

THE BRASS POUNDER

Newsletter of the Carolina Southern Div, Mid-Eastern Region, National Model Railroad Assoc.
Volume 6, Number 1 April 2006

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The division membership and friends met at the Box Car Grill on January 21st for the traditional annual business meeting. A good turnout of members and guests made for an enjoyable meeting. See the division website for full minutes of the meeting.

The principal business carried out at this year's meeting was elections and appointments for the 2006 year. Fred Miller has resigned his positions with CS Div 12 as clerk, newsletter editor, web master, and AP Chair. This was due to his increased responsibilities as MER Business Manager taking all his time. Four members will fill Fred's former positions: Michele Chance (newsletter editor), Jack Haynes (clerk), and Gil Brauch (web pages), and Dave Chance (AP chairman). Fred was then elected as director. Dick Bronson, (pay master) and Jack Parker, (assistant superintendent), will remain the same for the coming year. Jack will continue to work on membership along with help from all of us. Richard Knight, our superintendent, rang the bell of praise, and everyone chimed in, that last year was a good year and this year we will keep it rolling and expand a little.

The group adjourned to visit three layouts. All visitors were invited to share in fellowship and to come again and consider joining the Carolina Southern Division.

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Rick Knight, Superintendent, CS Div. 12

Thanks to everyone who turned out for the annual meeting and layout tour on January 21st! I know we all had a hoot of a time! And our hats are off to Gil Brauch –

for arranging the layout tour and for his home layout, to Bob Weaver for his layout, to the Central Carolina N scalers for their modules, and to Scott Teague for his layout. What a great time – and I know I came home with a few new ideas. Although those of us in popular scales did take a bit of static from the N Scale folks....

What's down the tracks for us? My plan is to have at least one activity each month. Some will be a lot more formal than others. In February, for example, there is no scheduled function – but there is a TRAIN SHOW at the Cabarrus Arena. It hasn't been particularly well promoted, but that's another story. And I know that the local modular clubs are not planning to attend with their complete layouts; each of them has made repeated attempts to contact the show management to arrange participation and none of them has yet to hear a thing back.

I'm going to be there – promoting THE WORLD'S GREATEST HOBBY, and looking for a bargain or two. I hope everyone will come out, just to support the hobby in general. As you well know, it would seem to the casual observer that the hobby is dead in this area. The only model railroad store in Charlotte is gone; must mean that Charlotte can't support one? The "big" train shows (GATS and Greenberg) don't come here any more; must mean this is a dead market? But nothing could be further from the truth. The demise of "Trains, Ltd." was not due to the lack of support of the Charlotte modeling community. The successor to GATS and Greenberg is the promoter of the February show.

The four Hobby Lobby stores in our market area sold a ton of boxed train sets this Christmas – and did the same last Christmas. So did Little Choo Choo Shop. And the HobbyTown USA stores sold a bunch of boxed sets. I personally heard from folks that work at some of these stores that they could have sold a bunch more boxed sets, if they'd been able to get them. There are a LOT of people in our market with a fascination with trains.

Look on our website at the TIMETABLE section, and note the upcoming train shows within an hour or two driving time. There's a show in Asheville in early March, and one in Hickory in early April. (And another in Concord in June.) I'd encourage each and every one of you to get out and go to these shows. Last year, I was at both the Asheville and the Hickory shows and they were very well attended. I spent a couple of hours wandering the floor at each of them – and I was surprised at how few people I saw that I knew. I might have seen a total of five people at the two shows that I knew from my various wanderings in the hobby. It was the same this past Fall when Chris Christenbury and I went out to the show in Hendersonville.

Why do I go to the shows? I know, it costs money just to get in the door. But it's less than I'd spend to see a movie in a theater. And it's usually better entertainment for a much longer time span. And the money, at least in the three cases listed above, goes to support local clubs in the hobby.

I go to meet folks. I like to wander around and chat with vendors and exhibitors and fellow customers. I always learn something. And the exchange of ideas is great.

I go to gather ideas. As I wander the aisles, I try to look at everything, even in scales that I don't model. Whether it's on a modular layout or on a vendor's table, maybe something in S scale has an application I can use. It might be an added detail – or a weathering technique – or some unique twist. I carry a legal pad and

a pen so I can make notes and sketches. Who knows if I'll every use the idea – but it's in inventory, in case I do need it.

I go to attend the seminars and clinics, if they're offered. The person presenting the seminar or clinic usually has more expertise in the subject than I do, so it's a chance to improve on my modeling skills.

I go to just wander around. Tom Peters made a huge amount of money offering advice to business owners. One of his concepts was called "management by walking around." It was a blinding flash of the obvious. A manager who leaves his office and wanders around the business, observing and talking with employees, will be more successful than a manger who never budes from his desk. The same is true for us. If you don't get up and get out of your train room....

So I go to all the shows I can. No, I haven't yet made it up to Timonium. But I do have plans to make plans to go.

And if you know of a train show that is not listed on the TIMETABLE, please let us know!

Back to what's down the track for us... we're going to be meeting at the Lancaster & Chester Railroad on March 4th. Their office, in downtown Lancaster, is in an old freight house. On the second floor there is a museum that's excellent. The walls are covered with pictures. The display cabinets are full. And there's a lot of fun stuff. Plus, in the middle there's an HO layout of the L&C, with all of the industries served by the L&C.

And (as of this writing) the two private cars, the J.P. Henderson and the Golden Tower, are scheduled to be at the office and open for tours. Of course, if someone comes along and charters them, they'll be MIA. But there are other cars to see. And the shops. If you want a preview, go to www.landcrailroad.com.

We will also be holding a Model Railroad University – a day when we can get together and put on a whole range of clinics and 'how to' presentations. "Show

and Tell” was always one of my favorite subjects.

And how about some rail fanning. There’s nothing like a day spent doing research! And we’ve got a whole lot of great spots within decent driving time. I don’t think this is something the Division will do as a group – but I sure am encouraging folks to talk it up. As we talk to other folks about ideas, maybe they’ll get interested and want to go with us. It’s always more fun when there’s a car full!

Have I got your interest? I hope so. I’ll see you – next to the tracks!

THE DIVISION BRASS

Superintendent..... Richard Knight
Asst. Superintendent..... Jack Parker
Clerk..... Jack Haynes
Paymaster..... Dick Bronson
Director 2008..... Fred Miller
Director 2007..... Michele Chance
Director 2006..... Bill Jennings

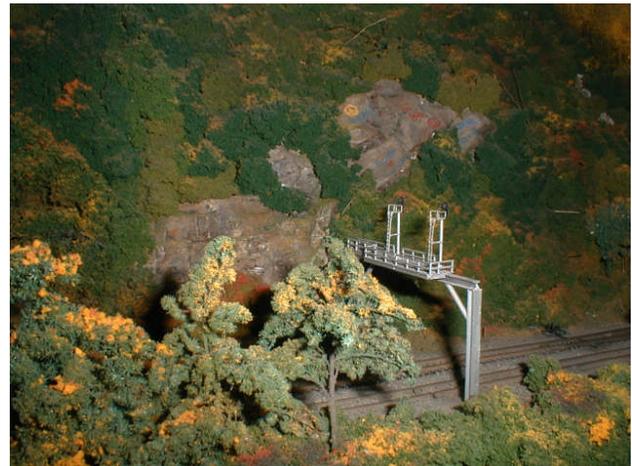
Membership Chairman... Jack Parker
AP Chairman..... Dave Chance
Newsletter..... Michele Chance
Webmaster..... Gil Brauch



Swimming by the bridge
on Bob Weaver’s Rail Road



Judging one of Gil Brauch’s RR scenes



Rocks with graffiti on Scott Teague’s RR

MODEL RAILROADERS OPEN THEIR LAYOUTS TO DIVISION 12

Many thanks to Bob Weaver, Gil Brauch, and Scott Teague for opening their layouts for our group to enjoy and learn. The Hickory area is alive with model railroading. We had the pleasure of seeing the wonderful achievements of model railroaders in “N” scale and “HO” scale. Everyone should see the Norfolk Southern entry doors into Scott’s layout. Our hats are off to these fine model railroaders who extended both southern and model railroading hospitality to the CS division members and friends.

LANCASTER AND CHESTER RR OPENS MUSEUM, PASSENGER CARS, AND SHOP TO DIVISION 12

Many thanks to the employees and owners for opening the museum and the shops to our club members. We enjoyed touring the museum and asking questions about the Springmaid line. We enjoyed seeing private cars and the work being done to restore them for present day touring. We enjoyed see the maintenance shop and looking down the throat of those big engines. After such a day of heaven we partook of local food and adjourned to go home and dream awhile.



L & C's JP Henderson passenger car

COMING EVENTS

April 22, 2006, Cherryville, NC is our next CS Division 12 meeting. The tour of the Alexander Railroad has been postponed and will be rescheduled for a later date. We will meet at the Cherryville Station on Depot Street at 10:00 am. If you are on time, there's a good chance of seeing the morning coal drag. We will tour the station, the small museum, the layouts in the baggage shed (very large HO, good sized O27, and an overhead G) and watch the traffic going by, etc. Layout tours include:

Barry Fichter's O Scale basement empire based on Erie and Lackawana railroad. Dick Schafer's HO freelance railroad, a work in progress. Bob Fanter's HO

layout. Directions to the layouts will be given at the Cherryville Station.

To get to Cherryville take I-85 to exit 17 (US 321) in Gastonia, go north on US 321 about 2.1 miles to NC 275 (Dallas/Cherryville exit) Go west on NC 275 about .8 miles to NC 279. Go west to Cherryville, where it becomes East Main Street. You will parallel the train tracks as you enter Cherryville. Depot Street is the third intersection after you start paralleling the tracks. It is about 12 miles from US 321 to Depot Street.

[Check our website for further info.](#)

NATIONAL CONVENTION IN MER REGION

Don't pass up the opportunity to attend the **Independence Junction** NMRA convention in Philadelphia, PA, July 2-July 9, 2006. Meet wonderful people, explore many prototype railroad sites, enjoy live clinics, model railroad displays, and go on tour of many great model railroad layouts. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity. More information can be found at: <http://www.ij2006.org/>

NMRA ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

DAVE CHANCE, DIV. 12 AP CHAIR

Three Golden Spike awards and three AP awards were earned since the previous issue of *The Brass Pounder*. Our Division has been doing very well in the AP Program. The awards are as follows:

- Golden Spike – Jack Monette, Feb 2006
 - Golden Spike–Carl Baumgart, Feb 2006
 - Golden Spike – Ed Locklin, April 2006
 - Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical – Jack Monette, Mar. 2006
 - Master Builder Scenery – Gil Brauch, Mar.2006
 - Chief Dispatcher– Gil Brauch, April 2006
- Congratulations! Keep those achievements coming!

The Achievement Program is designed to help the model railroader improve his/her skills. It is not designed to intimidate us or force us to enter NMRA

contests. Some of our work will need to be judged but not all of it and the judging can take place at a contest, at a local meeting, or individually in your home by local judges. Our division has at least four NMRA judges so that's not a problem. To see who in our division has earned AP awards look in the AP section of our WEB Page: www.bytedesign.com/CSDiv/apcontest.htm#APmembers

Think how nice it will be when you can see your name in the matrix and even in the MER's *The Local* and the NMRA's *Scale Rails* magazines. This occurs each time you receive an award so get started. Most of you that have a layout or a module may already qualify for a "Golden Spike" award. Some of you may already qualify for "Master Builder-Scenery and or Model Railroad Engineer-Electrical just by having built a layout. Contact me and we will discuss the documentation for each award you qualify for or want to work for. If you have served as an officer or director at the National, Regional, or Division level, you are on your way to an "Association Volunteers" award. Committee chairman or member, newsletter editor, NMRA contest judge, show or help show a layout at an NMRA convention or NMRA sponsored event also counts toward your "Association Volunteer" award. Have you started yet? Why not? Give me a call (704)933-4200, send me an email loconut@carolina.rr.com just talk to me at a division meet, at the hobby shop or anywhere else you see me. I will talk with anyone who wants to participate or just learn more about the AP program. Four of the awards listed above came as a result of talking with me about what needed to be done to get an award. You can do it too!

***INSTALLING A SOUNDTRAX PNP
DECODER IN A BACHMANN 3 TRUCK
SHAY***

BY Dave Chance, AP Chair, CS Div. 12

The final result of this experience was very satisfying and the owner has been

very happy. It didn't start out this well or there wouldn't be much of a story so let's start at the beginning.

The owner had purchased the decoder with the intent of installing it himself since it was (and still is) advertised as a PNP (plug and play) sound decoder complete with speaker. He soon discovered that in this case, PNP must mean something else like "purchase and pray". The only thing that is "plug" is the decoder does indeed plug into a DCC socket in the tender. First the tender shell, a metal casting, must be removed from the tender frame. Next the "coal" weight must be removed from the coalbunker and discarded (keep for other uses). The tender must be removed from the locomotive as well as the truck on the tender and the rear of the locomotive. Then a hole must be drilled in the bottom of the tender for the speaker wires to exit. Another hole must be drilled in the bottom of the coalbunker. The speaker wires must be threaded through the two holes and soldered to both the decoder and speaker. The instructions tell you to route the wires under the decoder and down through the hole in the bottom of the tender frame previously drilled. You are instructed to solder the wires to the speaker leaving only enough wire to allow the tender to move from side to side. Now we are told to "glue" the speaker and baffle into the coalbunker with silicon sealer (RTV). Not having any RTV, I glued it in using Micro Crystal Clear and it worked fine.

Now we are told to re-install the tender shell with a very short note to watch for pinched wires. At this point, I'd like to add, the installation should be checked before putting the tender shell back on! As I put the tender shell back in place, I checked the wire and looked fine. The shell was a little difficult to get off so I didn't give a second thought when it was difficult to get back in place. Finally I got the screw in and tightened up. Still everything looked ok. Note I said looked ok. I put the loco on the program track and proceeded to check the

programming to make sure no shorts were present. All looked well so on to the track. The loud hissing startled me so much I jumped derailing the loco. Again I placed it on the track, wow! It was obvious, I thought, the volume needed to be reduced. Now, I discovered that I couldn't change the volume. I went on to check the whistle and bell. I could hear both but the hissing nearly covered them up. When I advanced the throttle, the loco moved forward. I reversed it and it moved backward as I commanded. What could be wrong!

I decided something was wrong and I should call Soundtrax. The tech support man was on vacation so I talked to the engineer. He suggested several things to try and if the problem still persisted, I should call back the following week and talk with tech support. I tried all his suggestion to no avail. Now, I will say his suggestions all were based on the presumption that if the loco followed my DCC commands, the decoder was ok and I had made no mistakes, so the sound amplifier was probably bad.

I called tech support and explained the problem to him. He had not been advised of my problem. The very first thing he suspected turned out to be the problem but I had to hang up to try it. He said to remove the tender shell and check for a pinched wire. The wire wasn't pinched! It was completely mashed and shorted to the chassis. It fried the sound amplifier. It cost \$35.00 plus shipping and a long six weeks or so to get the decoder repaired. A small cost compared to the cost of a new decoder, over \$100 at that time. I suggested to them that it was my fault and I was willing to pay for the repair, that some minor changes to their installation manual could have prevented the problem from occurring. First, the very short note to watch for pinched wires should be in **bold**

type and emphasized as a **caution**, not just a note. Next, the instructions should state very clearly exactly where the holes should be drilled, and that they should be deburred. The edges of the holes should be rounded to prevent future wire chaffing. The indicated spot to drill forces the wires to be pinched. I was only able to prevent pinching by rerouting the wires under the existing tender PC board and rounding the edge of the hole. They acknowledged the manual is not as good as it could be but made no promise to correct it.

I have since installed other Soundtrax decoders and have been completely satisfied. Just listen to my Alco RS3, but that is the subject of another article, including how to build a speaker enclosure to fit in the cab.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

The BrassPounder needs good articles by our members for publishing. AP points will be given for all articles about model railroading or relating to model railroading, such as a article about a prototype car or locomotive with drawings and/or photos that can be used to build or detail a model of same. The points can be used toward AP awards for either "Association Volunteer" or "Author." Whether or not you are writing for an AP award, we need articles with good model railroading or related content. If you are unsure about how to go about it, contact the newsletter editor, Michele Chance (704)933-4200 or email to: michelejc@carolina.rr.com Articles about painting, decaling, detailing, constructing, etc., rolling stock, structures, scenery, operation, are all good subjects. There are many subjects that our members are just waiting for someone to share. So, think about writing an article for our newsletter, you won't be sorry!

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