

The Yardmaster

Southwestern Michigan Division



December 2025
 Website: <https://div9.ncnmra.org>

Division Nine Mission Statement

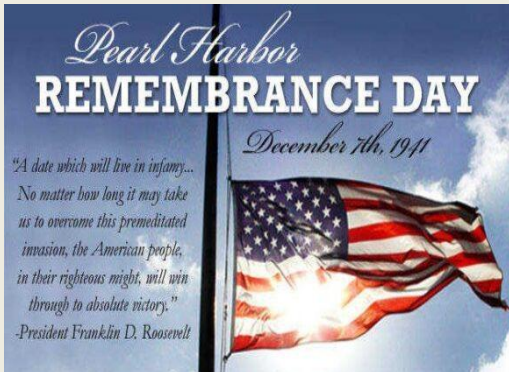
Our mission is to foster a welcoming community for model railroad enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels. We strive to share knowledge, inspire creativity, and promote the enjoyment of model railroading through collaboration, education, and hands-on activities. Together, we celebrate the rich history and artistry of railroading while building lasting friendships and memories.



Non-Train Related Holidays & Special Events –December 2025

- Dec. 1st Cyber Monday
- Dec. 7th Pearl Harbor Day
- Dec. 25th Christmas
- Dec. 31st New Years Eve

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Editor's Comments

Our new mission statement is now displayed above for your reference. Please review it thoroughly and share any feedback you may have.

Did you notice the new NMRA Logo appearing at the top left corner of this page?

Don't forget to participate in the modeling challenge at our February Membership Meeting. Every entry will be included in a drawing for a \$50 Hobby Recycling gift certificate in Grand Rapids.

Please remember that the donation match program is currently in progress, presenting an excellent opportunity to substantially grow our treasury. We are actively exploring ways these funds may be utilized to enhance the value and experience of Division 9 for all members.

There is a new article on pages 21 & 22 titled a Blast from the Past. It is my intent to include articles that appeared in previous issues of the Yardmaster.



Division 9 Board Members

Position	Board Member	Email address
Superintendent	<u>Garry Johnson</u>	<u>elecsprk@gmail.com</u>
Assistant Superintendent	Open	
<u>Paymaster</u>	<u>Bob Lawrence</u>	<u>robertlawrence44@msn.com</u>
<u>Scribe</u>	Greg Marvin	<u>grmarvin@comcast.net</u>
<u>Newsletter Editor</u>	<u>Alan Bau</u>	<u>alanwbau@gmail.com</u>
<u>Website Manager</u>	Tony Vacha	<u>CKRHandler@aol.com</u>
<u>Trustee</u>	Doug Van Meter	<u>vanmeterda@gmail.com</u>



Upcoming Division Nine Membership Meetings & Events:

Meetings & Events	Date	Location	Presenter & Topic
Membership Meeting	December 13th	Greg Marvins House	Rich Mahaney - TBD
Board Meeting	January 4 th	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	Starts at 7:00 PM
Membership Meeting & Christmas Party	January 17 th	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	Mark Tomlonson – RPO Cars & Railroad Post Office Operations
Membership Meeting	February 21 st	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	Modeling Challenge & TBD
Membership Meeting	March	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	Rich Mahaney – TBD

The following is a note from Greg Marvin regarding the December & January Membership Meetings.

December Membership Meeting

BIG CHANGE:

We are going to have a general membership meeting on December 13.

Due to difficulty in finding a good venue for December we had decided to combine the December and January meeting, but things have changed! The new plan is to meet at Yogi's Diner 2070 E VW Ave Vicksburg at 8:30 for breakfast. Following breakfast, we will head west on VW ½ mile to Greg Marvin's at 1032 E VW Ave for our meeting. (long driveway so plenty of parking especially back by the barn). We will conduct our normal membership meeting and not have to miss a meeting.

In January we will host our combined Christmas/New Years event as previously discussed where spouses will be invited to attend and enjoy celebrating with us!

I hope this isn't confusing- any questions please ASK! We look forward to seeing everyone for the layout tours and at the December meeting!

Greg Marvin



All Membership meetings held at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club start at 9:30AM, but coffee & donuts are available at 9:00AM.



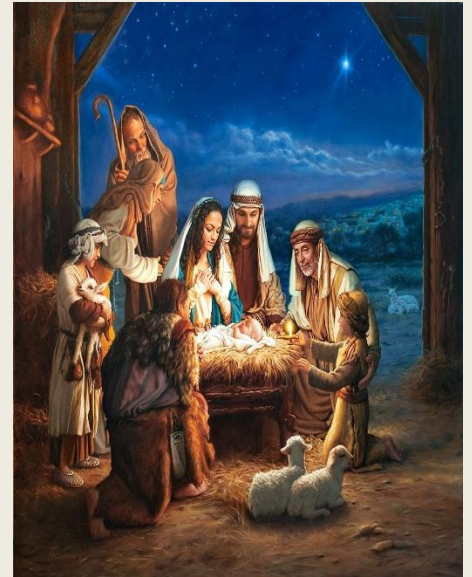
Remember all board meetings start at 7:00 PM. Location varies between board member houses in April, July & October and the Kalamazoo Bridge Club in January.



**The link to the Train Show List is displayed below:
[The Train Show List - Hobby and Train Event Clearinghouse](#)**

Merry Christmas

We are having our first annual Christmas Party during our January Membership Meeting, **spouses invited**, on **January 17th** at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club.



Although we found a way of having the December Membership Meeting on December 13th, the Christmas Party will still be held during our normal January 17th meeting date.

Kindly let us know if you'll be attending by **January 10th** to help us plan how many Gift Bags to prepare. You're welcome to bring along a dessert or appetizer to share with everyone.



Gift Bags for everyone!!!!



Door Prizes & 50/50 Raffle

Annual NCR Meeting Information

Happy Thanksgiving Week and Good Evening! Please be advised (or remember) that the NCR will hold an all-NCR Member Meeting on December 19, during the 7pm to 10pm time period, during NCR Division 6 meeting. The reason for this, is that the NCR Bylaws require the NCR to have annual meeting, normally this is done during the fall NCR Convention. But because of hosting the NMRA Convention in 2025, a decision was made to not have a Fall Convention. But we still need to meet the Bylaw rules.

The plan at this time is that Bill McMillion will send out the Zoon link to their Division 6 meeting to Marshall Stull before the meeting, Marshall will email the link to all NCR members before December 19th. But at this time, you can inform all of your Division members about what is going to happen, so they can mark their calendars for this meeting.

Again, the Division 6 meeting is between 7pm and 10pm on December 19th

All NCR members are also welcome to attend in person, instead of attending on Zoom. The meeting will be at the new Division 6 meeting facilities on the 2nd floor of the NEW Livonia Senior Wellness Center. The address is: [32001 Five Mile Rd, Livonia, Mi 48154](#)

It is located about 1/2 mile east of the old Senior Center at Hubbard and Five Mile Rd. Enter off Five Mile Rd, the two parking lots are right by the building.

Besides taking care of Division 6 business, the NCR Business Meeting, NCR President Rich Mahaney will present a clinic on the new rules involving transporting flammable liquids in tank cars and the new tank cars (DOT 117, DOT 117R and DOT 120) that became law in May 2025. Plus, Rich will also talk about how this is a problem for model railroaders. The clinic will be called: "F.A.S.T. Rules and How They Impact Railroads and Model Railroaders!"

Please email this note to all of your Division members, thank you!

Enjoy the Thanksgiving Holiday!

Rich Mahaney

NMRA NCR President

In November we visited three local layouts (Rick Garthe's, Greg Stonerock & Bill Nichols) Photos of these terrific layouts follow on the next several pages.

Rick Garthe's Layout (photos taken by Alan Bau)



Rick's layout was the first stop on our layout tour on Saturday November 15th.

For those of you that don't know, Rick's layout is battery operated.

He has a large layout housed in a pole barn, with very wide aisles.

You will see some rather unusual scenes in some of these pictures making this a unique layout.





See the batteries in the car above.







I just had to increase the size of these photos to see the details of scenes from many years ago.



Greg Stonerock's Layout (Photos supplied by Greg Stonerock)

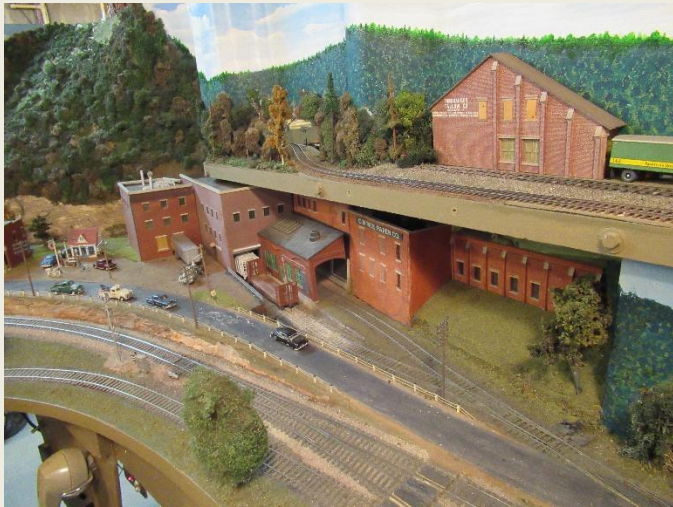




Bill Nichols Layout (photos supplied by Rich Mahaney)

Courtesy of Sheila Nichols & Kevin Kizer





Donation Matching Program \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

An anonymous donor has generously offered to match contributions from our members, dollar for dollar, up to a maximum of \$500.

Funds raised through this initiative will enable the organization to pursue several enhancements, including:

- Recruiting additional members
- Encouraging greater participation in group activities such as Christmas parties, family picnics, and other special events
- Introducing incentive programs for events like the Re-Purpose Modeling Challenge
- Upgrading audio/visual equipment
- And more

As this opportunity may not be repeated, we encourage all members to support this matching program. Timely donations will help us maximize the benefit of this generous offer, and every contribution is impactful. Thank you for your continued support.

If you would like to make a donation or pledge, please submit it to our Paymaster, Bob Lawrence, at any upcoming meeting, or mail a check directly to him. For mailing details, please contact Bob Lawrence or Alan Bau.

Current Status of Donations and Pledges

Month	Donations & Pledges	Total To-Date
Oct	\$50	\$50
Nov	\$50	\$100
Dec		
Jan		
Feb		
Mar		
Apr		
May		

Modeling Challenge Updates

Division 9 Is Hosting A Modeling Challenge For Its Members!

Division 9 Model Railroaders it is time to get going on your "Division 9 Modeling Challenge" project. It is time to decide on a railroad car that you want to model into a "second life and use". If you don't have a spare railroad car, there are lots of train shows going on in MI for you to shop at. Come up with some ideas, create a base to build your display on (12 inch by 12 inch up to 24 inches by 24 inches). Think about how the railroad car that you have chosen could be used in a "second life or use". The Division 9 newsletter will continue to have photo ideas and examples. The display can be in any scale of car, electricity and lighting can be used. Remember the Division 9 meeting in February 21, 2026 will be the date that the displays will be shown at our meeting. Don't be left out, the display date will be here before you know.

Rich Mahaney

Modeling Challenge Incentive Program

To provide a little incentive for members to participate in the Division Nine Modeling Challenge, everyone that enters a display will have their name entered into a drawing. At the end of the day one name will be drawn with the winner receiving a **\$50.00 Gift Certificate for Hobby Recycling in Grand Rapids.**

The date for the Modeling Challenge has been set for the Membership Meeting scheduled for February 21, 2026.

This modeling challenge is very simple. Select a model railroad car or cars from your collection (or purchase cars at a future train sale or by some other method) so that you can create a scene with it, in its new use and life.

This can be a railroad car in any scale and any type of railroad car. The key part of the modeling challenge is the railroad car is now being used in a different use, as compared to its original purchased use.

It should be built on a display that is one foot by one foot up to two feet by two feet. Foam or wood or something else is your choice for the display base.

There are no rules for this modeling challenge, only recommendations.

1. Base size for the display, so it can be shown at a Division 9 meeting at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club.
 - 2, Any scale of railroad car can be used. More than one railroad car can be used in the display.
 3. The railroad car(s) in the display are in a new use as to what it was originally purchased for.
 4. Type of railroad car chosen, can be any type. Caboose, open hopper, covered hopper, box car, refrigerator car, passenger car, flat car, stock car, intermodal well car, engine (steam or diesel), tank car (low pressure or high pressure or cryogenic), as examples.
 5. Photos of examples - real railroad car examples and model railroad cars examples will be in the Division 9 newsletters through December 2025.
 6. Be creative and use your imagination! Nothing is unacceptable!
 7. Electrical lighting and electricity can be used in the display.
 8. You can enter more than one display in the challenge.
 9. There will be no judging of the displays, just the sound of "oohs and aahs" when people look at the displays!
 10. Maybe you can find a permanent home or place on your layout for your car(s) on your layout to get more use out of your display ideas.
 11. Again, have fun! Be creative, use your imagination! If you look around in the real world, railroad cars are found in all kinds of "second uses or lives".
- Watch for further announcements as to exhibition dates. Examples of 2nd use lives appear on the next few pages.

Thanks for participating! Rich Mahaney

The June and July/August, & November Yardmaster issues contain ideas that may be useful for consideration.



**NORTH CENTRAL REGION, DIVISION 4
Grand Rails 2026
3-day convention**

Open to ALL model railroaders! You do NOT have to be An NMRA member to attend!

BASIC NMRA MEMBER REGISTRATION (PRIOR TO SEPT 1, 2026)	\$60.00
BASIC NON NMRA REGISTRATION (PRIOR TO SEPT 1, 2026)	\$80.00
YOUTH RATE (17 AND UNDER W/PARENT OR GUARDIAN)	\$5.00
YOUTH 18-25	\$20.00

There will be layout tours, railroad operating sessions, clinics, railroad displays, and more!

**OCTOBER 8-9-10, 2026
HOWARD MILLER COMMUNITY CENTER
14 SOUTH CHURCH STREET
ZEELAND, MI 49464**

CHECK THE DIVISION 4 WEBSITE FOR UPDATES AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION

www.grandrailsdiv4.com

Save the dates AND come join us for some great days of model railroading, learning and fun!

**Sponsored by
NMRA, NORTH CENTRAL REGION**



The New York Central is coming to Kalamazoo

The New York Central Railroad System Historical Society is hosting their 2026 annual convention in Kalamazoo, MI between May 14 and 17, 2026. The headquarters hotel is the Marriott Delta Hotel on the west side of Kalamazoo, just off US 131. Besides the standard activities of a railroad convention, they are planning a train ride from Pleasant Lake, IN to Coldwater, MI on Saturday May 16th. They are allowing non-NYCSHS people to register and sign up for the convention train ride and lunch to help increase the attendance at the convention and to help fill the train. More information, registration and pricing will be available at the NYCSHS website.

For more information click on the links below:

[**New York Central System Historical Society**](#)

[**NYCSHS 2026 Annual | NYCS Historical Society**](#)

The following note sent to Rich Mahaney provides more up-to-date information affecting non-members.

Rich, the NYCSHS Board has removed the requirement to be a Society member to attend the convention. Please advise your members.

Our present thinking is to bus riders from Kalamazoo to Pleasant Lake, board there and ride up to Hillsdale for lunch at the brewing company. We'd still appreciate your review if convenient.

Thanks

Alex SchneiderPresident



NMRA Three Strikes Policy:

There have been a few questions concerning the NMRA Three Strike Policy, which is reprinted below for your information. All NMRA Division are expected to follow this policy. We discussed this during the July board meeting and will be putting this policy into effect starting with the September Annual Meeting.

Common sense talk about the three strikes policy: What is it and what does it mean?

We've been getting a lot of questions about the Visitor Policy that the NMRA Board reaffirmed and publicized in February of 2015, limiting visitors to NMRA meetings to three visits during their lifetime.

This isn't really a new policy, since it was first adopted in 2007 and explained in the "President's Car" column in the November 2007 issue of Scale Rails (now called the NMRA Magazine). Then, as now, the needs of our insurance provider played a large part in the adoption of this policy, but there are also issues of basic fairness, as well as tax issues in the United States.

Here's the policy: Visitors are allowed three visits to an NMRA meeting IN THEIR LIFETIME. If they don't join by their third visit, they cannot attend any more meetings.

A lot of the questions we've been getting are from members trying to overthink the policy, worrying about this or that exception and making up complicated what-ifs. The policy does not apply to members' spouses who come along to the meetings so that they can go to dinner afterwards. It does not apply to non-member caregivers who aren't modelers, but who provide a ride to a member who cannot drive himself. It does not apply to events that are organized for the general public, like mall shows, swap meets, beginner clinic series, and the like, nor does it apply to things like joint meetings with another non-NMRA group or to family picnics or outings.

The policy does apply to non-members who continually show up at meetings at make themselves at home, month after month, year after year. Allowing freeloaders to participate as if they were members is unfair because it takes advantage of our members who HAVE paid up. We members are all paying to keep the organization going – what are the freeloaders doing, besides getting a free ride on our backs?

Tolerating permanent freeloaders can give our insurance providers a reason to cancel an NMRA group's coverage if there's an incident, leaving individual officers and members responsible for paying the claim. The IRS has rules about giving benefits of membership to non-members, too – they say don't do it, and there are tax consequences if you do.

Now, if your Division and Region are already following the rules (which would be a really good idea if you want the protection of our NMRA Liability Insurance policy), this policy is not the big deal you might think it is. We all know that if someone comes and tries us out three times and still doesn't join, he or she is not going to join. So after the third turn-down, don't worry about it – just move on to the next prospect.

If you're still wondering whether your group is in compliance, just ask yourself: are you allowing people who aren't members to come to your meetings month after month, year after year, and participate as if they'd paid their dues? If the answer is no, then fine, just keep doing what you're doing. If the answer is yes, then you have some changes to make.

If you have additional questions about this policy or how to implement it, please feel free to contact an NMRA officer, director, or NMRA HQ. We'll get your question to the right person.

Mike Brestel NMRA
Insurance Coordinator
At-Large Worldwide Director

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. Send your information to alanwbau@gmail.com.



Convenient Store with Gas Pumps & Car Wash



The item pictured here is offered by Greg Stonerock. It is the "Walthers Cornerstone Convenient Store", with Double gas station pumps (one for cars and one taller for Semi-Trucks) along with a car wash. New kit sells for \$79. Greg is asking \$20.

If you would like to buy these items contact Greg at 269-364-4090.



Achievement Program

Do you have any interest in the NMRA-NCR Achievement Program. If you want more information or have any specific questions, contact our Division 9 Achievement Program Coordinator - Dorman Wilson N8YNW@Charter.net.



Blast from the Past

On the next two pages is an article written by Dave Vinci that appeared in the February 2019 Yardmaster Newsletter. I hope you enjoy seeing this again.

402 LEDs to Power Headlights

By Dave Vinci

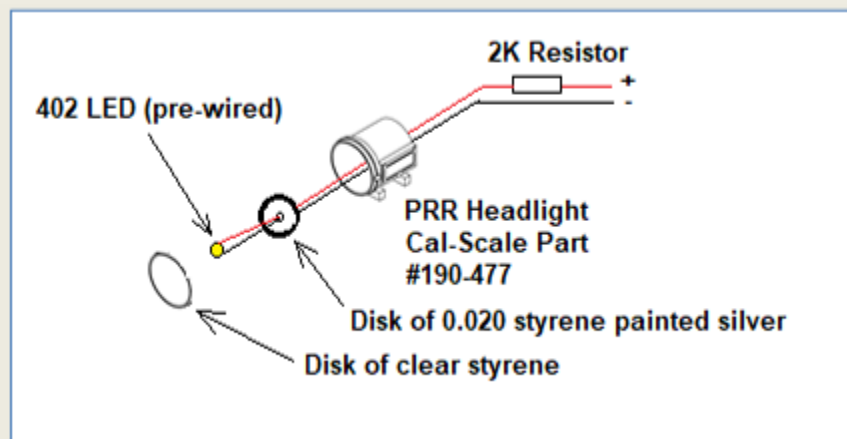
Replacing the lights in brass (or plastic) Steam engine headlights used to require the miniature 1.5volt incandescent bulbs (either 15 or 30 mamp) but today, low cost LEDs are the way to go. I found these pre-wired No. 402 LEDs in a 20 count package for about \$7.00 on eBay (about \$0.35 each). These LEDs are really pretty tiny and since they are pre-wired, they are easy to install. Here is the url where I got mine:

<https://ebay.com/p/T0603wm-20pcs-Pre-soldered-Micro-Litz-Wired-Leads-Warm-White-SMD-LED-0603/503606433?iid=401036678472&chn=ps>



These ship from China so they take awhile to arrive but it wasn't unreasonable, just a couple weeks if I recall correctly. Here's how I installed them:

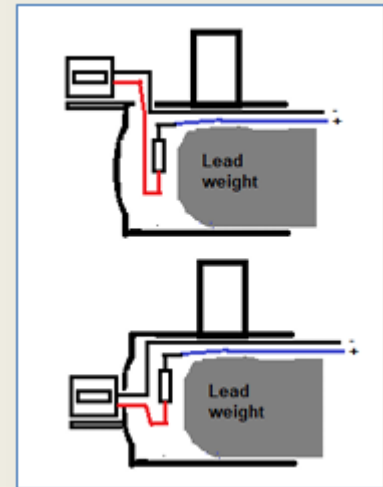
Just drill a small hole through the back of the headlight casting, #60 or so. It's just large enough to allow the 2 wires connected to the LED to pass. Next, paint a small scrap of 0.020 thick styrene silver. I also paint the inside of the headlight casting silver or white. Both colors seem to work, so do what you like best. When the paint is dry, using a leather punch, cut a disk of plastic so it fits nicely in the back of the headlight.



Drill a hole in the center of the disk so the wires pass through but not the LED. For One headlight, I drilled 2 holes, one for each wire, that way the LED wouldn't slip through the hole. Place a drop of glue, Ambroid, acc or canopy glue on the back side of the disk, slide

the wires through the hole in the back of the headlight and pull the disk/LED into place at the back of the headlight casting. You just have to keep tension on the wires until the glue sets. Using the leather punch again, I punched out a disk of clear styrene to use as a lens. This I cemented to the front of the casting.

Now, depending where the headlight casting is mounted, you must drill a hole in either through the boiler front or through the smokebox at the top of the boiler as shown at right. This will allow the wires to get from the headlight to the decoder leads. I put the 2K resistor on the + side of the LED and connect it to the blue wire from the decoder. The other wire will be connected to the white wire (or the yellow wire if you are doing the light on the tender). You might like to use a 3K resistor if you like a dimmer light.



Here at right, is what the installation looks like with the power off. Yeah, I know this is a light on a tender, but the installation is the same no matter where the headlight is placed. Notice that if you can see the LED at the back of the headlight casting. You could use a clear MV lens instead of the clear styrene, again, your choice.

Below is a photo of PRR G5 #5741 4 6-0 at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, notice that you can see the bulb at the back of the headlight casting.



Below is a photo of our model with the headlight powered up. Bright, isn't it? One could use a 3K resistor to reduce the intensity. Your choice.



Wrap-up

Did you remember to turn your clocks back on November 1st?

We invite members to submit news, updates on railroad events, upcoming train shows, or information about community gatherings related to railroading for consideration in future newsletters. Member contributions are essential to ensuring our community remains well-informed and actively engaged.

Final reminder that the December Meeting is back on the schedule. We plan to meet for breakfast at 8:30AM on Saturday December 13th at Yogi's Diner 2070 E VW Ave Vicksburg, then we will proceed over to Greg Marvin's house located at 1032 E VW Avenue in Vicksburg for our normal Membership Meeting.

The Christmas Party will be part of the January Membership Meeting on January 17th. Bring your spouse and have some fun and maybe win a door prize. Please let us know by January 10th if you plan to attend.



Do you have any thoughts on the new section "Blast from the Past"?

This is a reminder that the board meeting will be held on Sunday, January 4th, at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club, beginning at 7:00 PM. All Division Nine members are welcome to attend. We value input on a range of topics and encourage your participation at the upcoming meeting. If you are unable to attend but wish to share suggestions or ideas, please feel free to contact any board member via email, text, or phone.

This is the final Yardmaster Newsletter for 2025. I hope Division Nine's newsletter has been both helpful for your modeling projects and enjoyable to read. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please feel free to share your thoughts with me.

Our family wishes you and your family a very merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Alan Bau

Divisions 9 Scribe & Newsletter Editor

alanwbau@gmail.com

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR