



The Mail Car

Newsletter of the St Lawrence Division – NMRA

Issue no. 57 – January 2010

St. Lawrence Division web site: www3.sympatico.ca/gd.knowles/sld/sld_index.htm

From the Superintendent's Desk

By Peter Joyce

Belated Season's Greetings! I hope Santa was good to everyone, and I look forward to our "show and tell" in January.

Our November 28th meeting was very well attended. Bob Farquhar presented his clinic on "Waterfalls" and showed slides of the very impressive models on show at the Craftsman Structures Show held in Boston. Peter Nesbitt spoke on track laying, and we visited two layouts in the afternoon – Tom Hood's *Canadian Northern Railway* and Geoff Chase's *Wakefield Valley Railway*. Thanks to both for opening their layouts to the SLD board.

At the time of writing this column I still have not received Minutes from the NFR Executive Meeting held in October, so I cannot report on the status of a Spring Convention. Neither can I offer comment on the thought of holding a Model Railroading 101 type day, except to say that should one be organized Alex Binkley has offered to be head of publicity, and that CARM is

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Doug's Dream

By Grant Knowles

I have known Doug Pelkola for many years, a common face at both OVAR and the SLD. Doug has helped many of us with building our railroads yet he did not have one of his own. Rumour has it he had attempted a number of times over the years but never managed to progress too far in these endeavours.

Now that Doug has finished building his new home, it was time to help Doug realise his dream! In designing his house, Doug wisely set aside an 18ft square room in the basement for the Model Railroad with the potential to expand later, the real challenge Doug found though was settling on a track plan.

Doug had a few key criteria that he was sticking to for this dream railroad. These were:

- Large radius curves to support full length passenger cars (min 46 inch radius),
- Capacity to handle prototype length trains (app. 10 passenger cars):
- High deck height, app. 50 inches above floor:
- Long passing sidings to handle the long trains;
- Hidden staging to "stage" the trains.

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Alamosa Oil Depot built from a plaster kit by Grant Knowles. For more on the Plaster Kits 101 program, please turn to page 6.

Photo: Grant Knowles

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September Issue - August 15

November Issue - October 15

January Issue - December 15

Special thanks to Beate Herzig for proof-reading and general nit-picking

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prepared to assist us. Since I now likely will be "hors de combat" in the Spring (another knee replacement) I do not wish to take on this task, but I will support anyone else who wishes to do so.

Coming up in January we have our second day of working on our plaster kits (Jan 9th) and our regular meeting (Jan 30th), both at Emmanuel United Church.

There will be elections this spring, so if any of you wish to serve please speak to Stan Conley, who is charged with the task of finding replacements for retiring Executive members. There is much talent within our ranks, and nobody should be shy about taking their turn to serve.

Layout Tour

By Andreas Mank

At the last SLD meeting, Tom Hood and Geoff Chase opened their layouts for the membership. Both these layouts had been available for viewing before, but it is exciting to come back and review the progress made.

Geoff Chase is modelling the freelance Wakefield Valley Railway. As Geoff started operating his medium sized layout, the lack of a staging yard became apparent. Recently, the Wakefield Valley "tunnelled" into the workshop area and into a new staging yard. The tracks into staging can be seen in the center of the picture below leading into the wall. Geoff's staging is quite ingenious and the author is particularly interested, as I had been thinking about a similar approach for the staging arrangements on my own layout.

The staging yard consists of a 5 track sector plate. All the tracks terminate into a turntable which allows for turning of units and run-around. The sector plate pivots at the rear of the turntable and is moved by hand. To smooth the movement of the lengthy sector plate, Geoff installed wide styrene strips at the support points. The result is very convincing and smooth moving. To top it off, he installed a flip up cover to protect the trains from dust, particularly as it is installed in his workshop.

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Staging on the Wakefield Valley Railroad, clockwise from top left:

Turntable at the pivot end of the sector plate

Entry into Staging (from staging yard)

The sector plate runs on styrene strips to decrease friction

The staging yard has a flip down cover to protect from dust

Photos: Andreas Mank



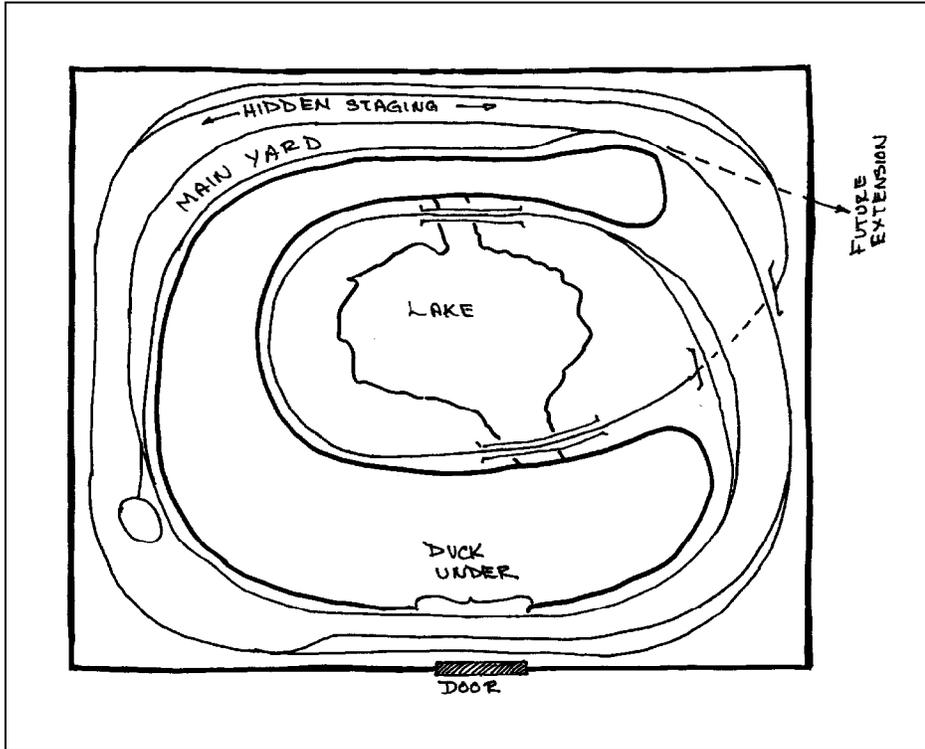
Tom Hood is modelling the Canadian Northern in 1948 – if it had survived as an independent company. The motive power is mostly steam and almost all are sound equipped.

The line starts in the big city and runs through the Danforth industrial area as seen in the photo on the left. As the line progresses further into Northern Ontario the distance between towns becomes large. Tom has managed to really convey the feeling of isolation in this section. After running through another division point yard, the line finally reaches an inland port with car ferry service.

More photos on page 6

Photos: Andreas Mank

Doug spent many months drafting up track plans all to be critiqued and assessed by his buddies whose feedback was not always very rosy! Poor Doug was sent back to the drawing board time and again to rethink his designs. Before we took our seasonal break from Model Railroading activities last spring, we laid down the law to Doug – we will commence building his layout come September so he had better have the track plan settled by then! Well as luck would have it, other commitments for our time pushed the start date until after Thanksgiving allowing Doug some more time to second guess his track plan. Luckily all was settled when we showed up on his door step with tools in hand.



Though we did not (and still do not) have a firm schedule in hand, my personal objective was to have all the track work in place and functional by next summer thus allowing Doug to run his prototype length trains around to his hearts content. The scenery could be added later at his own pace.

Assembly of the bench work started as soon as we settled on the final rail height which had to be high enough that the average person would be watching the trains more from the side than from on top. The highest rail height was set at 54 inches, quite a bit higher than the typical 43 inches.

As illustrated in the diagram on the left, the main line essentially travels around the perimeter of the room twice with a loop around a lake in the middle of the room. The main line is interrupted in a few locations with passing sidings and the main yard is located opposite the doorway. A Duck Under is required where the tracks cross the entrance way and provisions have been made to expand the layout through a wall at a future date.

The perimeter bench work is a box frame design that is attached to the wall studs at the rear and diagonal braces to the lower wall hold up the front edge of the layout. With this design, the whole layout hangs off the walls with no legs present to interfere with feet, etc. The central island was built with an L Girder design. The Photo on the left shows Doug busy laying cork roadbed in the back right corner of the room with the island bench work being visible in the foreground.

Doug chose to go with a very solid track sub roadbed comprised of 5/8 inch fir plywood held in place with risers. On top of this we laid two layers of cork before installing the code 70 flex track. The lower level is made from O scale cork roadbed followed with an upper layer made from HO scale cork roadbed. This double tiered approach will provide the prototypical double stepped ballast profile found on class 1 railroads.





The Photo on the left shows David Steer busy installing the flex track on top of the cork. We are experimenting with a new fastening approach where the track is set in a thin bed of silicon sealant. So far this approach is working out very well though it does require careful cutting and pre-bending of the track before gluing in place.

Before we knew it, Christmas was rapidly closing in so we set a personal challenge to have enough track in place so that Doug could run a train come Christmas day! The last Photo (below left) shows Doug grinning from ear to ear from running his first train on December 23rd. It may have been for all of 12 feet, but it was so rewarding to see that train rolling under its own steam, or, electrons. Not bad considering the room was butt naked 9 weeks earlier!



We still have a long way to go to complete the whole roadbed, but we're now under a full head of steam so watch out! Of course, it has not been smooth sailing as we had to readjust the roadbed height once already to gain the necessary height to pass over a lower track, then a method of train detection on the hidden tracks needs to be designed and installed before the higher front tracks can be installed, etc. Always a lot of issues to resolve and decisions to make.

Suffice to say that Doug's Dream is finally coming together through the assistance of three overly enthusiastic (and sometimes opinionated) friends. We will attempt to keep you posted on our progress as we march forward.

NMRA Dates

SLD Meetings		NFR-NMRA Convention	
January 30, 2010	Emmanuel United Church		TBD
			SLD Workshops
			January 9, 2010
January 30, 2010	Emmanuel United Church		February 27, 2010
March 27, 2010	Emmanuel United Church		April 24, 2010
May 29, 2010	TBD		
September 25, 2010	TBD		

KitBuster Plaster Kits 101

By Grant Knowles

By the time you read this article we are well into the winter months and the peak of the Model Railroading season. That means it is time for a recap on the Plaster Structures 101 program.

With the distribution of the kits back in September followed by two Kit Busters Workshops and clinics on the topic, you should be well into the assembly of your kit. Unlike the Laser Structures we tackled last season, you have noticed the plaster kits go together a lot quicker, largely due to the fewer pieces involved.

As we have discussed before, the secret to a good model is the care and attention you apply when preparing and assembling the parts. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Clean all the flash off the parts and dry fit the windows/doors before assembly,
- Sand mating edges to ensure a tight fit between the parts,
- Use a square when gluing the parts together to ensure correct angles, etc,
- Recommend use of white glue to fasten plaster parts together due to a slower set time,
- Add bracing to the corners to enhance the strength of the joint,
- Let major assemblies dry over night.
- Colour the castings after assembly thus hiding the seams,
- Be careful, plaster castings break very easily!

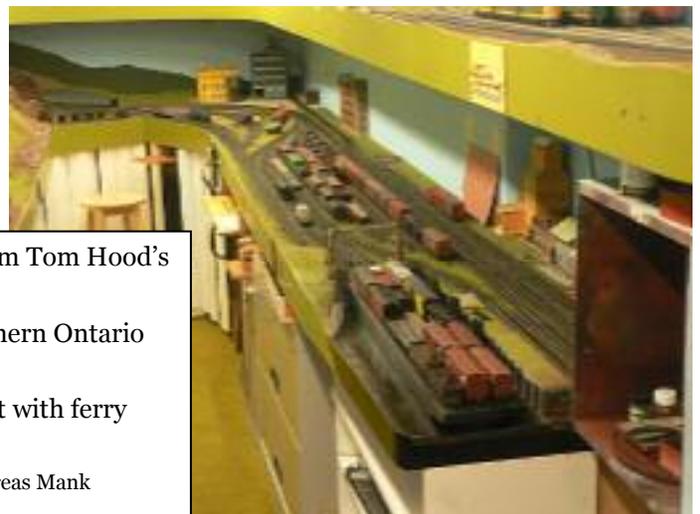
Over the Christmas break, I took a long hard look at starting a new project and came to the realisation that I first needed to clear off the hobby bench of the current projects before taking on a new one! Does that sound familiar? Back at the October KitBusters Workshop, I prepared the four walls to my Alamosa Oil Depot building. This is a simple four sided structure with a loading dock on both sides – see the picture on the cover of this **Mail Car**. Following Chris Lyon’s clinic, I first sprayed the model with red automotive primer after the walls had been assembled. I then followed with spot painting some bricks with Bragdon’s Chalks and closed with a diluted wash of mortar coloured paint. The roof was of a straight forward cardboard construction and the two docks were assembled from supplied strip wood. The whole structure received a final dressing of weathering chalks. Over all I am very pleased with the results though thoroughly upset that it is too wide to fit in the location I had planned for it. So on the shelf it will go until I start my next layout.

You may recall at the very beginning of the Plaster Structures 101 program, I had strongly recommended you do not select a simple four sided model to build as it will not take very long – I have just proven that! Of course I have another far more complicated plaster structure to start so that will be my “real” project.

For the balance of the season, we will have further workshops scheduled for you to work on your models along with a few clinics on related topics. After you have the core model assembled, you will be able to leverage a lot of what we learned in the Laser Structure 101 program here, i.e. window details, roof construction, weathering. So we will not revisit these unless requested.

We will though talk about what you can do with your model after it is finished. That is we will review how to install in a layout or diorama. So stay tuned as we delve into that aspect.

Continued on the next page



Scenes from Tom Hood’s layout:

Left: Northern Ontario town

Right: Port with ferry service

Photos: Andreas Mank

On a closing note, do not forget to check out the SLD Web site on a regular basis. Amongst all my other commitments, I do make an attempt to keep it current, especially regarding clinic and workshop construction material. We now have a section dedicated to the Plaster Structures 101 which can be found at:

http://www3.sympatico.ca/gd.knowles/plaster_kit/plaster_kit.htm.

Both Painting Clinics from the October KitBusters Workshop are now on line in this section. I do apologize in the delay with posting this information. Of course everything is linked off the SLD home page:

http://www3.sympatico.ca/gd.knowles/sld/sld_index.htm.

Display Table

By Grant Knowles

“Non Revenue” was the November Display Table theme that once again was just a “suggestion” as only one model on display that actually fit this description! Got to love the SLD members.

In not particular order, we will start off with two Ed Fulasz kits that Don Leger brought out. Both the Freight House and Corner Gas station were built by Grant Knowles for Don’s layout. Both kits are being built by members of the club as part of the Plaster Structures 101 program. They sure make nice models.



Ron Newby had his Elwood’s Garage on display. This is an O scale Full Steam Ahead kit to which he has added a full detailed interior. As I recall it scored very well at the recent CSS09 convention.

Not to be left out, Chris Lyon also had a model submitted at the CSS09 show (won 2nd place), in this case it was a Hamilton Model Works HO scale shed. The challenge was building a scene on the lid of a peanut butter jar. Very impressive use of colours and weathering by Chris.

Always an engineer at heart, Normand Levert had a unique challenge to deal with on his layout. The track plan required the line to pass through a wall that also included two turnouts to feed the staging yard and return loop. Instead of building the turnouts in place, which would be next to impossible to do, Normand chose to build the track at the workbench on a removable piece of bench work. It will then be installed as a unit.

Bill Meredith brought out two projects he has been working on over the past few months. The first is a sample casting of the hart Convertible Ballast car. Bill had brought out the master back in May. Bill will be finishing off the work on the trucks and decals over Christmas. The second model on display was even more impressive – an On3 model of the Colorado Central Porter Bell. This partially assembled o-6-o model is made from custom brass etchings and castings that Bill had made the masters for. Bill also has some of the tools on hand that he uses to machine the driver castings and reem out the axle centers – both very delicate and precision processes.



Steve Hockenhull takes the award for the largest item on display – a layout module. What was unique about this module design is the use of thin plywood for the frame and custom machined alignment pins that fit between the modules.

Thank you to everyone who brought out their pride and joy for us to examine. Additional photos are available on the November Meet web page:

http://members.fortunecity.com/gknowles/meets/sept_09/nov_09.htm



Next Division Meet

St Lawrence Division – NMRA

When:

Saturday, January 30, 2010

Where:

Emmanuel United Church

691 Smyth Road,
Ottawa

East of CHEO at Dauphin Road

Doors open at 9:00 am -- Admission \$5.00

What's on:

Morning:

Division Business

Clinic

- Bob Farquhar:
Basics of Air brushing
- Grant Knowles:
Casting plastic parts

Display

- Santa's Gifts and anything Red

Door Prizes

- You never know what to expect!

Afternoon:

- Layout Tours

