

Member since June 1988

NEXT MEETING
?????????
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:

- ◆ 2020- \$204.00
- ◆ April— \$60.00
- ◆ March-\$60.00

PRINTER

CARTRIDGES:

2019: \$547.00

YTD: \$20.00

February: 10.00

MEMBERSHIP:

132

THE SIGNAL



THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

VOLUME 24. ISSUE 4

APRIL 2020

JOHN L. MIDDLETON, JR. 1925-March 21, 2020

By Paul Lodge

John Middleton, an active member of the Great Falls Model Railroad Club, passed away on March 21, 2020. Many of us will always picture John in his conductor's hat and uniform.

When he joined the Great Falls Model Railroad Club in February 2017, John graciously agreed to let us interview him for a "Meet the Members" column, which was published in the June 2017 issue of *The Signal*. That interview and his newspaper obituary have formed the basis for this article.

John volunteered for nearly every event at the Great Falls Model Railroad Club and at all of the train shows. He contributed his talents to both the HO and G-Gauge layouts. Eric Long noted that John spent hours working tirelessly on the HO Grand Trunk yard, redesigning the track layout and getting the turntable operating. Ray Parent has written a separate article about some of John's work with the G-Gauge layout.

John was an active member in several railroad-related organizations. As a resident of Kennebunkport, John volunteered at the Seashore Trolley Museum. He earned his Streetcar Operator license in 1989 and at various times served as an instructor, inspector, yardmaster, guide and trustee at the trolley museum. He was a host docent on Amtrak's Downeaster and active in that role until the last. As a member of the Maine Garden Railroad Society, he helped with their annual Christmas display at the Maine Mall in South Portland. He had lived in Massachusetts for many years and was still a member of the North Shore Model Railroad Club in Wakefield. He noted that it took 30 to 40 minutes less to get to the Great Falls Model Railroad Club than to get to the North Shore Model Railroad Club in Wakefield, Massachusetts.

At the age of 10, John received his first model train, a Lionel set, which began his life-long interest in railroading. His father had been the vice-president of the Lehigh Valley Railroad for over thirty years. At the time he joined the GFMRRRC, John had a G-gauge point-to-point 13-foot long modular "Time Saver" layout on which he used a card system to spot and pick up cars.

John and his wife Marjorie were married for 65 years. They had four sons and five grandchildren. John grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and joined the United States Army Air Corps pilot program in 1944 late in World War II. When the pilot program was discontinued in 1945, he went to Amherst College where he majored in physics and graduated in 1949.

After graduation, John joined a company which specialized in vacuum technology. He worked in the physics department, where he received his first patent on a product used in the high vacuum industry. He also worked on technology used to make vacuum tubes and light bulbs. He later worked on developing and testing instruments involved in the aircraft industry. Working as an engineer in the fields of vacuum technology and unusual environment measurement devices for most of his career, he developed and constructed devices used in the Apollo lunar landers.

As liquid fueled rockets were coming to the fore he became involved with measuring the quantities of rocket fuel tanks on NASA spacecraft. In order to know the amount of fuel that is available, it needs to be measured. The technology necessary to do this is contained inside the fuel tanks. As the first lunar Lander left the Orbiter, when the gauges were turned on, the meter indicated that the tanks were empty. Since the tanks were suspended in space, John explained that he quickly realized the liquid in the tanks could not be measured because of weightlessness. The lunar module had to be decelerated so the fuel could settle to the bottom of the tank and be measured.

Even though John was a rocket scientist, James Long noted, "He was intelligent, I could tell even though I knew nothing about his background. It was the quiet way about him. He didn't have to prove who he was, he was at peace with himself and the world he lived in." James added, "Every time I saw him I felt like he was a friend. Right from the first time and eve-

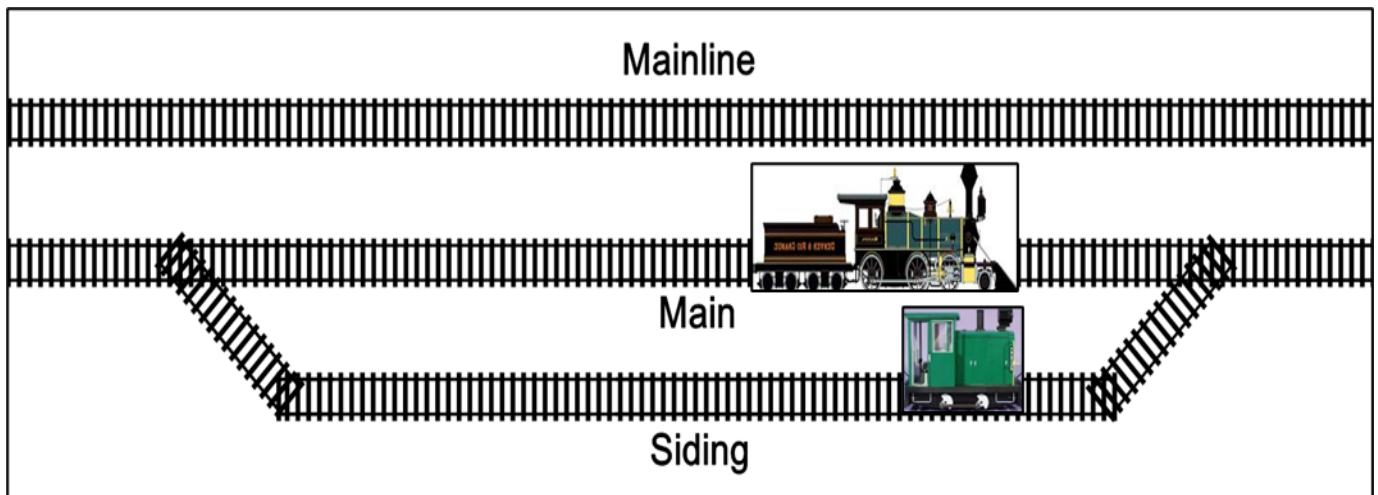
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Automating Alternating Trains on the G Gauge Layout

By Raymond Parent

A few months ago, the G Gauge 'Magnificent Eight' began working on Loop 3, our upper elevated loop, to enable the automatic switching between our lumber train and our coal train without any external actions on our part. The goal was to simply power up the loop and let it do its thing, so to speak. We used RR Concepts' Station Master & Yardmaster control technology to make that happen. Here you see part of the group trying to figure out where to start. It took us several work sessions to figure out how to best install the new wiring and toggle switches to make it happen flawlessly.

As background, Loop 3 is a continuous run that has one passing siding with two switches. The operating concept is to use both the mainline track between the switches and the passing siding as two holding tracks to stage one train while the other is running around the loop and vice versa.



Switches are thrown, and the lumber train proceeds slowly onto the mainline...

The above sequence will continue indefinitely until power is cut off. We can also set the number of loops that are made by each train before the operation is switched to the alternating train.

We recently completed the final installation step that allows us to swap between the above 'alternating' operation and the 'normal' operation that we have used in the past [Revolution handheld RC Transmitter] to control Loop 3.

Task completed and the **G Gauge Group** learned a lot in the process!

Continued on next page

Automating Alternating Trains on the G Gauge Layout

Continued from page 2

Below are several images in chronological order that show the operation in action.

[left to right] Lumber train enters main siding and continues behind the coal train until it reaches planned stop.



[left to right] Switches are thrown to siding, and coal train moves onto mainline. After a complete loop, it re-enters siding and comes to a complete stop in front of the lumber train.



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CLUB CLOSED DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

by Paul Lodge

The COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic has caused the Great Falls Model Railroad Club to be closed. Out of an abundance of caution, it was decided in early March not to have club meetings or other activities at the club until the spread of the coronavirus has stopped. Following the recommendations of Governor Mills and the Maine coronavirus task force, the Executive Committee has now decided that the railroad club building will be closed to everyone. This applies to all club members as well as to the general public.

All model railroad shows that were scheduled for March and April, including our own, have been canceled. Fortunately, the club is in a financial position to weather the storm. Treasurer Owen Buck has indicated that even without the club's April show at Mt. Ararat High School, we will survive this crisis.

Many of our members are in the high risk group because of age and/or health issues; but recent information shows that people hospitalized with the coronavirus (COVID-19) are in all age groups and many have had no prior health problems. It is safer to assume that everyone we meet has the virus, rather than that they don't have it. Although we need to keep the recommended six-foot distance, it is important that we continue to keep in touch with members to be sure they are okay and to offer whatever assistance we can safely.

If you find time this month to work on your personal layout or other model railroading projects, we hope you'll share details with club members in next month's newsletter. We'd like to introduce a new feature called "Pictures and Progress" with photos of your personal layout or model railroading projects along with captions and/or articles.

Stay safe and stay healthy.



SPIKEY'S STATION, JUNE 2019 SEASHORE TROLLEY MUSEUM

By Tami Paine

The members of Spikey's Station were among the Great Falls Model Railroad Club group who visited the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunkport on June 22, 2019. John Middleton was our host and train operator. He gave us an interesting tour and explained many details about trolley cars and their restoration.

Both Mike Meserve and Paul Lodge took video of the event. Other club members who attended were James Pepe, Eric Long, Adam Long, and Owen & Donna Buck and Sam & Beth Cooley. (Eric and Adam Long are pictured with John Middleton during the trip.)

John Middleton

continued from the front page.

ry time. Some people have a good aura, warm, friendly, welcoming. These people make friends easily and are so willing to be a friend. Lend a helping hand always, when needed, and express the willingness to do so. John had that aura and warmth about him."

Once the Coronavirus pandemic guidelines are relaxed, the Seashore Trolley Museum expects to hold a memorial service in tribute to John Middleton, and we plan to let GFMRRC members know in advance. The final note in his obituary reads, "The family suggests kindness toward one another as a tribute to his life."

JOHN MIDDLETON TRIBUTE

By Scott Gould

John Middleton will be sorely missed. I met John through Dick Rubin, who met him a few years back at the Springfield Train Show. John helped manage the Seashore Trolley Museum at the time. He took Dick, Ralph Luby, and me on a tour of the facility. John was in his 80's then, but traipsed from car to car with the energy of a six-year-old. He inspired all three of us to join. Ralph helped the museum to clean and rearrange its yards. Dick became a member of the museum board, as well as the prime mover in restoration of an open Montreal trolley car. John Middleton was an important presence at the Seashore Trolley Museum. He was involved with every aspect of its operations. Included here are a couple of pictures taken on the day that the museum launched a former Montreal open trolley that Dick Rubin's contributions made possible. John was the first museum member to operate the trolley, which I understand is now the museum's most popular ride.

John was an enthusiastic member of the Maine Garden Railroad Society (MGRS) as well as the Great Falls Model Railroad Club. He was also a weekly volunteer on the Downeaster's Boston run. John especially loved train operations, helping not only to create a G-Gauge switching yard at the Auburn club, but also helping to run operating layouts from Maine to Massachusetts.

I will always treasure a particular experience I had with him. The MGRS once organized an Amtrak trip to visit Boston. Many of us took the opportunity to visit Boston's famous science museum. One of the displays involves a full-scale mockup of the lunar lander that took Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin to the surface of the moon. Among the gauges that figured decisively in the landing was one that measured fuel. (Remember they were almost out of it.) John pointed to the gauge and told me, "I designed that." Quite a guy.



JOHN MIDDLETON TRIBUTE

By Ray Parent

John's selfless devotion of time, knowledge, and talent will be dearly missed by all of us who had the opportunity to interact with him over the years. He spoke ill of no one and was always complimentary of others' efforts in furthering the hobby. He made significant contributions within the G Gauge group, including the design and installation of the new Switching Yard - which we named after him last year. Most recently he was the spark, or maybe I should say Lightning Strike, that made our new Upper Loop Alternating Train installation possible.

On a personal note, John and several others were instrumental in disassembling my G Gauge operation when I moved to Falmouth in 2017 (see picture). That several week project would have been impossible without their unrelenting energy (made possible of course with a continuous supply of donuts & pizza)!



THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB 25 YEARS AGO (1995)

By Paul Lodge

Since its beginning in 1987, the Great Falls Model Railroad Club has seen many changes. In this issue of *The Signal*, we're looking back to 1995, 25 years ago.

Larry Cannon was president of the Great Falls Model Railroad club in 1995, and club meetings were held for the first time at Merrill Hill School in Auburn. In the early years, Great Falls Model Railroad Club meetings had been held at various locations, depending on who was in the club. Most of the early meetings were held at Edward Little High School, where Paul Lodge was a teacher. We had also met at the Central Fire Station on Minot Avenue when a club member was in the Auburn Fire Department and at the Auburn Police station when one of our members was on the police force.

Meetings were moved in 1995 to the Merrill Hill School on Western Avenue in Auburn because the classes Paul Lodge taught had been assigned to that school. Adult Education classes in Model Railroading, which had previously been held in the industrial arts room of Edward Little High School, were taught in 1995 in the basement of Merrill Hill School.

The club had been active in teaching model railroad-ing as part of the Auburn Adult Education program since 1988. In 1994 Terry King and John Robertson were instrumental in getting another model railroading class started in Winthrop. In February 1995 the Winthrop group created a two-part layout which was later used by Operation Lifesaver in railroad safety presentations.

Several club members made presentations at schools in the area as part of the Androscoggin County Sheriff Department's DARE program. In order to catch the attention of the students, the club brought a portable HO layout to use as a display and showed some modeling railroad techniques. Students were encouraged to ask questions about the layout, which would ultimately lead to suggestions for safety around railroads.

Making the portable layout (approximately 4- by 6-feet) was a club activity each year. In 1995, several club members met at Larry Cannon's home and built a highly detailed layout using water, rock molds, and several scenery tricks.

Each year's portable layout was raffled off at the Auburn Middle School Show in November. Another layout was made for the following year so that when we went back to the same schools, there would always be something new for students to see. One of the favorite activities for the children at the DARE meetings was to make "trees" using the "shake and bake" method suggested by Larry Cannon.

Dick Clark was Chairman of the Modular Group in

1995. The following is a list of the model railroad shows and events in which we participated: Augusta Armory, Portland Terminal Club, Topsham, Balloon Festival in the old Grand Trunk Station, Auburn Middle School, Round Top Center for the Arts in Damariscotta, and the Festival of Trees in Lewiston. Dick Clark also participated in the Litchfield Lions Club show and the Camden Doll House Show.

At the end of 1995, discussions were started about having one-day clinics. Matt Sharp, owner of Train & Trooper, was instrumental in helping to organize the clinics which were held in the spring of 1996 in the Grange Hall in North Yarmouth.

The club has grown in size and activities since its beginning with 19 charter members in 1987. By 1991 there were over 50 members and there are now nearly 150. Looking back 25 years to 1995 has shown the development of some of that growth.



RUNNING OUT OF THINGS TO DO?

By Terry King

When the stay at home order was given, you might have thought, now I have the time to build all of those un-built kits that are under the layout. I bet that by now you may need a break from building those kits.

Why not become an author? The *SIGNAL* is always looking for more articles. You could always write about that kit, (or scratch built project or kit that you are modifying) that you are building.

Do not forget to take lots of pictures of your work and of your layout. Another possibility if you are having trouble with something on your building or layout, ask for help through the *SIGNAL*. Do not forget to take lots of pictures.

One last note **do not copy anything from another article, publication, or the internet!** This could be in violation of the copyright laws and cause us to have to pay a large sum of money to the original author.

One last thought, take pictures of your layout, even if you are just starting out or have it all most finished. Don't forget that the national magazines are also looking for stories. Larry Cannon has done a number of these and I am sure he could give you some pointers on your article. You could even send the finished article to Frances Lodge for a final proofreading before you submit the article to a national magazine.



SQUARE FOOT CONTEST

By Bob Willard

The Modelers Forum Square Foot Contest is still on. We just don't know when we will hold it. We still plan to hold the contest at the fall show, which we hope will be at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham on November 7. So if you're bored, this would be a good time to start creating your entry. Just remember to use the same rules as last time except the theme is water. Your entry must be 12" x 12" with water in the scene. It can be in any scale you want.

Peter Cole wrote: John Middleton was truly a mentor for all of us. Patient as he taught everyone from running a real railroad to a model railroad. Giving of his time, whether for the Northeast Train Riders, the Seashore Trolley Museum, or countless model railroad clubs, including our own Great Falls. He was a straight talker, and gave good advice without making the recipient feel incompetent. John will be severely missed, but his example and knowledge will live on in all who worked with him. I am so grateful



The Magnificent Seven G-Gauge Crew. Front row, left to right: Peter Cole, Ray Parent, Ken Nettleship. Back row: Dave Kierstead, Dick Cosgrove, John Middleton, and Dick Clark.





THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

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Upcoming Events



Recurrent Activities

Please check web site or Facebook



The club house is closed until further notice.

Operating Sessions

NONE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Regular Monthly Meeting

NONE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Spikey's Station

NONE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Work Session

NONE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE