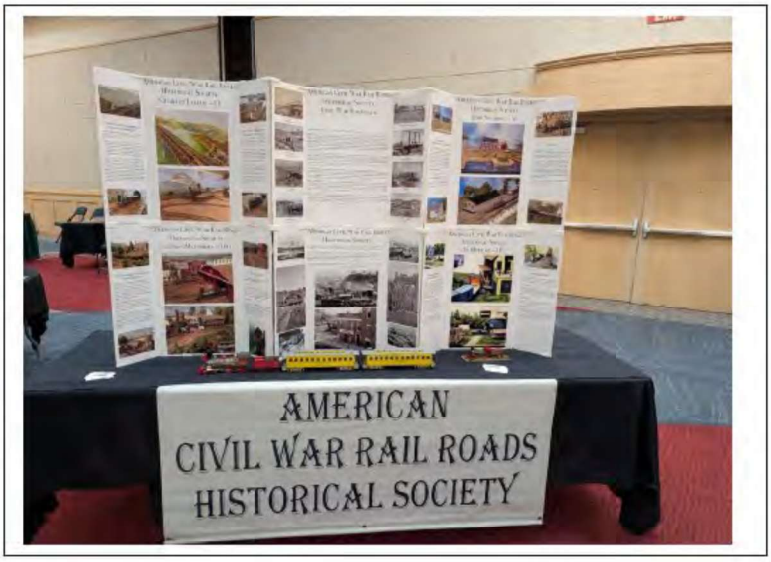
Article and photos by G. A. Reynolds MMR

I had the privilege of attending the 2026 NMRA national convention in Chattanooga, Tn. It was held on July 27 through August 2 at the Chattanooga Convention Center. There were over 200 hours of clinics, layout tours, operating sessions, prototype tours, modeling with the master modelers, and the national train show. I had a wonderful time, and it would take several hours to let you know everything I did. What follows are some of the highlights from my time at the convention.

- There was a booth set up for our upcoming 2028 national convention. I helped by manning the booth several times during the week.

- I noticed that over half the attendees had a southern accent. Nevertheless, I met people from the northeast, California, Montana and even Australia. Clark Konnig and I were the only people from the NFR.





- The Civil War Railroad Society had a nice display and presented several clinics. Berny Kempinski had a fantastic clinic on the USMRR Aquia Line. You may recall that he was published several months ago in one of the national magazines. There were a lot of attendees with southern accents (although I was tempted, I did not feel it was my place to remind the southerners that they lost the war).

Scenic City Express NMRA Convention 2026 *(continued)*

- I also noticed that there were a lot of female attendees. Not just as companions, but as model railroaders. I met Leslie Eaton MMR who gave an excellent clinic on scratch building tips and tools.



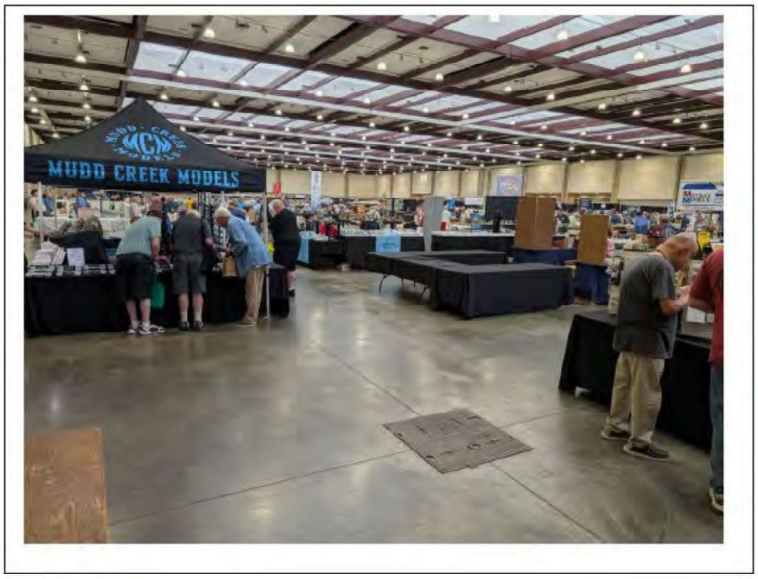
- The n scale Free-Mon people had a huge display set up. I was fascinated with the module that had a tornado going through and destroying several houses.





- I went to Chuck Diljak's clinic on weighing cars. Now I need to figure out how to add a semi-automated weighing station to my layout at my coal mine (operators beware).
- There were a lot of clinics on 3D printing and AI and how to use these technologies in model railing. I have already started using AI. It has generated several Work Notices that I use during operating sessions. It is very scary how much AI knows about my layout without me telling it anything.
- I had a chance to go to some clinics and meet some well-known model railroaders. I met Tony Koester (Trains of Thought column and Nickel Plate Railroad fame), Bob Frankrone (Love Those Loads) and Eric White (editor of Model Railroader).

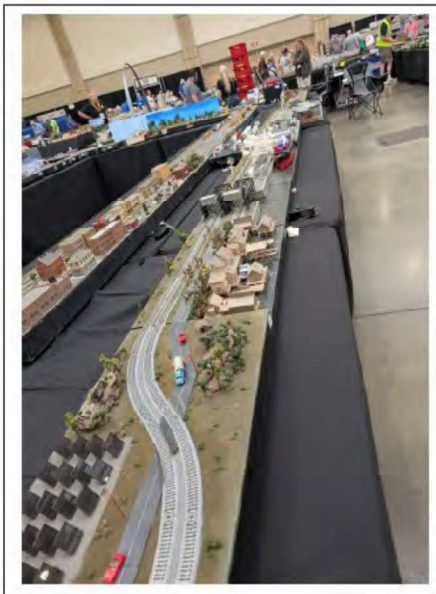
Scenic City Express NMRA Convention 2026



- The National Train Show was featured on Saturday and Sunday. It was about the size of our Hamburg train show, with nothing special from any of the manufacturers that were present.

- The biggest attraction was the 10,000-square-foot T-Track set up. They had 758 modules (1,511 single-module equivalent) and 3,084 actual feet of mainline. It took over 2 hours for a train to complete the whole loop. There were 48 clubs participating from the United States, as well as clubs from Australia and Denmark. AND yes, it was a world record.





Ops Ops Ops 2.0

Article and photos by G. A. Reynolds MMR

If you remember, last year we had a divisional operating session targeted for beginning operators. It was well received, and based on the feedback, everyone had a fun time... Well, we want to do the same thing this year, so we are planning a one-day operating session for Saturday, November 7.

The plan is to run a morning (10 AM to noon) and afternoon (2 PM to 4 PM) sessions. The operating session will be geared toward people with no or little operating experience. Please let me know (gar2rey@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending and which session (morning or afternoon or both) you would like.

I will assign you to a layout based on the number of people who apply. The layouts will include Frank Pastori's Allegheny Central, Paul Miller's New York Central, and mine, the Grand Allegheny Railway, to name a few.

(Editor's Note: I joined the operating session on Gary's layout last October and boy did I have a blast ...lost of fun and it was great to hang out with the other members and learn a thing or two too! Highly recommend you join in this year!!)



How to Create a Building Mockup

Article and photos by Ken Akerboom

For my T-Trak module, I'd like to model some prototype structures in Wayland, MA (where I spent my Elementary school years and have many fond memories)

I already got the passenger station done before I realized this might make a good article for the Lantern, so I'm doing the freight station in this article.

Step 1 – Prototype information & Drawings

The first step is to research the prototype and check whether any drawings are available. For the mockup, I am using the drawings in the B&MRRHS "Modeler's Notes" publication, issue #9 (Sept 1987).

Here's a photo of the building (Ken Akerboom photo, 19-Nov-2018, IMG2427.jpg):



NOTE: Tracks were on the right side of the building in this view. I think the platform has been removed, and the building has been repainted in "prototype-ish" colors (Sorry for the pole & high-tension line tower; I forgot my "Pole filter" :-).

The drawings were scanned into a PDF file (I used 600DPI, black-and-white scan).

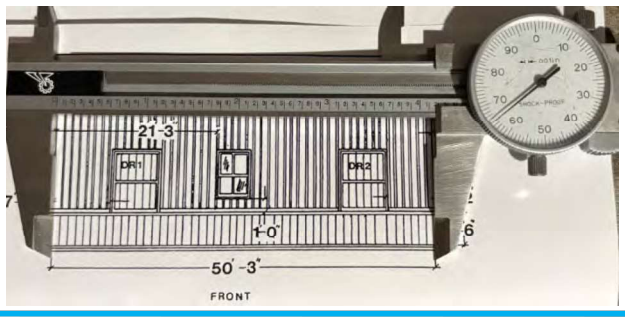
I then edited them in a PDF editor to remove (as much as possible) the non-drawing "stuff", to make scaling, etc. easier.

Step 2 – Scaling the Drawing(s)

I then opened it in Adobe Acrobat and printed at 100% scale (I used "Custom Scale" in the print window)

Note: you need to print at a "known" scale (it doesn't have to be 100%, but do **not** "auto-scale" or "fit" the printout)

Using a set of calipers, I measured a dimension on the print out (Ken Akerboom photo, IMG_2256.jpg):



How to Create a Building Mockup *(continued)*

So, the 50'-3" dimension on the PRINT measured as 4.165"

Now calculate what it SHOULD be for N scale (50'3" = 603" / 160 = 3.769")

Now calculate scale factor for PRINTING = 3.769 / 4.165 = .905 = 90.5%

Now re-print the PDF at a scale of 90.5% - check the length is correct, and maybe check a couple other dimensions.

Now print another for the other side

Check each drawing for this scale factor – it turns out the 2 drawings (sides/ends) were different scales, so I had to print 2 more copies at the "end view" scale

Now cut out each side. Do NOT cut to the final size – leave extra stock so you can still see the lines you want to cut to after laminating to the backing material.

Step 3 – Decisions

You will need to decide what you want to use for backing. I used 1/32" styrene sheet, but you can use (I would suggest "High Quality") cardboard or whatever. Make sure to plan how you will brace the interior to prevent warping.

Also, you need to decide how you want to treat the corners

- butt joints (so you will need to cut 2 walls short by twice the backing thickness)
- miter each corner at 45° so they are the "correct size" on the outside (paper printed side)

I chose the 1st option – as the ends have the roof pitch, I trimmed the sides back about .03" on each end of the sides.

Now lay out the cut-out (printed) sides on the backing to figure out how best they will fit – remember this layout!

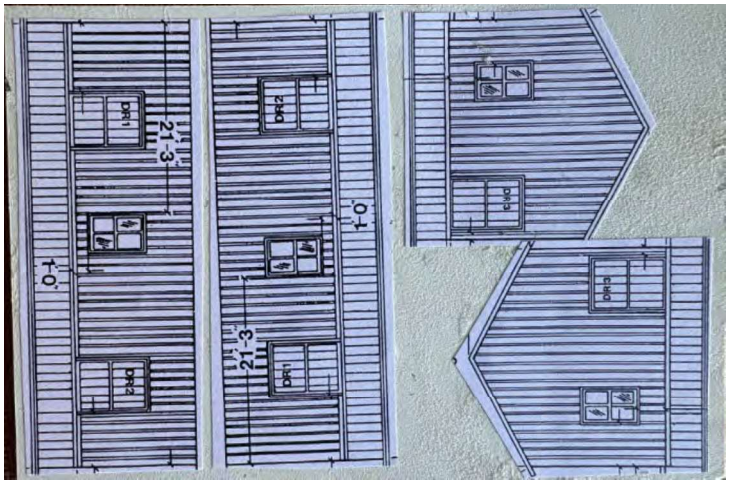
And cut the backing material into this size (plus a little extra, as you may only get ONE chance to place the printed-out sides).

Step 4 - Gluing side laminates

Use a spray adhesive (I used 3M "Super 77" adhesive). Please read the warning labels and directions and follow them.

I chose to spray outside.

I sprayed the backing (I used Nitrile gloves to protect my hands), then positioned each piece on the backing & pressed it down. This picture shows the results of this stage (Ken Akerboom photo, IMG_2257.jpg):



How to Create a Building Mockup

Let it dry someplace "protected" (I used my garage, as it is summer) so any solvents evaporate & the glue "dries".

Of course, once I saw the above picture, it reminded me: Try to find drawings WITHOUT dimensions ON the wall sides...

Step 5 – trimming and assembly

For this building, I decided against using a base.

Place some scrap paper over the "exposed" areas of glue (so the straightedge doesn't pick up any glue), then trim the sides of each piece.

Plan & cut the roof sheets (pretty easy for this building – it had a 12" overhang on all sides).

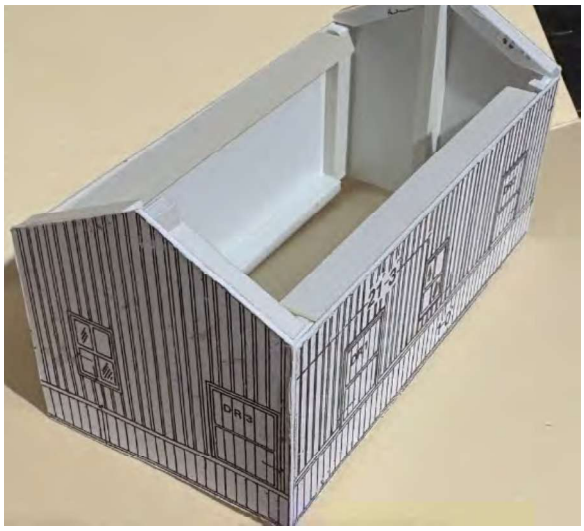
Assemble using normal techniques for your material; add bracing as required.

I just left mine "Black & White", but you can use colored pencils or water paint or whatever to decorate.

I cut the loading dock from a piece of wood and glued it to the side.

Finished views

Walls & bracing, no roof (Ken Akerboom photos, IMG_2266.JPG):





With roof and loading dock, in situ on module (Ken Akerboom photo, IMG_2267.JPG):

WNY Division HO Switching/Display Layout Update

Project Status as of August 2026

Article and Photos by Steve Cotton, Assistant Superintendent

Since its founding in 2020, the Western New York (WNY) Division of the Niagara Frontier Region has borrowed a 72-inch by 20-inch modular HO switching layout from the Lakeshores Division of the Northeast Region to serve at train shows as a "hands-on" visitor attraction and NMRA recruiting tool. The opportunity to actually operate a locomotive to switch freight cars on the layout attracts and maintains the attention of many children. Parents watch their kids experience the thrill of running trains and, possibly, relive their own childhood memories. Meanwhile, Division members get the chance to share their enthusiasm for the hobby along with the benefits of NMRA membership.

While the cooperative sharing arrangement reinforced the bond between the two Divisions, coordinating timely exchange of the layout to address the needs of both Divisions occasionally was a challenge. Also, the layout was not readily available to address other potential WNY Division opportunities for NMRA promotion, such as at other local community events. Therefore, the WNY Division Executive Committee agreed to develop its own, easily transported layout and secured an initial $1,000 grant from the Niagara Frontier Region to construct and equip a demonstration layout mimicking Lakeshores' successful design. Superintendent Bill Wiedenbeck recruited a team of Rich Collins, Steve Cotten, Gerry DiPaola, and Mitch Friscia to lead and execute the project.
The first project task was addressed by Gerry DiPaola who employed AnyRail™ software to develop a track plan using Kato Unitrack components. Unitrack has served reliably for many years on Lakeshores' 2-module layout. The software generated a list of the Unitrack sections required to implement the track plan. Simultaneously, Mitch Friscia and Richard Collins donated the materials and then fabricated and finished the two 36-inch long, 20-inch-wide layout module structures.



Figure 1 is photo of the team members fastening track sections to the modules following the May 16, 2026 WNY Division meeting. After the track was installed and its proper alignment and function manually evaluated with a test car, the modules were stored in separate corrugated cardboard transport boxes prepared by Steve Cotten.

Figure 1: Laying track on the WNY Division HO switching layout modules.

Division Display/Switching Layout Kick-Off *(continued)*

A project objective of the WNY Division Executive Committee enthusiastically embraced by the project team was to operate the demonstration layout with Digital Command Control (DCC). Richard and Mitch selected a Digitrax DCC system with a Wi-Fi interface to control a compact SW-1500 switcher equipped with DCC and sound. After the Division purchased these items, the switcher was programmed and the system successfully tested by Richard and Mitch. The first demonstration of layout operation occurred during the Division's annual summer picnic on June 13, 2026 (see Figure 2).

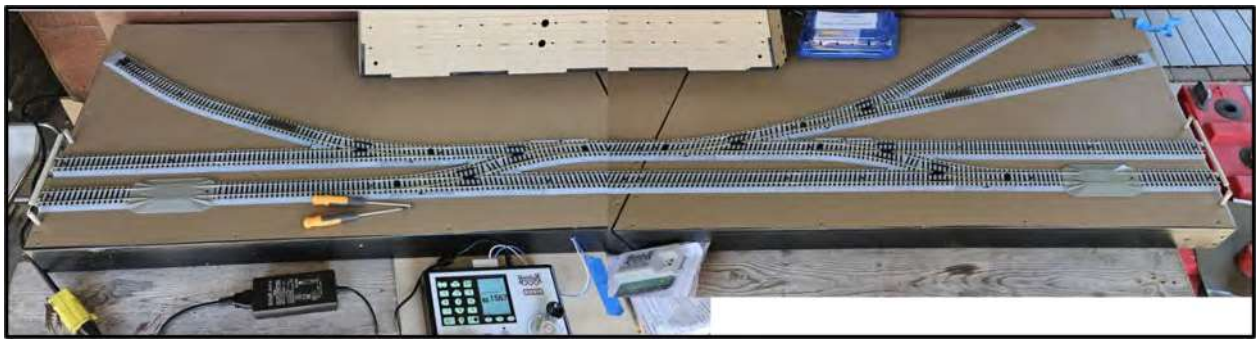


Figure 2: Composite photo of the operational WNY Division HO switching layout displayed on June 13, 2026.

To prepare the layout for its intended promotional purpose, trackside structures will be added along with some very basic ground cover scenic materials. Several more freight cars consistent with the industries represented by the structures placed along the track sidings must also be acquired. The AnyRail software was again employed to virtually locate on the layout a number of candidate trackside structure kits. An iterative evaluation process reduced the number of viable candidates to the six structures indicated in Figure 3. The kits for these six structures were delivered on August 13, 2026. The intention is to distribute the kits for assembly and finishing by several other Division members in advance of the next regular WNY Division meeting on September 19, 2026. If the structures are assembled by then, the final locations for each structure will be identified at that meeting. Knowledge of these placements will then permit application of the basic ground cover (gravel roads and parking lots, grassy areas) necessary to

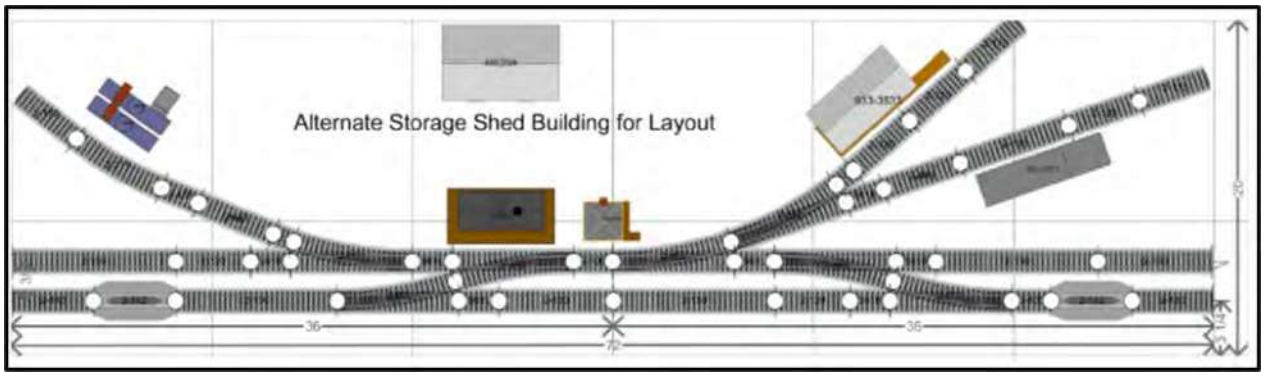


Figure 3: WNY Division HO switching layout track plan indicating notional placement of trackside structures.

The current project expense total presented in Figure 4 anticipates donation of surplus scenery materials and rolling stock from WNY Division members.

HO Switching Layout Project Expenses (as of 8/18/26)		
Category	**Vendor**	**Amount**
Module construction materials	Friscia & Collins donations	$0.00
Kato Unitrack components	White Rose Hobbies	$409.15
Digitrax Zephyr Express DCC Starter Set	Tony's Train Exchange	$183.75
Digitrax LocoNet DCC WiFi Interface	Tony's Train Exchange	$64.75
DCC system shipping	Tony's Train Exchange	$29.38
SW-1500 locomotive	Train World	$169.99
Locomotive shipping	Train World	$10.98
Module storage/transport cases	Cotten donation	$0.00
Model structures (including shipping)	Walthers	$197.37
Rolling stock	member donations	$0.00
Scenery materials	member donations	$0.00
	TOTAL	**$1,065.37**
Detachable shelf for DCC system	Friscia donation	$0.00
WiFi Handheld DCC Controller	TBD	TBD
Accessory Storage/Transport Case(s)	TBD	TBD

Figure 4: HO switching layout expenses incurred through August 18, 2026.

Remaining project actions include fabrication of a detachable shelf for the DCC unit, integration of a receptacle for a track power plug into the module structure, acquisition and programing of a Wi-Fi enabled handheld DCC interface, and development of robust means to safely store and transport all of the layout accessories (locomotive, rolling stock, structures, and electronics).

Remember, the inaugural display and ribbon cutting event for the module is planned for the November 21-22, 2026 Western New York Railway Historical Society train show in Hamburg, NY. Looking forward to everyone coming out to join in celebrating this WNYNMRA Division milestone!

Union Pacific's Big Boy 4014 in WNY 2026



Photo by Paul Miller taken just east of the Genesee Arch Bridge near Letchworth State Park in New York State.



Photo by Gerry DiPaola taken at Silver Springs, NY

Division Calendar & Future Events

2026:

September 1- *The Lantern* newsletter publish date

September 2- Division Executive Committee meeting 7:00pm *(virtual meeting)*

September 19- Division meeting at HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30am

- T-Trak "build" session Sept 19

October 17- Division meeting at HDC 100 Lee St. 10:30am *(elections to be held)*

October 24/25– WNY Division 9th annual Layout Tour *(schedule to follow)*

November 21/22- WNYRHS Toy & Train Show, Hamburg Fair Grounds

November 21- Deadline for submissions to December's *The Lantern newsletter*

December 1- *The Lantern* newsletter publish date

December TBD - WNY Annual Holiday Event

2027: NMRA National Convention in Tacoma, WA

2028: NMRA National Convention in Rochester, NY

Click here for NMRA National Conventions

Click here for NMRA Regional Conventions

Division Calendar & Future Events *(continued)*

2027 NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION – TACOMA, WA

AUGUST 10-15, 2027



The 2027 NMRA National Convention and National Train Show will be held in the Tacoma Convention Center. There will be several hundred booths featuring vendors and manufacturers announcing new announcements, hands on demonstrations and dozens of train layouts.

More information at httpswww.nmra2027.org/

NMRA

Logo and images/info by NMRA.org

Links and Notes

Heritage Discovery Center (HDC) Directions:

Exit 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.WNYDivsionNMRA.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, photos, and/or articles to the editor, Gerry DiPaola, at:

Editor@wnydivisionnmra.com / 716-545-1740

Publication date March 1st - Deadline for submissions is February 21st

Publication date June 1st - Deadline for submissions is May 21st

Publication date September 1st - Deadline for submissions is August 21st

Publication date December 1st - Deadline for submissions is November 21st

Thank you in advance for your contributions!



Links and Notes *(continued)*

The WNY Division Sunshine Committee/Welfare Report

Our Lantern is published monthly and is a great place to keep up to date with membership. Please consider sharing a brief message about one of our members who may be under the weather or hospitalized so we may send a short note wishing them well and/or a speedy recovery. You can message or email the editor, Gerry DiPaola, at:

Editor@wnydivisionnmra.com / 716-545-1740

Thank you.

Links and Notes *(continued)*

Good Reasons to keep your membership!

Click the below link for the most current information.





Click here for the NMRA's Partnership Program

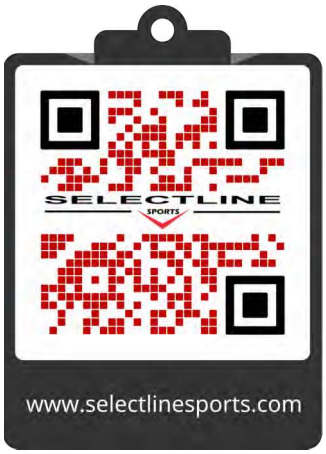
Links and Notes *(continued)*

WNY Division Members' Section

Member Ken Akerboom is looking to borrow a copy of the book "Merchants Despatch: Its History and Equipment" by Roger C. Hinman (Signature press, 2011?). Please reach out to Ken directly or contact the editor at Editor@wnydivisionnmra.com. Thank you!

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