



North County Model Railroad Society (NCMRS)

On Saturday, November 29, 2008, the club meeting will be held at 10:00 am, at Boney's Marketplace, 1820 Oceanside Blvd., Oceanside

Work Schedule

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

Visitor Schedule

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

Upcoming

Operation Dates

To be announced
Setup time 1:00 pm
First Departure 4 pm
Last Departure 7 pm

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Expansion Completion

It's time that we get the back area expansion and the front entry update effort completed.

Planning for this expansion effort began in January this year. Budgets for the two projects were approved at the February and March business meetings. Major materials were received in April and serious electrical and framing construction began in early May. By the time you read this we will have been working on these two projects for six months.

We said, early on, that we would be able to complete these projects before mid-July, when we expected NMRA visitors from the national convention in Anaheim.

Like most projects the last 20% of the work seems to take as long to complete as the initial 80%. I understand that. As they say, the devil is in the details. Now it's time to get it done.

In mid-September Dan gave me a report that listed the nine items that needed additional work in order to complete the back area

expansion. I reviewed these items with the membership at the business meeting and asked for volunteers to meet with me after the meeting. It is disappointing to report that no one stepped forward. I will work with anyone to complete these last few items, hopefully new faces and new members. But I will not do it myself.

At the same meeting Leo presented a short list of items that need work to complete the entry way update. I think he got the same response I did when he asked for help.

He also presented a plan for a new kid's demonstration layout that would replace the Show-N-Go in the entry way area. When he finished his detailed presentation and asked for someone to lead that project the room went silent. Every member seemed to be looking down to see if their shoes were tied. That ended any plans for a new kid's layout. That probably was the right decision, but I am not very happy with the way it happened. If there was no interest in a new kid's layout, the whole idea should have been shelved six months ago.

Why is it that the same few members seem to carry the full load on these kinds of work activities? The same people hold up their hand every time there is something besides running trains that needs to be done. It's no wonder that some of our most senior members have decided to "step back" a bit.

For the next couple of weeks let's worry more about completing our expansion projects and less about what the layout will look like on the new Peninsula E.

So, please contact Dan or Leo, or me in their absence, and make some arrangements to help finish the final few items in the back expansion area and the front entry way. It's not acceptable to watch and wait for someone else to do the work. Step up. This need's to get done.

All aboard,
Dick Miller

Trains By Herman Vandenbosch

I have been asked to share some of my impressions about trains and railroads. I am not an expert and know nothing about locomotives, but I do remember, as a child growing up in The Netherlands, standing at the station seeing the slipping wheels of the steam locomotives.

I arrived in the United States in 1964, to begin a one year tour of the country by train. The first leg of my journey was from New York to Virginia. This train trip was very different than in Europe. The cars were shiny aluminum rather than the drab colors in Europe. I could travel for many hours without entering a different country. Three months later I continued my trip by going from Miami to Los Angeles. Not many

people. then or now, opted to travel that distance by train, but would fly instead.

In California, I changed my plan. I decided to stay in California rather than continue my travels around the United States.

I was married in 1972. The following year my wife and I purchased two month Eurail passes that entitled us to travel throughout thirteen European countries. We went from the west coast of Norway to the southern tip of Italy, jumping onto trains whenever our mood or the weather inspired us.

Even then, the French train system was known for its speed. We clung to breath taking cliffs along the French Riviera, but came to an abrupt stop when we reached Spain. We had to change trains because the train and tracks in the two countries were not compatible.

The most interesting passenger car we rode in was between Southern Italy and Rome. This vintage car did not have a center aisle, but the seating rows opened to a passageway at the either side. The train that would stop every ten minutes at the station at the bottom of the mountain, with a village was at the top.

The most beautiful ride was from Oslo to Bergen, Norway. The entire train was first class - really first class. Plush interiors, with over stuffed swivel chairs, stewards serving your every need, and beautiful music from Norway's native son, Edvard Grieg. At noon the train stopped for lunch at the 5,000 foot summit. There were spectacular views along the entire route. Seeing fjords from this height was a sight we will never forget.

The thousands of miles traveled on the Eurail pass

did not require the same identification rules that apply today as you go from Oceanside to Glendale. Amtrak trains, although clean and spacious inside, have such dirty, scratched windows that you cannot enjoy the beautiful ride along the coast. Service is infrequent.

In Holland swivel has a train in either direction every twenty minutes or so, with windows that are clean. The ride is so smooth and quiet it feels as if you are parked!

I have visited hundreds of railroad stations. The one that impressed me the most was Union Station in Washington D.C. Since I first saw this station in 1964, over one hundred million dollars have been spent on renovations, making it truly outstanding.

I know very little about trains, but I really enjoy them.

The New York City Subway System By Howard Levine

It's big, it's dark, it's noisy, it's stuffy, it's crowded, and it's dirty. But it carries millions of passengers each day, and the "Big Apple" would be a disaster without it.

For those of us who grew up in New York, the subway was a take-it-for-granted afterthought. The idea of a subway-less city was beyond comprehension. You could ride from anywhere to anywhere else for all of five cents (this was the 1930s). You could even ride for ever on that nickel, since the platforms at end-of-the-line terminals allowed you to step from an incoming train directly to an outgoing train. For train nuts (like me) this was a source of unbounded joy!

There were (and still are) both local and express lines, mostly in Manhattan, but also to a lesser extent in the other ("outlying") boroughs. These

lines were four tracks: two local tracks on the outside, two express tracks on the inside. Local trains stopped at every station on the line; express trains only at the more important places. Want to go to 19th St? Take the express to 14th St.. Then take the local from 14th to 18th. Walk one block.

For youngsters like me the subway provided a magnificent way to get around. Want to go to the Museum of Natural History? No problem. Board at "my" station (Sterling Street, Brooklyn - 1½ blocks from home), take the Seventh Avenue Express straight through to 72nd Street, Manhattan, and there you are. How about Stuyvesant High School (my school)? Seventh Avenue Express to Franklin Avenue, Brooklyn. Cross the platform to the Lexington Avenue Express. Continue on to Union Square, Manhattan. 30 minutes - what could be easier!

When New York kids heard about other cities - where there was no subway - they were in disbelief. How could any place exist without a SUBWAY? How did kids get through life without one? What did they do in Omaha, San Francisco, Des Moines, or Buffalo? They must be a bunch of "hicks." And so another New York pejorative was born! Lucky my friends and I never heard of San Diego. To us it would just have been a place where another bunch of hicks lived. If you can call that living. Little did we know.

North County Model Railroad Society
Boney's Marketplace
1820 Oceanside Blvd.
Oceanside, CA 92054
(760)-722-7366 www.ncmrs.org
Editor in chief: Howard Levine
Copy editor: Sue Ruddick
Layout: Nick Ruddick

All About Railroad Signals (Part 1)

by Cliff Anderson

1. Introduction

Several NCMRS members have been discussing signaling at the club and on trips to see layouts with working signals and other forms of communications. Unfortunately, even more members have not been involved in these discussions. Leaving aside the technical aspects of how signaling works, it is not hard to learn what railroad signaling is and what it does. In this series of articles, I will describe both the early history of signaling, and also how signaling works today.

I hope to provide members with enough information so that all of us have some common vocabulary of what signaling is about. If and when we get around to discussing the costs and benefits of signaling on our layout, this may be useful in helping the membership understand what they are talking about.

A little clarification is in order, because the railroads use at least three distinctly different kinds of signaling. Even though there are some relations between them, only one will be of interest to the club.

The earliest form of signaling was used by train crews to communicate with each other over a distance of one or two train lengths, or even further in some situations. The flagman used to wave a lantern or a flag in very distinct patterns to communicate with the engineer or conductor. The conductor or engineer used whistle codes to communicate with the flagman. (The earliest locomotives did not have whistles, or headlights, but that is another story.) On operation nights the

club uses a primitive variant of this method, with engineers and conductors shouting messages back and forth to each other. This method is not the subject of this series of articles.

Where the track crosses a busy road, a second form of signaling was mandated by governments, and implemented by the railroads. The purpose was to alert drivers and pedestrians to get out of the way. The club obviously has no need for this type of signaling, but I will briefly discuss its historical role.

The form of signaling that gives the engine crew an indication of whether the track is clear ahead, and hence promotes the safe and efficient movement of trains over the rails, is the topic of this note.

2. How Railroads Learned to Manage the Flow of Traffic the Hard Way.

I am not well enough informed to give an accurate history of railroad signaling, but I can give a reasonable approximation of how railroads got into the signaling game in the first place, and how some of the major changes came about. As with most human endeavors, none of the changes that led up to what we call signaling today took place quickly. There were many false starts and dead ends, and many of the changes were written in blood, suffering and painful lawsuits. If you have traveled much in North America, you will have noticed that signals look very different from one railroad to the next and that too has some rather lengthy history behind it.

The very earliest railroads were likely to have only one locomotive and perhaps a few cars with a relatively short strip of track.

The very earliest of what we think of as railroads were likely at the head of a mine with cars pushed out by human labor, or pulled out by mule or by a fixed steam engine with a winch and a long cable.

Later a single steam locomotive was brought, in above ground, to transport loaded ore cars to a barge or a local processing plant. Cars loaded with tailings were moved to a dump pile. At roughly the same time a few railroads carried passengers from one location to another, seldom more than a few miles apart. The earliest passenger cars bore a strange resemblance to a stage coach on top of an ore car frame. The locomotive made so much noise and smoke that warning the local citizens was an automatic outcome. Then someone built a rail line that crossed a dirt road and one of the trains startled a horse or perhaps did something worse. Signaling as we know it is of little value for a single train railroad and probably little or no thought was given it.

For the first time in the history of human transportation, people could move faster, and took longer to stop, than their eyes and reaction times could cope with. A person on a bicycle on a paved road can travel faster than those trains, but when weight and speed are taken into consideration, the bicycle had better brakes. Early trains did not have what we now consider adequate brakes, so there was either a clear track or a disaster. Only after repeated disasters did someone even consider any kind of signaling and in some locations an employee was given a small shack with a potbelly stove, and was expected to listen for the locomotive and then get out to warn the local folks when the train was coming. Variations on this primitive form of signaling occurred extremely slowly.

After a time some railroads found a need for a second locomotive. Until that time there had been no planning for sharing track between two trains.

So, a whole realm of unexplored human interactions had to be addressed. The employee in the shack was woefully outclassed when two locomotives appeared out of the rain or fog at the same time. Many would-be railroad empires did not have the resources to recover from their first two-train crash. Those that did recover or learned from others' experiences set about trying to prevent further occurrences. As is usually the case in human events, alternative proposals were set forth and what we can see today only represent those methods that have survived.

3. It's Dark Out There

The most primitive surviving method of those times is what railroads today call "Dark Territory" — where no signals control trains, but some extensive sets of rules govern the movement of trains. The track from Oceanside to Escondido was dark until the Sprinter changed that. It is not uncommon for an entire branch line or even a whole small railroad to be Dark. With limited exceptions, industrial sidings are still dark.

When any signal light is inoperable, Dark Territory rules still apply today. The employee timetables and the "Book of Rules" for each railroad provide explicit instructions about what is to be done, who is authorized to approve each activity, how the train crew verifies that they have been given that authority and how to fill out the required forms! Entering and exiting Dark Territory involves very stylistic rituals.

In next month's newsletter, the second part of this series will describe the beginnings of block signaling. Keep tuned!