

THE BRASS POUNDER



Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Division 12, Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

Volume 25 Number 7

July 2025

Division Coming Events

Alan Hardee Layout Visit

Saturday, July 19th at 10:00am

Address will be communicated
via email to all members.

Superintendent's Corner

By Andrew Stitt

In the last several months I have encountered and had conversations with a number of people who have been interested in returning to model railroading after “putting it up for a while”. There have been a number of reasons for this renewed interest. Getting involved with the grandkids (I can relate to that), getting their own children interested in doing something productive with their hands, or retirement.

You know what? Model railroading is a good hobby! It allows us to become creative. It allows us to do research on any number of related topics. It allows us to learn new skills, And most importantly, it allows us to

go at our own pace. It doesn't demand attention like other aspects of our lives. It's always there when we are ready and want to return to it.

What the folks that I have talked to have all mentioned is that it has evolved since they were away. Certainly, what sticks out the most are the technological changes, DCC, LCC, signaling and sound equipped engines top the list. The quality of the models ranks a strong second, Anyone who has looked at the latest offerings can testify to that. Let's not forget structures. Laser cut kits can produce some really good-looking buildings and models. 3D printing is also very impressive for what it can produce. Let's not forget the rising interest in T-Trak and modular construction. Things have come a long way from that 4' x 8' sheet of plywood.

So here is my point. Interest in model railroading is still out there. If you have a little experience that you can share with the returnees to the hobby, please do it. If you don't know about something well enough to answer their questions, find somebody who can. I bet many of our members are in position to help.

Editor's Notes

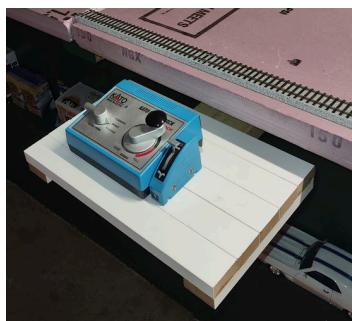
By Chad Barnette

What is this? Find out in next THIS month's edition!



Hello and welcome back to the railroad mystery hour. Scratch that. Hello and welcome back to the railroad mystery minute. It won't take you more than a minute to read this column.

The roundabout way of answering the question of what this is is that it's something I repurposed for something I never expected to use it for. OK so let me just show you what the finished product is and then we'll go from there.



I created a stand for my controller! Not so exciting you say? Maybe not, but for me this signified me getting over another hurdle that prevents me (you, maybe?) from making progress. "I don't have the materials I need" - this was often my excuse or my lamentation. In reality, there's usually something that can be done to make progress and enjoy the hobby. Even when our wallets or other delays seemingly preclude us from doing so.

Division and Regional News

Wade's Train Town

Wade's Train Town – June Stats

Contributed by Ed Smith, MMR

Open houses: 4

Attendance: 90

Volunteers: Ed Smith (2), Chad Barnette, Tim Rust, Bob Halsey

We are, once again, requesting members to step up and volunteer to spend one Saturday a month, at most, at the Legacy Train Exhibit at the Newton Narrow Gauge Museum. We just leveled out at 4 volunteers again, but proved how fragile these manning levels are by having an illness among us. We really need one or two more bodies to solidify our obligations. So if you can see fit to volunteer, it will be really appreciated

The AP Report from the Plywood RR Desk

Contributed by Neal Anderson, MMR

At the Dreams Come True Railroad Track we had several folks that earned awards.

- Scott Davenport has earned three Merit Awards on the trackwork that he has done at the track.
- Andrew Stitt was awarded his Civil Engineering AP
- Joe Skorch was awarded his Civil Engineering AP
- Brad Jones was awarded his Chief Dispatcher AP



Thanks to everyone that came out to the Dreams Come True Railroad!

A Visit to Alan Hardee's Layout

Contributed by Alan Hardee



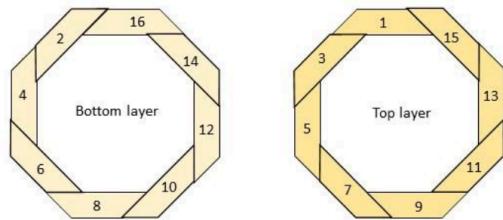
The July Meeting of the Carolina Southern Division will be held 10:00 am on July 19th at the home of Alan Hardee. Alan's address will be provided via email to all members. All GPS apps will lead you right to the house. Looking at the house, the train building is on the right rear corner.

Alan has been working with a double pinwheel helix design for a corner

section of the layout room to connect the lower and upper levels of the layout. It is still in the construction stage but will be viewable enough to see the construction process. It will have 3 tracks with the two inside tracks as coal train storage between staging and the power plant.

Double Pinwheel Helix
<https://appalachianrailroadmodeling.com/double-pinwheel-helix/>

Steps 6-8. Building the Double Pinwheel



Scratch Building the Waxhaw Bridge, Part 4

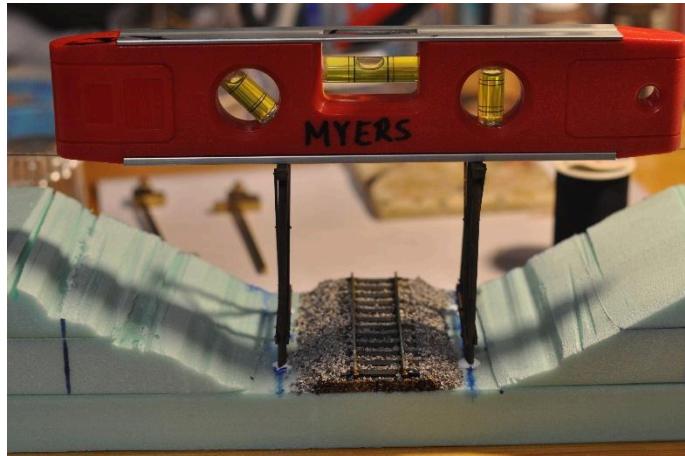
Contributed by David Myers, Clerk



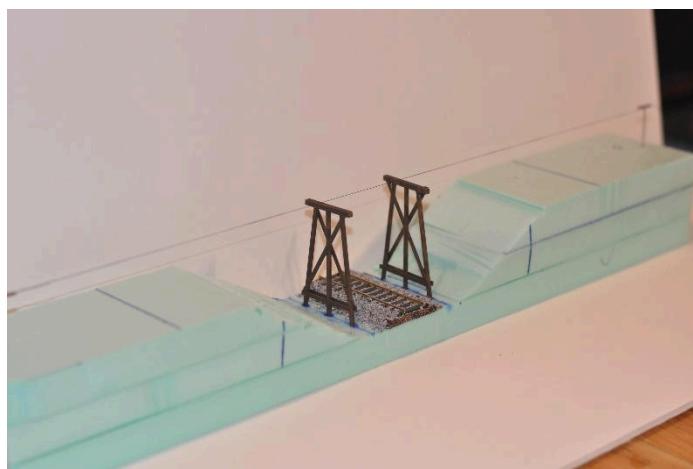
Before beginning the assembly of all the bridge components, I painted the track and ballasted the roadbed while the area was still easily accessible.

With the roadbed ballasted, I installed the two center piers. I used foam pins and thread to mark the centerline of the bridge. The center posts of each pier were positioned using the thread that marked the centerline. The two center piers were glued into place with

the appropriate track clearance. I used a small level to confirm the center piers were level. The level kept the piers properly positioned while the glue dried. After the glue dried, I removed the centerline thread and performed the remaining assembly by sighting along the centerline pilings of the pier. (10th grade geometry – 2 points make a line.)

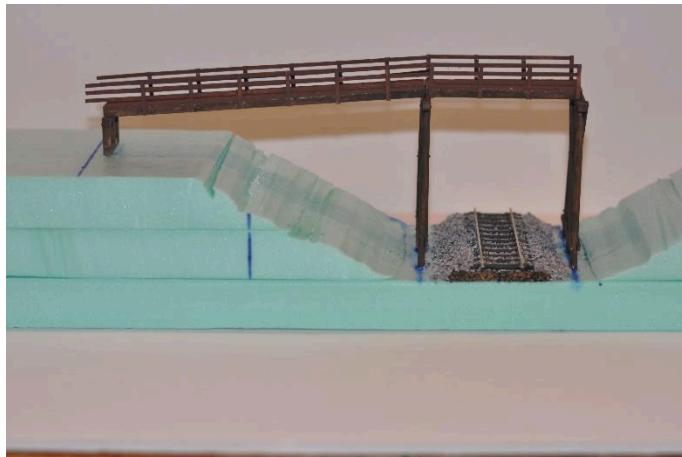


Center piers in position and the glue drying



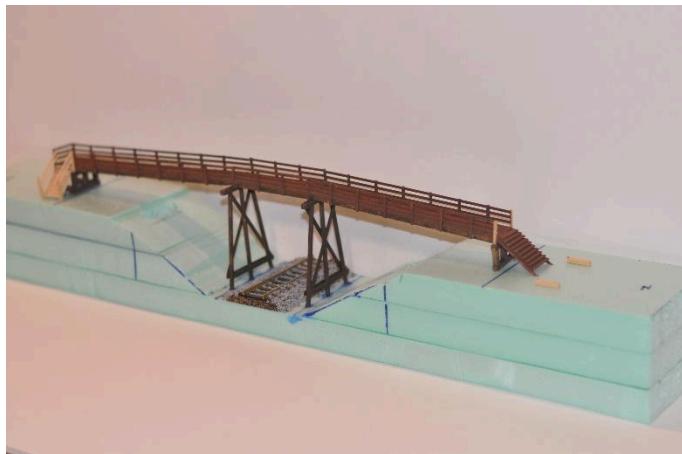
Centerline piers in place with the centerline thread

The center span was glued in place and given a day to set. The end pier for the north ramp was glued in place while aligning the north ramp for installation. I intentionally left the handrails on the ramps long on both ends. This allowed trimming and sanding to align the handrails at the proper angles when joining the sections together.



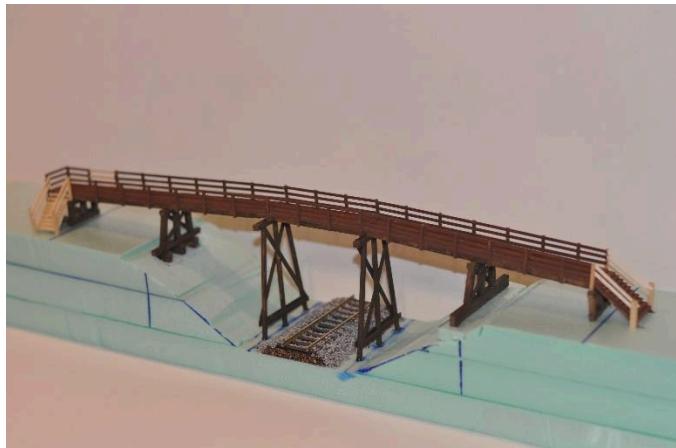
North ramp in place

The south ramp was installed in the same way as the north ramp. South end pier of the south ramp is part of the platform and stairway of the south ramp. I installed the north stairway and completed all the handrails.



Ramps and stairways in place, last of the handrails in progress.

The last major components for installation were the middle piers for each ramp. The foam “terrain” was shaped to accept the footings of the piers. The bases of the two piers are different. This required configuration of the foam for each. I placed the middle piers at the midpoint of each ramp.



All bridge components, stairs, and handrails assembled.

I gave the addition of each additional component a full day to dry to ensure stability when adding the next component. It became a multi-week process.

Next, for Part 5, I will begin the landscaping. This will include paint touchup on the bridge, adding ground cover, flower beds around the stairways, sidewalks, fences, and curbs.

Thoughts of a Carolina Southern Division Model Railroader

Contributed by Dave Thrams

Are you enjoying being a National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) member? Or maybe my question should be a little more specific. Are you enjoying being a member of the Carolina Southern Division of the NMRA? I hope your response is a resounding YES!! Realistically, I know not everyone will answer this question the same. Heck your response may be different just because of the day of the week, the last conversation you had with another member, or maybe frustration on how difficult the latest model project has been. I remember getting frustrated when I didn't have time to spend on this wonderful hobby because life just kept getting in the way. I was an on again, off again model railroader for over 30 years. Not too long ago, I was a little surprised when I realized that when I was not participating, I continued to pay the NMRA dues every year and never had a break in membership.

Now why would I continue to pay the dues when I wasn't able to participate? One reason was that I knew the NMRA created, negotiated, and wrote standards so that someone can take a locomotive to most anywhere in the world and set that locomotive on a layout of the same scale and it would run just like it was on its home layout. Many recent articles in the

NMRA magazine have been explaining the NMRA Standards and reading those have reinforced my thinking.

But really, the main reason I kept paying dues when I couldn't participate was the fond memories I had from my years of model railroading as a young person. I grew up with model railroading with my dad having a basement layout that ran around the basement walls 2 1/2 times. He was also a member of a couple local model railroad clubs and it always seemed those guys were having a good time being together. I say 'guys' because that's all I saw at the time. One club he joined built a permanent layout on a third floor of an old downtown building and I still remember the stairwell being steep and long. I also remember that layout being large and awesome with only benchwork and they ran long trains.

The other club was a round-robin club where they rotated meetings at their members' homes. Some members who volunteered to host a meeting were either building a layout and wanted advice or help in certain areas of their layout. While other members who hosted a meeting would have an operating layout and would host a complete operating session. Some of these operating layouts were very intricate and some not so much, but regardless, they enjoyed being together celebrating model railroading.

Fast forward during my on-again, off-again years, where I would occasionally attend NMRA functions with my dad. In addition to the local clubs in his area, his division held monthly meetings and a couple events each year. He was the division editor and not only did he edit the Division newsletter, he printed (typesetting and hand cranking a drum-like device that spit out newsletters), then folded and mailed the newsletter each month. He was involved at the National level by running, a now extinct, Locomotive Performance Contest at National Conventions when they were held East of the Mississippi. Because of the large equipment used for this contest, another person ran the locomotive performance contest when conventions were held west of the Mississippi. To be competitive in that contest, folks would improve their locomotive performance in a few ways that involved adding as much weight as possible, including heavy flywheels to add momentum, and rubber tires to improve pulling power. But like all things, change happens, and I saw a big shift start one year. I remember at that national convention a modeler (from Germany I think) brought locomotives with quiet smooth running Can motors he installed to replace the original motors of the locomotives and the game changed. I can't remember if he brought three or more locomotives, but I remember him taking all the top locomotive performance prizes that year.

Why am I reminiscing and telling you all this? Because I have great memories of the people involved in the NMRA and model railroading and my memories continue to grow due to the wonderful people in our Carolina Southern Division. I am impressed with all the activities our division leaders plan and host with the help of our members. Our annual calendar for years has been filled with monthly meetings that are held all around our division. The Railroad Modeling University (RMU) has been held each spring led by Doug Algire for many years and last year by Andrew Stitt. For the RMU to be successful each time, several model railroaders volunteer and to name one longtime volunteer, Roy Becker who has been the Registrar for

as long as I can remember. Many other division members help to setup and work during RMU while several more modelers host clinics to teach even more model railroaders attending the clinics!

Our CSD even sponsors an entire model railroad on display, we affectionately call Wade's Train Town, at the Southeastern Narrow Gauge & Shortline Museum in Newton. Gil Brauch, MMR and Ed Smith, MMR with help from a few others, have led that wonderful project for years. This project is pretty big since it's open every weekend and they could really use some friendly volunteers to interact with the general public. Wanna see families smiling and having great fun? This is the place.

Last year's celebration of November's National Model Railroad Month saw 20 layout owners open their layouts to an average of more than 40 visitors each Saturday! Two years ago we hosted the Mid-Eastern Region Convention and I never did hear how many volunteers it took to put together that very successful convention led by Neal Anderson, MMR.

Do you have fond memories of attending our Carolina Southern Division activities? I hope so!

Let me go down a slightly different track for a few paragraphs. I want to encourage you to think about volunteering to help CSD activities so they can continue to be fun and successful. I speak from personal experience when I say, if you volunteer, you will make friends, learn much more about modeling, and have a good time. Being involved with the CSD has given me opportunities to learn so many things about model railroading and meet wonderful people. Being involved puts you in the right place at the right time, puts you in the wrong place at the right time, and can even put you in the right place at the wrong time, which has been kind of fun when I think back to those memories. I have no regrets being the CSD Treasurer over the last five years because I have met so many wonderful people who support our division. By the way, my time as Treasurer is limited and my time is running out and someone else will need to be Treasurer in January. Is this an opportunity for you to get involved more with the CSD?

Volunteer groups like the CSD, usually have a small group of volunteers that tend to run everything. That is not always good for the organization, nor is it good for the volunteers. From my observations, the CSD is blessed with a good number of volunteers, but we can always use more. In my book, the more the better. More people doing a little is much better than a few people doing a lot. Alan Hardee, our past CSD Superintendent, and Andrew Stitt our current Superintendent, in my opinion, have done well in reaching out to members when we need help. I can't talk about earlier Superintendents because Alan and Andrew are the only Superintendents I've known in the CSD. This is only my opinion based on what I see, and I can't speak for Alan and Andrew, but If you have not been asked to help, it is most likely because they don't know you are interested in helping. So let them know.

The CSD has added some exciting new faces to our CSD volunteers recently with Chad Barnette editing our Brass Pounder, Tim Rumph as Director and Alan Mitchell assuming

Program Chair after the passing of Keith Iritsky. Chad as Editor of the Brass Pounder needs articles so we can have a newsletter with lots of good information. We are not professional modelers, so professionally written articles are not required. If you're working on or recently finished a project, several of our members might be interested in what you've done. Write up something so Chad can add your article, tips, or project summary to the Brass Pounder. Tim as a Director, may need to find help for a project we want to offer to our members so if you get asked, please say yes. Alan is looking for people (similar to Chad) who have information to share with our members at our monthly meetings. It can be a class on how to build, wire, or fix something, or can be as simple as a show-and-tell time after the business session of the meeting. Alan is new to this task, so help him out if you can or have any ideas for our meetings.

While writing, re-writing, and re-writing again, these thoughts over several weeks, I found it interesting to read the June 2025 NMRA magazine where our NMRA President, Gordy Robinson wrote his monthly article, "What makes a Good Division?" He makes very good points and certainly says it better than I can. If you get a chance, go back and read it again and see where we do things well and not so well. Then consider getting involved to help the CSD do better. Lord knows, and we know, there is always room for improvement somewhere and you may be the person to bring a solution.

It was only about five years ago when I decided to be more involved in this division. I can tell you I have made some good friends and have learned so much more in those five years, than the last 40 years combined. Why? Because I interact with more CSD members as a volunteer. By talking and listening more, what I learn has made model railroading even more interesting and fun than before. It's one thing to attend Railroad Modeling University, and talk to the instructor and other class members, but I learn so much more when I meet with these same people in other settings.

Even though I am building a layout in my basement, when I decided to get active in model railroading again, I joined a couple of model railroad clubs. I originally joined to meet local model railroaders and to find out what goes on in this area. I joined a modular layout club, and I confess, have not been as involved as I planned, but what little time I have spent with them has been great. I've learned how modules are built, the maintenance effort it takes to keep them running for shows, the effort required to setup the modules, operating in a public environment, then teardown and transporting the modules back home. I have been thoroughly impressed by the club members and see how they enjoy being together.

Also, because of my involvement with the Division, I found a round robin group of modelers that operate on member layouts in their homes. The time spent operating on their layouts takes time away from me working on my own layout, but I have accomplished more on my layout recently, because of what I learn from them. As I operate on a friend's layout, I see similarities...and differences...to my layout and I ask questions about what works best and doesn't work. One of the members, Joe Skorch, set aside an extra day to teach a couple of us how to hand lay a turnout using Fast Track jigs, and with that new knowledge, I have

reworked some second hand manufactured curved turnouts on my layout, vastly improving their performance. Thanks to Joe's patience, and the other group members letting me have conversations about converting old DC locomotives to DCC during the operating sessions, I have successfully converted a few locomotives. I also managed to blow up a decoder, but that's for another article. Hey, I just talked myself into writing an article on converting old DC locomotives to DCC! Have I convinced you to write an article for our Brass Pounder or show us one of your projects at our monthly CSD meeting?

Okay. Let me take you down another track as I wrap this up. In my opinion, we have a great group of members in the Carolina Southern Division. I consider this division and its members to be an even better group than what I grew up with. How do I know? Because I'm right in the middle of this group. I'm involved with a good group of volunteers who enjoy model railroading, who enjoy being with people who love model railroading, and are willing to share their experiences, both failures and successes. Every volunteer group like this needs volunteers like them; and it needs you. People exactly like you.

So, I'll end this conversation by asking you to think about how you can get involved in this division or how to help others in this division. Whether it's just a word of encouragement, a suggestion, volunteer to help with a project, or become an elected officer or appointed official of the CSD. Different people with different modeling interests will bring more ideas into this division. That means more and different fun activities for our members. We need a cross-section of members whether you have lots of experience or very little modeling experience, you come to us with your experiences, and that is good.

Understand this please. I am not writing or speaking for the officers and officials of the Carolina Southern Division. This article is made up of my opinions and thoughts.

In closing, I encourage you to thank those volunteers I mention in this article, and the many more volunteers I failed to mention.

Applaud and help Alan Mitchell as the new clinic organizer for monthly meetings.

Applaud and help the Crew that maintains Wades Train Town in Newton.

Applaud modular clubs that keep model railroading in public areas and applaud permanent clubs that are attracting young people.

I look forward to seeing, talking, and listening to you at our Carolina Southern Division activities, and thank you for reading this to the very end.

Oh, and one last comment. I stay in touch with a couple of my dad's old club members because of the way they helped my dad continue to operate on layouts when his mind was failing. Model railroaders are a great group of people.



Dreams Come True Railroad Event

Contributed by Andrew Stitt

On the 21st of June 2025, Scott Davenport and Neal Anderson hosted the meeting of the Carolina Southern Division 12 at the Dreams Come True Railroad. Below are a few photos captured at the event by Andrew Stitt.





Joe Skorch receives his AP award for Civil Engineering

Coming Soon! A Trip to Lionel

Contributed by Chad Barnette, Editor



Who would've thunk? At least not me. I had no idea the Lionel headquarters was right in our backyard....right there in Concord, North Carolina.

Well, many thanks to John Yarbrough - he has arranged for the CSD to have a tour of the Concord Lionel factory in August. This tour is only available during the week so it will be on Wednesday 8/13/25.

Be sure to register as space is limited to the first 20 registrants.

See you there!

<http://www.carolinasouthern.org/Lionel%20Tour%20Registration.html>



2025 CSD Model Railroad Open House Saturdays

Contributed by Dave Thrams

It's getting close to celebrate National Model Railroad Month again! Can you help us celebrate by sharing your layout in November 2025? We need your help for this to succeed.

I heard loads of positive feedback from everyone last year and it didn't matter at what stage of construction the layout was at.

Is your layout under construction with benchwork and a little track? Okay!

Is your layout fully scenicked? Great!

It doesn't matter if you can run a train or not on your layout. Let's celebrate by sharing your layout for National Model Railroad Month.

If you live in the Carolina Southern Division, we have a weekend reserved for you and your layout! See the dates below and please consider opening your layout for others to stop by and see what you've accomplished and learn about your future plans for your layout. CSD members can learn from your ideas for your layout.

Let's share the World's Greatest Hobby!

If you are like many of us, and enjoy visiting model railroad layouts, these proposed dates can help you plan your visits. I say proposed because if we get more layouts this year in these areas, or if you live outside these areas and would like to share your layout with CSD members, we can rearrange this plan. The more layouts, the better!

Proposed dates:

November 1, 10 am –3 pm (Southwest) Gaston County/West CLT area

November 8 10 am –3 pm (Southeast) Waxhaw/York area

November 15, 10 am –3 pm (Northwest) Hickory/Statesville

November 22, 10 am –3 pm (North/Northeast)

No matter where you live, if you would like to share your layout and help us celebrate National Model Railroad month with our Carolina Southern Division members, please contact:

Dave Thrams at Paymaster@carolinasm.org or call (704) 747-6823

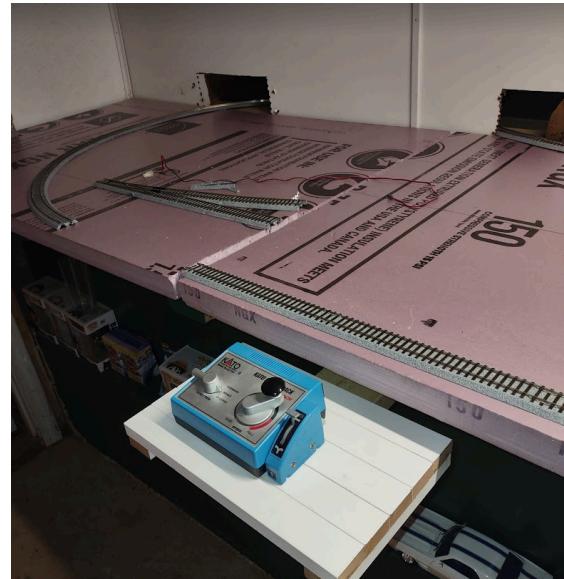
Alan Hardee at Assistsuper@carolinasm.org or call (704) 689-3867

An Idea Whose Time Has Come - Part Two

Contributed by Chad Barnette, Editor

Part two has finally arrived. In what might be described as not much progress, part two aims to highlight what has happened, with an emphasis on making it sound exciting. In all seriousness though, I have made some progress since we last met.

The first notable change from last time is I have added the 2" pink insulation foam I got from Home Depot. I shared with a couple folks the happy accident that resulted in my acquiring said foam. I went to the Home Depot with just a little bit of money in hand. As luck would have it found, bookcased along with the others, a partially broken piece of insulation. The light bulb went off - I could get a discount for this - so traped up to the front of the store and asked politely if there might be a discount for this. A man hollers from off in the distance....."Take 70% off". SEVENTY!, I think. What a lucky break. Let that be a lesson to anyone needing some foam for the layout. Just stay away from my Home Depot - I got dibs.



So I have covered the roughly 16 foot span with 2 inch foam. Although, I didn't have quite enough to reach the corner where my second balloon loop would be located. And while you can't tell from the picture, this particular corner wasn't quite so friendly as the other. The underlying bench work has a strange incline to it (part of me wants to know why and the other part of me doesn't) that inadvertently introduces a 3% grade. I know it's 3 because I had to cleanup a nasty transition from the pink foam to the white foam that caused the sectional track's incline to look terrible. So I went to tinkercad and designed a wedge to help with the transition.

Finally, I have also created a diagonal brace with a piece of 2x3 from the foam discount retailer. Because of the aforementioned strange corner dimensions, I am still determining exactly how I want to finish off the "benchwork" for this corner. The diagonal brace did allow me enough freedom to marry up both ends of the track to create the continuous running mainline. In case you're wondering, there are more turnouts to come as funds allow. That's all for this month's edition. See you later for part 3!



Digital Distractions



A new podcast (new to me) that you might enjoy is called “Around the Layout”. Hosted by Ray Arnott, the podcast explores many different facets of the hobby. Below is an excerpt from the website:

Join us as we talk to model railroaders just like you and learn about their beginnings, challenges, accomplishments and the things they love about our hobby. Come hang out with us Around The Layout and be inspired to create your own model railroading story to share.

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