

THE BRASS POUNDER



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

Volume 24 Number 2

February 2024

Division Coming Events

February meeting:
February 17th, 10AM @
the Mecklenburg
County library located
in Cornelius (21105
Catawba Avenue)

Superintendent's Corner

By Andrew Stitt

Well, we completed 2023 with the Carolina Southern Division Annual Meeting at the Newton Depot a few days ago. For me, it is very pleasing to see so many of our members attend the meeting in person, or via the internet. This shows that there is an interest in what our group does, and what it continues to do to develop plans for its members. In case you missed it, those running for re-election were voted in, as well as two new officials. Please welcome David Myers as incoming clerk, and Keith Iritsky as a new board member.

Following the election, a number of speakers talked about the various clubs and groups that they are members of in addition to the Division. I think it is very important for all to hear about things train related that are happening locally. As we go forward, this information sharing should help in advancing interest in the clubs and groups and help to spread their word through our website, and Facebook pages. I'm definitely in favor of that. Spreading the word about our hobby helps to give anyone new to our Division an idea of what is going on.

The concrete is still being mixed for this year's Division activities. As you know, we have been invited to ride on the speeders with the folks that own/lease the Red Springs & Northern. This is a cooperative effort with our neighbors at the Carolina Piedmont Division. There are still a few spaces available as of this writing. Information can be found on our website. It is our intention to have tables at both the Hickory Train show in early April, and the May train show at the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer. Neal Anderson has invited us to come out to ride the live steamers in Oakboro, probably in June. I'm also excited to say that Mecklenburg County has lifted their restrictions on use of library meeting rooms! So, starting in February, those months that are likely to have meetings in addition to special events will find themselves where we can now find space – something that was not easily done before!

RMU is coming in April! This is a fun event to attend – both to learn some things, and also to share some experiences with others. I hope all of you will consider attending. More to follow on this subject.

So, climb on board. It should be another fun year at the Carolina Southern Division!

Editor's Notes

By Chad Barnette



And we're off to the races! We're now well into 2024 and only a little more than six weeks away from the start of spring. For that I'm very excited! I was lucky enough to sign up to go to the Red Springs and Northern outing. More specifically I was happy to hear that their tracks head out deep into the country. I quite like the sections of track that go through urban sprawl and urban decay, but equally I enjoy the tranquility of the tracks that seem to go through untouched wilderness.

I also got to enjoy my first-ever in-person CSD annual meeting. I don't have the head count, but I felt like it was quite a good showing this year. The fact that we had to continually pull out more and more folding chairs was a great problem to have. I enjoyed the delicious box lunch meal from the Depot Deli but was sad to hear they're closing in just a few short weeks. It was great to catch up on the club discussions, vote on new elected officials, as well as to hear the updates from the various model railroad clubs in the area.

For those who couldn't attend, I hope to meet you in person soon. I look forward to our next meeting in Cornelius! Hope to see you there!

- Chad

Area Train Shows

**"I've got a day": CRMHA Model Train Expo –
February 16-17th, Easley, SC**

**"I've got a couple hours": NC Railroad Expo –
April 5-6th, Hickory, NC**

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

I target the 1st of each month for publication. Please submit articles for publication by the 25th of each month.

The preferred format is MS Word, but I can convert most other formats. For questions and help, email me at editor@carolinasouthern.org

Division and Regional News

By Chad Barnette

Train Town Update

Contributed by Ed Smith

Here's the January update on Wade's Legacy Room at the Newton Train Museum:

Train Town Box Score	
January 2024	
Open Houses	4
Attendance	91
Hosts: Ed Smith, Keith Iritsky, Gil Brauch, Tim Rust, Larry Paffrath, and Fred Brooks	
To volunteer, go to:	
http://carolinasouthern.org/ttvolunteerrequest.html	
(#)=frequency (r)=first time host	

During January we continue to have strong numbers even after the spike of attendance seen during the holidays. Gil even mentioned at the CSD Annual Meeting how strong the attendance at the Newton location has been compared to what is used to be. Wade's is definitely in a much better spot!

Carolina Southern Division Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Carolina Southern Division (12) of the Mid Eastern Region (MER) of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) was held on Saturday, January 20, 2024, at Newton Depot. The meeting was held on a beautiful January day – the air was cold and crisp, but that didn't stop the masses from coming out. David Myers, our newly elected CSD clerk provides the official meeting minutes below. Thanks David!

**Carolina Southern Division, Mid-East Region
National Model Railroad Association
Annual Meeting
January 20, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 by the Superintendent, Andrew Stitt.
A quorum was present.

Dave Thrams gave the Paymaster's report.

Year's beginning balance: \$8400.00

Year's ending balance: \$9600.00

He announced that the Division had revenue from received donations of model railroad materials that had been sold at trains shows.

The Superintendent made the following announcements:

1. Mecklenburg County has returned to pre-Covid policies and the county's library meeting rooms are now available free of charge, again.
2. The region reimburses the Division in membership, but the funds originate at national.
3. With the expansion of the geographical area of the Division, letters were sent to all the NMRA members added to the Division. Only one response has been received.

Gil Brauch reported on "Train Town". Ed Smith was "on duty" at the layout.

1. Attendance is holding up.
2. Volunteers are requested to help man the layout on Saturdays from 10:00 to 4:00. AP points are earned by serving. The Division website has the sign-up schedule.
3. Two additional layouts are being added to the display room.

Neil Anderson provided an update on the Achievement Program and discussed opportunities to earn AP points.

Doug Algire reported on the Railroad Modeling University (RMU). He presented a brief history of RMU and some of the clinics that have been given since RMU was first conducted. He reviewed the objectives and benefits of RMU. Agreed by consensus that the 2024 RMU will be conducted on April 20 at a location to be determined.

Joe Skorch reported that for the Nominating Committee. Nominees for positions to be filled for 2024 were:

- Superintendent: Andrew Stitt
- Assistant Superintendent: Alan Hardee
- Treasurer: Dave Thrams
- Clerk: David Myers
- Board of Directors: Keith Iritsky

A motion to close nominations was made and seconded.
The above slate was elected.

The Superintendent awarded Letters of Appreciation to the following Division members:

- Larry Paffrath
- Ed Gumphrey
- Doug Algire
- Ed Smith
- Joe Skorch

The Superintendent recognized model railroading groups represented by Division members:

1. David Manko represented the Model Railroading Center at the Newton Depot Museum. Projects for 2024 include:
 - a. Acquisition of a siding, but replacement of many ties will be required
 - b. Repair/replace the siding on the cabooses
 - c. Running electricity to the dining car
 - d. Construction of a two-track shop for restoration work
2. Tim Rumph spoke about Jack Parker and the P&W. The future of the P&W is undetermined. The agreement on the property is about to expire.
3. Gil Brauch talked of the Central Carolina N-Scalers and the joys of N scale model railroading. Their modular layout is generally set-up at the NC Transportation Museum. They support events at Spencer including the seasonal Polar Express.
4. Neil Anderson told of the Southern Piedmont Live Steamers. A Division meeting was held at a live steam site in South Carolina last summer. This year there are tentative plans for a meeting at Oakboro, east of Charlotte.
5. Ed Smith, as "Train Town" coordinator reminded the group that it was three years ago the move of the layout from Brookford began. He expressed appreciation to all who helped with the move and have been manning the layout at Newton.
6. Alan Hardee represented the Metrolina Model Railroaders. The club owns all the modules for their modular layout. They display it at several locations throughout the year to include the NC Transportation Museum, the Southern Christmas Show in Charlotte, and Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens annual Holiday Lights display. Their next display will be at the Fletcher Train Show. It is a 100% NMRA club. NMRA members are invited to join.
7. Michelle Chance represented the Concord Area Model Railroad Club. They were founded in 1992 and have membership between 20 and 40 over the years. The members work with four-foot modules. Michelle is a founding member of the CSD and gave a brief history of the Division. It was started in 1996 at the Concord Library. She recognized some of the early, influential members of the Division and displayed some of the early logos and ball caps.
8. Bob Halsey stated that the CSD should do something to honor Jack Parker.
9. Chad Barnette introduced himself as the new editor of the newsletter.

The Superintendent reported on future plans:

February: the Division meeting will be held at the Mecklenburg County Library in Cornelius on Saturday February 17 at 10 AM.

March:

1. There is an opportunity to ride speeders on the Red Springs and Northern in Red Springs NC. Spaces are still available.

2. The annual NC Railroad Expo at Hickory will be March 31 to April 1, 2024. The Division will have a table there. A possible meeting room will be investigated.

April: the annual RMU will be conducted on April 20. Location to be confirmed.

May: the annual train show at the NC Transportation Museum in Spencer.

June: tentative plans for a Division meeting at the live steam park at Oak Boro, NC.

September: annual Division picnic, location to be determined.

The Superintendent noted that tri-fold brochures promoting the Division and the NMRA have been effective and encouraged continued use of them.

The Superintendent encouraged members to complete the survey of interests to allow more effective planning of events.

Joe Skorch noted that early survey returns indicated that many members desired to visit layouts. He called attention to the NMRA website layouts welcoming visitors are listed.

Kieth Iritsky solicited ideas and volunteers for clinics for future meetings.

There was a discussion on the Division procuring electronic equipment to conduct combination in person and online meetings. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to authorize the Board of Directors to study needs and options and procure the necessary equipment.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59.

Submitted by,

David Myers
CSD Clerk



Pictured:
Superintendent
Andrew Stitt
presents certificates
of appreciation to
Larry Paffrath, Ed
Gumphrey, Doug
Algire, Ed Smith,
and (not pictured)
Joe Skorch



Some of the familiar faces at this year's CSD Annual Meeting



CSD Model Railroading Interest Survey

Submitted by Andrew Stitt, Superintendent

Results January 2024

Response to our survey, presented online in early January and presented to those attending the Annual Meeting was pretty strong. Most members took the time to completely fill out the questionnaire. The results are presented below.



56% of the respondents preferred HO scale, with another 25% preferring N scale. A wide majority are standard gauge modelers, with less than 20% also having some interest in narrow gauge. As expected, most of those responding had 30 years or more invested in the hobby, although it is pleasing to see some who are relatively new to our great hobby participating in the survey. As a result, 70% consider themselves to be either experienced or master level in their skills related to model railroading. 21% have collected equipment over the years without having a layout. 18% have equipment and some modules. 33% have equipment, some modules, and a home layout. Finally, 18% have equipment and a home layout.

When it comes down to the size of the modules or home layout, the survey results were scattered. 23% acknowledge having a very small layout. 12% have a small ping-pong table size layout. 23% have a medium sized layout, while 27% have a large layout, and 15% have a basement sized layout. The state of completion of a layout or modules had scattered answers as well. 31% are either planning a layout and/or have done some benchwork. 24% have benchwork with operable trackwork, and perhaps some scenery landforms. 10% categorize their layouts as having operable trackwork with considerable scenery and structures. 35% say their layouts are mostly completed!

27% of us are pretty much solitary modelers, while 42% like to be part of a small group if the opportunity presents itself. 68% of our respondents stated that they are currently associated with a group of modelers (in addition to CSD)- 9 different groups were listed. Finally, 21% stated that they like to operate on their or other layouts.

When the questionnaire came to asking about interest in learning aspects of the hobby, the answers were fairly consistent. At least 50% were extremely interested or interested in all of the categories listed: layout design, building benchwork, laying track, wiring and electricity, basic scenery landforms and ground cover, roads, bridges, and structures, building, detailing, and weathering rolling stock or motive power, installing, and using DCC, and designing and participating in realistic operating sessions. Roads, bridges, and structures, and wiring and electricity topped the list.

Finally, many respondents stated that they like to visit other layouts, while a somewhat smaller number listed visiting railroad related businesses and taking day trips to visit local short lines.

Again, thanks to all who responded. This definitely helps our BOD and RMU planners in seeing that those activities planned for future events are in line with our member interests. Of course, if any member comes up with an idea or opportunity to offer some activity for our members, please bring it forward to any of the above.


We Need You for RMU 2024

by Doug Algire

Planning is now under way for RMU 2024 on April 20, 2024. This will be our fifteenth Railroad Modeling University. The Carolina Southern Division of the NMRA is proud to continue this annual tradition.

This year RMU is returning to:


West Concord Baptist Church
225 Warren C. Coleman Blvd.
Concord, NC 28027



**RAILROAD
MODELING
UNIVERSITY**

BECOME A BETTER MODELER
GET ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS
MEET OTHER "TRAIN NUTS"
CLASSES FOR ALL SKILL LEVELS

APRIL 20, 2024
West Concord Baptist Church
225 Warren C. Coleman Blvd.
Concord, NC 28027
Cost: \$10 for the Day
DETAILS / REGISTRATION:
WWW.CAROLINASOUTHERN.ORG



**CAROLINA SOUTHERN DIVISION
NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSN**

We have room for forty-four (44) classes. AP Evaluation and White Elephant already consume eight class times.

Comments from previous students are:

- Great audience engagement by going around the room.
- Very knowledgeable with lots of great tips.
- I appreciated that all the clinics I attended provided handouts. This made my note taking and recall of the topic much easier and more beneficial.
- Need more time.

How can you help? Railroad Modeling University is a team effort. We need volunteers.

- **RMU Dean**. I currently fill this role. RMU Dean has overall responsibility for RMU.
- **Volunteer Coordinator**. This is open. Primarily asking and getting volunteers to help with registration, setup and tear down.
- People for the White Elephant sale table.
- People for the Division sale table. This could be the same people watching the White Elephant table. Could be more than one person and they can rotate shifts.
- At least two people for the Registration table.
- Four to six people to help setup the night before and teardown at the end of RMU.
- Instructors for each class period.

Without instructors Railroad Modeling University could not exist. The students are appreciative of the knowledge and expertise each instructor displays. Our Division benefits from having instructors volunteering their time and sharing their talents at Railroad Modeling University. The depth, breadth and variety of model and real railroading knowledge is truly exceptional in our Division.

Please consider teaching at Railroad Modeling University 2024. We have members that took a break from teaching. We would love to have you back. Some of you I have spoken to at the monthly Division meeting about coming back to teach. Others gave clinics at the MER 2022 Convention in Charlotte.

Our classes in the past included:

1. Basic Model Railroading
2. Planting Buildings
3. Scratch building Cars
4. Open Car Loads
5. Documenting Your Railroad
6. Tracks and Wheels
7. Making Wire Trees
8. Lighting the Layout
9. Track & Ballast
10. Advanced Ballasting
11. Making Scenery
12. LED Lighting

13. Build a Structure from a Magazine Article
14. Reversing Loops
15. Light, Sound & Motion
16. Background Sound
17. Multi-Function Animation Decoder
18. Tips and Tricks from a Master Model Railroader
19. AP Program & Evaluation
20. Module/Sectional building



Figure 1 – Patty Short RMU 2023, Making Wire Trees

Instructors that taught the same class a number of years may think that they no longer need to teach. All of the classes are popular. Of course, some are more popular than others. But hey, who enjoyed all of their high school and college courses?

Recently on a phone call with a friend, the discussion came around to hobbies. He knew that model trains is one of my hobbies.

He chuckled and said, "Hard to believe a man of your age PLAYS with model trains?" Notice the word play is in capital letters. That is how he said it. My reply was "Well sometimes I do play with model trains. I also enjoy and operate model trains as close to reality as the full-size trains." His comeback was that it still sounded like playing to him. I proceeded to give him a quick overview of what operation means in the model railroad world.

Our hobby supports whatever we want to do with our model trains. If we want to watch them run in circles, we can do that. If we want to move freight and passengers like the full-size version, we can do that. Whatever floats your boat as the saying goes.

I am sure many of you have run into someone that may have said something similar to you as the man in my meeting. Maybe you took issue with it and maybe not. Typically, the person making the comment has not had the chance to see a layout that supports operation. Now you have an opportunity to let someone in on the fun we have.

The education should not be heavy handed, nor should we take on a superior attitude. Instead, it is a wonderful opportunity to help someone understand what we do and why. Hint, Hint, think RMU. They might become a convert to model railroading or support someone in their family that is a model railroader.



Figure 2- Michele Chance RMU 2023, Build a Structure from a Magazine Article

There seems to be three type of model railroaders. Let us take a look at each of them. These are my general observations so feel free to disagree.

The Arm Chair. The arm chair model railroader typically does not have any room at all for a layout or even a shelf layout. They support the hobby by subscribing to magazines, purchases books, memorabilia, and other related items. They attend local train shows but usually do not travel out of their local area. They usually do not join a club or the NMRA. For them this enough. They enjoy model railroading.

The Involver. The Involver is the largest segment. They support the hobby by subscribing to magazines, purchasing books, memorabilia, rolling stock, locomotives, structures and other related items. They usually have a layout, shelf layout and/or modules. Their layouts/modules are well detailed, look nice and operate well. They attend local train shows and on occasion travel out of their local area to other shows and events.

They may join a club, the NMRA or both. When they do join, they are active and participate in the club or NMRA activities. They might give a clinic at their club or local NMRA Division. They may run for an office. They enjoy model railroading.

The Rivet Counter. The Rivet Counter is just what the name means. They examine every model, structure, and layout for 100% faithful reproduction of the real world. They are sticklers for details on everything. And I mean everything. They do not know the meaning of "just enough is ok".

They support the hobby by subscribing to magazines, purchasing books, memorabilia, rolling stock, locomotives, structures and other related items. Many have layouts that are finely detailed.

They usually join a club, the NMRA or both. When they do join, they are very active and participate in the club or NMRA activities. They usually give a clinic at their club, local NMRA Division or national show. Many run for an office both locally and within the NMRA. They enjoy model railroading.

Please remember these are generalities from my personal observations. You may see yourself a little in each type. Most people will have one type that dominates their model railroading style. None of them are better than the others as each type benefits our hobby.

Sometimes, *The Rivet Counter* frustrates *The Arm Chair*. Sometimes, *The Involver* frustrates *The Rivet Counter*, etc. You see where I am going with this? If you are an *Arm Chair* type embrace *The Involver* and *The Rivet Counter* and vice versa. All is good!

The bottom line is our hobby has room for everyone no matter what type of model railroader they are. Welcome all of them with open arms. Embrace them, nurture them and you and they will carry our hobby forward. We all enjoy model railroading.



Figure 3- Roy Becker RMU 2023, Speed Matching DCC Locomotives

These are the people, young and old, male and female that attend Railroad Modeling University. Mark your smart phone calendar now for Saturday April 20, 2024.

Once again, please consider teaching at Railroad Modeling University 2024. We have members that took a break from teaching. We would love to have you back!

We would like to have as many class periods filled by March 1, 2024. This will allow the Division to start advertising at train shows, hobby shops and on-line.

Please contact me at dalgire@comporium.net if you would like to continue teaching or have a new class idea.

Happy Railroading!

Amherst Train Show 2024

By Ed Smith, MMR

Like many of you in the hobby, we consider the train show a cherished event. Over the years I've attended many shows: local, regional, and national. Most, if not all, have been a good experience, sometimes expensive, but always a good day in the hobby. Over the years I've heard stories about the annual Amherst train show in Springfield, MA, but I had never attended. Two things have been a deterrent. First, it's a long drive from NC to MA. But, more importantly, the weather in Springfield, MA in January can be brutal. That said, this was the year to go.

My friends, Keith Iritsky and Andrew Thompson, both fellow Newton Museum volunteers and CSD members, and I decided late last year this was the year to go. Keith and his wife decided to drive, but Andrew and I were hesitant about that option and decided to take Amtrak. So, on the Thursday before the show, we started our adventures. Leaving Hickory at 4 am, we drove to Raleigh to catch the Silver Star at 9:04 am, destined for a Washington D.C. arrival at 3:04 pm. We had a 5:05 pm connecting Northeast Regional train to Springfield, MA, arriving at 12:30 am at our destination. Everything was uneventful except for a one-hour delay outside Richmond, VA, when our train ran over tires left on the track. Fortunately, the total train inspection was successful and our two-hour window between trains was sufficient.

After arrival at our hotel and a short night's rest, we were ready to begin our weekend. At the NMRA hotel, we attended the portion of the annual BOD meeting open to members. There were approximately 30 NMRA members, from all regions, worldwide, and special invitees around a large table, discussing all facets of our organization and hobby. Some discussions were mundane, but occasionally, they got heated. The two things that stick in my mind were the topics of future national conventions. With Long Beach in 2024 and now Michigan in 2025, already decided, Chattanooga, TN, was decided upon for 2026, and a presentation was given by the West Coast Region for Tacoma, WA, in 2027. Also, at the NMRA hotel, if desired, you could have signed up, at additional cost, for clinics that ran all day on Thursday and Friday. As

the day wound down, the 36° temperature shortened any sightseeing, so we had dinner and went back to our hotel for a good night's rest before the train show.

Our Saturday started early, around 8:30 am, with us gathering at the shuttle pick-up site. Weather conditions were 36° and dry, but it didn't deter the ever-expanding group at the site (pic 1). I never expected what was in store for me. We arrived at the Eastern States Exposition grounds at around 9 am, the opening time. The site is huge. The show was in 4 large buildings, one with a large annex that housed many of the modular and club displays (pic 2, 3). From the opening bell to the end of the day, the crowd never stopped (pic 4, 5). On the first day, attendance was reported at well over 15,000. There were well over 300 vendors, many more tables and displays, and over 40 club or modular layouts, filling all 4 buildings. The map shows the vendor layouts (pic 6). The venues were so packed both days, that Andrew and I went separate ways and re-united for lunch at one of many food outlets, and again for our shuttle ride back at the end of each day. We never did see the Iritskys. But I did see fellow members Dick Bronson and his wife at their RR-Cirkits table and Rick Beam in one of the venues.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

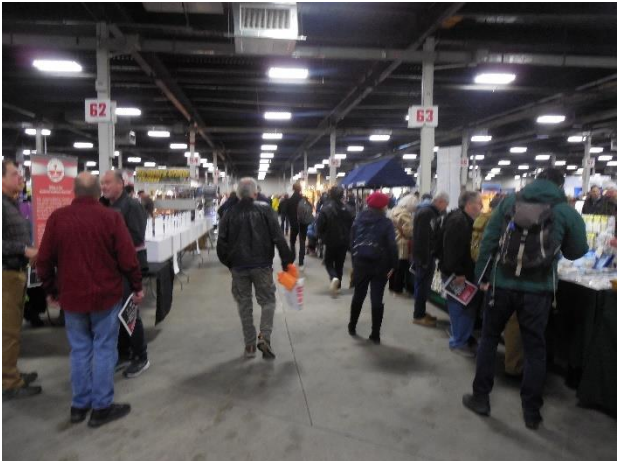


Photo 4



Photo 5

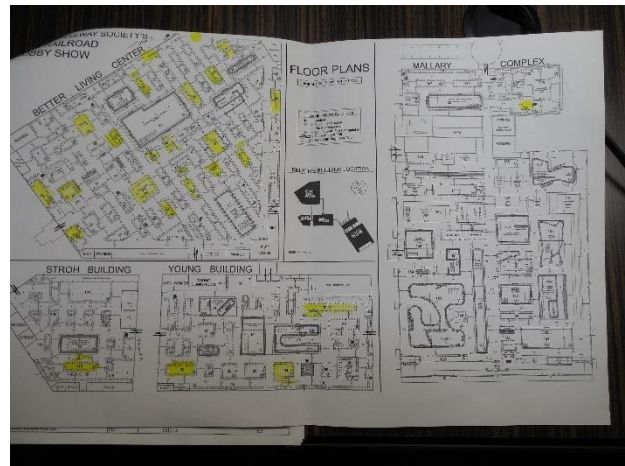


Photo 6

I really can't describe the experience. You can view videos of the event on YouTube. Everything you can imagine in the hobby was there. Stuff you need to buy and stuff you don't need and buy anyway. I know this for several reasons. Of all the things I purchased that I could haul back home, two stand out. I bought 5 Intermountain 40' Erie boxcars for \$30. I told myself I didn't need more rolling stock, but at that price, I had to buy them. Well, when I got home, I realized I already had 3 of the cars. I'll have to re-decal. Next, I found a great Erie piece of art, so I bought it. I have a small gallery growing in my train room, and as usual, I just found out I have this piece. I think a good suggestion for the show would be to have a UPS booth for shipping, *but I believe my wife already advised and nixed that idea.*

There were venues for everything in the hobby (pic 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14), from Z-scale to Legos and larger, details, cast, 3-D printed, Laser-cut, etc., building kits, new and old, the new popular laser-cut to Fine Scale Miniatures, historical societies, railroad hats, shirts, jackets, etc., to name a few, and I mean a few. I was astounded by the volume of products and the number of venues. This is truly the Mecca of train shows. If you have a chance, you should attend at least once. But the stark reality of the weather (pic 15) and the long journey can be daunting. Would I do it again? Most definitely. It's the best.



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12



Photo 13



Photo 14

Well, that's it. Andrew and I boarded the Amtrak at 4 am Monday for our 20-hour return trip (pic 16). A side note as we walked from our hotel to the Springfield train station at 3 am on Monday in the cold and ice, I couldn't help but wonder what the passing motorists thought about the two homeless guys toting all their bags and belongings. It was a great adventure.

You should do it.
Ed



The Workbench Wing

Here in the Workbench Wing, we take a peek at each member's workbench. From the organized to the chaotic, here we capture the beauty of where the magic happens. For our second-ever submission, we have for your viewing pleasure Ed Gumphrey's workbench.

Here we see what our workbenches all look like from time to time (and for a lot of us....most of the time). You know this is the perfect image to capture the chaos of the hobby. There are so many moving components (literally and figuratively) in model railroading. From scenery to electrical to kitbashing and beyond, the amount of "stuff" required to make it all happen is astronomical. Here's what I admire about this photo – from what I can see, everything is at least being kept on the workbench surface! The floor surrounding the workbench is completely free of any overflow. Thanks so much Ed for being our first ever volunteer to share!



That's New(ton) To Me

By Chad Barnette

As I was putting together the issue this month, it occurred to me that I have now been to Newton, North Carolina several times now. Most of the time for the sole purpose of attending an event with the Carolina Southern Division – and, strangely, another time to get our passports before we went on our anniversary trip to Italy. There are definite advantages to Newton being a little on the quieter side of things and being able to get a passport in the tail end of the Covid years proved to be one of those things.

What I realized about Newton is that I really know nothing at all about it when it comes down to it. I think maybe I owe it to the town to learn a bit about it if I'm going to traipse through there every now and then. I always had it in my head that when I see what I presume to be a railroad town, that its existence is due to the pre-existence of the railroad. Of course, this is the case sometimes, but other times the towns were already there. And that is the case here – Newton began its formation as the county seat of Catawba county back in 1843 when the first courthouse was constructed. It wouldn't be until 1855 when the town charter was created. The town was set up utilizing a gridiron plan that was formed about the courthouse. The town boundaries were exactly 1,000 feet from the courthouse in all directions.

Initially the main draw for folks to settle in Newton was the courthouse. Government activities, cultural activities, and trading were what drove the growth in the early years. In 1855 the North Carolina legislature established an act that created the Western North Carolina Railroad company. The initial route for the railroad would take it from Salisbury, North Carolina to Morganton, North Carolina. Part of the law allowed bonds purchasers dibs on where the line would go. Poor Newton must not have purchased enough of those bonds and the route would pass to the north of town. The line was constructed between 1858 and 1863. Luckily, a group advocated for a three-mile spur to connect to the main line.

With the spur in place, development accelerated further and further outward from the courthouse, and naturally a lot of industry surrounded the spur. There's a lot more to discuss about the different industries through the years in Newton. That'll have to wait for another article. However, there's one more thing that is fascinating about the rise and decline of downtown Newton. Turns out both were driven by the location of the courthouse. The rise of Newton was spurred by the construction of the courthouse, and ultimately the beginning of downtown Newton's decline began in the 1970's when the courthouse functions were relocated to a new spot on the 321 bypass. Both the courthouse and the railroad seem to be equally strong forces in the community.

I hope you enjoyed this little foray into the history of Newton. Clearly, I have only scratched the surface here, but I think knowing what I know now will give me reason to pause and give more than just a passing glance to my surroundings as I pass through on my way to see all the fine folks of the Carolina Southern Division. That's Newton to me!

CLOSING PAGE BONUS



(c) 1997 - Eugene Austin

Newton Depot is moved to its present location to preserve it for years to come.

Division Brass

<u>Superintendent</u>	Andrew Stitt	superintendent@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Asst. Superintendent</u>	Alan Hardee	assistsuper@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Clerk</u>	NEW David Myers	clerk@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Paymaster</u>	David Thrams	Paymaster@carolinasouthern.org
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<u>Director 2026</u>	Joe Skorch	director2@carolinasouthern.org
<u>Director 2024</u>	NEW Keith Iritsky	director3@carolinasouthern.org
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