



## Great Falls Model Railroad Club Modeler's Forum - January 10, 2026

Modeler's Forum convened at 1425 on Saturday, January 10, 2026 following the regular club meeting. The following members were present: Bob Willard, Jamie Robinson (taking notes and photos), John MacMullen, Catherine Knowles, Carmen Anastase, Antonio Berletti, Travis Johnson, and Darin Long.

Bob kicked off the session showing a 1/25 scale Model T truck with an elevated work platform in its bed. This was a nice display model that he had acquired for \$10 in some back alley deal a while back. Bob used it as inspiration to create an O scale (1/48) model. He used a Matchbox chassis and styrene, along with a cast resin hood.

Bob also related the tale of his Square Footer. He had been inspired by a photograph of a small track crew scene on a modeling Facebook page, and fleshed out the scene with a building and additional detail to fill the massive space available in 144 square inches. Bob's attention to detail for his scene included four spikes in each tie plate under the rails!!

Antonio was next. He has been making and modifying locomotives and equipment following the "Thomas the Tank Engine" theme created by Rev. Wilbert Awdry in 1942. Tony has 3d printed a Percy, but it was destroyed in an inadvertent fall from a desktop. He is now engaged in acquiring and modifying locomotives made by Reidpath. These are OO scale more "vintage." OO is slightly larger than HO, though the track gauge is the same. It was developed to accommodate the larger motors of the time, and is still quite common in Great Britain. Tony is modifying Reidpath to resemble various "Thomas" models, and is currently working on another "Percy" using a model modified with a Great Western-style cab.

Tony has also won an eBay bid for a Reidpath 0-6-0T in LMS livery. He has made it into a "Thomas" and remotored it, making room for a DCC decoder and stay-alive unit [a stay-alive unit is a capacitor-based device that supplies power to the motor briefly if it should encounter a dead spot or dirty track]. Tony added interior details and a smokebox (from a Hornby model). Another club member, Ernie Pike, has 3d printed coaches "Annie" and Clarabelle" for Tony. Tony showed a model of "Toby", an 0-4-0T tram. It has been painted and modified to have sprung buffers. Also shown was a modified Fleishmann 2-axle coach that has been shortened and lowered to correct its buffer height.

Continuing the theme, Tony showed the shell of a British Rail Class 04 diesel. It will be fitted with skirts and sprung buffers and converted into "Mavis." Lastly, Tony showed "Bertie the bus." This was another eBay score, a British Leyland bus that was already fitted with interior detail. Tony is reworking the markings and printed new "Ffarquhar" signs for the ends of the bus.

*Editor's note: we don't see a lot of modeling of foreign prototypes. Thank you, Tony, for bringing these models in and showing them off!*

**GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB**  
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Travis started off by showing a model of the Lewiston Grand Trunk depot that Ernie Pike 3d printed. It will be used on the layout in Middleton, the area that (loosely) represents Grand Trunk's Lewiston operations, but was renamed in honor of John Middleton after he passed. This was the first pass at the building, and it certainly has the right look. Ernie is refining the design, along with windows, etc.

Next, Travis told the tale of his extended-cab GP39-2. He could not find it for weeks. Somehow it had fallen into the gap between the cab and bed of his pick-up truck, and logged many miles in this most hobo-ish of locations. And was still there!! Extended-cabs were a special EMD order from Anaconda Copper for use in open-pit mines. They needed the extra height to be able to see over the pit rim (and probably haul trucks too). They had high pilots and fuel tanks to be better able to clear debris (think locomotive with a 4" lift kit...). There were thirty locomotives built to this pattern in three separate orders. Pretty rare birds in the grand scheme of things, and hard to see in the real world as they spent most of their time on company property.

Carmen brought in some NMRA magazines. These have a monthly column on tools and were immediately snapped up by Bob! In the unlikely event that Bob doesn't already have a tool is advertised, mentioned, or reviewed, he can make plans for its immediate acquisition... Carmen brought one of the building flats he has been working on for his layout. It is now equipped with 3d printed fences and trash cans courtesy of Kent Waterson, as well as recycle bins and window air conditioners. Carmen said he is having trouble keeping the trees vertical and will probably have to drill through the base into the layout to stabilize their mounting. He builds these as flats on modular bases as they go against his backdrop. Remember that these represent the backs of the buildings, not the fronts! For his next scene, Carmen is working on houses with garages. He salvages used building parts to build these scenes and remarked that some of them are so well constructed that it's really difficult to get them apart. He's using flowers and hedges purchased from Temu and will be adding automobiles as well.

Jamie talked about the square footer he entered in the November 2025 contest. It was a winter scene depicting a trolley line enduring what would likely be its last winter. A small trolley is checking the line prior to commencement of the day's service. The trolley is an old (50+ years) Tyco model with the motor removed and a battery installed to run an LED headlight. The trolley was upgraded with window glazing on the car ends and a motorman. There is a small scratchbuilt snowplow installed under the front end. The track is entirely hand laid with code 55 rail. The trestle is built to B&M Standard Plan B-10 for small pile trestles. Scenery is a foam base overlaid with Hydrocal with accents from Woodland Scenics. The bare trees are from a small bush that used to live beside Jamie's garage. When the bush died, Jamie noticed that its structure made it perfect for model trees and a great deal of it was salvaged for future use.

The trolley wire system is also entirely scratchbuilt. Bamboo skewers were used for the poles. Brass rod and wire were used for the wire supports, while the trolley wire and pull-offs are phosphor bronze. Glass beads make up the insulators on the wire hangers, but the insulators on the pull-off wires were turned on the lathe from styrene. Jamie said this was the first time he has scratchbuilt overhead wire, but he learned a lot about it during a clinic at the East Penn Trolley Meet in Allentown, PA last summer.

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John MacMullen spoke about practicing soldering. A couple of modelers offered tips about using flux for best results. John is also building a display rack for his models using mahogany from a cabinet that he built while in high school.

Square Footer Contest 2026: Please think about a theme to be discussed at the next meeting. A few ideas were bandied about, including perhaps centering it around a depot. This might adjust the size of the display, depending on the scale modeled. There were nine entries in the 2025 contest. That's the most there have been for many years and enthusiasm is high. We would love to see even more entries in 2026!

Please join us following the regular member meeting on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026. Please note that this is the third Saturday due to the Augusta show on Valentine's Day. We'd love to see your models (or new tools) and hear your ideas for the 2026 Square Footer Contest.

*Jamie*

