



Member since June 1988

**NEXT MEETING
JANUARY 16
6:30 p.m.**

**Have a story
you want to
share?**

**Send it to
the Editor
today and
you may be
published!**

**Bring a friend to our
next meeting.**

DO YOU WANT TO WIN?

Attendance & 50/50 prizes are drawn at every Meeting, on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

**YOU HAVE TO BE
PRESENT TO WIN!**

DONATIONS

Bottles for Basics:

- ◆ 2019—\$547.00
- ◆ 2020— \$0.00
- ◆ December—\$28.00

PRINTER

CARTRIDGES:

Total last year: \$222.00

YTD: \$321.60

Last Month: \$2.00



THE SIGNAL



THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

VOLUME 24. ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2020

TIME FOR 2020 DUES

By Owen Buck, Treasurer

It's time to think about paying your Great Falls Model Railroad Club dues for 2020. Thanks to our other fund-raising efforts, dues remain at \$35 for families, \$30 for individual adult memberships, and \$8 for junior members. Annual dues are for the calendar year. Although we realize that after-Christmas bills may be an issue for many of our members, we hope you will consider paying your dues in January. The deadline for the year is July 01, but earlier payments are certainly welcome. If a new member joins mid-year, I calculate pro-rated credit to get synchronized with the calendar year. As always, if you think that an error has been made on your dues, please get in touch with me and we will figure it out. Dues payments for 2020 can be made now, either in cash or by check made out to Great Falls Model Railroad Club. Do not send cash by mail. Checks may be mailed to **Owen Buck, Treasurer, GFMRR, 144 Mill Street, Auburn, ME 04210.**

The club's basic costs for 2019 (nothing fancy, just the taxes, insurance, heating oil, maintenance, electricity, etc.) were about **\$19,000.** Membership dues are an important part of the club's financial health plan and brought in about **\$3,000.** Other sources of income include our annual train shows at Topsham in April and November; the Train Fest in August and ExTRAINaganza in November; and Surplus Asset Sales in May and December. Thanks to members who have contributed their time and effort to these events as well as bottle returns and special utilities donations, we have been able to keep our dues low and unchanged for many years.

Thanks for your continued support of GFMRR!



PARTIES IN DECEMBER

By Paul Lodge

In addition to the Great Falls Model Railroad Christmas party on December 19 and the Spikey's Station Christmas party on December 21, there were two birthday parties and one Christmas party at the railroad club during December. Several members of the HO Crew stayed after their Operating Sessions to help with the parties.

Because of an accidental double-booking, both birthday parties were scheduled from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 7. Cindy Laplante and her son, junior club member Hunter Laplante, generously held his birthday party downstairs near the HO layout. Hunter has celebrated his birthday at the railroad club every year since 2014, when he was only six years old. The party upstairs celebrated the birthdays of three family members, ages 1, 5, and 7. In addition to enjoying the refreshments, decorations and games upstairs, the group spent some time downstairs viewing the HO layout in operation.

For the third year in a row, the Midtown Athletic Club from Lewiston held their Christmas party at the railroad club. After completing crafts projects which their leaders had brought, everyone went downstairs to look at the HO layout. Following refreshments upstairs, Santa Claus distributed gifts to all the children.



SPIKEY'S STATION

By Tami Paine

At the December 7 meeting of Spikey's Station, Travis Johnson showed the kids how to lay track on their module. Each child will have his or her own campsite on the Spikey's Station campground module. Everyone had a chance to learn the techniques and use the proper tools for laying track, and they enjoyed working with Travis on this part of the module.

Before their Christmas party on December 21, members of Spikey's Station helped to take down and put away the Christmas trees and decorations that had been used in November for the ExTRAINaganza and for other activities in December. The ExTRAINaganza organizers expressed their thanks to Spikey's Station for helping to put up and take down the decorations.

Spikey's Station will hold their regular meetings from 9 to noon on January 4 and 18 and on February 1 and 29. Instead of the usual meeting at the railroad club on February 15, members of Spikey's Station will join other Great Falls Model Club members at the Whitefield Lions Club Model Railroad & Dollhouse Show at the Augusta Armory. See our Facebook page for more details.



DECEMBER MINUTES by Paul Lodge



December 19, 2019

Before the monthly meeting and Christmas party, Jamie Robinson showed a You Tube video on weathering. Although it featured military vehicles, the techniques could easily be used on gondolas or boxcars for model railroads.

The video was followed with the monthly Power Point presentation showing club activities since last month. Several of those who had participated in the Modelers Forum added interesting information about the photos of their projects.

President Mike Meserve was not at the meeting. Vice-President Jamie Robinson opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made and accepted to approve the Secretary's report as published in the *Signal*.

Paul Lodge read the minutes of the Executive Committee from December 12, and they were approved as given. The Secretary's report was followed with discussion of some of the items in the report. This year's ExTRAINaganza was a financial success partly because of publicity from the *Lewiston Sun/Journal*, which published articles and photographs on both Saturday and Sunday of our first weekend. One observation was the need for someone to be a parking lot attendant. It was suggested that we stripe the parking area next summer in order to give guests a suggested parking arrangement. Additional parking for club members is also possible on our land at the top of the hill above the cement retaining wall. In order to do that safely, we need to get permission from the City of Auburn to eliminate the curb at the bottom of the hill.

Club members are planning to design a polo shirt with the club's logo on it. The shirts, which would be sold to club members only, could be used as a substitute for the club vest and would still identify that person as a member of the club at events. T-shirts have also been suggested with the club symbol on them. Individuals will need to sign up in advance for either shirt so that we do not order more than we need. This is still in the planning stage and there will be more information as it becomes available. Anyone who would like to submit a design is encouraged to share it at the next club meeting.

Owen Buck was on his world tour in Madagascar so Jamie gave a brief report on the financial condition of the club. It was noted that we did not make as much on the fall show at Mt. Ararat as we have in the past, but we did well on the Surplus Inventory Sale on December 14. The report was approved as given. (NOTE: Owen had earlier informed the Executive Committee that the income

from the ExTRAINaganza was a new record, but there was still more income to be entered as of his final November report.)

Reports from individual divisions within the club were given. George Pitchard said that the library has received some small donations, and about a dozen books have been added to the library. He encouraged club members to borrow some of the many books we have available.

George also reported that the O-gauge layout is a work in progress. Wiring is continuing to be done, and scenery will be added after the final track plan is in place.

The HO Division is working on repairs as needs arise. Members are invited to come help run the layout during the monthly operating sessions.

The N-scale layout is currently working on DC only. Once upgrades have been made, it will be converted back to DCC.

We have been notified that we should not use the term *Train Fest* as the name for our event during the Balloon Festival. Members were asked for suggestions for the 2020 event in August. Travis Johnson suggested that we use the "Hobo Holiday" concept as a replacement for the *Train Fest*.

The club has received a request from the NMRA Seacoast Division for a donation as a memorial for Chip Faulter. Chip had joined the GFMRR in February 2017 and was for many years an important member of the Seacoast Division of NMRA. Club members asked for more information in order to make a decision on the amount of money to contribute.

Carmen Coulombe's name was drawn for the Attendance Prize, and she chose a railroad-related tile as her prize. Bob Purington won the 50/50 raffle.

After the meeting adjourned, everyone enjoyed the assortment of delicious foods and the chance for conversation with other club members at our annual Christmas party.



MODELERS FORUM

By Kent Waterson

Because of the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, the Modelers Forum combined the November and December meetings into one session on December 12. The group included Bob Willard, Dick Holman, Kent Waterson, Jamie Robinson, Tami Paine, Paul Lodge, Dexter Baum, George Pritchard and Carmen Anastase. A few others, including Carl Butland and Eric Long, hung around after an Executive Committee meeting.

The meeting focused on a tree-making theme. Bob, Dick, Carmen and Paul all demonstrated various techniques for making trees for model railroad layouts.

Bob started with bottle-brush pine trees. These are formed using a flattened loop of floral wire with sections of hemp rope (approximately 2") spaced along the length of the loop. With a low-speed powered screwdriver, the ends of the floral wire are twisted. The rope fibers twist with the wire, and the result is a "bottle-brush" look. The rope fibers are then trimmed to shape the tree.

Dick then demonstrated how he had made HO scale Christmas trees for his square-foot diorama. He started with what look like oversize pipe-cleaners available at craft stores or even Dollar Tree. The sections are cut to length, and then the fibers are simply trimmed to shape the tree.

Carmen showed a method of making evergreens from furnace filter material. The material is cut into squares, then pressed over a dowel or skewer, which acts as the trunk. As in the other methods, the sections are then trimmed to form the tree.

In all three of these methods, perfection is actually not desired. Since real live trees seldom have a perfect form, any imperfections that may occur with these methods is beneficial.

Lastly, Paul did a quick demonstration of making birch trees from wild spirea. Spirea blossoms tend to have the perfect shape for these types of trees. First, paint the trunk of the tree white for birch trees. The stem can be left brown for maple and oak trees. The leaves are made of ground foam or dyed sawdust. After dipping the tree in diluted white glue or spraying it with hair spray, sprinkle on the desired leaf color (brighter green for spring and shades of yellow for the fall).

At this point the meeting shifted to more of our

usual "show and tell." Dexter showed some railroad-themed Christmas ornaments he had found while packing for his move. He also brought a pair of milk jugs. The jugs can be laid on their side, and then the top edge removed, leaving the bottle top and the cap. The jug then forms a tray that can be used as a staining fixture. When the staining is finished, the bottle top can be removed, and the stain can easily be poured back into its storage jar.

George next presented an impressive array of locomotives, a refrigerator car and a passenger car that he had re-gauged to On30 narrow-gauge. Locomotives included a Bachmann Climax and a pair of Bachmann 2-6-0's that he had converted with the help of an article in the *Shortline & Narrow Gauge Gazette*. George demonstrated the rolling capacity on a short piece of track, and the re-gauged pieces performed perfectly.

Tami asked for advice for structures that she had intended to use as buildings for her square foot module. The Fairy Houses (from *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*) were made from baby food jars covered with air-dry clay. The clay had cracked, and she was unable to find a suitable means of filling the cracks before the contest. However, the Modelers Forum group thought that the cracks actually added to the houses and that they looked fine as they were.

Jamie displayed a 1978 vintage brass 44-Tonner that he had converted to Proto-48. He had added traction motors and various other details. The result was another impressive model.

Finally, Kent presented a variety of organization items printed on his 3D printer. Pieces included a grid-type holder for screwdrivers, knives or other shaped tools; a pegboard Pan Pastel rack; a pegboard wire spool rack; and a pair of screw clamps. The last item he had printed was a window that had been designed for an HO scale building.

The meeting wrapped up around 8:45. It is always impressive to see the skills of the various modelers at these meetings and learn about the tools, supplies and techniques they use. There's a little something for everyone. If you have a model railroad item you have created or have questions about anything to do with model railroading, come join us and help fill in the gap! Modelers Forum meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month and everyone is welcome.

ExTRAINaganza

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SHOW

By Paul Lodge

NOTE: This article was omitted from the December newsletter by mistake, so we are printing it here in full, not only for today's readers but also to provide the GFMRRRC newsletters with a historical record of the 2019 ExTRAINaganza.

The 2019 ExTRAINaganza was one of the most successful shows we have sponsored at the Great Falls Model Railroad Club in the eleven years it has been held. Good publicity from the Lewiston *Sun Journal*, the *Twin City Times* and all editions of the Turner Publishing monthly newspapers attracted many of those who attended. Our website, Facebook, emails and signs were also mentioned by several people.

On the day before the ExTRAINaganza started, Daryn Slover from the *Sun Journal* came to the club, took pictures and interviewed some of the club members who were setting up for the event. His article was published on Saturday morning, the first day of the ExTRAINaganza. He came again on Saturday with another *Sun Journal* reporter and they talked with several families. Their story and photos were published in Sunday's Lewiston *Sun Journal* and the *Kennebec Journal* in Augusta.

Our goal has been to have at least one hundred paying guests at the ExTRAINaganza each day. On three of the four days this year, we had more than one hundred adults. Sunday's attendance was less than thirty because of the cold rain and threatening weather forecast. Even a week later, however, people still said they came because of the newspaper articles. More than half of them had never been to the club before.

When visitors enter the building, the large G-gauge layout catches everyone's attention. It's the "WOW" factor that introduces them to the club. The "Magnificent Seven" had prepared the layout weeks in advance to be sure that it would run smoothly during the four-day event. Dick Clark and John Middleton supervised the layout for the entire four days, with help from Dave Kierstead and Ray Parent on the first day of the ExTRAINaganza.

It's always nice to have something new. This year we had received a large donation of Lionel equipment from club member Dick Proctor. George Pitchard and Carl Butland utilized the benchwork, track, buildings, and transformer to build a new layout in the area where we once had the conference table. Steve Doughty helped them during the ExTRAINaganza, and the track worked flawlessly for the entire four days.

Some club members brought in trains that had not run for years and tried them out on the tracks. The members may have had even more fun than the visitors.

One of the club's objectives is to entertain the children under 12 years old. After children write their names on paper locomotives, they pin them on the painted "Christmas Tree." The total number of locomotives was 231. For the first time, a special Christmas tree was set up so that children could choose a colorful ornament and place it on the tree. Some of them enjoyed it so much, they placed several balls on the tree.

Tables were set up for different activities. More than 125 gingerbread cookies were decorated with frosting made by Rick James, and most were eaten before they left the building. More than seventy-five wreaths and candy cane were created, using tri-beads and pipe cleaners. Nearly eighty-five spice ornaments were decorated with colorful glitter glue. They can use these for many years to decorate their home Christmas trees as a memory of our ExTRAINaganza.

The games available for the children were also popular. More than eighty-five played the "Hoop a Caboose" game, and more than two hundred played "Roundhouse Roulette." Many of the prizes used for the games were little ornaments made by Terry Obie. The night after the first day, she made 75 more in which she enclosed a chocolate candy. Terry also contributed many Christmas ornaments which were sold at a separate table.

When the children went downstairs to the extensive HO layout, they could sign up to run a train. More than 150 children were guest engineers on the HO layout this year.

The "Square-foot" contest models made by the children from Spikey's Station were on display and made an interesting conversation starter. Many families took flyers promoting

ExTRAINaganza Continued

Spikey Station. While children were doing crafts and younger children were playing with the Brio layout or the trains on the rug, adults could watch the trains on the television nearby.

On the last day of the show, club members Roger and Martha Feeley made a generous donation of about \$1,000 worth of new, unopened trains designed to run on Brio track. Many of them were in the Thomas the Tank Engine series. This is a substantial contribution and is really appreciated by the club. The items were immediately put out for sale with price tags, and several items were sold by the end of the day. Thank you, Roger and Martha!

Pot-luck lunches were provided by several club members and there was a wide variety of food. Hobo Chef Jerry Johnston added his expert help on the last day. It is difficult having to deny guests a chance to eat with us, but we do not have a license to sell food that we cook. However, we did have chocolate chip cookies available which were donated by Governor's Bakery and Restaurant in Lewiston. We thank Governor's for continuing to support our annual ExTRAINaganza.

About forty club members came to help for at least part of one day of the four-day ExTRAINaganza. Nearly every area of the building was well supervised for the first two days. During the last two days after Thanksgiving, however, we really needed more help everywhere. Club members who parked their cars at Goodman's made parking space available for visitors who attended the show. Thanks to everyone who helped make this year's ExTRAINaganza a success!



PREPARING FOR THE AUGUSTA TRAIN SHOW

By Paul Lodge

The Whitefield Lions Club will sponsor its annual Dollhouse and Model Train Show at the Augusta Armory on February 15, 2020.

Participating in this unique mid-winter show has been a tradition for the Great Falls Model Railroad Club for many years. Combining model railroading and dollhouse displays shows guests how these hobbies complement each other. Dollhouse modelers enjoy our scenery, which for them is landscaping. Many model railroaders find small items from the dollhouse hobby which work in model railroading.

As is customary, we will be there at 7 a.m. to set up the modules and sales tables for the show. If you would like to include your module in the club's modular layout, please let Travis Johnson know soon. All modules need to be at the Augusta Armory by 8 a.m. on February 15. Tear down will begin at 3 p.m.

Come to the show and help with the day's activities. Everyone appreciates extra help.

The GFMRRRC Surplus Inventory Sale on December 14 was a successful event. Thanks to all who helped set up the sales tables on Thursday and/or Friday and those who helped with the sale on Saturday.





THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

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Upcoming Events

*February 15, Whitefield Lions Club
Model Railroad & Dollhouse Show
at Augusta Armory 10:00—3:00
p.m.*

*Please check web site or Facebook
page.*



Recurrent Activities

Operating Sessions

January 4 & 18—9:00 a.m. to Noon

Membership Meeting

3rd Thursday of each month

Modelers Forum

4th Thursday of each month— 7:00 p.m.

Spikey's Station

*January 4 & 18 9:00 a.m.—Noon
February 1 & 29*

Work Session

Every Wed. Evening - 6:00 p.m.