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NEXT MEETING
May 20, 2021
6:30 p.m.

**Have a story
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share?**

**Send it to the
Editor today
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*Bring a friend to our next
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DO YOU WANT TO WIN?

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

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Bottles for Basics:

- ♦ 2020- \$484.00
- ♦ February— \$49.00
- ♦ March—\$33.00

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THE SIGNAL



THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

VOLUME 25. ISSUE 4

APRIL 2021

NEW MT. ARARAT HIGH SCHOOL

By Paul Lodge

The Great Falls Model Railroad Club annual spring show, usually held at Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham in late April, was canceled in 2020 and again this year because of the coronavirus. Our November 2020 show was also canceled, and we are still waiting for decisions about COVID-19 restrictions and other factors to determine whether the fall show will be held in November.

Although our fall show had been held in Auburn on the first Saturday in November since the GFMRRRC was organized in 1988, a scheduling conflict in 2015 required a change of venue on short notice. Mt. Ararat High School was able to provide the same space we had previously used for our April show, so we kept our November 7 date and changed the location to Topsham. Their high school had the advantage of more space near the school for parking and in the gym for layouts and vendor displays. Both our November and April shows have been held at Mt. Ararat High School since 2015.

During our last train show at Mt. Ararat High School in November 2019, we saw architectural drawings of the proposed new high school. When the Brunswick Naval Air Base closed a few years ago, the population in Topsham decreased rapidly and the number of students declined so that the high school building did not need to be as large. The town

decided to build a new, smaller high school and tear down their old high school, which was in need of several improvements. The new building was to be built on the athletic fields near the parking lot. The building we have used for several years was to be demolished and new athletic fields would be built on the former high school site.

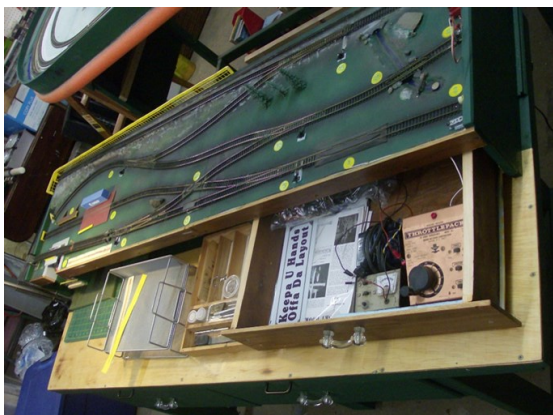
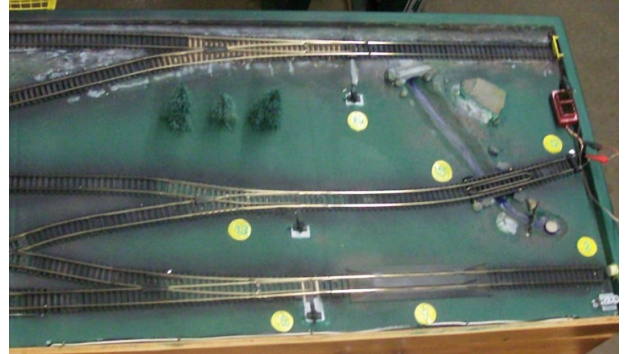
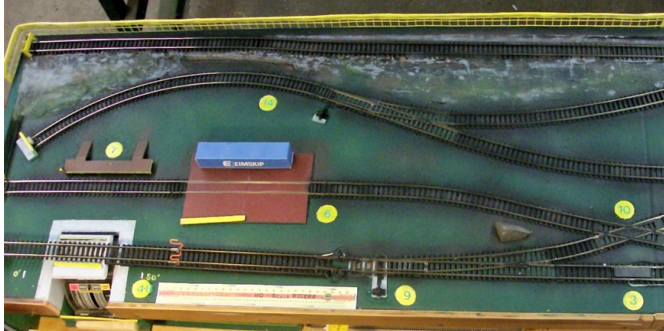
Construction on the new high school was well under way when we held our April 2019 show and was completed before students arrived for the start of school in the fall of 2020. Pictures taken in 2019 and in March 2021 show some of the changes. The green walls in the 2019 photos show the construction in progress. The old high school has now been taken down and new athletic fields are being built. Because of COVID-19, the first official open house and ribbon-cutting for the new high school has been postponed until the athletic fields are completed in August 2021.

We hope to return to Topsham for our April and November train shows as soon as the corona virus restrictions are lifted and the new high school becomes available for public gatherings like ours.



An HO Scale Test Table / Switching Layout

By Kevin LaMarre



Test Track Testing Stations

Station #	Function:
1.	Re-railer to align wheels to the track.
2.	Coupler height & alignment station. <i>Caution: Don't keep tester on live track, it's metal!</i>
3.	Magnetic un-coupler tester.
4.	Weight scale for cars & locomotives. Be sure to calibrate from time to time. (Knob on back)
5.	#6 Tight hand switch test.
6.	Street running test. Test container available for flat cars or deep dwell cars also.
7.	Dock side clearance test station.
8.	Un couple car from loco at Station 3. And run up 'scale hill' & block so loco can perform run-around. Release brake to let car coast. Then, re-couple loco to car.
9.	Left Hand #6 switch testing station with slight curve in track.
10.	Crossover test station.
11.	Bridge crossing test station.
12.	Locomotives with motors: Wheel cleaning station. Make sure to connect alligator clips for power.
13.	Wye switch test with curve.
14.	18 inch radius curve test.
15.	2 ½ % grade test with level portion at top for stop and reversing.

AN HO SCALE TEST TABLE / SWITCHING LAYOUT

By Kevin LaMarre

Model Railroaders are perhaps some of the most creative people I have ever met. In the short time I was in the hobby, I witnessed many interesting things that were “built from scratch”, “kit-bashed”, or made-over until the desired perfection was finally attained. Testing tables were no exception, as many enterprising modelers combine them with switching operations, giving them a “mini layout” while the “Big Pike” is under construction. It’s a great “temporary fix” to soothe the desire to operate while working on the main line...plus, it keeps your patience level somewhat manageable! This is the story of the mini-layout testing table that I built. Although details at the end of this article explain that I am offering my table for sale, I hope this article will give readers some ideas for building their own testing tables.

One of the under-used resources (and a real gem!) is the Great Falls Model Railroad Club library. The club is really fortunate to have the library, and I recommend that everyone use this valuable resource frequently. I can’t say enough good things about its great content and the way it continually grows with donations from members and friends. Duplicate copies of model railroad magazines are offered as complimentary gifts to visitors and members. You can’t miss them, all stacked up in the bookcases as you enter the club lobby. Between the library and these free magazines, I was able to learn a great many things in a rather short time. One of those things was the importance of having some sort of testing facility that is separate from the regular layout -- a facility that can also be used to test and repair both motive power and rolling stock.

The modeling magazines contained many examples of testing facilities. Some were very basic and easy to build and use. Others served as a full-range testing table and switching operation that could really put a locomotive through its paces. I finally settled on a fairly comprehensive plan that fit my needs and could be expanded upon later.

As I thought of other things that would be helpful in testing, I began to incorporate them into my own plan. I downloaded a free track planning application that was available online, and put together a rough format of what I wanted to have. This allowed me to record the details on paper so I wouldn’t forget them once I got started. I kept a master copy on hand for any revisions I decided upon.

The first thing I built was the testing module itself. The framework came from lumber I had hanging around. I made a base of ¼” plywood, then glued to it a 1” sheet of styrofoam to which the track and other items could be secured, and contours could be added later. The working surface measurements of the test area are 17½” x 67”.

Laying track took some time as I wanted to make certain the table had everything I needed. Since it was a test table and would serve as my “standard”, I wanted to make sure things were as “on the square” as I could make them. Even on a project as seemingly basic as this, I discovered that a certain amount of confidence is needed in one’s abilities, or procrastination and hesitation become constant but unwanted companions to the project! During one of those periods of hesitation, I decided to build a supporting table on which to hold the test table, building it to a size that could easily be slid under the main benchwork of my model railroad. I had two spare drawers lying around and incorporated them into the main table, adding some casters to the legs so the whole works could be easily rolled out and around when needed. My period of P & H (*Procrastination & Hesitation*) actually worked to good advantage, as it resulted in a very fine table that supports the test table securely and serves as a handy work station for my locomotives and rolling stock during the testing and adjusting processes. There is plenty of space under the test area for keeping tools, paints, and instructions. The photos with this article show the completed main table with the testing table resting on it. The testing table can be removed from the main table if need be, by simply lifting it up and off.

When I was ready to lay track, I measured and then measured again to make sure everything was where I wanted it. I made a track profile on the foam and then went to work. I was surprised how little time it took to lay down and secure the track. Doing a bit of scenery work brought things to life. I marked off the “testing stations” by painting a yellow circle near each station and affixing a number in the circle to show the order in which to perform the testing process when things were completed. All that was left was to do some wiring, and add the necessary tools and such.

Under the testing area, I was able to store a cutting board, a bin for holding paperwork or instruction books, and a small sliding drawer to hold often-used tools. In the drawer I have stored the transformer that runs the table track, a smaller utility transformer, an older amp/volt meter, some pertinent paperwork & guidebook, and all the wiring needed to finish wiring the tracks to fully electrify the test table. I have only electrified a first section; but for someone who knows what they’re doing, completing the work will be easy. There is a hole in the back of the table to run power to the transformer so it can stay in the drawer.

This is a pretty comprehensive set-up, but it could still be modified should one want to do so. There’s room for some buildings and more scenery. Once the remaining track is fully powered, it will be a fun little place to perform switching problems as well. I did run a few locomotives on it and they performed well as far as there was power, so I know it works.

Here’s the good news! This table is for sale. It’s the last part of my layout to go, and I’m offering it to club members first. This would be great for someone who is new to the club or to the model railroad hobby and doesn’t have a layout or room to set one up yet, so there’s a function for it outside of just being a testing and repair table. Everything that you see on the table comes with it, plus a nice work light. The whole thing can be yours for \$250. To make an appointment to stop by and check it out, call 207-655-4441 (please leave a message) or Email: klamarre@maine.rr.com

Don’t wait too long, as I’ve had interest on this for use as a crafting table. If it has to go that route, all of the model railroad stuff will be removed so the table can be re-purposed. This is a nice little set-up for the right person just starting out or for a seasoned hobbyist who wants a work-space to test, adjust, fix, or rebuild their locomotives or rolling stock.

MODELERS FORUM

By Kent Waterson

The Modeler's Forum reconvened on Thursday, March 25, for sharing more information and displaying modeling skills. Back for another round were Bob Willard, Jamie Robinson, Kent Waterson, Larry Cannon, George Pitchard, Carmen Anastase, Dick Holman, and guests Brian & Riley Inch.

First up was George Pitchard with the tabletop benchwork for a two-piece modular layout – a glorified test track for his 2' and 3' gauge models. He plans to take this unit to train shows once they start happening again. The modules were designed to fit on a single 6' table and to be transportable in his van.

Carmen Anastase followed, looking for ideas on fabricating some piping and couplers. He showed a few of his experiments and the original he's trying to duplicate. Not completely satisfied with the results, he sought suggestions from the group. In the examples he presented, his material of choice was Evergreen styrene, but the sizes didn't work out. It was suggested that he look at Plastruct and see if they have some better options.

Dick Holman then presented his next "economical" solution to a small problem. Dick likes to use Woodland Scenic's Scenic Cement but does not like the spray bottles they sell for laying down the cement. These sprayers have too much volume and a tendency to disturb the material you're trying to fix. His solution was found at The Dollar Store in the form of two small spray bottles that produce a much finer mist and are cheaper than the Scenic Sprayers.

After Dick, Bob Willard presented an update on his conversion of an M30 to a log skidder. Bob didn't like the engine that came with the M30 and replaced it with a collection of parts from previous builds. After that, Bob showed a series of vehicles (all O-Scale) that he had created:

- A scratch-built truck that was built from a set of plans for converting a Monogram Mack Bulldog to a van. The plans were intended for 1/24th scale, but Bob used the scale drawing to make his truck.

- An early Dodge model from an English manufacturer. Bob cleaned off the decals and added a payload of bags in the bed.

- A model from his previous diorama of a Model T service truck. The cab was made from styrene while the fenders, hood, and running boards came from an original Matchbox model.

Brian Inch was up next with a model of a wigwam sawdust burner. Brian designed the kit and had it laser cut, making a very nice-looking model.

Riley Inch then presented an interesting flat carload with a military theme. On the flatcar was a Sikorsky H-34 helicopter that had suffered wartime damage. Riley did a great job with the modifications, war damage, and overall

appeal of the model and flat car.

Kent Waterson was next with an update of his battleship diorama. The aircraft crane has now been completed. He also showed a collection of items (deck hatches, vents, etc.) that will be features on the deck of the ship.

Rounding out the night was Larry Cannon with an update of models for the Fairbanks Scale Co. annex on his layout. Larry explained the process of creating the new buildings from various building section pieces while adding strip styrene and casts of other building sections. New pieces included:

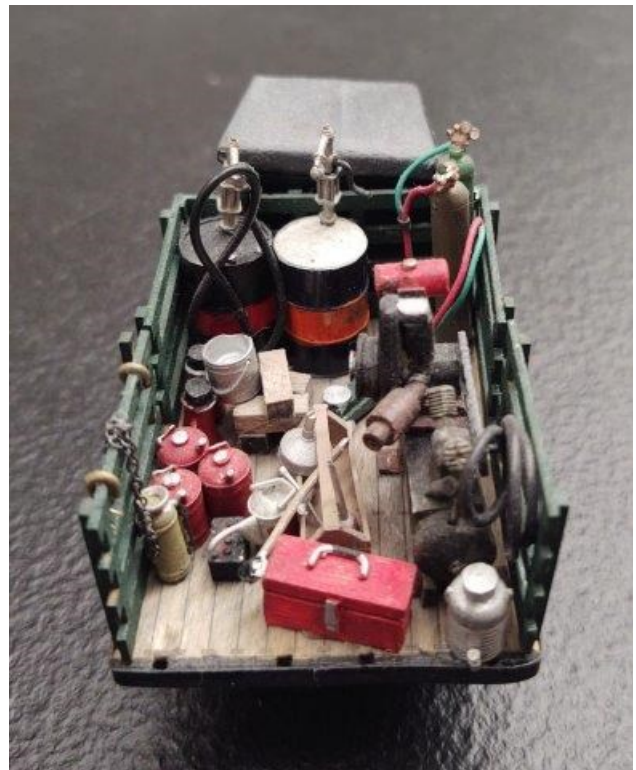
- A building with 9 over 9 windows specifically shaped to fit a spot on his layout.

- A bridge that went between a pair of buildings. Bridge was much modified with a core from a Central Valley bridge kit.

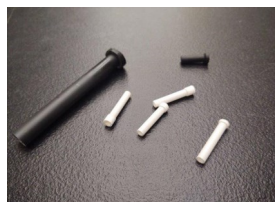
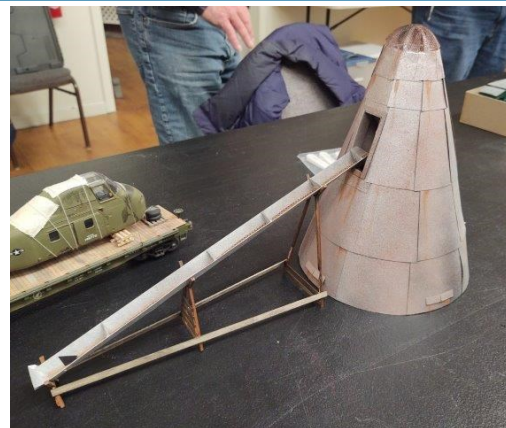
- A coal bunker built without a lot of references to go on. The mechanism to lift the coal into the bunker was modeled after the lifting mechanism of a garbage truck from the same era!

- A boiler house with a very tall stack.

It was great to see the variety of items presented and the skills on display. We invite anyone to come join us, even if just to observe and ask questions. We all learn by the questions that are put forward to the various presenters. Come join us on Thursday, April 22, at 7 p.m. for another casual discussion of one of the areas that make this hobby great. Hope to see you there!



MODELERS FORUM PICTURES



FLIMSY, BREMERTON CONNECTION

By Frances Lodge

For the past few months, members of the Great Falls Model Railroad Club have been receiving email copies of *The Flimsy*, the monthly newsletter of the Bremerton Northern Model Railroad Club. Each month the GFMRRRC newsletter editor, Terry King, chooses articles from *The Signal* to send to *The Flimsy*. Those articles usually include the Modelers Forum articles written by Kent Waterson.

Kent Waterson recently sent the following information to the GFMRRRC Secretary:

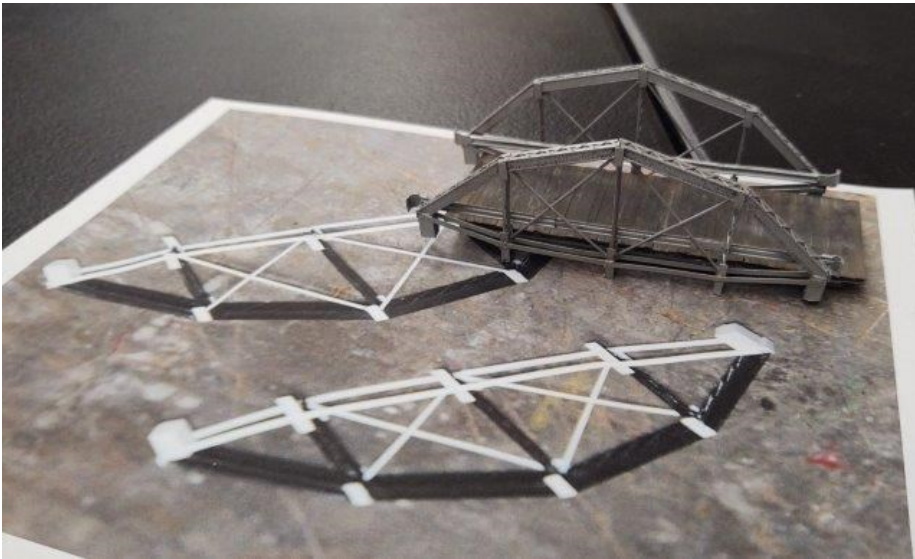
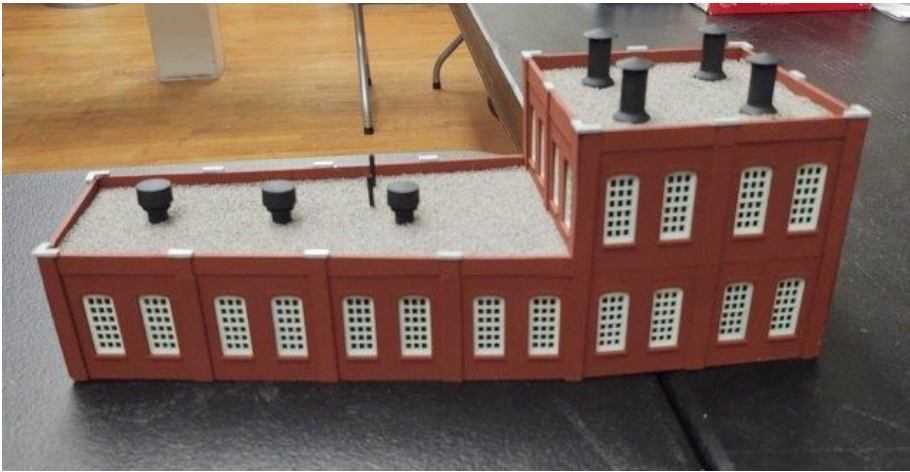
I feel like I have a (very) remote connection to these guys. I used to live in the Bremerton area when I was in the Navy. Small world that they would be the ones to have a connection with us!

A quick online search showed that Bremerton, Washington, is the home of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and the Bremerton Annex of the Naval Base Kitsap. Bremerton is connected to downtown Seattle by ferry. The Bremerton Northern Model Railroad Club began in 1972, received its charter in 1973, and currently has about 60 members with 100% NMRA membership.

Thanks to Terry King and the editorial staff of *The Flimsy* for sharing articles and newsletters.



MORE PICTURES FROM THE MODELER'S FORUM



ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING MAY 20, 2021

The annual business meeting of the Great Falls Model Railroad Club will be held on May 20, beginning at 7 p.m. We are asking everyone to wear masks and respect the 6-foot social distancing guidelines. Many members have already had their COVID-19 vaccinations, and this should be helpful as well.

According to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Great Falls Model Railroad Club, the annual business meeting should be held in May of each year and should include election of officers for the coming year. Obviously, it was impossible to meet in May of 2020, and we kept the same officers for a second year. This month the Executive Committee

will select a Nominating Committee, who will submit a slate of nominees at the May business meeting; additional nominations can be made from the floor.

Some members have come often to the club for the weekly HO Work Sessions on Wednesday and/or Saturday; and the Modelers Forum has met for the last few months, following the 6-foot social distancing and wearing their masks. We hope everyone who feels comfortable with following their example will come to the club meeting on May 20.

Only **nine members** are needed for a quorum at any club meeting, but we hope many more of you will decide to come. We will place the chairs **six feet apart**, but family members can move them closer together. **Please wear your**

ExTRAINaganza in 2021 - Maybe

With COVID-19 restrictions lessening, the GFMRRRC is hoping to hold our annual five-day ExTRAINaganza during the last two weeks of November. Keep watching your emails and monthly newsletter for more information.





THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

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Upcoming Events



Recurrent Activities

Please check our web site on Facebook.



Operating Sessions

NONE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Regular Monthly Meeting

May 20th, 6:45

ELECTIONS

Spikey's Station

NONE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Work Session

Every Wed. night—6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

Every Sat. 9:00 to Noon

Modelers Forum

April 22, 7:00 p.m.

Executive Committee:

Thursday April 15 @ 6:30 p.m.