



The Yardmaster

Southwestern Michigan Division



April 2023

Website: www.ncr-div9.com



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Non-Train Related Special Events

April 1st – April Fool’s Day

April 9th – Happy Easter

April 22nd – Earth Day

April 28th – Arbor Day



From the Desk of the Superintendent – Garry Johnson

Greetings fellow Division 9 members:

Our Division will be on the road for the April meeting. Three outstanding layouts to view. This is an opportunity to discover and learn how to further your modeling while enjoying these layouts. I encourage each and everyone to take this opportunity on the 15th. The weather looks to be good for travel. Hope to see you all.



Division 9 Officers

Superintendent	- Garry Johnson	elecsprk@gmail.com
Assistant Superintendent	- Joel Pyard	pyardj@comcast.net
Paymaster	- Bob Lawrence	robertlawrence44@msn.com
Scribe & Newsletter Editor	- Alan Bau	alanwbau@gmail.com
Trustee	- Doug Van Meter	vanmeterda@gmail.com
Trustee	- Casey Bartman	Casey@GR-MI.com

Note: Elections are coming up in September. The positions in red are up for election.

Editor's Comments

We have 3 terrific layout tours scheduled for the April Membership Meeting in the Grand Rapids area, that just so happens to coincide with the Grand Rapids Train Show. Also please take a look at the new NMRA Interchange program on page 5. For this program to be effective, we need all NMRA Division 9 Members to register. We will be providing more details about this program as they become available.

I want to thank everyone that is in some way connected to the success of the Yardmaster Newsletter. We can't do this without your input and submission of questions, comments, etc.

Alan Bau
Yardmaster Newsletter Editor

Yardmaster Submissions: Please send articles, news items, inquiries, photos and comments to the Editor of **The Yardmaster, Alan Bau** alanwbau@gmail.com , **by the last of the month** for inclusion in the current month's edition.

Upcoming Division Nine Membership Meetings & Events:

Presenter	Date	Location	Presentation Subject
GT&I Chapter of the PRRT&HS Meeting	April 1st	Freedom Village, Holland, Mi.	Starts at Noon
Board Meeting	April 2 nd	Zoom Meeting	Starts at 2:00 PM
Thom Post, Skip Luyk & Ralph Moxley	April 15 th	See page 6 for details.	Layout Tours in the Grand Rapids area.
Casey Fisher & Dale & Deb Killarney	May 20 th	305 Hyde Circle Dr., Plainwell 34228 N. Brookwood Gobles	Layout Tours We may stop for lunch at the Club Car
Maynard Mitchell	June 17 th	4228 Fawn Ct, Battle Creek, MI	Layout Tour
Board Meeting	July 9 th	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	
No Membership Meeting Scheduled	July & August		Enjoy the summer
TBD	September 16 th	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	Annual Business Meeting & Board Elections

Note: The layout tours scheduled for April 15th happen to coincide with the Grand Rapids Spring Train Show. All three of the layout owners will be taking time off from the show to accommodate our visits. To minimize their time off from the show it is important that we adhere to the schedule laid out by Rich Mahaney on page 6 of this newsletter.

July Board Meeting to be held on July 9th at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club located at 648 Maple Hill Drive in Kalamazoo. This is approximately one mile west of our normal meeting place, the Colonial Kitchen. This will be an in-person meeting, but for those unable to attend, a zoom link will be available.

The Annual Membership/Business Meeting will also be held at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club on Saturday September 16th at 9:00AM. Coffee and donuts will be available. Don't forget this will be our annual election meeting for the Board of Directors. Watch for further updates as they become available.

Upcoming Train Shows

To encourage our members to support local area train shows the following shows are within reasonable driving distance from Kalamazoo.

Dates	Event Name	Location
April 1	KMRHS Spring Swap Meet	Kalamazoo County Fairgrounds
April 15	Greater Grand Rapids Spring Train Show	Wyoming, MI. HSB, Inc.
April 26	Muskegon Railroad Historical Society Model RR and Hobby Expo	Cardinal Elementary School, 2310 Marquette Ave. Muskegon, MI.
May 6	Blue Water Train & Swap Show - 2 Days	Darrel's 5078 Lapeer Rd, Kimball, MI 48074 Geoffrey Hering 810-531-4975
June 11	47th Annual Kane County Railroadiana and Model Train Show	525 S Randall Rd, St. Charles, IL 60174 Russ Fierce 847-358-1600

Question of the Month – March Results

“What are your suggestions to help us increase Membership in Division Nine and attendance at monthly meetings?”

There was one response to this question. “Having been in several organizations concerned about growing membership, my recommendation is to focus on retaining current members. Making us attractive to current members will encourage them to share with potential new members as well as reducing losses.”

Question of the Month for April

Have you registered for the NMRA Interchange?

Please send your response to alanwbau@gmail.com.
The overall results will be published in the next issue.

NMRA Interchange

By now you have seen or heard about the announcement of the NMRA Interchange. The Interchange will provide an online space for our members to collaborate, learn, exchange ideas and information, and chat about all things model railroading. The NMRA Interchange will connect you with members from across the NMRA using voice and text chat. The "Hangout Rooms" are available for video conversations anytime without the need to pre-schedule. The NMRA Interchange uses the Discord platform, which is available through a web browser like Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome. You can also download the Discord desktop application or the Discord mobile app for your smartphone and/or tablet. The software works on iOS, MacOS, Windows, Linux, and Android. You can download the Discord application from here: <https://discord.com/download>. You can register for Discord and the NMRA Interchange at: <https://www.nmra.org/nmra-interchange>

If you need help logging on, or just want to learn more about the Interchange Program click on the link displayed below.

[Joining the NMRA Interchange - Cameron Lafleur - Bing video](#)

The Board is currently reviewing the benefits of using the NMRA Interchange and we will distribute more information as it becomes available. All Division 9 Members are encouraged to register for the NMRA Interchange. You can register by clicking on the link above. Note: you must be an NMRA Member to participate in this new application.



For Sale Items – Do you have an excess inventory of cars, supplies, etc. which are just taking up space and most likely will never be used? You can list these items here and try to sell them, so you can buy more train stuff.

To list your for-sale items here, send your list of items along with a picture if one is available, a description of your item(s) along with your asking price and contact information. If you wish your item(s) to be listed in the upcoming newsletter, you need to submit them along with needed information no later than the 25th of the month.



Send your information to alanwbau@gmail.com.

NMRA NCR Division 9
March 18, 2023
Membership Meeting Minutes
Location – Colonial Inn - Kalamazoo

Attendance:

In-person Garry Johnson, Dorman Wilson, Rick Garthe, Bob Provot, Alan Bau, Rich Mahaney, Joel Pyard, Bob Kline. Guests – Brenda Bau & Merrick Wilson
Zoom – Bob Lawrence, Dave Vinci, Jim Donohue

Meeting was called to order by Garry Johnson at 9:34 AM

Officer Reports:

Superintendent – Garry Johnson thanks all of the clinic presenters, both past and future, for the excellent work they do in promoting Model Railroading and providing instructions on a wide range of topics. Garry also provides us with an update on his progress in building his new layout.

Assistant Superintendent – Joel Pyard – nothing new to report

Paymaster – Bob Lawrence reported there was no change in our treasury account.

Scribe/Yardmaster Editor – Alan Bau

NCR President – Rich Mahaney updated everyone on his new role of NCR President. Rich also reviewed the upcoming schedule of events. See the schedule of upcoming events for details.

The NCR Convention is scheduled for October 19th thru the 22nd in Fort Wayne, In.

Achievement Program Coordinator – Dorman Wilson updated everyone on the Achievement Program and encouraged members to get more involved as it isn't all that difficult to earn Certificates on various aspects of the program. If there are any questions on the AP please contact Dorman for assistance.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08 AM.

Dave Vinci then presented his clinic on "Some Thoughts on Yard Design for Model Railroads". Dave presented some interesting ideas and things to consider when adding yard(s) to your layout.

Note: These minutes have not been approved yet.

Respectfully submitted:

Alan Bau

Division 9 Scribe

Achievement Program Information – as stated in the March Membership Meeting Minutes, the Achievement Program Coordinator for Division 9 is Dorman Wilson. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Dorman for assistance.

You can also follow along as NMRA Magazine Editor Cinthia Priest continues along her journey to achieve MMR status. See pages 36-39 in the April 2023 edition.



APRIL 15, 2023 Membership Meeting - LAYOUT TOURS FOR DIVISION 9 - Overview

Division 9 will be heading out on Saturday, April 15, 2023, to visit three layouts in the greater Grand Rapids, MI area for the day. The layouts that we are visiting are all great home "basement" size layouts. Don't forget your camera!

We will start our tour at the home of Thom Post at 9am. Thom's "transition" era layout models the prototype railroads of the Chesapeake and Ohio and the Pere Marquette railroads in HO. Thom's home is just southwest of the intersection of US 131 and M6, south of Grand Rapids. Thom's address is 918 West Crownpointe Ct, SW, Byron Center, MI 49315. You would exit 131 at 68th St and head west to Clyde Park Ave SW, Go north on Clyde Park Ave to Crownpointe Dr, go west on Crownpointe Dr to the second street which is Crownpointe Ct, then head to Thom's house at 918.

When we are done at Thom's (or by 10am) we will head to Skip Luyk's house that is located at 3165 Lost Creek Trail NE, which runs north off of 3 Mile Road east of East Beltline Road. Lost Creek Trail is a short road (it looks like a private drive or road) and Skip's house is at the end of the road. Skip's layout is a logging railroad in the Pacific Northwest called the Arcadia and Betsy River Railway. It is modeled in HO scale. The easiest way to get to Skip's address from Thom's, is to continue north on 131, then in downtown Grand Rapids head east on 196 to the East Belt Line, then north on the East Belt Line to 3 Mile Road then east to Lost Creek Trail (3165 is the house number).

When done at Skip's we will head to Ralph Moxley's house in the Cascade area east of Grand Rapids to see Ralph's Ann Arbor Railroad modeled in HO scale. Ralph's layout models the Ann Arbor Railroad in MI from Cadillac to the Elberta/Frankfort area where the car ferry docks were located. Ralph's house is located at 1757 Hillsboro Ave SE in Cascade. Most likely your GPS mapping on your phone will bring you down Cascade Rd somehow to Laraway Lake Dr after coming back down East Beltline. This house is southwest of Ada and west of the Thornapple River and east of Cascade Rd. You are also northeast of 28th St. Ralph has asked us to

come around the backside of his house to enter the basement and go to the layout room.

Sorry Rich has not had time to look through his photo files for pictures of each of these three layouts to "wet your interest and get you excited about visiting these three incredible layouts", but you will not be disappointed! Thom, Skip and Ralph are excellent railroad modelers and scratch builders. Come learn and see their modeling techniques, layout construction and planning, operating/operations ideas and the magic they are making in HO scale! Don't forget your camera and questions for the builders of these three basement layouts.

After the three layout tours, options for the afternoon are the Grand Rapids Train Show back in Wyoming by 131 and M6. Train show is at the HSB School at 5625 Burlingame Ave in Wyoming (NW corner of Gezon Parkway {54th St turns into Gezon Parkways west of 131} and Burlingame). If you go to the Train Show, you will see Thom, Skip and Ralph with tables there.

You can also stop at the "regular" railroad hobby shops in the greater Grand Rapids area also for your needs.

It will be a great "model railroading day"! There is no planned Division 9 meal (breakfast or lunch) or business meeting on April 15th, just a "model railroading day"!



Ask Dave – April – 2023

Manual Methods to control Turnouts

By Dave Vinci

I have been collecting ideas on how to control turnouts using inexpensive materials for what seems like forever. Powering all the turnouts on a layout with motorized methods is problematic. First is the cost: a Circuitron Tortoise (TM) Switch Machine is running \$21 to \$25 each, plus the power supply, plus the turnout controls plus the control board to connect it to the DCC bus. And then there is the complexity of the wiring and the drain on the DCC system etc. etc.

Long ago I standardized on the #202 sprung ground throws which are now running \$3.25 each.

They are a bit oversized, but the movement is positive, and they are reliable. I have many on my layout that are more than 30 years old and still work well. If you need to power the frog you can use a microswitch mounted next to the throwbar. (Figure 1).

If you mount the ground throws next to the turnout throwbar, then your operators have to reach into the scene to operate the turnout and that can be a source of damage to other items.

To combat that, where possible you can mount the ground throw at the

edge of the layout and route the actuating wire through a buried brass or plastic tube. (Figure 1). Note that the end of the handle can be painted Green for a normal orientation and red for the diverging route.

I also added a white dot to indicate how the turnout should be left when leaving the area. This method seems to work pretty well no matter how far away from the edge of the layout the turnout is, but it is best installed while the track is being laid.

In Figure 1, the turnout on the left has a brass crank that moves with the throwbar to operate a set of contacts under the table that powers the frog and it is wired the same as the microswitch. **(See Figure 3)**



Figure 1



202s with a microswitch

Here's another system based on a DPDT slide switch:

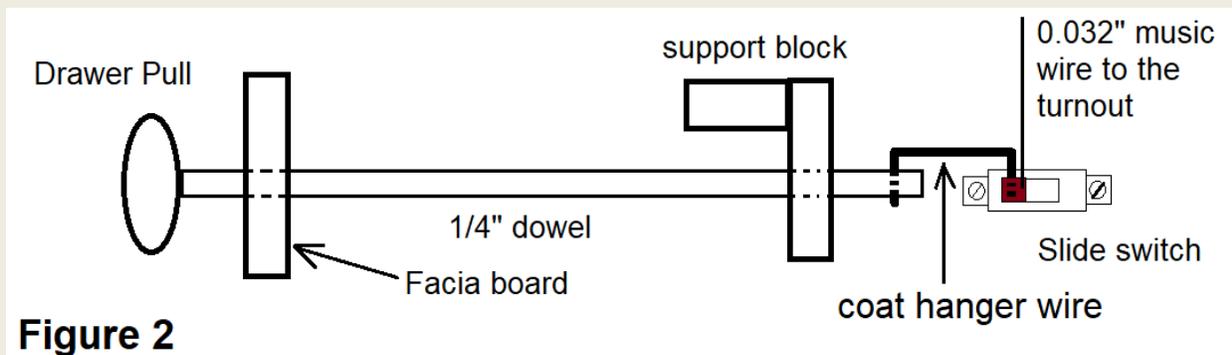


Figure 2

In this case the switch is mounted horizontally under the layout. 2 holes are drilled in the switch one for the 0.032" wire going up through a 1/4" hole to pierce the throw bar and a larger hole to connect the switch to a length of 1/4" dowel. Then to operate the turnout one just pulls or pushes the knob which moves the switch and the turnout. **(Figure 2)**

The benefit to this system is that the switch has 2 sets of contacts one of which you can use to power the frog and the other set for lights or signals.

(Figure 3)

There are several more ways to use this switch. One is to mount it next to the turnout throw bar or use a buried wire like we did with the ground throws.

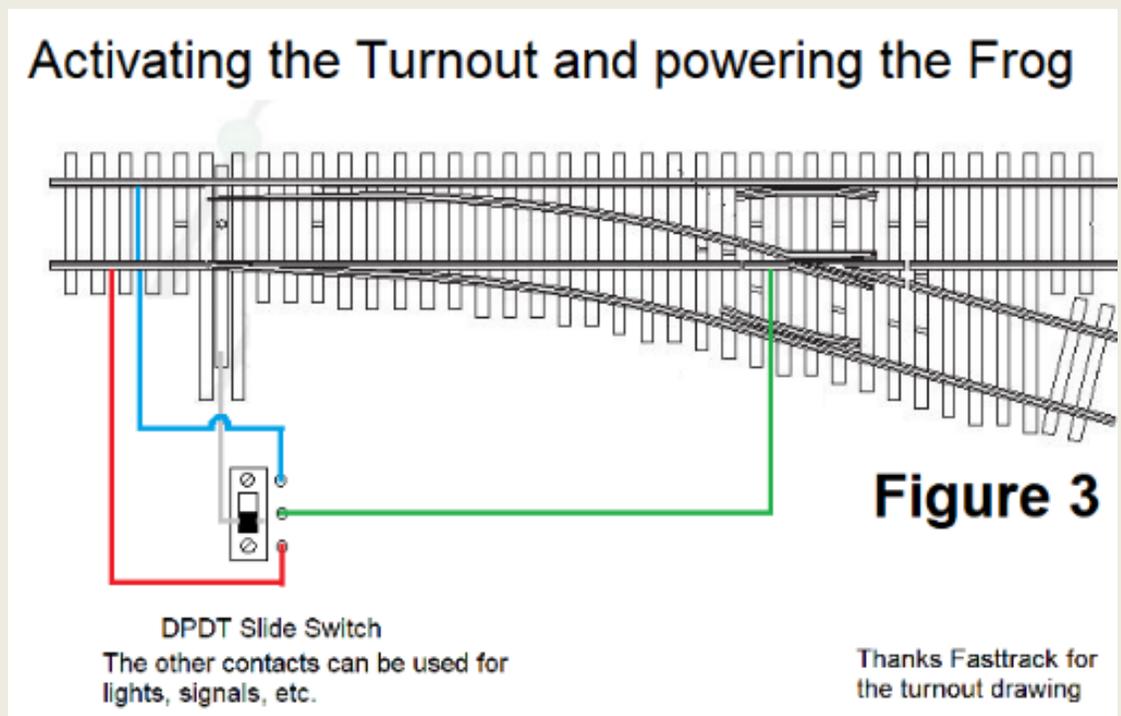
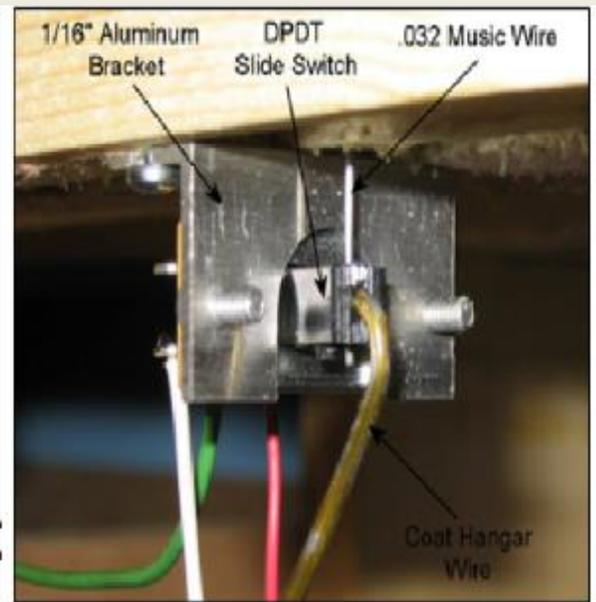
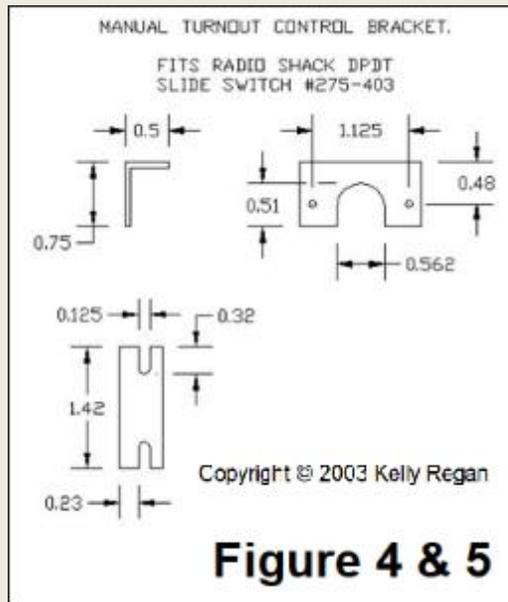


Figure 3

I found an article by a fellow modeling the B&O where a bracket was made of L shaped aluminum (1/2" by 3/4") to mount the slide switch on its side.

(Figure 4 & 5)

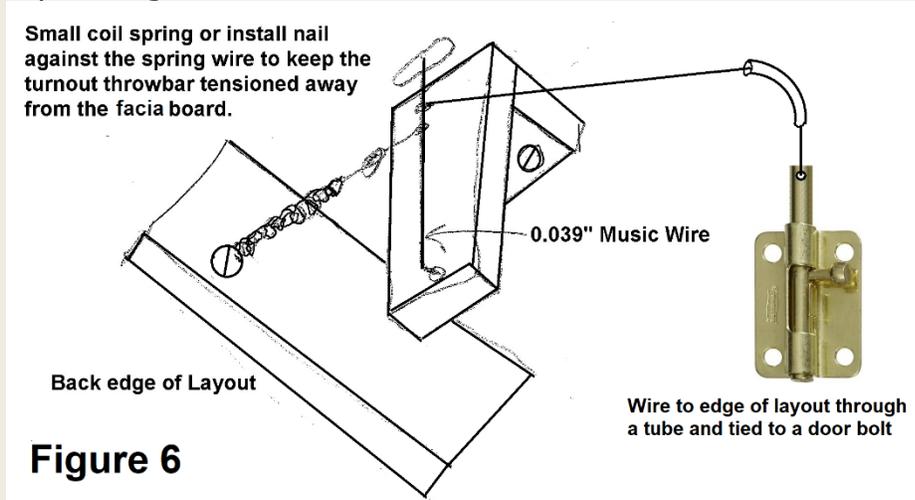
Then using a piece of music wire imbedded in the switch handle that extended through a hole to pierce the throw bar from below.



This is the same way that a tortoise machine operates a turnout. **(Figure 2)**

There are any number of ways to move the switch. One way is to use a bent coat hanger to move the switch.

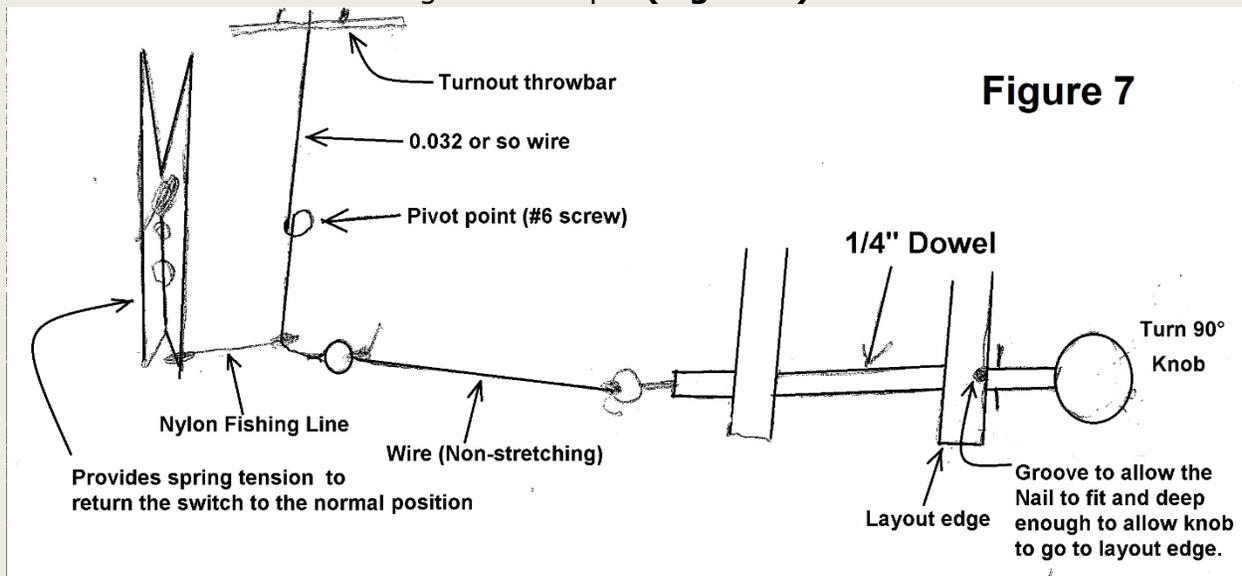
How about this system using a spring and fishing line. **(Figure 6)** The line to the layout edge was tied to the end of the barrel bolt latch.



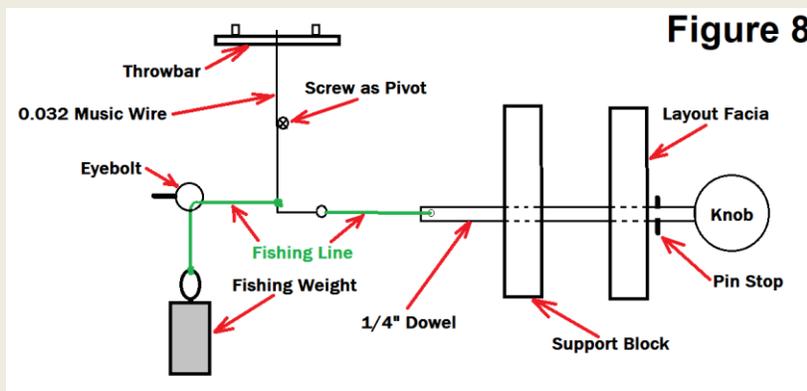
each position. If you use braided fishing line for the last few inches of the line that would make it easier to adjust.

I wish I remembered where I saw this done. Somewhere in Ohio, I think.

How about this method using a clothes pin (**Figure 7**)



How about using fishing tackle like this? (**Figure 8**)



I've even seen auto choke cables used to control turnouts in the larger scales.

Fast Tracks makes a manual turnout controller called the Bullfrog that you assemble and it has 2 microswitches for frog powering and lighting. It can be built in a couple custom configurations. It retails for around \$10. They use model aircraft cables to activate the turnout.

One individual used bicycle spokes in place of the 1/4" dowel actuator.

There are other commercial manual systems out there but they are in the \$15 range or higher.

Train Operations by Jim Glenn

Car cards

When I decided to switch from Ship It to car cards, I already experienced operations at several layouts that used car cards. Car cards like **Ship It** gives your layout a purpose. Cars move according to the needs of the industries on the layout. You can purchase car cards already printed from several suppliers.



I chose to make my own cards. I started out by purchasing a package of multicolored 3x5 index cards. I made a card for each of my cars, and I used different colored cards for different type of cars. For instance, all box cars had yellow cards. I entered the car's information at the top of each card. The car's moves were then listed below. Some of my cards had four moves for each car with the last move returning the car to where it first started. Other cars only moved twice and used two lines. I did not use waybills. I used train orders instead for each train. **A car card system does not replace the train orders.** The engineers still need to know where their trains originate, terminate, and where they are supposed to stop along the way.



The major disadvantage of this system or any car card system is that now you need a place to keep the paperwork as **the car card must always stay with the car.** Thus, boxes for the car cards are required at all yards and industries on the layout. I made wooden racks for holding the cards at each town or industry.



As I learned more about operations, I became part of informal operating groups that included people from Grand Rapids, Toledo, and the Detroit area. And, I joined the Operations Special Interest Group of the NMRA.

I started hosting operating sessions for the groups, interested modelers from the Kalamazoo area, and hosted operating sessions for NMRA conventions. The operators were mostly experienced and brought their own aprons (to hold car cards) and picks. I purchased aprons for new operators to help hold the cards for those who did not have them. I use Digitrax radio throttles and put Velcro on the back of the throttles and on the fascia as a place to secure the throttles. That allows the use of both hands to sort cards. **As operations quickly demonstrated, I needed a place for operators to lay cards and throttles as they worked an industry.** I do not have a separate room or desk for a dispatcher, and in my 24x20 foot layout room I can talk to operators easily. My aisles are not wide enough to add shelves for sorting cards and still have room for people. So, operators laid the cards and throttles on top of cars and on scenery. When I operate on a layout using car cards without shelves, I place the cards on top of cars to be picked up and on cars in my train that need to be set out. I also keep clips in my apron to hold the car cards for each town or industry separate. When you add communications using walkie talkies, you add one more thing to go top of the scenery. The picture below shows how the Blissfield Club operates. You can see the holders for the car cards, and the operator using a headset for communications, and the apron for cards.



Blissfield Model Railroad

Car cards have many advantages:

- They give the car movements a purpose,
- They are easy to modify.
- Cars can be identified with certain industries,
- If a car is missed in one operating session it can be picked up in the next session,
- Off layout industries can be included,
- Cards are inexpensive.
- Passenger cars do not need cards unless your sessions call for setting out or picking up baggage cars etc.

I decided to change from car cards to JMRI Operations Pro after operating layouts that used JMRI Operations Pro. With Operations Pro I did not need the shelves to sort the cars, and I already completed much of the data needed to be entered in **Ship it**. In addition, **I started to believe that I was sorting cards more than I was running trains**. Next time- JMRI Operations Pro.



Sorting cards at Jerry Hall's layout

Questions? 269 290 2800

btrailroad@sbcglobal.net

Tank Cars - Rich Mahaney

Rich has supplied us with lots of information over the last few months on tank cars. For this month we are including a number of pictures that reflect the various points that Rich was telling us about. Nice Pictures.

DOT-112 Tank Car



DOT-112 Tank Car



DOT-112 Tank Car

DOT-112 Tank Car (transporting a heavy acid)



DOT-112 Tank Car

DOT-112 Tank Car (note the use of 8 axles)



DOT-112 Tank Car (old "whale" belly style) DOT-114 Tank Car



DOT-112 Tank Car

DOT-114 Tank Car (with spray on insulation and no jacket)



DOT-112 Tank Car

DOT – 105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



DOT-105 Tank Car



“World’s Largest Pressure Tank Car”



Wrap-up

Well, I guess that’s it for another month.

Thanks again for all your support and encouragement.

Hope to see you all soon.

Remember our next Membership Meeting, which is layout tour day, is on Saturday April 15th, starting at 9:00AM in Grand Rapids.

Alan Bau