



The Mail Car

Newsletter of the St Lawrence Division – NMRA

Issue no. 60 – September 2010

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

Superintendent's Report

By Ron Newby

Here we go, my first Superintendent report (and hopefully not my last one). I hope everyone had a great summer, I know I had a busy one. I did not get much modeling done but I did manage to build a gazebo in the backyard. Maybe I should fill out the paperwork and see if I can get a merit certificate for it in the structure category.

We are planning another exciting year where the focus will be in introducing young people to the wonderful world of model railroading called "Model Railroading 101". We started planning this in the spring and are continuing the planning. We plan on having a session in November to introduce model railroading and another session in the new year on building your first model railroad.

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Controlling the Chaos

By Grant Knowles

This is the fourth article regarding the construction of Doug Pelkola's CN Railroad in HO scale. In the previous articles we touched upon the dream behind the model empire, some electrical work and installation of an impressive bridge assembly. Now that we have a good start on the track installation it was time to start thinking about how to "control" track power routing and turnout controls.

From the start, we had chosen to design and build Doug's layout to support both DC and DCC equipment and to standardize on Tortoise™ switch machines for all turnouts. Automation of the turnouts is required to support the advanced track power routing (see the March **Mail Car** article) we desired. Even with this level of

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November Issue - October 15
January Issue - December 15
March Issue - February 15
May Issue - April 15
September Issue - August 15

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

We plan on offering clinics, layouts to view and refreshments, it should be a lot of fun. Further details can be found inside this issue of the Mail Car.

We are also doing the raffle layout for OVAR this year and the next and I cannot wait to see how this year's project is shaping up. Having a layout that can be configured in different ways should make for interesting running and operations for the new owner.

We seem to have a lot of people with different skill levels and hopefully we will be getting more. Along the theme of "Model Railroading 101" we plan to offer at least one clinic a meeting on the basics of model railroad construction. We will tailor these clinics to the veterans among us by showing different techniques on the topic being presented. The other clinic will be of general railway interest. If anyone has any ideas for clinics or has a topic for a clinic that they would like to see, please let one of the executive know, we are always looking for ideas.

We are also planning on holding a couple of Kitbusters clinics this year, for an update on the latest developments please see Alex's contribution below.

As our usual meeting place is undergoing renovations, we will be having our meetings and other activities at the Kitchissippi United Church at 630 Island Park Drive near the Queensway. Please remember to check the map on the back cover before heading out for the first meeting at the end of the month.

Well that is basically what we have planned for this year, looking forward to seeing everyone on September 25

Kitbusters starting from Scratch

By Alex Binkley

The SLD Kitbusters program for 2010-11 will focus on building a structure from scratch in wood, styrene, paper, steel, clay or any other material.

We are hoping that members will take advantage of this opportunity to stretch their modeling skills to build a structure from the ground up. The construction projects of the last few seasons have certainly shown SLDers can build kits superbly. Most have kit-bashed or improvised and scratch building is the next step.

Several emails have been sent around soliciting interest in the scratch building sessions and the response from about 15 members indicates we have the critical mass to make a go of it. However, there was no agreement on what we should build although a small freight house, as suggested by Grant Knowles, certainly has considerable popularity.

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SLD reaches out to the Curious

By Alex Binkley

In an effort to attract new people to the hobby, SLD is offering two special workshops in the coming months under its Model Railroading 101 program.

Put together by a group of SLD members, headed by Grant Knowles, MR 101 is aimed at attracting people who are interested in model railroading as a hobby or who have a few trains but are unsure about how to build a layout. We hope to attract parents and kids to the events and in the end see them leave enthusiastic enough to join SLD or OVAR.

MR101 consists of three components and there is no exam at the end:

Part 1 will be a morning session on Nov 6 at Kitchissippi United Church at 630 Island Park Dr. near the Queensway starting at 9:00 a.m. It will be devoted to explaining the nuts and bolts of model railroading. Participants will learn about the various groups within the hobby based on scale, type and era of modeling. We will explain how to make the most of a starter train set instead of watching it just go in circles and how to build a layout that allows you to expand when you are ready. Or how to take the 4 by 8 sheet of plywood and really get creative with sidings and scenery. And to get trains to run better. Of course, there are all those useful skills that model railroading teaches. And all the camaraderie.

Part 2 will be held on February 5, 2011 and will present more detailed information on the hobby as well as plenty of “how to” information. It will be aimed at those who have some experience but would like to learn more.

At both events, SLD members will make presentations on various aspects of the hobby and be available to answer detailed or specific questions. Workshop participants will also be able to ask follow up questions after the sessions.

Part 3 will be the opportunity to work with SLD’s skilled modelistas on the 2011 Railfair raffle layout. The group has been busy preparing an eye popping raffle layout for Railfair 2010.

The SLD is tapping into the considerable resources of our 50 members to present this workshop. From years of our operating switching layout at Railfair and other events, we have found a deep well of interest in the hobby and plenty of basic questions about it. We want to tap into that resource to bring new blood into the hobby.

Notices about the first workshop including a family registration form will be popping up in hobby shops in the near future.

Everyone is encouraged to participate and if you need more information, see our web site www.sld.mrr101.info

NMRA Dates

SLD Meetings		SLD Workshops	
September 25, 2010	Kitchissippi United Church 630 Island Park Drive		October 23, 2010
			MR 101
			November 6, 2010
November 27, 2010	Kitchissippi United Church		
			February 5, 2010
January 22, 2011	Kitchissippi United Church		
March 26, 2011	Kitchissippi United Church		
May 28, 2011	TBD		

sophistication and control it will be necessary to provide some form of “control panels” to host the supporting toggle switches and track indicators.

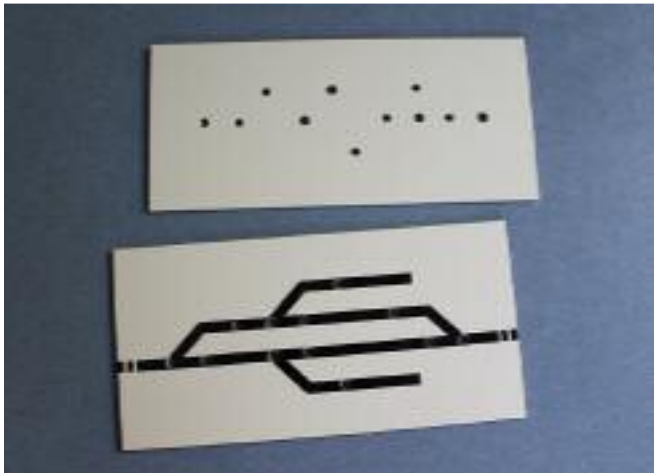
Over the years, a number of control panel designs have surfaced each addressing a specific need. Here is a brief summary of the key designs:

Single Control Panel. Here the whole layout track plan is captured on a single centralized control panel that allows the user to control the whole layout without moving. These were popular in the early days of the hobby when the layout designs “surrounded” the operator. Problems surface when you apply this approach to an “around the walls layout” as it does not support following the train and in addition, miles of wires are required to bring everything to the central location. This approach is not for us.

Remote Control Panels. Involve breaking the layout into “defined” sections or regions and creating a separate panel for each. This partially supports “following your train” but like the Centralized Control Panel, involves a supporting structure to hold the control panel. These structures often protrude into the aisle way which have a tendency to snag our ever growing mid-rifts!

Switches On Fascia. Here the track plan is marked directly on the layout’s fascia in close proximity of the track to be managed. This approach supports the concept of following your train, reduces the length of wiring and is less confusing to new operators.

DCC Throttle Control. With the advent of DCC, the operator is now able to control the turnouts from their hand held controller. Depending on the controller brand, this can be a simple or complex operation to perform. The flexibility is great, the implementation costs and user training are higher and in our case, will not support DC operations.



The upper panel has been painted after the holes were laid out and drilled. The lower panel sports the automotive tape with breaks indicating the track extends past the end of the panel.

A draw back we encountered with the fascia approach is that invariably the switch or buttons are inadvertently activated when a passing body part brushes against them. The common solution is to recess each of the switches so their tips are set back from the fascia edge. On the mainline where turnouts are far and few between, recessing one of two switches at a time is not a big issue but becomes far more onerous for yard areas.

After careful consideration, Doug chose a variation of the above scenarios that involves building local area panels that are recessed into the fascia. This approach will congregate the switches for a localized area together into a single panel so that only one (large) hole in the fascia will be required to recess them into.

Now that we have settled on a design, let us review how we built the panels.

The panels themselves were made from 1/8” tempered masonite. The size of the panels was largely dictated by the complexity of the track plan to be displayed along with the physical size of the toggle switches, push buttons and

LEDs to be housed. A quick paper sketch of the track plan was first made then transcribed onto the masonite. Holes were then drilled for the power block switches, turnout switches and the routing indication LEDs. We then applied 2 coats of white primer, sanding after each application to remove any fibres. We then sprayed on about 6 coats of Krylon acrylic paint, once again sanding with fine sand paper after the first two coats in order to arrive at a very smooth surface.

While referring back to our original paper sketches, since the paint covered our original pencil lines, we applied 1/4” automotive pin stripping tape to indicate the tracks. The automotive tape has a very aggressive adhesive that will hold the tape in place for years. A sharp hobby knife was used to trim the tape around the switch holes.



The panel outline is traced onto the fascia where it will be located.



After the panel hole has been cut into the fascia, 1x1 pine strips are clamped and glued to the backside.



Here is a finished and installed panel in place. Note how the toggle switches do not extend past the edge of the fascia.

We then took the panel to the layout and traced its outline onto the fascia. A quick pass with a fine toothed blade in the jig saw produced a perfectly sized rectangular opening.

To recess the panel, we glued (with yellow carpenters glue) 1x1 pine to the back side of the masonite fascia around the cutout. The 1x1 provided sufficient set back for the micro switches we were using. These were clamped in place and allowed to set overnight. We then cut some 1/4" plywood into 1 1/4" wide strips. These were then glued to the back of the 1x1 such that 1/2" extended into the opening thus providing a flat surface to screw the panels against. The panel was test fitted to ensure all was well.

The switches were then installed on the masonite panels. Pay particular attention when tightening the nuts so not to distort the automotive tape. The LEDs were mounted from behind and held in place with hot glue. The panel was then wired up and mounted in the opening with four #4 round head wood screws.

As an added bonus, we used an off white background colour for the main control panels and a faded yellow shade for the hidden trackage, thereby minimizing operator confusion when the panels were in close proximity to each other.

All in all, we are very pleased with the results both mechanically and aesthetically.

On a closing note, the railroad's mainline was completed on August 6th culminating a focused effort by 4 people since last October. We figure a total of 30 work sessions were performed along with work done by Doug between these. We still have a long way to go yet – install the main yard, final wiring of the main line, etc. It will probably be another year before all of the track is laid, functional and wired. In the meantime, Doug is able to run trains around the room to his heart's content!

The Railfair Raffle layout – A Progress Report

By Andreas Mank

As reported in the May **Mail Car**, the SLD has taken on the task of building the 2010 Railfair Raffle layout. The picture on the front page demonstrates the progress on the layout up to last Tuesday.

Greg Montague offered the use of his basement for the work sessions on the layout. We have been getting together on Monday evenings on an almost regular schedule to ensure that our progress does not fall behind the tight schedule. Several SLD members volunteered to assemble a few buildings and a trestle in between sessions, all of these have been completed now and are being installed on the layout.

During our first Monday evening session, several goals were achieved. Paul Anderson showed us how to use his hot-wire foam carving tools and proceeded to rough in the river bed on one corner of the layout. Additionally, all the main tracks received a road bed profile carved into the foam support. Meanwhile, we played with the placement of the structures and finalising the spur tracks until everyone was pleased with the arrangement.

While deciding on the placement of the structures, we also added in a road and a few dirt driveways. Finishing the track laying was a straightforward task, again using liquid nails adhesive to attach the track to the foam base. The last two pieces of track were glued down a couple of weeks later, as we had to wait for the installation of the scratch built trestle, courtesy of Grant Knowles, across the river bed. Meanwhile a few magnetic uncoupling ramps were installed to allow hands-off operation with Kadee and similar magnetic activated couplers. Once all the track was in place, the rail was coloured using Floquil weathering pens. Colouring the side of the rails will make the Code 100 track a little easier on the eye!

On another Monday evening Chris Lyon painted the backdrop, which is permanently installed on the front half of the raffle layout. It is always amazing to watch him work his magic. Tom Badenoch provided a scratch built dam which will increase the plausibility of the water in the river bed spurting out of the backdrop.

On the other side from the river, a road cuts diagonally across the front section of the layout. The road pavement was cut out of 1.5mm thick pieces of styrene and attached on top of the foam core. A thin coat of plaster now covers the entire layout section, and a retaining wall was built to prevent the church yard from sliding onto the road.

The only building missing is the actual station building, which will occupy the open space at the front right of the layout. All the other buildings have been placed in their proper locations. Mike Rozeboom provided additional help ballasting the track. Several souls helped working the scenery around the buildings. A number of trees appeared and have been planted on the layout.

Next week the last building will be installed and the scenery finished. A shelf has been installed for the power pack and the finishing touches for the electric wiring will happen next week as well. Finally, we need to clean the rails, and start running trains!

Continued from page 2 "Kitbusters starting from Scratch"

At the September meeting, we will have plans for a number of structures that members could consider. If you have some to offer, bring them along. If you cannot attend, please let me know:

Alex.binkley@sympatico.ca or 613-749-7633.

At that meeting, we will discuss the basic format of the workshops and see what kind of information members would like. Bob (the Builder) Farquhar will tell us about the kind of tools we will need. Anyone else with scratch building ideas is welcome to contribute as well.

We have plenty of experienced model builders in the group who can answer detailed questions or offer suggestions and tips during the Kitbusters' session. Let us know if there is a topic you would like more on or on which you could make a presentation.

Display Table

By Grant Knowles

The May Display Table theme was “Plaster Kits and All Things Brass”. Since the May meet was the wrap up to the Plaster Structures 101 program, it was a perfect opportunity for members to bring out their completed and nearly completed projects. We also opened up the doors to anyone who has a model made of brass (whole or in part). We had solid participation in both fields as well as many other wonderful models on display.

Paul Anderson had his nearly complete Ed Fulasz Freight House kit. The interior view blocks behind the open freight doors are now complete and now that Paul has found some roofing material he likes, will have the roof installed shortly.

Grant Knowles had a generic stone freight house that is a plaster kit from Guts, Gravel & Glory. Grant notes the castings were not of the same calibre as the Ed Fulasz as they sported air bubbles, incorrect sized window openings for the castings provided and varying wall thickness. Despite all of this, the kit did go together well (after some adjustments). The roof is made from Bar Mills shingles.

Grant also had a model of the Alamosa Oil House on display. This is a plaster kit made by Cibilo Crossing and will find a home in his Como train yard.

David Steer brought out two Sn3 brass train engines (in keeping with our "All Things Brass" theme). Both engines (a K-27 & K-28) are PBL products, one sported a factory paint job while the other shows many years of hard use through soot and road grime. There is always something appealing about outside framed engines.

CC Crow has long been noted for making exquisite plaster building kits and the station (GN Passenger Depot) James VanBlitterswyk had on display is no exception. James has the building half finished with the roof trusses for the second half now done. A most impressive bit of scratch building.

Peter Nesbitt is a long time Soundtraxx dealer and they had sent him one of their Blackstone 20th anniversary commemorative boxcars. These are ready to run HOn3 cars modeled after the Denver & Rio Grande roster. The violet colour scheme will certainly make it stand out on the layout.

Our dedicated S scaler, Alex Binkley had an Unloading Emporium structure on display that he built from a National Association of S Gaugers kit. It is a plastic kit that Alex would have preferred seen built in plaster or resin. Alex has yet to add the exterior details that will bring it to life.

Over the past few months we have watched as Ron Newby worked diligently to assemble his Mosquito Flats Station from a Downtown Deco O scale "Rocky Flats" plaster kit. Ron experimented with a number of paint/stain techniques before settling on one for the model. The curved turret also posed a challenge as Ron had to remove the casting seams, adjust the window openings and adjust the fit with the main station structure. In the end he has arrived at a beautiful station with a lot of character.

Peter Coleman never ceases to amaze me with the models he builds. Peter was one of the first to complete their Ed Fulasz plaster kit. Peter chose to build the Switching Tower to which he included and fully detailed scratch built interior and added working lights to boot! Next up Peter had a scratch built Great Northern Mining Co. Supply House based on sketches for the Slobnik & Sons Supply that appeared in the Oct'09 Scale Rails. The styrene building sports a plaster stone foundation and Grandt window and door castings. The platform was made from MidWest Scale Lumber scribed decking. The roof, Peter's second attempt, is made from Campbell's shingles glued to a card stock surface that in turn was mounted to the styrene sub roof with double sided carpet tape.

We also had the 2010 Rail Fair Raffle Layout on display. Well not the whole layout, just the parts that have been completed so far. The frame for the two layout sections has been completed by Grant Knowles and Andreas Mank installed most of the Atlas sectional track. The modules are now off to Greg Montague's house where over the summer months Michael Rozeboom will be leading a team of eager model builders to finish the layout in time for Rail Fair.

Thank you to everyone who brought out their pride and joy for us to examine. Photos are available on the May meet web page:

http://members.fortunecity.com/gknowles/meets/may_10/may_10.htm



Next Division Meet

St Lawrence Division – NMRA

When:

Saturday, September 25, 2010

Where:

Kitchissippi United Church
630 Island Park Drive
Ottawa, Ontario

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

What's on:

Morning:

Division Business

Clinic

- Ron Newby
The Canada and Atlantic Railway
- James VanBlitterswyk
Making Trees

Display

- Summer Projects

Door Prizes

- You never know what to expect!

Afternoon:

- Layout Tours

