



Member since June 1988

NEXT MEETING
Jan. 20, 2022
6:45 p.m.

*Please bring a friend
to our next meeting!*

When you send an article
with pictures, please do not
embed them into the arti-
cle—send them as a sepa-
rate file.

DO YOU WANT TO WIN?

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

YOU MUST BE PRESENT TO
WIN!

Bottles for Basics:

- ♦ October—\$59.00
- ♦ November—\$44.00
- ♦ December—\$0

**We are no longer
collecting used
ink cartridges or
toner packs.**

THE SIGNAL



THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2022

MONTHLY MEETING JAN. 20

Well, the Holidays are over and we all sincerely hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. *Ugly sweater pix next month.*

There's a big hole in our hearts this year, with the passing of our Librarian/Archivist George Pitchard just before the December meeting. We'll remember you, George, every time a wheel turns on the O Gauge layout!



NOVEMBER 18 MEETING MINUTES

Paul Lodge — Deputized Secretary

The December monthly meeting is the annual Christmas party for the Great Falls Model Railroad Club. As usual, the party followed the business meeting on December 16, 2021.

President Mike Meserve opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

It was announced that George Pitchard had passed away. After an emotional tribute to George, a train was run for a loop around the O-scale layout while sounding its whistle in remembrance of George. Club members were invited to make comments about their association with George, and several members shared their memories.

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

Owen Buck was traveling, so Vice President Jamie Robinson used the projector to display the treasurer's report on the wall. He commented on the results of the November ExTRAINaganza and the December 11 Surplus Inventory Sale. The Treasurer's Report was approved as given.

Jamie Robinson gave a report about the Modelers Forum and the projects on which members are working.

Carl Butland reported that the O-scale layout worked flawlessly during the five days of the Ex-TRAINaganza and it was a big hit with our guests. Carl asked that the layout be named for George Pitchard, who started the layout and did much of the work on it.

Shortly after joining the Great Falls Model Railroad Club, new member James Elliott volunteered to operate the N-scale layout, which ran well during the ExTRAINaganza, as did the HO layout. The G-Gauge layout had a major breakdown because of a broken axle on a locomotive on the upper level. As a result, that line was left as a static display until it can be repaired or replaced.

Three club members recently visited the new Mt. Ararat High School and were impressed with the facility. If we use the gymnasium during the ongoing COVID situation, we would need to follow several requirements, including being responsible for insuring that all participants and attendees are wear masks. **A motion was made and seconded that we not have the spring show at Mt. Ararat this year.** After further discussion, the motion was approved. It was suggested that other locations be investigated, including Auburn Middle School.

Because of yet another variation of COVID-19, a motion was made to discontinue birthday parties until further notice. The motion passed. It was agreed that we will consider birthday parties again in the future.

January begins a new year for Utility Team pledges to help pay all or part of one month's electricity bill of \$150 or one monthly water bill of \$30. See separate article in next month's issue of *The Signal*.

Corners for the modular traveling layout need to be completed. Members asked for permission to continue working on them in the meeting room.

The annual Dollhouse and Model Train Show is scheduled at the National Guard Armory in Augusta on February 19, 2022. Although there was some discussion and a few members volunteered to help, no vote was taken about our participation. It was reported that masks will probably be required. The Whitefield Lion's Club has sponsored the Augusta Armory Dollhouse and Model Train Show at the Augusta Armory for nearly 30 years of sponsoring the show, but the Maine 3 Railers O-Gauge Model Railroad Club will be the sponsor this year. For more details, check out their website at maine3railers.org.

MEETING MINUTES (continued)

The HO Division reported that there will be an all-steam operating session on New Year's Day until noon.

It was suggested that members from other model railroad clubs be invited to one of our operating sessions. All it takes is a contact.

The Attendance Prize and the 50/50 raffle tickets were drawn. Andrew James took a pizza cutter for the Attendance Prize. Jamie Robinson won the 50/50 raffle and donated the winnings back to the club. The meeting adjourned for the Christmas party and food provided by club members.

DONATIONS

It's a whole new year with lots of opportunities to step up and sponsor a month of Water (\$30) and/or Power (\$150) fees. Dues only cover a small portion of our fixed costs and this program helps fill some of the remaining gaps.

GEORGE E. PITCHARD 1951 - 2021

By Paul Lodge

Great Falls Model Railroad Club Librarian and Historian George E. Pitchard passed away shortly after his 70th birthday, which was December 6. During the past few years, George had been fighting several incurable ailments. Two months ago he told some of us about his failing health. His last visit to the club was at the start of the ExTRAINaganza in late November. George was a valued member of the club and will be greatly missed.

George had joined the club in May of 2017 and had been the librarian since June 2019. He was in the process of organizing the club's library books on the computer, but had not yet finished that project. He had, however, designed and completed several helpful carpentry projects throughout the building. He constructed the closet space at the clubhouse entrance, an attractive bin for the *Bottles for Basics* collection area, the storage closet in the meeting room for the club's excess inventory items, and a place for the club's chairs to be stacked neatly when they were not in use. He built additional shelving for the "company store" and library, and made a desk for the librarian's work space.

George designed, built and developed the free-standing O-scale layout in the area which once held the conference table. Former GFMRRRC member Richard Proctor of Greene had given the club a generous donation of O-Scale items, which George recommended using to create a layout. As other people donated more O-scale items, George added rolling stock and scenery details. He also attached shelves below the layout for extra rolling stock. He experimented with various track plans in order to provide interest and best utilize the area. George brought several interesting projects to Modelers Forum meetings, including scale models of narrow gauge railroad cars he built to be used on the layout.

During a trip a couple of years ago to pick up a donation for the O-scale layout, George shared with us that he had spent about a year in the Air Force and had worked for the military and the government as a translator of Chinese messages. He did say that he spoke German, which he learned from one or both of his grandparents, and he could translate both German and Chinese.

George was also an author. He heavily researched narrow gauge railroads west of the Mississippi and wrote a 300-page book with hundreds of illustrations and pictures. His extensive research netted him thousands of hours of useful information which he shared with other authors who were interested in narrow gauge railroads.

GEORGE E. PITCHARD

(continued)

According to online references, George had self-published [A Utah Railroad Scrapbook](#) in September 1987 and updated it in March 1988, November 1989 and November 2003. It can be found in at least one archival source, ordered as an e-Book on Google, and is currently offered on eBay. One of the associated websites has an excerpt of personal commentary he had written about the book. According to the *Utah Deseret News* of March 31, 1991, George had organized volunteers for the restoration of one of the Utah locomotives. Some of this information was available from utahrails.net.



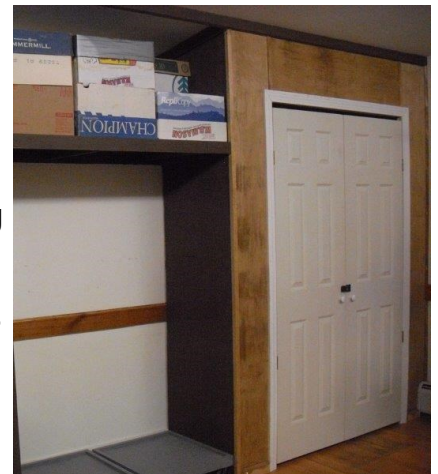
George had planned that his next writing venture would be the Narrow Gauge railroads east of the Mississippi and he decided to move to Maine because of the number of narrow gauge

railroads here. Having found a reference online to the Great Falls Model Railroad Club in Auburn, George concluded that the Lewiston-Auburn area was the ideal location, and he joined the club after visiting a few times.



Larry Cannon's comments spoke volumes: "George had a love of books on railroading and had a terrific knowledge of narrow gauge and standard gauge railroads because of that interest. While he was a private person, he did open up a bit to some of us and shared that knowledge. I enjoyed that privilege after I got to know him."

George Pitchard will be missed not only as a railroad enthusiast and outstanding modeler and carpenter, but also for his awareness of what needed to be done and then solving the problems with his designs and ingenuity. His many projects around the building will be a constant reminder of his talents and his contributions to the club.





I told him and gave him my phone number so he could call to make sure that I was at the club. He kept coming in for a few hours per day, but it was a couple of weeks before I convinced him to join the club so he could withdraw a book.

When the library received Wally Chase's donation, he came in one morning and looked at all of the magazines and books and said, "This is wonderful. Do you need help?" I replied that I did indeed need help. It was at this time I found out that he had worked in a few libraries, mostly out west in Utah and Colorado.

George was a great help to me and increased the capacity of the library by designing and building the extra shelves. All in all, George was the best librarian that the club has ever had.

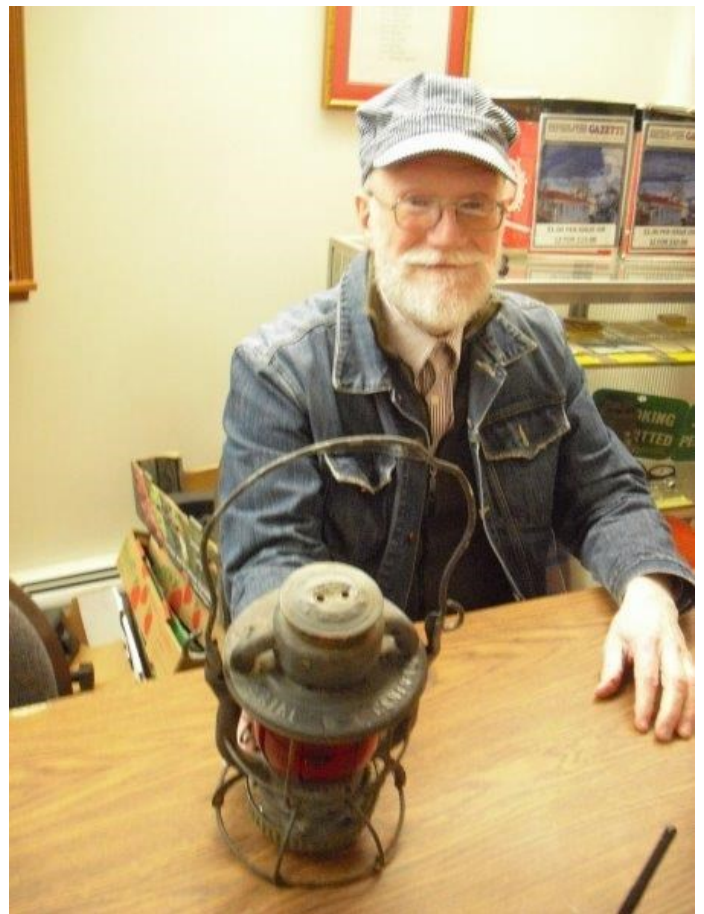
[Editor's note: this is a fine tribute from Terry, a gentleman who served as the Club's Librarian for many years.]

THOUGHTS ABOUT GEORGE

By Terry King

I first meet George at an Augusta Train Show, some years ago. He was looking for some railroad books but didn't want those that I had for sale. I asked him where he lived, and he replied in Lewiston. I said that he should visit our club library as we had a large selection of books that I thought that he would enjoy. I have to say he had his doubts about this. I gave him my business card and told him he should look for himself.

I did not see him for a few months, and then during our ExTRAINaganza he said, "I am taking you up on your challenge. Where is your library?" I took him into the library, and he was amazed and said so: "I have never seen a model railroad club with a collection like this." He took a book and started reading, for a few hours. As we were closing, he asked when I was at the library.



RIP, George. We will miss you.

NEW ENGLAND MODEL TRAIN EXPO

by Carmen Anastase

I was traveling to Massachusetts and decided to take a detour to the train show run by the HUB division of the NMRA, held in Marlboro on December 3-4. Cost was \$12.00.

The show appeared to be well attended, and people were lined up at the door for a 10 a.m. opening. The show was larger than our show and most of the vendors were from New England. There were many bargains, both on the tables, and in those boxes lined up under the tables. A group of tables were set up for a "White Elephant" sale where division members could sell excess inventory. Each item had a price and description and there was no haggling. I thought the sale served two purposes:

1. A service to the members; and
2. An attraction for people who were looking for bargains.

There was food available, as was as a chance to have a picture with Santa door prizes. The Boys Scouts were there working on their merit badges and there were about 6 operating railroads. I made several bargain purchases and left after an hour and a half to travel to my original destination.

ExTRAINAGANZA 2021

by Paul Lodge

Should we, or shouldn't we? Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Great Falls Model Railroad Club members were not sure if we should open the club for public events this year. Some members questioned how many people would feel comfortable about attending a public event. The club decided to hold the ExTRAINaganza on the weekends before and after Thanksgiving, using recommended COVID precautions. It was felt that at least ten club members would be necessary in order to cover all the layouts, entrance door, and games. Even though few

club members signed up in advance, there was plenty of coverage once the event started. On one of the days, more than twenty-five members helped throughout the building; and there was ample coverage on all the other days.

This year, the ExTRAINaganza ran from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for five days. We had distributed flyers and free passes at the Oxford County Fair, the Maine Paper & Heritage Museum in Livermore Falls, the Auburn Public Library, and Governor's Restaurant in Lewiston. Some of those who came said they learned about the event on our website or from flyers at Maine Modelworks and Rolly's Diner. Russ Dillingham from the *Lewiston Sun/Journal* visited on Friday, November 26. His article and photos gave us good coverage in the newspaper and online, providing a large jump in attendance. <https://www.sunjournal.com/2021/11/26/photo-album-extrainaganza-chugs-along-in-auburn/>.

Attendees were asked to sign a waiver of liability. A sign was posted on the entrance door reminding folks of the CDC advisory that all persons should sanitize, maintain social distance, and wear masks in public settings regardless of vaccination status. Directly below the sign were hand sanitizers and sanitizing wipes. While the CDC mask policy is only a recommendation, every GFMRRRC member was required to wear a mask to help protect the general public. We had received donations of sanitizing supplies from generous club members, and three sanitizing stations were set up around the building.

Attendance this year was spotty. We have always aimed for about 100 people a day. In previous years, we met that goal a little more than half the time. This year's average attendance was much lower, but everyone seemed to enjoy what we had to offer. The admission price of \$5 per adult helps support the club's facility and keeps our annual dues at the current low rates. In the past, selling raffle tickets and tickets for children's games and craft activities has contributed about half of the total income from the ExTRAINaganza. As a COVID precaution this year, we did not have craft activities, raffles, or games that required tickets. "Hoop-a-Caboose" was the only game for which sanitizing was possible, but the children

EXTRAINAGANZA 2021

(continued)

enjoyed the free game and the “prize” of ringing the bell. The company store made several sales, which helped the bottom line. People find it convenient to buy items electronically using PayPal or other sources of payment with their smartphones.

Events such as the ExTRAINaganza are a good way to introduce the club to visitors and encourages people to join the club. One of the new members, James Elliott, even volunteered to run the N-scale layout the next day after joining. Two families asked when we were going to allow birthday parties again and left applications for April and May.

A big “Thank You!” to all those who brought food for club members to eat. There was a good variety of tasty, healthy food, including the chocolate brownies.





THE GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

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THE SIGNAL

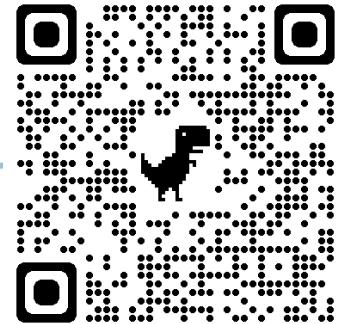
The *Signal* is published twelve times per year by The Great Falls Model Railroad Club.

Copyright January 2022

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Address Change

If your mailing or e-mail address changes please notify us at:
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www.greatfallsmodelrrclub.org

Upcoming Events

Recurrent Activities



Grab your Great Falls gear at the Company Store, and join the Blu Cru!



[Please check us out on Facebook.](#)

Operating Sessions

Saturday, January 22

Saturday, February 5

Regular Monthly Meeting

Thursday, January 20 at 6:45 p.m.

Spikey's Station

NONE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Work Session

Every Wednesday 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Every Saturday 9:00 a.m. to Noon
(unless there's an Operating Session)

Modelers Forum

Thursday, January 27 at 7:00 p.m.

Executive Committee

Thursday, Jan. 13 at 6:30 p.m.