

NMRA Milwaukee National 75th Anniversary Convention

BY PHIL MONAT AND MIKE RITSCHDORFF

The NMRA's national convention will return next July to the city that many people consider the birthplace of model railroading - Milwaukee, Wisconsin. That was where Al Kalmbach first set up shop, selling train kits and printing the first issue of a little magazine called Model Railroader way back in 1934. It is also the home of Walthers, a firm well know to any of us who have purchased anything having to do with trains in the last fifty years. This is also the 75th anniversary of the NMRA, having started as a national organization back in 1935. So there is a lot to recommend a trip north next July, and your OPSIG organization has been adding more fuel to the fire.

Local coordinator Mike Ritschdorff has been working hard on developing a group of layouts for your operating enjoyment. Not only has he been finding great layouts in the Milwaukee area, but he has also set up additional sessions in Chicago, Rockford, and La Crosse as you drive to and from the week's festivities in The Beer City. As I look at this preliminary schedule, it is in fact possible to operate on a different layout for eight days in a row! So grab your OPSIG aprons and start planning on heading to the upper Midwest in July (don't forget your official OPSIG hat as well!).

The kind folks at the NMRA are again handling our layout selection process, so you will not find a place to sign up or log your preferences here. The NMRA registration package will contain several pages referring to all OPSIG session in Milwaukee. It will not, however, cover sessions at the outlying cities of Rockford, La Crosse, and Chicago - these you must sign up for via the local area coordinators who will be handling all details for those sessions. Their contact information and some preliminary details about their plans are below. While it is a bit early to lock things down, this information is presented so you can see what is out there. In the April/May/June issue we will list all the layouts that are available.

ROCKFORD - Rockford, Illinois is about 90 miles from Milwaukee. The city has a long history with railroads and model-



ing railroading in particular, with several beautiful layouts located there. Local host Bill Kirchmeyer will have his own layout up and running (visit the RockRail web site and click on CCS), and if demand warrants he can arrange for several more. So if you're driving from the South or West, plan on getting to Rockford on Saturday 10th for a session in the afternoon or evening, and maybe another on Sunday morning before you head up to Milwaukee.

Contact: Bill Kirchmeyer, CCS-Trainmaster@comcast.net
(815) 282-3653

Layouts: Bill Kirchmeyer

Local Web Site: www.RockRail.org

LACROSSE - Lacrosse, Wisconsin is 207 miles slightly northwest of Milwaukee. This is the home of the very successful and popular RiverRail event, so you know there are some excellent operating layouts to be enjoyed here. Local host Ron Copher has lined up five layouts so far, which means there are plenty of slots for those of you who might be traveling this way.

Contact: Ron Copher, Locoeng@aol.com, 608-792-9912

Layouts: Waraxa, Klein, Copher, Lesky, Weber

Local Web Site: www.RiverRail.com

CHICAGO - The Windy City is 92 miles south of Milwaukee. Needless to say there are many great layouts in this the Capital of the Midwest, and local host Mike Ritschdorff has lined up seven exciting sessions for your enjoyment. Some of these layouts, being on the north side of Chicago and not far from Milwaukee, are operating during the convention week and are therefore part of the NMRA's registration packet. If you see them there and wish to avail yourself of that session, please sign up there. If you want to operate on one of the weekend travel sessions, however, you must let Mike know directly so he can hold you a spot. If you have any questions, of course, just drop Mike an email and he will help out.

Contact: Mike Ritschdorff, nepoca@hotmail.com, (773) 763-1516; Layouts: Carney, Ritschdorff, Schnepf, Bedlek, Hesse, Schlidkraut, Mikalouski

LAYOUTS (AND GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS)

Here is a brief summary of the layouts that, at this point in time, have agreed to host OPSIG sessions during the convention week. Again, you must sign up for these via the NMRA's registration package – they will forward the information to us and we will coordinate our little hearts out getting you what you want (hopefully!)

Mike Ritschdorff – Crew/14 – Scale/HO—Miles/Time 90/1:45

Also will be available before and after convention

Car Cards/Waybills – Lenz/CVP radio throttles

A fully scened N&W/VGN layout set in the late fifties time period. Features 2 working load-outs and maybe a rotary dumper. This medium sized layout is double decked using pusher service. Four types of motive power are used. This layout was on HGTV's "Incredible Basements" in 2003, heavy mainline action with tons of switching. Fully sound equipped.

Greg Bedlek – Crew/30 – Scale/HO—Miles/Time 90/1:45

Also will be available before and after convention

Car Cards/Waybills – Lenz/CVP radio throttles

A partial scened Belt Railway of Chicago/Burlington Northern layout set on Merger Day, March 1970. This very large layout features the BRC in one corner will 30 transfers into Clearing Yard along with select large industries. The BN side runs from Chicago to Seattle with dramatic scenery in the Rockies with 100's of handmade trees. Full length Hill line passenger trains are run with a passenger terminal that can handle them. Fully sound equipped.

Dennis Hesse – Crew/12 – Scale/HO—Miles/Time 90/1:45

Car Cards/Waybills – Rail Command/CVP radio throttles

This nicely designed Chicago Great Western-inspired layout runs from Chicago to Iowa with all the trappings of this classic fallen flag. F-units everywhere, nifty single track operations with two large yards working through trains and building locals. Some scenery has started. The operational system is well thought out and flows very nicely.

Jim Carney – Crew/10 – Scale/HO – Mile/Time 90/1:45

Also will be available before and after convention

Rail Ops system – Rail Command

The Jamestown & Rock City is a granger road set in Illinois running through the middle of Illinois in direct competition with the IC and the CCS. Features medium sized trains over a long double decked layout designed for operations. Set in the 1950's, plenty of home road power. Sharp looking and smooth running.

Harry Schlidkraut—Crew/12—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 90/1:45

Also will be available before and after convention

Car cards/Waybills - Digitrax with radios

Harry's representation of the modern day New York, Ontario & Western fills a large basement. The O&W shops are so good that they have kept the FT's and F3's running like new! Modern run-through power is represented, along with Amtrak passenger service. Yards and industrial switching will keep the crews busy.

Ted Schnepf – Crew/14—Scale/O –Miles/Time 100/2:00

Also will be available before and after convention

Car cards/Waybills - NCE with radios

Operations on this very large layout features the Mississippi River area of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. The double deck features large structures and plenty of scenery! Operating on this O gauge layout will give a new perspective of the heft of O gauge. Set in late steam/early diesel there is something for everyone. Operations in the new addition should be well on their way.

Ken Jaglinski – Crew/7—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 5/:10

Car cards/waybills - NCE

Ashland, Superior & Pacific is a point to point, free lanced, museum quality steam to diesel transition layout that runs from Ashland, WI to Grand Forks. Lots of detail, scratch-built and kit bashed structures including an ore dock at Duluth. Designed for operation there are working signals and many towns with local switching capable of keeping six operators busy. There is a separate narrow gauge branch with dual gauge trackage and switchbacks. The AS&P has its own paint scheme and decals, most steam engines have sound. The layout was featured in *Scale Rails*.

Bob Reppert—Crew/8—Scale/HO—Miles/time 10/:30

Car cards/waybills - DCC

The Dawdle & Delay Line is a 24x18 freelanced Midwestern bridge line. Operation is casual with no timetable, fast clock or dispatcher. Railroad is designed for operation, hosts a variety of motive power and equipment.

Don Cook—Crew/4-7—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 45/:60

Car cards/waybills - NCE

Don's Spokane Division is based on the Great Northern in central Washington state circa 1949. Operations use mostly steam and heavy electric locomotives. Features 100 structures and scenery is 98% complete. Also there is a one man-switching puzzle used as a branch line.

(continued...)



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Milwaukee “N” Southeastern—Scale/N—Miles/Time 5/:15

Switch lists - NCE

The MNSE is a fully sceniced N scale layout set in the 1980's. This single level layout features double track mainline running the entire length of the layout. A large switching yard and hidden staging yard are the origin points for several hotshot train of containers and other commodities. A large paper plant and coal fired power plants keep crews busy. The multi-track passenger terminal services short and long haul passenger trains.

Ralph Plachter—Crew/15—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 40/:60

Switch lists - Lenz

The Midwest Lines is a freelanced point to point layout based on the operating practices of the Union Pacific, Burlington and Rock Island lines going from Kansas City to Denver. This fully sceniced layout has a nice long mainline run of 300' and a branch line of 120' the time frame is set in 1965 on with well-engineered layout!

Dan Dyer—Crew/8—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 40/:60

Car cards/Waybills - Digitrax

The Burlington Northern River Division loosely based on the BN running from St. Paul, MN to Savanna, IL. With yards in both end towns. Road will run by the world's largest 6 pack at the Heileman Brewery. This layout has a nice balance of road trains and turns with extras thrown in for fun.

Jim Spice—Crew/14—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 50/1:15

Car cards/Waybills - NCE with radios

The Denver & Cat Canyon is a fully sceniced HO scale railroad set in 1953. Crews are dispatched via a central dispatcher and operate via train order station phones. Power is mostly steam with a few first generation diesels. All locomotives are sound equipped. Helper service is used on Tennessee Pass as grades are prototypical. The railroad is modeled after the Grand Junction Div. area of the Rio Grande.

David Popp—Crew/7—Scale/N—Miles/Time 30/ :45

TT&TO with car cards and waybills - Lenz/radios

The Naugatuck Valley Railroad is set in Connecticut's Naugatuck River Valley in the fall of 1959. Though this New Haven line was facing decline in the late 50's, the operation it featured is perfect for a midsized model railroad. The layout features a busy yard requiring a crew of two, a pair of locals that are

fun to work, an assortment of switching assignments, and enough commuter passenger work to keep those working the mainline on their toes, yet time to finish their work.

Marty Edwards—Crew/10—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 25/:45

Switch Lists - Atlas DCC

The “400 Route” is a “granger road” in transition from steam to diesel, 1935-1952. With five towns on the layout there are 42 places to switch! Many of the typical granger road businesses are well represented with many vehicles and people to make the layout have a sense of purpose.

Bob Frey—Crew/8—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 30/:45

Car cards/waybills - Digitrax with radios

The U.P. & Western is a signaled, loop to loop layout operating steam and early diesels most now with sound. The Union Pacific resides in the larger room and has 30” min. radius while the Western branch line is in the other room with 24” min. radius and 2% grades. A significant amount of switching is done between these two model railroads. The layout features ten cities, six main passing sidings, with more than 160 Industries that can be switched from two main yards. The Ogden Station has three passenger tracks that run into a closet with sliding doors for additional staging capacity.

Dean Mikalowski—Crew/20—Scale/HO

Car Cards/Waybills - Digitrax wireless throttles

Also will be available before and after convention

BNSF-NKP line between Chicago and Fort Wayne, IN. 750' mainline run on two decks, 2 yards to work, 2 active interchanges, 5 locals, coal, coke, ore intermodal, Roadrailer, grain, auto-racks, tank train, transfers, commuter, and passenger trains to operate. Plenty of switching, Scenery in early stages. CMRI/JMRI signaling and dispatch panel in the works.

Ken Rodig—Crew/7—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 30/:45

ARR Switch lists - CTC-80

The Ironwood System is a freelance regional railroad set in the late 1960's Wisconsin and Northern Michigan and Minnesota serving the iron mines in the Massabi Range, and the paper industries in Northern Wisconsin. The layout models the paper industry part of the railroad business.

Arpad Eiler—Crew/14—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 30/:45

Switch Lists - Digitrax with radios

The Great Freedom Railroad is set in the late 20th century. It is a linear-style double-deck built around a large classification yard, a major steel mill, a large port facility, ore dock, coal and ore

mine. Five interchanges with other club member's layouts with several cities with intensive switching action. Scenery is foam, plaster and hardshell. Rocky Ridge is a 35' long mountain range.

Tim Hensch—Crew/9—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 15/:30

Car Cards/waybills - NCE

The Norfolk & Wney is a prototype-based freelanced model railroad in a 20x30 basement. Inspired by present day NS operation from Bluefield to Williamson W. Va. This double decked layout has six branch lines feeding the mainline at leager at mid-layout, at this yard classification is done on mainline time freights and local industries along with all of the revenue coal traffic. Staging on the east is at Bluefield with west staging being represented by Williamson.

Dave Poquette—Crew/5—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 15/:30

RailOp Waybills - Lenz DCC

The Paper Valley Lines is a freelanced layout based on the towns of the Fox River Valley. It features the towns of Appleton and Green Bay Wisconsin. There are several paper mills, featuring pulp unloading, chemical deliveries and many other switching opportunities.

Ed Novit—Crew/10—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 70/1:15

Switch Lists, Car Card/Waybills - Easy Dcc with radios

Northern Pacific, Yakima Valley region. The heart of this layout is Yakima, WA, yard with enough A/D and classification work to keep yard crews busy. The fruit row switching district uses 1-2 crewmen along with an agent to ice, prepare and switch out the several towns laid out with prototype track arrangements. Using TT/TO is on the "light" side so any one not familiar can get a taste of this exciting form of operation. No intimidation, no stress just good clean fun for all!

Bill Kirchmeyer—Crew/12—Scale/HO

Car Cards/Waybills - RailCommand/radios - Special requests

Also will be available before and after convention

The CCS is a Class 1 railroad running from Chicago to New Orleans. The modeled part is from just north of Champaign Ill to just north of the Ohio River. Two large staging yards feed train from the north and the south with a large classification yard at Champaign. With 7 working locals and interchanges with the B&O, PRR, NYC, IC and the Wabash will keep many good crews busy.

Stan Olander—Crew/13—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 40/ 1:20

Custom computer switch lists - Lenz DCC

The Corn Belt Northern is made up of two separate layouts The first is a 16x25 double-tracked railroad running from Sioux City,

IA to Duluth, MN. It has very highly detailed scenery throughout the entire layout. Equipment alternates between the GN and the Milwaukee Road. The second layout is a single track freelanced layout running from Council Bluffs to and Boone Iowa. This portion uses CNW equipment and does interchange between the two layouts. Scenery is well on the way on this newer portion of the layout room.

Ted Lewtas—Crew/4—Scale/HO—Miles/Time 30/:45

Switch lists - DC control

This Boston & Maine branch line represents the "signature" New England lines. Small steam and early diesels work out the typical New England businesses. Most of the equipment and structures are one of a kind and there are many award winning structures that are of actual buildings located along the B&M.

North American Prototype Modelers Layout

Scale/HO—Crew/12—Miles/Time 5/:15

Car Cards/Waybills - NCE DCC

The North American Prototype Modelers Layout features 26 scale miles of mainline needing 47 (yes 47) boosters to make it operate. A super detailed passenger station, a wilderness "River Line," a detailed farm scene with interchanges, a heavy industrial area and a large classification yard. TT/TO control. Visit www.napmtd.org for more information.

David Waraxa—Crew/12—Scale/HO

RailOp Waybills - Digitrax

Also will be available before and after convention

The Kootenai River Sub is a mostly scened layout that depicts a freelanced version of BNSF's line between Sandpoint, ID and Spokane, WA. MRL exercises trackage rights running both through and local freights along with the UP, which maintains service in Kootenai Falls. BNSF through freights, industrial switching, and frequent locals make for a heavy operations oriented railroad. Operating sessions can be scheduled for those traveling to/from the convention.

Ed Klein—Crew/11—Scale/HO-LaCrosse, WI

Car Cards / Waybills - Easy DCC

Also will be available before and after convention

Great Northern and Missabe iron ore traffic predominates on this northern Minnesota railroad. Loads from both lines travel to Orr Yard to be sorted into trains for the dock switcher to shuttle to and from the dock. Overhead freight, interchange connections, and local service to the communities along the line add to the operations. Operating sessions can be scheduled for those traveling to/from the convention. *(continued...)*



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Ron Copher—Crew/18—Scale/HO—Rockland, WI

Car Cards / Waybills - Digitrax

Also will be available before and after convention

The Lake Erie & Southern operates in Indiana and Illinois, set in the 1950's. The modeled LE&S Illinois division includes the 1st district between South Anderson Yard to Alton and St.Louis. (550 ft.) also the 3rd district between South Anderson to Peoria and Creve Croeur. (475 ft.). Active staging at both ends of the St. Louis line and staging for the P&PU RR at Creve Croeur supply the railroad with traffic. Eight 1st class trains and six 2nd class trains plus an assortment of extras are operated over the division. The layout dimensions are 29 ft. by 65 ft. Operating sessions can be scheduled for those traveling to/from the convention.

Al Lesky—Crew/12—Scale/HO—La Crosse, WI

Car Cards / Waybills - Easy DCC

Also will be available before and after convention

Milwaukee Road's River Division of the mid-1970's is depicted on this double deck layout. Manifest freights, Amtrak's Empire Builder, and numerous patrols cover the line between La Crosse, Wisconsin and Red Wing, Minnesota. The Northwestern utilizes trackage rights to access their Winona operations. Operating sessions can be scheduled for those traveling to/from the convention.

Neil Roggensack—Crew/10—Scale/HO—West Salem, WI

Car Cards / Waybills - RailCommand DCC

Also will be available before and after convention

Recently featured in *Model Railroader*, the Montana Northland is a mid-70's freelance road is set in western Montana and central Idaho. Bridge traffic keeps the helper service busy moving trains over the mountains along with local service on this multi-deck mushroom design layout. Operating sessions can be scheduled for those traveling to/from the convention.

Dennis Weber—Crew/10—Scale/HO—La Crosse, WI

RailOp Waybills - Easy DCC

Also will be available before and after convention

The Peoria Western's "terminal" district is comprised of a large classification yard which handles over 400 cars during a session without "cherry picking," a car repair complex, and extensive industrial switching areas. The upper level "prairie" district includes various interchange connections and local switching. If you've ever had any doubts about the limitations of computer generated switch lists, here's your chance to find out how smooth it can be! Operating sessions can be scheduled for those traveling to/from the convention.

For more information

Please visit <http://www.nmra75.org>

First LSOPS Weekend, CONTINUED

present at all areas and every interlock having a repeater board in case you don't happen to be able to see the modeled signal aspect. Steve is a professional NS Dispatcher who happens to currently run this section of their line, so you can bet that every single thing on the layout and the CTC machine is an accurate depiction of the prototype. Steve uses NCE, and the equipment again runs flawlessly. FRS radios are required but most often they are eerily quiet, since the signals give the crews most of the information needed. The scenery on this lovely layout is coming along very nicely with almost two-thirds of the layout

completed. This is a truly delightful layout that features some of the most prototypical operations I have seen yet – I encourage you all to try and attend.

So that was LSOPS. Jeff Warner and his fellow layout hosts did a superb job of getting this one rolling and they greatly entertained 30 folks for a weekend. All guests I spoke with had a wonderful time and they were all asking the same thing – when will it be next year? I guess that's the ultimate tribute – operators that can't wait to return. 🚂

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS: We welcome your contributions to the DISPATCHER'S OFFICE! All submissions should be in electronic format. Microsoft Word documents and high-res JPGs preferred are preferred for publication.

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