

THE CALL BOARD



A 100% **NTRAK** CLUB

Celebrating Our 12th Year!

June 2003

VOLUME XII NUMBER 6

Chasin' Trains at Hawk's Nest

Jeff Peck

During our annual pilgrimage to Hawk's Nest in late March, NVNTRAK'ers *Matt Schaefer, John Steitz, Bernie Kempinski*, and I took a break from the festivities to enjoy the beautiful weather and chased trains in the area. Our first stop was in Gauley Bridge, at K & M Jct., to do a little research for a module I'm finishing up. As we left, we noticed a NS coal drag coming off the ex-NYC branch. Matt's



hypothesis was that the coal was headed for Deepwater, where it would be switched into a larger train to be dragged up Loop Creek to Beckley and points east. Matt's guess was dead on. We began by following the train along Rt. 60, until we caught the head end units as they pulled in to the yard. After a quick stop for food, we crossed over the Kanawha River at Montgomery, to catch the train as it crosses the Kanawha and the CSX on a multi-span combination truss and girder bridge. Not knowing how long it would take to get the train assembled, we decided to check out the local landscape and introduce Bernie to the WV state flower (satellite dish) and also set off a WV burglar alarm (3 or 4 mutts in the yard) in the process (ok, Edd, that's the end of the WV wisecracks). We settled on a perch about 70' above water level, to watch the river crossing. Matt's scanner soon let us know the train was on the move. We dropped down to catch the head end as it crossed a bridge that was still stenciled for the Virginian Railway, then jumped in Bernie's sure-footed Tahoe to begin the chase. The grade up Loop Creek is 2% and has more

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The View from the Gap

Cotton Bowen, President

Last month I noted that participation in an organization can be rewarding, and the spice that makes life interesting. At the time, I had little indication of how potentially prophetic that comment would be. One of our dedicated BoD members (Dave Davies) was rail fanning in May, and observed a malfunctioning diesel start a fire(s) on the old RF & P route. His timely phone call enabled the local fire department to control and put out the fire without any loss of property or injuries. Although traffic on the rails was delayed, the fire could easily have had much more serious consequences. First, I hope Dave will accept our combined thanks for a job well done and secondly, I note that his timely actions lend strength to the contention that smart railroads and local authorities should encourage, rather than discourage, rail fanning.

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WWW.BIGTRAINLAYOUT.ORG

August 5-8, 2004 Chantilly, VA



MODULE OF THE MONTH



Two VIDCAP views of Mann's Bluff — Dave Davies

Mann's Bluff

Steve Jackson

Last month, the *Hostler's Shack* contained a discussion of modules with Green Flyovers. Well, Mann's Bluff is one of these modules. The idea is to provide a way to run trains within the framework of NTRAK, without getting caught up in the train looping that can result from the NTRAK standard. New Jersey Southern (NJS) NTRAK first introduced me to the concept of using

NTRAK modules for something different than running trains in a circle. They accomplished this by constructing, *and using*, modules that allow movement between the NTRAK standard lines, and permit them to maintain very dense train running on a relatively small layout. Since the modules are NTRAK compliant, they can be used in any type of NTRAK layout.

Mann's Bluff is a 4' by 5' corner that

provides a starting point for alternate blue, and allows access from the red and yellow lines up to green. It is actually a pair of modules; a 3' by 4' corner section and a 2' by 2' section. The 3' by 4' corner section provides the flyover and turnout from blue to alternate blue. The 2' by 2' provides a crossover from red to yellow, allows green line to re-align, and provides sidings on the

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RAIL EVENTS TIMETABLE

June	1	Backshop Prince of Peace Church, Springfield, VA	13-19	NMRA National Convention Toronto, Canada
	5-8	20 th N Scale Convention Houston, TX	20	Fairfax Station Museum Setup Picnic outside after teardown of layout inside
	7	Manassas Railfest, Manassas, VA Setup Foreman is Bill Rutherford	26-27	Springfield Mall Public Show Springfield, VA
	14-15	Alexandria Red Cross Waterfront Festival Alexandria, VA Setup Foreman is Paul Diley	August 3	Backshop Prince of Peace Church, Springfield, VA
	15	Fairfax Station Museum Setup Fairfax Station Road, Fairfax, VA	16-17	GATS/Greenberg Great Train Show Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, VA
	22	Tim's Railside Bar 11 AM, see Matt Schaeffer for info	21-24	Arlington County Fair Setup foreman: John Steitz
July	6	NO Backshop		

(Continued from Page 1, View from the Gap)

Recently, we have all read or heard of articles and accounts of rail fanners being detained, questioned by the police or encouraged to move on. I would contend, that when rail fanners obey the law by not trespassing, and thereby possibly creating a safety hazard of their own making, not to mention just breaking the law, they can render a valuable service to the railroads, by providing another set of eyes to watch for undesired activities and events. With the proliferation of cell-phones, the security of railroad operations and property can be enhanced in a manner that decades ago would have been science fiction. I hope that Dave's actions are appreciated at the Boardrooms of any of the railroads that benefited from his actions. (*Ed—Although 20-30 fire units responded, there was no CSX presence at all.*)

Talking about getting involved. I was disappointed in mid-May, when I sent out an appeal for someone to act as the Quartermaster for the club picnic held on 18 May at the Fairfax Station. Our regular QM, Bill Baldwin, informed me at the May backshop that he would be unable to perform his usual service of setting up the picnic. I thank Bill for informing me in a timely manner. It's always a good thing to keep people informed with enough lead-time for the club to adjust and move on. The problem I have, is not that Bill was unavailable, that happens to everyone from time to time; it was that no one stepped forward to pick up the ball and continue down field. No one stepped forward, at least until Dave Davies again saved the day. Come-on club members! Here is a member of the club that is already on the BoD, he also is the Call Board Editor, and now he's stepping in to the breach as the acting QM. Isn't there anyone else who can volunteer? Dave, once again, Thank-You! Don't get me wrong. I know that many of us are busy with jobs, family, and other obligations, but this is your club and it's going to be what we all collectively make of it. I also have to acknowledge that there are plenty of members who serve in various ways as BoD members, former BoD members who are guiding lights, and project managers, etc. I extend my thanks to them also, but! We have talent and skills that most clubs would drool over, and I am still looking for participation from those who aren't currently actively involved. Last month I asked for suggestions of what more can we do to peg the fun meter needle against the pin. So far I haven't heard much, I'm still **LISTENING!** I'd really like to have more participation. In the mean time we will continue to forge ahead. I guess it won't be as fast as we can, but as I said its' your club and the BoD is here to serve the club.



From the Super's Desk
John Steitz, Asst. Superintendent



The month of June kicks off the NVNTRAK summer show season, with several outdoor set-ups, and some of our best opportunities for promoting the hobby.

Sunday, June 1, starts off with the monthly Backshop at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in West Springfield. This is a good time to bring out any modules in need of a touch-up and testing, or any new modules which you'd like to set-up in convention or show layouts in the next few months. The next backshop is August 3, in the middle of vacation season. If you're thinking of using a module that hasn't seen a show in a while, you might consider bringing it out to one of the Backshops to get it certified.

[If you can't make a Backshop prior to your target show or convention - such as yours truly, thanks to his brother's wedding - you can always talk to Paul Diley, our Superintendent. There are several members of the club who can stop by, check out and certify your module in lieu of a Backshop.]

The ink will barely be dry on this issue of the Call Board, when several members of NVNTRAK will be heading down to Houston, for the 20th N Scale Convention, June 5-8. In addition to the fun of running on a really large NTRAK layout, there are all sorts of clinics, contests and tours. Check the convention web site for more details.

[<http://www.kingswayrc.com/ncrowd/2003/2003.html>]
I *believe* the layout there is virtually full, but I'm sure the organizers can always use a helping hand. Houston 2003, and the N Scale Collector's Convention in Tulsa, later that month, are the last N Scale conventions prior to our own Capitol Limited 2004 convention next August.

If you're staying closer to home that weekend, Saturday June 7th will feature the annual Manassas Railfest. We set up outside under a tent, right next to the Amtrak/VRE Station, in the company of other modular model railroad clubs. There are vendors in one of the old buildings nearby, and in the street, as well as 1:1 scale action, with NS and VRE equipment available for touring. VRE runs short excursion trains to Clifton and back, and an added bonus at the end is the 1:1 switching of equipment out of the siding and back to Manassas Yard. Please remember, if you would like to run on the layout, common courtesy says that you should either bring a module, assist with the set-up early in the AM, or, at the very least, assist with tear down after the show is over. Bill Rutherford [worj@comcast.net] is the layout coordinator for this show, and he could use your help.

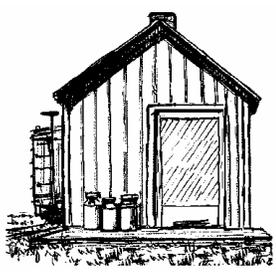
(Continued on page 6)

 **THE HOSTLER'S SHACK** 

Matt Schaefer

TIM'S RAILSIDE BAR – At the hostler's shack, we had an uproar from guys demanding a summer party at Tim's, where they can enjoy the sun, water, trains and all the great views. We have reservations for the cabana for Sunday June 22, which will lock-in if we have a contingent there to hold our table(s) about eleven o'clock. We already have some troopers stepping up to handle that tough job, as rail traffic is better earlier in the day.

REALIABILITY = FUN: It's no fun when you notice your diesel smoking, or even worse your new steamer smelling like wires instead of steam. As we all know, if we can get rid of the little green gremlins, the set ups will be faster, and we will have less show stoppers later. What we need is the major clubs to agree on some guidelines for large layouts, like maybe the 500 module size. But, the guides should also apply to any size layout.



SHOW STOPPERS – There are thick books, long web sites and papers on DCC layouts, but they do not cover all the things we need to know for Ntrak. Many problems we create, because common set up procedures are not followed, like not running the basic coin test correctly, or we overlook private control panels, Cinch plug reversed, etc.. With all the coordination and tech management at No Bull 2, still an engine was fried dead on the Red Line Route.

TRAINING CREWS – At '96 East in Alex, we even required attending a clinic of instruction on how to run the Red Line Route, as Aristos had not been around very long. It seems to me, rule #1 now should be to keep your train under your observation all the time, particularly if you are not familiar with the track you are running through. If your engine stops, or even jerks, it could be dirt or it could be a dangerous short that needs to be corrected before it causes a secondary problem, i.e. dead engine. Instead of pumping out 10 amps into your brass engine, Edd's fuses limit the current to 2 Amps on our Aristo blocks. One problem may be other clubs do not use fuses or any current limiters "yet" on Aristos.

DCC EQUIPMENT – Under the right conditions, like where resistance is high and limits the current to less than 5 Amps, the basic Digitrax DB 150 will pump out up to 5 Amps without tripping, which is plenty to fry an engine. Also, Tony's PS one will also allow up to 5 Amps of current before tripping and the Amps are not adjustable in either of these. The time delay can be longer, to avoid the nuisance trip, but this still does not reduce the chances of a fried loco with high resistance. Note, the high resistance can be in the loco and wheel to track connection, causing the limiter not to trip, and not in the track feed system.

PM 42s - One partial solution is use of the newer Digitrax power management (PM) 42's, or Tony's Power Shield PS 2 or 4, that can be set to trip at a lower current, down to 1.5 Amps. Do we want lower settings if they cause more nuisance trips, and allow fewer locos in a block? If a PM42 or PS 4 limit is dropped from 5, to lets say 2 Amps, how much track should be in one block? Should it be one long track or several parallel tracks, to keep the area all in view? Can we expect to see less trains running on bigger convention layouts allowing longer blocks? Assume we have 70 modules in one big loop, how best to divide that into blocks and what current limit should be used?

SOLUTIONS – These are just a few of the interesting scenarios, and now is a good time to test out some ideas and get some agreements to eradicate some of the green gremlins that rob us of hours that could be used for running trains.



Convention Note

Registration for the Capitol Limited has been opened for NVNTRAK Members only. Our arrangement with GATS will require us to pay them a portion of the "rent" for the layout space this August (2003). Early registration by members will help cover this and other early costs (such as for publicity materials).

Members do NOT need to register at the hotel to receive the \$65 early registration rate, but registration is encouraged (we'll all be there long hours come August '04).

Please ask the registrar if you have any questions.

(Ed—the form will follow in a couple days with the "new" New Member CallBoard.)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Northern Virginia NTRAK extends a hearty welcome to **Brent Arritt and Brian Orlowsky** our newest members, who joined within the last few months. Welcome to the club. We look forward to getting to know you better in the coming months.

The May 4, 2003, NVNTRAK BOD

meeting was called to order at 2:20 PM. Paul Diley, Jim LaBaugh, Cotton Bowen, Dave Davies, and Steve Jackson present.

Old Business:

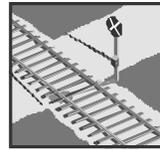
Cotton reported that a contribution in the amount of \$100 was sent to the B&O museum to help with the repair of their facility. An additional check in the amount of \$100 will be sent to complete the club's contribution of \$200 towards their repair efforts. Cotton commended the Call Board editor for the improved quality of the May issue. Jim and Paul have compiled separate lists of modules owned by members of the club. They will compare lists and Paul will continue to contact members to verify the existence/status of modules. Jim reported that he has made progress in compiling a club-owned equipment list, but has still not contacted a few individuals and will continue to pursue. Scenery ideas for the new junctions were discussed. Dave reported the outstanding part of the club DCC order has still not been received. Paul reported that Edd B. has installed the resistors on the throttles in the large trailer. (Note: Edd installed resistors in the throttles for the remainder of the throttles at the May FFX station setup. Thanks Edd!!) Dave reported that the annual calendar has been updated and was published in the Call Board. Dave reported that he still needs a photo of an Aristo throttle for the new member Call Board. Steve J. volunteered to take a photo of one of his throttles and forward to Dave. Dave reported that he had written an instructional section for the DCC throttles.

New items:

Steve J. asked if the club's adopt-a-highway program should be added to the schedule. Jim provided Dave with labels for club mailings and also reported 80 members of the club paid in full for NTRAK membership. Jim reported that the club is in good financial condition. Jim passed around a letter from the B&O museum thanking the club for the \$100 contribution. Jim reported that Richmond Controls had sent funds to receive the Call Board. Jim reported that form 990EZ had been filed with the IRS. The BOD tabled a motion to review the club owned modules to determine which, if any, should be retired/replaced. Jim reported that he has been unable to order the Cinch Jones connectors to replace the club stock. He will continue to pursue this. The issue of members that attend shows, expecting to run trains, without assisting with setup or teardown was discussed.

The BOD meeting was adjourned at 3:15.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Jackson
NVNTRAK BOD member (for Marc Sisk)



The Other Side of the Tracks

Chester Freudenthal, past CB editor

The Other Side of the Tracks

You know you are a model railroader if ...

- You refuse to buy an inexpensive, beautifully detailed boxcar lettered for your favorite railroad, because the real thing had fourteen ribs and the model has sixteen.
- It constantly annoys you that the kits for model airplanes, cars, and boats in the hobby shop aren't made to useful scales, like 1:160.
- Your wife gives you something expensive but inappropriate, like an articulated stack car when you model the 50's, and you run it to avoid hurting her feelings, but the whole time, you're squirming inside.
- You spend more on your model trains in a year than most Third-World nations spend on the real thing.

It's been a while since you heard from me, so perhaps an explanation is due. Yes, I am still recovering from my injury, so it's hard to get to many set-ups and lug along a module (but I can't wait to try the new Bridge!) But more to the point, I lost interest. What, lost interest! How can that be? Well, it just seems that the direction the club was (is?) taking doesn't agree with me, and so while my love of the hobby is still there, that for the club has waned. After 11 years it's hard to admit, but it is true. I am not giving up by any means, but I am afraid I am in the minority on just "running trains in a circle" and not wanting the other BS that seems to have attached itself to what were our roots. My old modules and all the stuff for my new modules gather dust for now. Enough said. My other hobbies have benefited from my abstinence through. My Panda collection is now over 2000 strong and my photography is improving. But these are solitary hobbies, and I do miss the camaraderie of our club. Perhaps this summer will see me become more active and maybe I'll get one of the end-loops or my oNeTrak module built.



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The very next weekend is my favorite show of the entire year - Alexandria Waterfront Festival. [<http://www.waterfrontfestival.org/>] The festival is the equivalent of a county fair for the City of Alexandria, and is the principal fundraiser for the Alexandria Chapter of the American Red Cross. So, in addition to having fun running trains, NVNTRAK is helping out a very worthy cause. The festival features carnival rides and vendors, tons of dripping carnival food that is oh-so-bad for your waistline, musical concerts throughout the day, with headliners Friday and Saturday evenings, and Sunday afternoon. There are even fireworks Saturday night, after the main concert. As with virtually all of our shows, helping with our layout gets you into the festival for free. We set-up a small layout in the family tent in the middle of the festival Saturday morning, and run trains all day and evening Saturday, and all day Sunday, until tear down Sunday evening. Paul Diley, our Superintendent, is the set-up coordinator for this show. Space limits dictate that only POFFs and 3' corners can fit into the layout, but if you have one of those, check with Paul to see if he needs any more. If you can, please come by and help us with the layout.

The very same weekend as the Waterfront Festival, we set-up our layout in Fairfax Station, on Sunday June 15, the third Sunday of the month. [See <http://www.fairfax-station.org/>] We're also at Fairfax Station, Sunday July 20, and Sunday, August 17. Each time, we start setting up the layout around 11 AM, have trains running from noon till at least 4 p.m., and then tear down and are out of building by 5:30. This small layout (6-10 POFFs plus corners) is a great try-out for the first public show of any new module that has been fully scened and certified. We attract more families to our FF Station layout than almost any other show, so with kidzilla lurking around the layout, it's not the place for your prized brass steam engine. But our layouts do bring smiles and looks of awe from our youngest visitors, and boost donation revenues to keep the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum operating. We need new modules to rotate through Fairfax Station layouts and bring some variety to our set-ups there. So if you're interested for any of those dates, please contact Paul, or Club President Cotton Bowen [N130E2@BUPERS.Navy.Mil], who is a frequent set-up coordinator.

Some of us hope to drive up to Toronto, Canada for the NMRA National Convention, to contribute modules to the large NTRAK layout at the National Train Show. [<http://www.nmra.org/convention/trainshow.html>] The convention runs July 13th through 19th, and the layout will be set-up on Thursday, July 17th and run until Sunday, July 20th. Ottawa NTRAK and FUNTrak from Northern New York State are coordinating this layout. In addition to promoting the hobby, and starting to seriously publicize our own 2004 Capitol Limited, we also hope to help Toronto bounce back from its recent bad publicity over SARS. We're keeping an eye on

current travel advisories, but unless a full-blown epidemic breaks out, we hope to head north and have some fun in the middle of July. For more information, please contact Cotton or myself [steitzj@georgetown.edu]

The weekend after the national Train Show, NVNTRAK has a mall show scheduled for Springfield Mall, July 26-27. [<http://www.springfieldmall.com/>] Paul will have more information about that show in the next Call Board. But, if you would like to contribute a module, please contact Paul as soon as possible, as our mall shows are some of our most popular venues for module participation. In addition to many hours for running trains, mall shows display our hobby to the general public, not just those already attracted to train shows. It is a great opportunity to educate the public about railroad history and safety around railroads. We usually attract one or several new members with each mall show. Set-up is usually Saturday morning prior to mall hours, and we run all mall hours through Sunday evening, when we tear down. If participation warrants, we may run DCC and try our hand at operations on one of the three mainlines at some point during the weekend. And, as always, if you'd like to contribute a new module to the Springfield Mall layout, there is only one Backshop between now and then.

After the August Backshop on Sunday the 3rd, we have another double-header weekend on August 16-17. The simplest show of the two, of course, is our August 17th set-up at Fairfax Station.

More complex is our layout at the GATS/Greenberg Great Train Show at the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly Virginia. [See <http://www.greenbergshows.com/news.htm>] We'd like a good layout at this show, because next year, this show will be part of Capitol Limited 2004, our joint convention with GATS/Greenberg and other N Scale organizations. Train shows are our opportunity to show off our modeling within the hobby, and to share our expertise through clinics and demonstrations during the show. We set-up our layout the Friday afternoon/evening before, and early on Saturday morning, and then run trains through show hours Saturday and Sunday. Show layouts are another chance to run loooooong trains, as well as show off that unique one-of-a-kind train or locomotive you're acquired, and/or worked on. There's also a chance to show off that new skill or technique you've perfected, and to get some recognition for your modeling efforts. If you're interested in contributing a module or a clinic, please check with Paul Diley ahead of time.

So, who says there are no train running opportunities during the Summer? Whatever your vacation schedule, please plan to help us out at one or more of these shows, either by setting up a module, or helping is set-up or tear down a layout. In addition to having lots of fun, in most of the layouts, you'll be helping the club to help a good cause.

(From Page 1)

curves than a supermodel, so you have lots of opportunities to stop, look at the beautiful landscape, and listen to the flanges squealing around the curves. We stopped at a few spots to take pictures, and decided we would make the area through Page, WV, our final stop, since we had to get back to the lodge to do some runnin'. Unfortunately, the train didn't make it to Page, as it got held up by a work crew, but what we did catch along the way was wonderful. The trackage between Deepwater and Page looks like something that a model railroader would lay out. Seeing a coal train from a cliff side, stretched out over multiple bends in the creek like the longest black snake you've ever seen, is just awesome. Saturday yielded more opportunities, as we took field trips to Quinnimont and Prince under rainy skies. CSX was nice enough to supply a few coal drags for us to watch. You can experience all these wonderful sights (and more!) for yourself, just keep tuned in to the Hostler's Shack for the dates of HN '04. If more NVNTRAK'ers go next year, maybe we can generate enough hot air to push any surprise late-season snow storms off to the north - good thing I took the 4WD option on the truck I rented!



Convention Update

John Drye

We've continued our negotiations with GATS. They are as enthusiastic about the show as we are, and offered us three options for 2004. The first two let NVNT run the whole show, as we did in 1996. These two options differed slightly on how much marketing assistance we would get from GATS. The third option split the show pretty much the same way as did Greenburg. They run the Train Show, we run the convention and the layout.

The three options were reviewed at the May Backshop. The Convention Committee elected to go with the third option, which allows both organizations to do what they do best. GATS knows Train Shows; NVNTRAK knows big layouts (and conventions).

As part of Option 3, GATS offered to rent us the amount of space we think we need for the NTRAK layout. We briefly thought about filling all 100,000 square feet, but we couldn't find a pizza box large enough. After reviewing space and module counts from recent conventions, we decided to rent 40,000 square feet, or about half the Expo Center. Matt's pizza box calculations show that's enough room for well over 401 modules (the current record).

Now that plans are beginning to firm up (again: third time is the charm), the Publicity Crew is starting to build up steam. Gil Brauch and John Cook will be off to Houston by the time you read this. They will carry the 2004 flag in the form of a new banner (see page 1), flyers and a neat new idea Matt and Don Jackson came up with. You'll have to come to one of our June setups to see (and get one for yourself). The flag wavers will be off to a number of other conventions over the summer.

You can expect to see our ads in the usual magazines soon. Better than an ad, is an article; plus you get paid for it. Most of us have at least one clever idea for an article that can mention 2004. Now is the time to start working on them so we see a parade of articles like we did in 1996.

The convention committee meets regularly at our monthly Backshop, plus other meetings as necessary. We still have a LOT to do. A few more volunteers have come forth. If you'd like to help out in a specific area, please contact the committee or me or the board of directors.



Railfanning Rochelle, Illinois
by Dave Freshwater



Rochelle Railfan pavilion.

Now this is a railfan location that *Steve Triggs* and *Bobby Richesin* would love. No, not because there are lots of **UP** and **BNSF** trains (around 100 each day). It is open 24/7 – there’s a place to build a fire and watch trains all night.



Rochelle Fire Pit in foreground.

tourist dollars to the town. So, they build a pavilion on top of a fill,



Rochelle double diamond crossing with UP train approaching. BNSF tracks run from left foreground to right

The *Rochelle Railroad Park* was the brainchild of Ken Wise, Rochelle’s economic development director. He wasn’t a railfan, but he realized that railfans brought

UP’s



UP tracks north of the park.

former **CNW** mainline and **BNSF**’s Aurora-Twin Cities line. **UP**’s *Geneva Subdivision of the Illinois Division* runs along the north side of the park; **BNSF**’s *Aurora Subdivision of the Minnesota Division* runs along the south side.

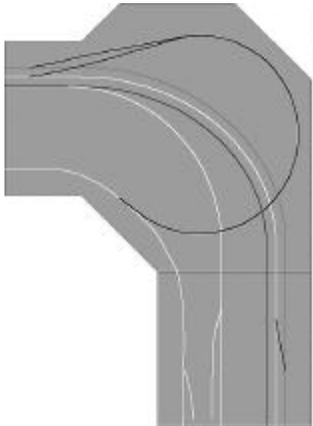


BNSF tracks south of the park.

The pavilion is outfitted with speakers, tuned to the **BNSF** and **UP** frequencies. Therefore, you can save your scanner batteries. There are detectors west of the pavilion. The milepost locations of the detectors and the pavilion are displayed on posters. There are grade crossings east of the diamond, so you get warning



Helpful postings in the pavilion.



Mann's Bluff Diagram.

(From Page 2 MOM)
 alternate blue and green lines. I used atlas track on the module throughout. I used the custom line #6 turnouts and code 80 flex track. The turnouts are each controlled with a DPDT slide switch, mounted adjacent to the track surface. The slide switches serve two functions. They provide a positive throw for the Atlas turnouts, since the Atlas turnouts do not have the snap action of the Peco

turnouts. Also, the slide switches provide power routing that is coordinated with the direction of the turnouts. This allows me to include stopping blocks and to automatically route the red or yellow power up the grade to green. Piano wire is used to run between the slide switches and the

turnouts, through coffee stirring sticks.

The grade on Mann's Bluff is part of where the name was derived. A roughly 15" radius curve runs up a 4% grade. The



The MoPac BL2 pulls back to the main line after picking up several full hoppers.

name Mann's Bluff was selected partly because of its tie to the *New River* theme. It was also selected because the grade on the module will 'call your bluff'. Don't think that your GP30 is going to pull that 35 car train up that grade. You had better put a couple more locos up there!!

The scenery of the modules is sparse, and consists of dramatic elevation changes, with a river/creek through the middle. The mountains are made



Action at the Mann's Bluff Coal Exchange



Loaded hoppers ease down the line.

predominately from extruded foam, with a little bit of plaster cloth. The mountains are aspiring to have *New River* vegetation, but for now, are settled at something more akin to the desert southwest.

Many hours with the glue gun remain. The creek bed (still dry until I figure out how to make water) is made of plaster cloth. There is not much level land for any type of settlement; however, one end of the corner section contains an abandoned homestead site, including a partially collapsed cabin and the few bovine residents. On the 2' square section, there are two sidings that service a small tippie, that permits the movement of coal from the green line down to the alternate blue.



The frame of the 3' by 4' section is 1" by 4" white pine. The MoPac FA1 returns from a run on the mountain line to heavy traffic on the mains.

The frame of the 2' section is 1" by 3" white pine, because that happens to have been what I had around at the time. Both sections have a 1/4" Luann plywood top. This material combination has served me well, and is both lightweight and sturdy. The legs are standard 2" by 2" legs held in pockets using thumbscrews. All of my modules share the same pocket construction, and I can therefore use any of the legs that I have with any of my modules interchangeably. This makes getting out of the house on show day a little easier, since I don't have to look for the 'right' legs.



The settlers didn't make it. Let's hope that the cows listen to the warnings of their friend as he passes by on his way to Chicago!

While this module is ready to show, they are never done. I still have a forest to fill out, a riverbed to fill, and details, ...



UP eastbound meets the westbound local at the park.

of trains from those too. There are electric outlets in the pavilion, so you can recharge camera batteries. Given the number of cameras and video recorders in the park, they get a lot of use. The park has a gift shop selling snacks, souvenirs and some model railroad items. There are soda machines and restrooms outside the shop. Just about anything that you'd want while railfanning is available here.

There are always railfans around at the park. Besides those like me that read about it in *Kalmbach's Hot Spots*, you'll find local townspeople dropping by. One family came by with takeout dinner and watched trains while eating. Local kids on bicycles stopped in for a bit. Everyone's friendly and will welcome you.

You don't even need to travel to visit this location. There is a web cam on the pavilion roof. (You can access it



Ed. — I can hear Bobby now ... flags/flares/wings ON A LOCAL !

through Trains.com.) This web cam is the source of some conversation between the radio hosts on *WGN-AM* in Chicago. One of the hosts likes railfans and can't understand golf. The other loves golf and doesn't understand railfans. Earlier in the week that I was there, at about 6 a.m., they had offered tickets to a Cubs game and dinner to the first person who appeared on the web cam and called them. One of the folks who lived in Rochelle grabbed her cell phone, went off



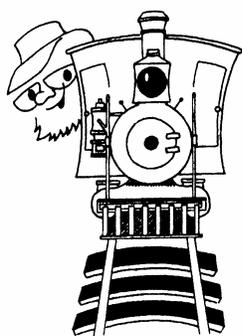
Townspeople watch a UP westbound.

to the park, called them, and got the tickets.

Each of the railroads have their own station east of the railroad park. There is an indirect connecting track between the two lines on the east side of town too. While most of the trains through this location are through trains, **UP** does run a local. Because it doesn't completely clear the block while working industries in Rochelle, the crew has to dismount and use a key to trigger the signals that govern the diamond. **BNSF** has a small yard on the southeast side of town, but I didn't see a local working the area.

UP is also building a new container yard west of the town to take advantage of the junction of I-88 and I-39 southeast of Rochelle. That will also allow trucks to avoid the traffic congestion in Chicago, which is about an hour east along I-88. The quickest way to the park is to get off I-88 at the Highway 251 exit (first exit west of the I-39 intersection). Head north into town. After passing over the overpass, turn left at the next street and head over to 9th street. Then turn back south. 9th Street runs just east of the park and is the location of the entrance to the parking lot. From I-39, you get off at the Route 38 exit and head west. Then you head south on Route 251. Just before the overpass/bridge over the tracks, head west to 9th Street. There are a number of hotels, restaurants and gas stations up along Route 38 if you can pull yourself away from the tracks.

You aren't going to see any **Amtrak** or **Metra** trains here. You'll have to go to a location closer in to Chicago. Some of those spots will have similar train densities. But you won't find anything like this park and the townspeople who really welcome railfans closer in. Any place looking to set up an area for railfans should look to Rochelle for a model.



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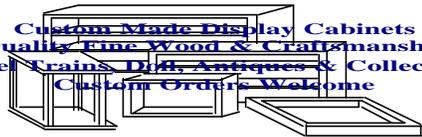
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For those who have bought the new Kato SD70MACs in CSX, you know that 734 and 713 are the engine numbers offered. Well, I couldn't pass up chasing CSX 734 (since I have one at home) for about 90 miles across the Virginia Piedmont on the old C&O from Doswell to Charlottesville. CSX 734 is pictured leading a Sealston hopper train westbound as it passes under the new VA Route 22 bridge east of Charlottesville, VA — Dave Davies