NV NORTHERN VIRGINIA NTRAK

Northern Virginia NTRAK
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January 1994 Volume III, No.1

Club News

Christmas Party

John and Judy Cook graciously hosted the 1993 NTRAK Christmas party on 18 December at their home in Montclair, VA. The magnificent spread of holiday food, drink and decor that the Cooks prepared more than compensated for the long drive south. While the revelers munched on ham sandwiches, cookies and numerous other goodies, they were entertained by train videos and a slide show. Gil Brauch's video taken at some of our NTRAK set-ups was particularly interesting. The eye level close-ups truly demonstrated the speed at which our trains run. Obie showed a video tape of the Valley Forge NTRAK setup which gave a feel for the immense size of the layout. Matt Shaefer presented a slide show with some of the many fantastic shots he's taken in his career as a train buff and photographer.

The gift exchange went pretty much without incident as the participants seemed to be content with their initial draws. Our course Brian Brendel didn't get to keep the antique tank car he coveted, however everyone was happy at the end.

Edd Braithwood insisted on having a business meeting during the festivities but it didn't dampen the holiday mood.

Thanks again to John and Judy. They did a great job in hosting the party. They have set a new standard for future NTRAK Christmas parties. Now if John could only get his layout running...[redacted]

Upcoming Events

Jan 23 Monthly club set-up and business meeting at the Franconia Government Center. Call Charles Greenacre or Fred Obermeyer for details

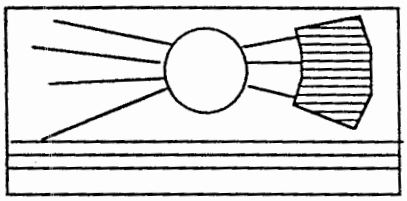
April 9-10 Greenberg Model Train and Doll House Show. Lake Braddock High School. Contact Charles Greenacre if you wish to bring a module or present a seminar.[redacted]

Module Ideas

During the last couple shows several people, including some new club members, asked me for advice about module designs and or themes. I pondered the subject and offer the following ideas for consideration.

A big city passenger terminal would make a good addition to our club layout. Several members enjoy running long strings of varnish. A terminal where these beauties can look pretty and wait their turn on the red line would be very useful. Matt has proposed several designs for the track work for such a module. The availability of station, platform and train shed kits should make building such a module fairly easy. The real challenge will be to make it long enough to comfortably hold the consists and still be transportable.

In a similar vein, a steam era terminal would fill a similar role for steam engines in our set-ups.



2x4 Steam Terminal

The above design shows a small roundhouse and turntable with some additional service and storage tracks. Of course, bigger is better and the model railroad literature shows several examples of more comprehensive steam terminals and facilities. An impressive example of a NTRAK roundhouse and steam terminal was on display at the Valley Forge show. Check with Obie as he has photos of it.

During a recent telephone conversation, Charles Greenacre called to my attention that the club could benefit from an additional crossover track. He indicated that his Fuddrucker's Junction module included one crossover, but an complementary crossover is required. Edd Braithwood's engine terminal includes some crossovers but not a complete set. Check with them if you are interested in including a crossover in your module.[redacted]

New Newsletter Editor

As announced in the last newsletter, Chris Riddick has turned over the newsletter editorial job to Bernard

Kempinski. Thanks for doing a great job Chris. Good luck with grad school.

If you readers have any material you would like to submit to the Northern Virginian NTRAK newsletter please send it to: Bernard Kempinski, 6056 Estates Drive, Alexandria, VA 22310. Feature articles, trip reports, classified ads, how-to's, module progress reports or design ideas, and just about any subject relating to railroading and N scale are appropriate. To expedite the editorial process you may submit your articles to me by email at bkempins@ida.org or on 3.5" disc in either DOS or Macintosh format. If you send graphics please insure that they are Macintosh compatible or on a hard copy.

Rumor Bin

by G. Andy Dancer

Some club members must have been very good boys last year. I've been told that USRA 2-8-8-2 were found in both Brian Brendel and John Cooks' Christmas stockings. Those two engines on the layout will be hotter than a Yankee-Oriole double header in August.

Captain du la Mer Charles (his secret ambition by the way) and Premiere Mate Dave Greenacre have completed the framework for Le Harve Harbor modules. Why Le Havre you ask? Because that's where the Normandie docked and if you're building a N scale Normandie you got to have a place to dock her. The modules will be about twenty (!!!) linear feet in some unusual configuration. They might need the Normandie to take this thing to shows.

The Landmark show was such a success that the club is trying to do an encore in February. This time we're negotiating for 3 days on President's weekend and the mall center court. Stay tuned.

Chuck Obermeyer is doing well and will be back in the shop soon- at least part time. It will be good to see him back at the throttle.

CLIMAX YARD

by Matt Schaefer

CLIMAX YARD In our December newsletter we looked at a design for a flat yard. Well I had so many comments on the yard suggesting crossovers, #6 turnouts, multilevels, and other features that I decided this month to offer a design of "Climax Yard" with more options and maybe this will trigger even better ideas from our yard goats. We can sure use a lot more yard tracks to shown off our stuff and operate out of!

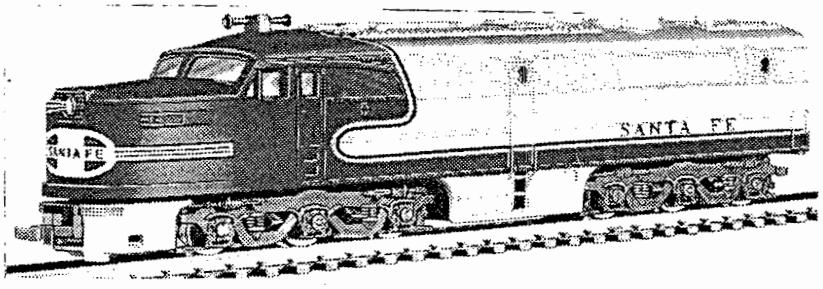
7 FOOT MODULES Last month we compared 4 and 8 foot modules but I now offer up 7 foot modules because these modules can be slid on edge into a minivan or pickup with a 4 X 8 foot bed. With permanent scenery up to 6 inches high six of this size module can be carried or stored in a space 4 feet wide. So that is why I suggest 7 foot modules but we'll go more into the frame and transport next month. Lets talk about the yard plan first.

ONE CROSSOVER IN THE YARD For easier reading of the track plan view the sketch from the edge of the paper looking down the tracks. The neat addition of a #6 crossover inside the yard (shown at A on sketch) connects 3 tracks of the yellow to either yellow or red mains with or without an adjacent yard lead module. To make up some

Obie's Corner

News and Gossip from the hobby industry.

Con-Cor announced several releases of interest to the N scale modeler. First is the return of the J3a 4-6-4 Hudson. The reissue will have an improved mechanism including a flywheel, and 5 pole motor. Working headlight and rear tender light are included.



Their PA-1 and PB-1 will also be back in production. These are improved versions of the first models released in the 1980's. New mechanisms and better details should make for an attractive power set.

The tri-level auto racks are in production but have not reached the shop yet. They are based on the 84 foot flat car with 28 additional parts to make up the enclosure. Kitbashing opportunities abound as the parts are interchangeable.

The 125 ton twin stack container cars should be out in early 1994. They also re-released their fuel foiler piggy back set.

New in the store are one piece cast Hydrocal structures. A loading ramp and a diner are in stock. The detail on the diner is good. With a some paint and weathering these should make attractive additions to a module.

of the space required for the crossover the red line is run down the ladder (at B) through trailing turnout points eastbound (going to the right). If the optional module with the orange line (called front passing track) is added (at C), red trains can run around the ladder on orange, and not down the rough ladder track. Using the orange also leaves the red main free to serve as a yard lead (at D) to 7 of the 9 yard tracks.

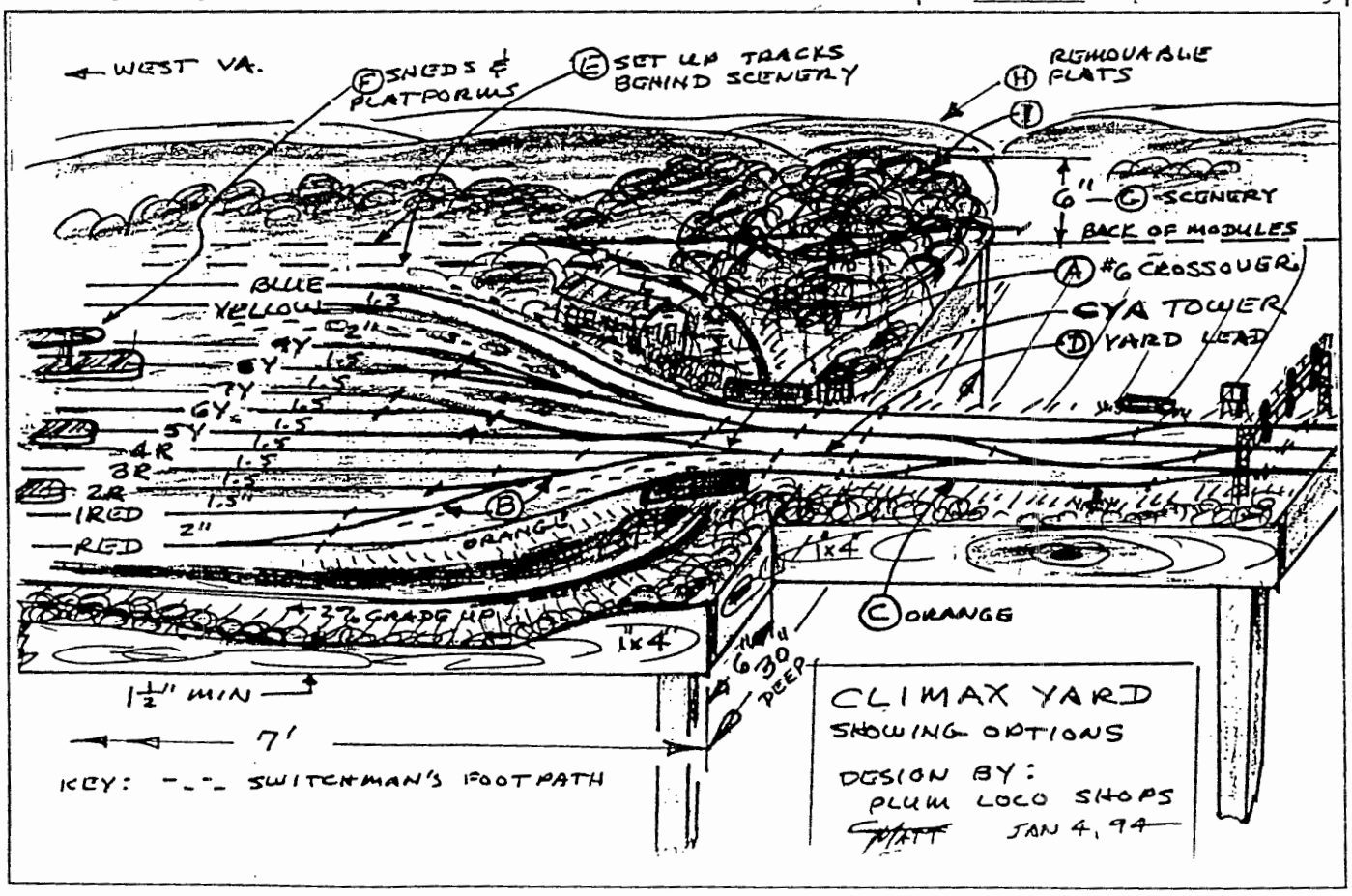
ADDITIONAL CROSSOVERS Yes, a real yard would have crossovers in the throats on BOTH ends. But the original goal was to go for maximum yard length and capacity for the red and yellow mains and additional crossovers should not be needed if all tracks have ample yards. Adding double or two #6 crossovers on the yard module would take another 12 inches out of each end of the yard. But if more crossovers are desired they can be located on the adjacent module(s), no problem. This keeps the yard tracks their maximum length and reduces the number of yard modules and track connectors needed. An interlocking tower has been placed where the operator will have a good view of all operations, CYA tower.

UNDERPASS LOOPS Loops with an 11 inch radius were added at both ends of the set up yard to connect the red main to set up to tracks. This track takes away the space for 1 red yard track but adds a much longer folded 18 foot set up and lead track which can hold 65 each 40 foot cars. a good trade off. The grade also adds to the visual depth of the module. The underpass is similar to the present underpass and loop at the large Russell Yard near Ashland, Ky. The loop is mainly used to run engines around from the far side to the roundhouses and shops. The grade for a 7 foot module can be a reasonable 2% to pass under the mains. Incidentally, I used to play on the tracks in Richmond in 1950 where the Seaboard had at least a 4% grade transferring cars from RF&P's Acca Yard up into their Hermitage Yard and double headed steam switchers were given the job.

TWO SET UP TRACKS If the module is expanded to 30 inches deep two set up tracks can be added at the back of the module (at E). The set up yard is 1.5 inches lower than the mains to eliminate another grade and the set up tracks feed directly to red. There is not enough space to have a grade from the set up tracks to blue. Optional crossovers can be provided on an adjacent module to crossover to yellow or whatever. Didn't I say there would be options?

THROUGH PASSENGER STATION Optional removable passenger platforms and umbrella sheds are shown (at F) and are placed over or replace yard tracks 2, 5 and 8. Two 7 foot modules will hold passenger trains of up to 18 cars plus 4 E units which is just about right.

SCENERY Optional scenery



up to 6 inches high with buildings and/or hills (G) can give a view block for control panel(s) as well as the set up yard. The scenery on the end modules should be rounded on the ends to present a good view from the next module (at I). One or more flats of background and skyline rising above the fixed 6 inches of scenery can be sceniced on panels or flats (at H). These flats could be unbolt for transporting.

NUMBER OF MODULES To lengthen the yard, additional modules can be added but each one would add about 14 connector tracks with 4 connectors each, totaling 56 rail connectors. See design of racks of connector tracks in the December newsletter. The racks will expedite the set up work. For discussion purposes if all 6 modules were part of the yard such a yard would be 42 feet long, could hold a straight string of 138 each, 40 foot cars all on one yard track and would require about 200 yards of flextrack.

Next month I'll go into the frame and transport of 6 modules. Yes, we do have members thinking in terms of 42 feet of modules! If you have any design suggestions or are ready to cut plywood I would be glad to coordinate any effort on this project. We need all kinds of pull in tracks, passing tracks and more yard tracks would be most helpful to our operations. May you have the best of N-TRAKing in 94![redacted]

REFLECTIONS ON THE B&O LAYOUT

By Matt Schaefer

The B&O Layout displayed in Cincinnati every Christmas Season for the last 48 years has a charisma that makes it a classic. It has changed very little in the 40 years that I have known it. To see it again is really like going home! The small school children are bussed downtown to see the layout as well as other holiday displays and carollers. Then over the years they return with their families. What is it that gives it staying power for 48 years to date? I'm not sure but these are some of the salient features of the display:

1. The layout has a home and financial support in the Cincinnati Gas and Electric Company. The lobby of the company and center of the layout is gaily decorated with lighted Christmas trees, snappy looking red nutcrackers, horses and sleighs and all is covered with snow and lights.

2. The layout has lots of continuous action which is enhanced by the larger and faster speeds of the O scale trains. Two or more trains are frequently run on the outer loop and are continuously stopped and then moved up by the automatic block system.

3. The layout has bright operating B&O color postion signals plus a control panel with lights that keep changing as the trains move through the four blocks.

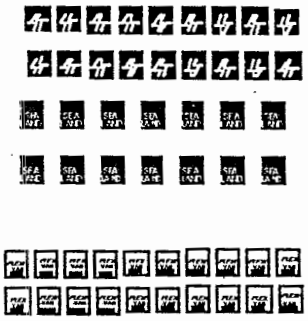
4. The buildings on the layout are lighted and the layout and all its buildings are covered with snow which cordinates with the Christmas decorations in the room.

All thes features in combination with a very helpful operating crew makes for an exciting display. The crew glady stops trains on any request for pictures. In addition for the B&O fan there is the mystic of the B&O blue Capitol Ltd, the B&O position signals and the neat Baltimore and Ohio lettering on engines and cars with the dome logo. There is no doubt this is a classic and improvement plans are being made for the upcoming 49th and 50th year!

I often wonder how much influence that tipple track O gage oval layout had on the birth of N-TRAK.[redacted]

N Scale Mud Flaps!??

When detailing the Con-cor series of tractor trailers I have found that small paper mudflaps glued to the tractors and trailers add a nice touch. Reproduced below are some scale mudflaps that you can cut out and use on your tractor trailers. A few air lines, painted tail lights and turn lights makes for a nice model without a lot of work.[redacted]

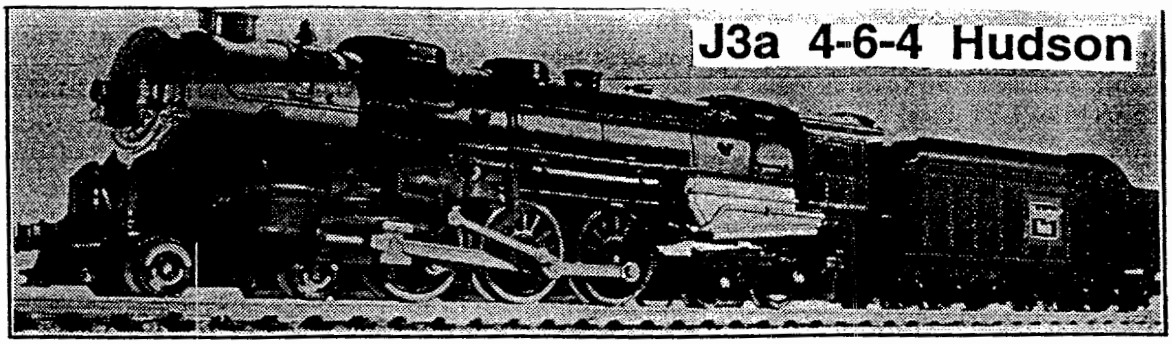


Rail News

Interesting Tidbits from Rec.Railroads on Internet

The Sunday River Silver Bullet Ski Express will start (Portland, Maine to Bethel, Maine) The train will run Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during the months of Jan. and Feb. Sat and Sun in March and April; every day during the holiday weeks (Dec 26-Jan 2) and (Feb. 21-27) 1994. Call 1-207-824-RAIL or 1-207-824-3000 ext. 225 for info.

From Ernest Raub, "Since we've been talking about axle counts on defect detectors: I was checking out the action at Selma, N.C., Monday afternoon and saw, among other things, southbound



The Con-Cor 'N' Scale Hudson will be back in production in early 1994. We first made this model in 1970 and it has proven to be one of the most popular N Steam Locomotives over the years.

The 1994 edition will have quite a few revisions over the previous prodctuion, including a flywheel and working headlight and tender light.

History of the J3a:

First built in 1937, the New York Central bought 50 of these high speed passenger locomotives. They were the pride of the New York Central System for many, many years and became one of the " Classic " steam locomotives of all time.

Even at the end of their careers they were used for high-speed freight and mail trains, so it is perfectly acceptable to use them for both freight and passenger trains on your personal railroad.

Features of the 1994 version of the J3a:

- New 5 pole,skewed armature motor
- Flywheel has been added
- Headlight has been added
- Rear light in Tender has been added
- New Worm gear
- Very smooth running mechanism
- All 12 wheel tender pickup
- Added Tender Weight
- Finely detailed Valve Gear
- Traction Tires
- Improved decoration

Price:(To be Announced)

CSX 471. I had heard him talking to the dispatcher and reporting that he could barely maintain 40 mph.

When he passed the station, I began to understand why. The train had four units (two six-axle; two four-axle, with the fourth unit being an older yard switcher in Seaboard System colors) and looooots of cars. The Smithfield detector reported 692 axles, which, after subtracting for the power, gave me 168 cars. The cars were a mixed bag of mostly empties. But, with a good many of them being above average length (auto racks, TTX flats, long center bulkhead flats, etc.) this meant that the train was just a shade under two miles long. I presume this was caused by unusual conditions -- starting back up after a holiday weekend. Or, was it? Has anybody else seen or heard any trains this length in normal operation? The problem, of course, is that such a train is too long for most sidings and can only be met or overtaken on longer sections of double track. (471 was running ahead of Amtrak 79, the "Carolinian," which got into Selma about an hour late. 79 branches off the CSX onto NS tracks to Raleigh at Selma.)

From the *New York Times* (*Business Day* section)

"In another sign of the resurgence of the nation's railroad industry CSX Transportation said yesterday that it had ordered 300 locomotives from the Transportation Systems division of the General Electric Company. The sale, the terms of which were not disclosed, adds to a long list this year of orders from railroads upgrading their equipment and investing in new technology.

The announcement was also significant because 250 of the locomotives that CSX is buying from General Electric have motors that run on alternating instead of direct current.

Such locomotives (AC) require less maintenance because their motors do not require the brushes found in direct-current motors, which transfer power from the locomotive's alternator to the motor's core. They can haul 33 percent more freight than direct-current locomotives, offer savings of 10 percent in maintenance costs, and 3 to 5 percent in fuel efficiency, said David Tucker, a general manager of marketing and service for GE transportation systems.

In March the Burlington Northern Railroad awarded a contract worth $675 million to General Motors and Siemens to supply 350 alternating current freight locomotives. Eight of the

locomotives were delivered this year.

Other orders this year from the industry include Southern Pacific Lines' announcements that it would buy 133 reconditioned locomotives from Morrison Knudsen and 50 new locomotives from General Motors. In November the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company said it would buy 65 locomotives from G.E.

The order from CSX will be filled during the next four years beginning with 80 locomotives in 1994. In all, 250 alternating current and 50 direct current engines will be produced.

CSX said most of the new locomotives would be used to add to its fleet of 2,965 locomotives. But in many cases one of the new locomotives can and will be used to replace two older models due to their greater efficiency."

Also in the paper;

"The Morrison Knudsen Corporation, one of the country's largest construction companies, will enter the locomotive manufacturing business next month when it rolls out an engine powered by liquefied natural gas.

The locomotive, at a relatively small 1,200 horsepower, is a prototype of a switch engine.

General Electric and General Motors are the only other United States manufacturers of locomotives. Morrison Knudsen has extensive experience in rebuilding used locomotives. "[redacted]