



Member since June 1988

NEXT MEETING
February 20
6:45 p.m.

NEXT MONTH
Deadline for
March Issue
March 1, 2014

MEMBERSHIP
125

ATTENDANCE PRIZE

Bill Meehan won the Attendance Prize. Maybe next meeting it will be YOU!

Will your name be drawn on

February 20?

You have to be present to win!

BOTTLES FOR BASICS

- ◆ Total LAST YEAR
- ◆ \$363.85
- ◆ YEAR TO DATE:
- ◆ \$589.48
- ◆ THIS MONTH:
- ◆ \$56.00

The Signal

The Great Falls Model Railroad Club



VOLUME 28 . ISSUE 9

FEBRUARY 2014



"BEST IN SHOW"

Great Falls Model Railroad Club

Paul Lodge



The "Best in Show" honor was awarded to the Great Falls Model Railroad Club by the Amherst Railroad Society Railroad Hobby Show on January 26 in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Club members created a four-level G-Gauge masterpiece on which eight trains ran at the same time. The large display covered a 40- by 40-foot area and took between 4 and 7 club members 15 hours to construct. (At the end of the show, it took nine members 3 1/2 hours to take down.) The engineering genius of member Ralph Luby made the intricate exhibit possible. More than 25,000 people attended the country's third largest train show which covers over 350,000 square feet and is housed in four buildings at the Big E.

Even though this was a two-day event, some club members used five days to make the presentation possible. One day was used to load the vehicles, another day to set up the exhibit, then the two days of the show, and tear down. More than a dozen club members made the trip and helped in various ways before, during, and after the model train show.

The club's success is partly due to the support from David Lee, manager of the Auburn Mall. He loaned us table covers for the forty tables used for the exhibit.

The Amherst Railroad Society started developing the model train show in the mid 1960's. As the show has grown and become financially very successful, the Society has made grants and donations to many railroad-related organizations. They donate to railroad museums, historical societies, and restoration projects. The Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington Railway, the Portland Narrow Gauge Museum, the Boston & Maine 470 Club have received donation from the proceeds of this show.



BANGOR SAVINGS BANK VOTING UNDERWAY

Paul Lodge

The Bangor Savings Bank Foundation began its seventh annual grant-making initiative on January 28. Through this charitable program, Maine's largest independent bank asks Maine residents to weigh in on how best to allocate \$100,000 the bank has pledged to give to 68 Maine nonprofit organizations.

The number of Maine people taking the time to participate and vote for their favorite causes grows each year. The 48 nonprofits listed on the ballot receive at least a \$1,000 grant for participating in the program, and the top 20 write-ins that get the most public support will also receive a grant from the Bangor Savings Bank Foundation. The organizations with the most votes in each of the eight regions (including write-ins) will receive \$5,000 each.

It is easy to vote online at www.bangor.com/cmm. Club members should go online and vote for the club by using the legal name of the club: The Great Falls Model Railroad Club. (Notice the word "The" is the first word in the official name of the club.) Each club member should encourage at least three (3) non-club members to vote for the club to help increase the prospect of our club being a winner. Paper ballots are also available at Bangor Savings Bank branches statewide, and at each of the participating nonprofits. Any Maine resident is eligible to vote for up to three (3) nonprofits. The voting period began January 28 and ends March 11, with winners announced in early April.

The Bank, founded in 1852, is in its 161st year of service to the people of Maine, with 56 branches and on the Web at www.bangor.com. The Bangor Savings Bank Foundation was created in 1997. Together the Bank and its Foundation invest more than \$1.5 million per year into the community in the form of nonprofit sponsorships, grants, and partnership initiatives.

**REMEMBER, VOTE AND ASK THREE
(3) OTHERS TO VOTE FOR OUR CLUB.**

THE SIGNAL



GFMRRRC HOSTS AARP TAX TRAINING

Frances Lodge

The Great Falls Model Railroad Club was host to an AARP income tax training session on Thursday, January 16. This special one-day training focused on Maine income taxes and this year's new Property Tax Fairness Credit. The class included about twenty new and veteran AARP volunteer tax counselors from Lewiston, Auburn, Norway, Poland, Naples, Bridgton, Rumford, and Carrabassett Valley. AARP Instructor, Carole Ressler, thanked the club for the use of their meeting room and equipment. She commented on the size and convenience of the meeting room and the helpfulness of club members.

GFMRRRC Treasurer Tom Coulombe was one of the newly certified Tax Counselors who attended this class and the sessions held the previous week at Community Concepts in Lewiston. GFMRRRC club member Frances Lodge is the AARP District Coordinator for Androscoggin, Oxford, and Franklin Counties and has appreciated the use of the club's facilities for many of the one-day training sessions during the past three years.

AARP offers free income tax help with federal and state income tax and the Property Tax Fairness Credit at various locations throughout the state of Maine. Taxes are prepared and filed electronically by IRS-certified volunteers from February 1 to April 12. People of all ages with low to moderate income are eligible for this service unless they have business or rental income. You do not have to be a member of AARP. Appointments may be scheduled at the Lewiston Armory by calling 513-3170; Norway Library, 333-6448; Poland Library, 998-3166; Rumford SCORE Office, 364-3633 (call between 5 and 7 p.m.); Bridgton Community Center, 647-3116; Fryeburg Library, 935-2731; and Carrabassett Valley Library, 246-2157.



FEBRUARY CLUB ACTIVITIES

Paul Lodge

The spring semester of the Model Railroading class starts on Tuesday, February 11, and will run for eight weeks. Any modules built in the class will be available to display at the club's spring show at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham on April 26.

The annual Doll House and Model Railroad show at the Augusta Armory is scheduled for Saturday, February 15. This will be the first show at which we will sell raffle tickets for "The 12 Gifts of Christmas."

DID YOU KNOW?

Paul Lodge

At the January club meeting, Larry Cannon displayed and explained the ideas behind several of the model railroad cars created over the years for the "Comedy Corner" of our modular layout.

Most of the models were built by Larry Cannon has built most of the models. Some of the ones he featured were the "Center Flow" tank car, the prop car, the tank train, the "Derek" car, the beer can tank car, the vista dome stock car, and the famous "Mosquito Dispersal Unit" (MDU). The MDU won first prize for the "Humor Car" at the 1999 NMRA national convention. Larry displayed the framed award he received for the MDU.



January Minutes by Paul Lodge



MINUTES OF JANUARY 16, 2014 MEETING

There was no slide presentation by Ed Leslie this month because nobody sent him any pictures during the Christmas season. The evening's TRAIN TIME program featured the trains at Tehachapi Loop and Caliente in California.

President Ed Leslie opened the meeting and asked for the Secretary's Report. A motion was made to accept the report as published in the Signal.

Tom Coulombe gave the Treasurer's Report, which was approved as given. As Station Master, Tom Coulombe reported that the driveway was sanded after the recent ice storm and that he has also personally sanded the driveway as needed since that time. A new sign has been installed over the door to the library entrance under the "Crew Room" sign. We are waiting for the Maine Department of Transportation to approve the DOT signs. It was noted that because of the winter we have been having, the roof has not had to be shoveled. It was suggested, however, to be aware of ice which could slide off the roof and onto a car or person. Thursday, February 6, will be the next Family Night at Governor's. Tom encouraged members to come help supervise and get a free meal. Family Night starts at 4 p.m. and goes until almost 8. Because we do not have enough supplies to adequately build an N-scale Raffle Layout, it has been decided to build our usual HO-Scale Raffle Layout.

Reports were given by the different layout groups noted that the N-scale room now has a controller for operating DCC, buildings are being constructed by Chuck Bagley, Dennis Collins, and Maurice Fortin. Rick James reported that the work is going forward on the HO layout by labeling turnouts and assigning names to locations on the layout.

Several members will help setting up, supervising, and tearing down the extensive display at the West Springfield Train Show on January 25 and 26. Some members will be leaving on Wednesday and returning on Monday for the two-day show on Saturday and Sunday.

Dates were selected for summer events for 2014. It was suggested that we try to schedule the Auburn Mall show for the same weekend each year. The third weekend in August was selected. This year the date will be August 23. In order not to have too many activities at the same time, the club picnic will be held

on July 19 at Tom and Carmen Coulombe's house.

As a fund-raising idea, Cory Golob made a presentation for an Amateur Radio Special Event Station activity. Cory is chairman of the Amateur Radio event activity and will get help from Travis Johnson, Rick James, and David Gilchrist. Cory answered questions about the proposed event and described the QSL cards which ham radio operators like to collect. Our club will make up three and a half-inch by five and a half-inch QSL cards and sell them to the collectors for \$1. (See the separate article elsewhere in the newsletter.)

Jerry Johnston is suggesting the "Twelve Gifts of Christmas" as a fundraising idea. He will make two tri-fold displays and have them ready for the Augusta show on February 15. Rick James volunteered to get quotes from a printer about making the raffle tickets. Terry King volunteered to prepare a ticket which would satisfy the state requirements for raffle tickets. (See more details about this fundraising idea elsewhere in the newsletter.)

As the "Did You Know?" portion of the meeting, Larry Cannon brought several comic cars he and others have created through the years. Many members are familiar with the Mosquito Dispersal Unit and some of the other fun creations. At the National NMRA convention in 1999, Larry received first prize for the Humor Car with the MDU.

John Visco delivered a slide presentation about the Lewiston Lower part of the HO layout for the "Thinking Out of the Boxcar" portion of the meeting. His entertaining presentation included historic pictures of the area in the late 1800s and early 1900s and compared the old pictures with views from our layout.

"What's on Your Workbench" was presented by Stephen Martelli. He brought an air compressor and nail guns which work from air pressure. He explained the importance of having the proper size air compressor to handle different sizes of nail guns.

Dave Gilchrist won the 50/50 raffle and Bill Meehan won the Attendance Prize.



Operating the Great Falls Railroad

By James Vatter

When I joined the Great Falls Model Railroad Club in October 2011 I had many reasons for doing so. I wanted to learn new techniques for modeling, meet new people with common interests and operate on a large model railroad. I got a chance to participate in my first Great Falls Railroad (GFR) operating session in September 2012. After the session I mentioned to Travis Johnson that I had some paperwork I had developed to operate my own Pennsylvania and Northern Railroad. Travis asked me to bring the paperwork with me so he could see it. I brought it in the next week, he looked at it and declared "I like it, you are now in charge of the operating sessions." A promotion to Chief Operating Officer was not what I wanted. As an Army vet I should've known better than to volunteer.

I have never operated any model railroad with more than one additional person. My first contact with operations was in the mid seventies when I read about the Sunset Valley Lines. In a series of articles in *Model Railroader* Bruce Chubb detailed how he operated his railroad. I had one model railroad friend at this time, Jeff, and we were inspired by this series so we devised a plan to link our two railroads. We both had the basic 4X8 plywood with a couple loops of track and some sidings in the middle. Jeff got the idea of adding a small extension on his layout for a freight yard and I did the same. I suggested adding a siding running off the edge of our layouts to act as interchange tracks; these were also added. We soon began operations with a basic car card system. Every few days we would each bring a shoebox of cars to school for interchange. Another track was added to the opposite sides of our layouts to represent another short -line, and we began to bridge traffic across our railroads. A coal mine came online on my railroad and a power plant was built on Jeff's railroad. Eight car unit coal trains began passing between our railroads with run through power. This set the foundation for operating sessions between our two layouts that lasted for many years and hours of enjoyment.

From those roots my interest in operations began. I have never designed or built any model railroad without first deciding how it would operate. Traffic mix, staging yard placement, and realistic industrial tracks have always been the most important part of even the smallest shelf-style switching layout I've ever built. Operations isn't the most important part of our hobby but it is high on my list. Operations allow the locomotives and cars to move with purpose. The various industries and passenger stations come alive as the reason for their existence is shown by the local switch job spotting that grain hopper or a local passenger train stopping at a station.

In the next few months I'm going to do a series of articles detailing operations of the GFR. I will start with a history of how and why it operates the way it does. I will then try to communicate the different jobs involved in GFR operations. These include Dispatcher, Yardmaster, Roadmaster, and various train operator jobs. We have main line freight, passenger, local, and station switching jobs. I am hoping that by reading this you may decide to come in on a Saturday and run some trains with us. We operate on the first Saturday of the month

and the Saturday following the monthly business meetings, so mark your calendars! The first trains roll at 9 a.m. with a pre-session meeting at 8:45. The best way to really learn about operations is to become a participant. Many of the veterans of GFR operations were amateurs (like me) when I stepped into this position. There is always room for more people to get involved.

So now you understand a bit more of my history, what brought me to this club, and what we do at the operating sessions. Next month I will take you on a tour of the main lines and describe the customers and traffic mix that makes up the Great Falls Railroad.

AMATEUR RADIO SPECIAL EVENT

Paul Lodge

The Great Falls Model Railroad Club has several members who are also "hams" or amateur radio buffs. Travis Johnson, Rick James, David Gilchrist, and Charles Kadyk are interested in both hobbies (and there may be other club members), and he has volunteered to be chairman of this special event. Cory Golob has suggested that the club sponsor a fund-raising event which will involve both hobbies.

Last year the club hosted the amateur radio group for a few months so that they could get training in becoming a ham radio operator.

Ham radio operators like to collect QSL cards from various events. This is the same idea as model railroaders who collected train passes from other model railroaders after they visit a person's home layout. Train passes were originally given by railroad workers to people as free passes on the railroad.

The club would be responsible for printing attractive, collectable QSL cards and making them available to ham operators. Cory Golob and his team will set up a station at our club during one of our events. Ham operators will send our team a request for the QSL card during the hours of the event. After the event is over, ham operators will send the club \$1 and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. We will put a QSL card in each envelope and return it to the ham operator.

Cory Golob anticipates that we could get up to 2,500 requests for the QSL cards if the idea is marketed properly. The Executive Committee approved the concept and will have 3 1/2 by 5-inch QSL cards designed and printed. It was suggested that we sponsor the event at our Train Fest during the Balloon Festival on August 16. Hot air balloons could make a colorful and attractive card.



THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

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An Educational Foundation

MEETING POSTPONEMENTS

If severe weather threatens on a meeting night, Tom Coulombe will notify local television stations that the meeting will be postponed until the following week. This would make it the fourth Thursday of the month instead of the third. Club members who receive the newsletter via e-mail will be notified by e-mail about the postponement.

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Upcoming Events



February 11, First Model Railroad Class

February 13, Board Meeting

February 15, Augusta Train Show

February 20, Membership Meeting

February 22, Operating session

March 1, Operating Session

March 13, Board Meeting

March 20, Membership Meeting

March 22, Operating Session

March 22, Maine 3-Railers Show,
Augusta Elks Lodge

March 22-23, Owls Head Model
Festival

April 26, Train Show, Mt. Ararat,
Topsham

September 7-10, 2016, 36th National Narrow Gauge Convention at
Augusta, Me.

THE 12 GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS

Paul Lodge

Jerry Johnston has created an interesting limited raffle called "The 12 Gifts of Christmas." Tickets will be sold at all club events throughout the year until all 900 tickets have been sold. The winning tickets will be drawn in December in time for Christmas.

Tickets will sell for \$5 each or five for \$20. Each \$5 ticket gives a person 12 chances to win. After the winning ticket is drawn for the first prize, that tick-

et will be returned to the pot with a chance to win again. This gives each person twelve chances to win, and one person could win up to twelve prizes.

The prizes to choose from will be a DC-equipped HO diesel locomotive, a \$50 gift certificate to either Governor's Restaurant or Craft Mania, or a three-year club membership. Each winner will be able to choose from the remaining prizes until all 12 winning tickets are drawn. A tri-fold poster featuring the prizes and explaining the raffle will be displayed at all the events in which the club is involved.