



North County Model Railroad Society (NCMRS)

The Editor apologizes AGAIN: The normal publication schedule for this newsletter is one week prior to the monthly meeting. This issue didn't meet its schedule. So (by way of announcement) the February meeting took place (past tense) on February 28, in its usual location. The next meeting will be held in the same place on Saturday, March 28, at 10 A.M.

Work Schedule

Thursday and Saturday are work days at the club. There are plenty of tasks to perform.

Visitor Schedule

Thursday 3 - 8:00PM
 Saturday 9:30AM-4PM
 (11:00AM meeting day)

Upcoming Operation

Date

Tuesday, March 10
 Setup time 1:00 pm
 First Departure 4 pm
 Last Departure 7 pm

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Thanks by Dick Miller

The other day I was obsessing about the fact that a small number of our members do the lion's share of the work at the club. One of our senior members, who helps me reset my compass from time to time, said that I was dead wrong. He suggested that every member contributes to the overall success of the club in one way or another, and suggested that I might want to rethink my position. He of course was dead right.

So, *thanks* to the construction crew that framed, wired, hung dry wall, tapped and mudded, painted, and hung lights in our new addition. It looks terrific. We are good.

Thanks to the planners who have worked hard to figure how to best have the railroad enter and exit the new addition. Thanks to the member who has put the various track plan suggestions through his computer verification program more than a few times.

Thanks to the scenery group that holds scenery meetings and

continues with scenery construction. Thanks to members who are helping to develop Dixon/Russell with new and upgraded structures.

Thanks to our very competent maintenance department, who seem able to fix any locomotive, no matter the condition. Thanks to them for the improvements in the condition of our club's rolling stock. The improvement in the overall quality of our rolling stock in the last couple of years has been dramatic.

Thanks to the Show-N-Go team. Last year's trip to the Del Mar fairgrounds for the annual train show was very successful. Moving the SNG to the fairground and setting it up went smoothly. Thanks to all of you who worked the show on Saturday and Sunday, and who then took the layout down and moved it back to the club.

Thanks to the operations crew who set up and conduct our monthly operating sessions. These sessions just get better and better.

Thanks to the members who are involved with Operation Lifesaver. Thanks to those of you who are certified

Thanks to the various members who are involved in the administration of the club. Thanks to all of you who pay the bills, sign up new members, keep the records, and do the forward planning. Thanks to those of you who write and publish the Semaphore, and keep and update our website. Thanks to the members who write and rewrite our specifications and procedures, conduct orientation and training sessions, write articles, and conduct clinics.

Thanks to those of you are involved in the whole donation and E-bay process that has contributed so much to our financial stability. Thanks to members who research and repair E-bay items in preparation for their sale.

Thanks to the members who pick-up and clean-up, buy and make the coffee, clean the track, order supplies, make financial and material donations, and to the member who regularly goes out of his way to bring doughnuts to the club every Saturday.

A sincere *Thanks* to all of you. You have made and continue to make our club a great success.

All aboard
Dick Miller
2/27/09

What Are Configuration Variables (CVs) In a Locomotive Decoder?

By Leo Valley

CVs are memory locations inside the locomotive decoder. They can be set (programmed) to different values to configure the locomotive to run the way you want it to run. Once programmed, the value will stay, even when power is removed, until you decide to change the value again. Although almost every specific CV does the same thing in every decoder, not every decoder uses all CVs. Some very basic decoders (generally manufactured before 2001) use as few as 7 CVs while decoders with many functions may use over 100 CVs.

Default CVs - Every decoder comes from the manufacturer with a default (factory set) "short" address of 03. The decoder can be installed and run using that address with no other CV's settings required. If the decoder was factory installed, the same is true. However, not tweaking some of the other CV's ~~may cause your locomotive to run~~ more like a toy train rather than prototypical real trains.

The THREE Most Important CVs –

CVs 17 & 18 contain the four-digit address (called the "Long Address") we use on our Club NCE DCC System. CV 29 is a very special CV that provides some basic set-up features for the decoder. By loading (setting) specific values into CV 29, you enable or disable these features. The features available for each decoder are listed in the documentation that the manufacturer provides with the decoder.

Among the features controlled by CV 29 are these:

- 2 digit (short) or 4 digit (long) addressing (At NCMRS we use Long Addressing)/.
- Normal direction of travel (very useful in setting up diesel engine combines).
- Speed Step Control (At NCMRS we use 128 Speed Steps. 28 steps can also be used)
- Analog Mode Conversion ON or OFF
- A user defined Speed Table ON or OFF

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Steam Locomotives in the East: Western Maryland Scenic Railroad

Dan Conway

In an earlier article, I sang the praises of the Strasburg Railroad in Pennsylvania. This article covers a visit to the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, and also talks a bit about the Baltimore and Ohio RR Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.

Compared to the rural beauty surrounding the Strasburg Railroad operation, Cumberland, Maryland was a less attractive stop on our trip. Cumberland is a historic city -- an old city fighting decay, with limited success. Cumberland sits at the base of the Appalachian Mountains. It was home to a major yard on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in former years. The Cumberland Gap provided a low-level route through the mountains to the West, and both the C&O and the Western Maryland RR, a regional coal hauler, had lines through the pass. The C&O is now part of the CSX system. The yard at Cumberland is smaller now, but the CSX moves a stream of long trains through Cumberland, day and night. It is still a railroad town.

The Western Maryland RR is gone, but a portion of its line has been preserved as the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. The WMSRR runs from Cumberland for 12 miles upgrade to Frostburg, Maryland. The line runs through some heavily wooded areas, and the fall colors of the trees are spectacular. The line features a Baldwin 2-8-0, built in 1916, that in operation looks and sounds great.

Unlike the Strasburg Railroad, with its beautifully restored wooden passenger cars, the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad has a collection of used -- and I mean well used -- retired passenger cars that are scruffy, unattractive and dirty.

The train had 12 cars the day we rode it. The 2-8-0 led the train out of Cumberland, with a diesel locomotive at the back of the train, acting as a helper on the upgrade run to Frostburg. In Frostburg, the 2-8-0 was supposed to be turned to lead the return run downgrade. With 12 cars and the diesel on the main line, the train fouled the switch at the end of the run-around track siding. The 2-8-0 could not be turned and placed at the head of the train for the return run to Cumberland. So the crew turned the locomotive 360 degrees, spinning it on the turntable for the sake

of the people taking photos, and then coupled it onto the rear of the train facing the way it was when we arrived in Frostburg. The return trip to Cumberland was pulled by the diesel, with the steam locomotive being pulled backwards down the track. I was most disappointed by this. I had expected to ride behind a steam locomotive both ways.

Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Museum

We then went to Baltimore to visit the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad museum. The museum centers on a remarkable building: a roundhouse that surrounds a turntable in the center of the structure. The entire round wooden floor at the center of the building revolves (think Atlas turntable). The roundhouse was originally built as a passenger car shop. When built it was the largest circular industrial building in the world, covering more than an acre of ground, and rising 125 feet into the air.

The tracks radiating from the central turntable are occupied by a large collection of historic locomotives and rolling stock.

Unfortunately, in 2003, a huge snow storm depositing 6 feet of snow on the museum collapsed the roundhouse roof, crushing the locos and cars inside under tons of snow, slate and timber. Some of the historic engines and cars have been rebuilt, but a few locomotives are still on display with their cabs crushed, waiting for funds to become available for repairs. Even with these damaged exhibits, the museum contains an amazing collection of historic railroad equipment.

In an old shop building next to the roundhouse, several locomotives are displayed, including a 2-6-6-6 C&O Allegheny, a locomotive more powerful than the famous UP Big Boys. You can go into the cab. The firebox door is open, and the firebox seems as big as the office space at the club. Sitting in the engineer's seat, you see an enormous expanse of black locomotive in front of you, and little else. The engineer's window is small, the locomotive is long, and you can see very little of the track ahead. I don't understand how anybody could run such a huge

locomotive without having a good view of the track ahead. I guess the crew spent a lot of time leaning out the side windows, which must not have been pleasant in winter weather.

For anyone planning a railroad-oriented trip to the East, in the Maryland-Pennsylvania area, I warmly recommended the Strasburg Railroad/Pennsylvania Railroad Museum in an earlier article. I also recommend the Baltimore and Ohio RR Museum. However I would give a miss to the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, and spend time at some of the other railroad sites in the region.



Fall glory at Frostburg station

Arriving in Budapest ([Keleti pályaudvar](#) — East Station)

By Howard Levine

I was struggling to fill this space, and not coming up with anything (writer's block!). But then I remembered our a European trip take in 2007 with my wife and sister. We had been in Vienna, and went by train to Budapest. Vienna is, like nearly all of Western Europe, modern and up to date — more so in some ways than the U.S. So us thoughtless Americans expected nothing less in Hungary, never having been there before. We hadn't reckoned on the post-Iron Curtain aspect of Eastern Europe! You step off the train onto

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Spinning the loco on the Frostburg turntable

Configuration Variables (Continued from Page 2)

Other important CVs include:

CV 2 - Start Volts. This sets the power the loco receives on Speed Step 1.

CV 6 - Mid Volts. This sets the power the loco receives at the Middle Speed Step (Step 64 if using 128 Speed Steps, or Step 14 if using 28 Speed Steps).

CV 5 - Top Volts. This sets the power the loco receives at the highest Speed Step (Step 128 if using 129 steps, or Step 28 if using 28 Speed Steps).

CV 3 - Acceleration. This controls the rate at which the decoder increases the locomotive movement from one Speed Step to the next in response to a new command to increase speed.

CV 4 - Deceleration. This controls the rate at which the decoder decreases the locomotive movement from one Speed Step to the next in response to a new command to decrease speed.

In addition, if the decoder is a sound decoder, specific CVs must be set to coordinate the chuffing

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Through the woods to Frostburg

Configuration Variables (Continued from Page 5)

of a steam locomotive or the diesel RPM sound relative to the locomotive speed, the type of whistle or horn, the sound volume, etc. Since these are specific and/or unique to each manufacturer, they must be programmed in accordance with the documentation provided with the decoder.

There are many other functions that can be controlled by some of the more capable decoders. Here, again, the decoder documentation must be followed to implement these functions.

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the platform and it's "Welcome to the dark ages." Very dirty. No benches to sit on. Roof shored up by temporary timbers. Forty minutes in line waiting to get reservations for the next leg of your trip. Nobody smiles. The reservations room has twelve windows. Only one is open. The reservations lady has a computer on her desk, but she prepares tickets by looking up information in worn old books. She hand writes everything. Finally we leave the station to go to our hotel which was, surprise — very modern! Next month I'll tell you about our departure from the same station. Another adventure — but I'm out of space for this month.