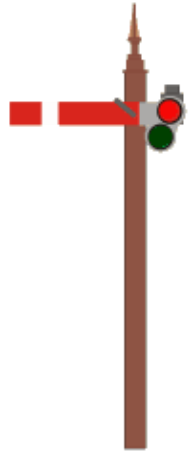


The Semaphore

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
WNC MODEL RAILROADERS, INC.



On the web at www.wncmrr.org

April 2010 VOLUME 39 NUMBER 8

Our next meeting is on April 1st at 7 PM.

Send comments about and contributions to this newsletter to [editor](#).

Please keep us informed of changes in your address, phone number or email address.



There was much to see and do at the Train Show, at our new venue WNC Ag Center



NEWS FOR OUR MEMBERS

OUR NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be starting at 7 PM on Thursday April 1st.

Clinic: John Williams will give a clinic on scenery.. See you there!

(No fooling!! This is not an April Fools joke! We will hold the meeting on April 1st.)

SUMMARY OF THE MONTHLY MEETING, MARCH 4, 2010

On March 4, the meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Fred Coleman reported on the *Train Show*, scheduled for March 5 and 6 in the new Exhibition Building at the WNC Agriculture Center, in Fletcher. He reported that about 100 tables were rented, and 3 layouts.

Show hours are: **Friday, from 1200 noon until 7:00 pm**, and on **Saturday from 9:00 am to 4 pm**.

We have set up our modules, and two other module are up.

There are many opportunities for helping:

On Friday, March 5, during the morning, we will need help in all the usual last minute details. From 12 noon we will need help in running the show we need to staff the door, the concession area, the Company Store, and of course, to run trains.

We will also fill these same positions all day Saturday, March 6.

Call Fred Coleman to offer your help.

Dave Anderson passed out the new shirt to all who were present with new logo.

The meeting adjourned after the shirt handout.

TRAIN SHOW RAFFLE RESULTS:



The N scale layout went to: Robert Cordell of Swannanoa, NC

The Carrabas gift certificate went to: Brenda McCurry of Asheville, NC



RAILROADS MOVE 2/3S OF ALL COAL MINED IN THE U.S. FOR MANY RAILROADS, IT REPRESENTS A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THEIR TONNAGE AND REVENUE.

The Powder River Basin has replaced Appalachia as the nation's leading source of coal.

Thirty-five years after the [Burlington Northern](#) proposed building the 127-mile line between Gillette and Orin Junction in the South [Powder River Basin](#) in Wyoming, the heavy, frequent coal trains of today continue to amaze 96-year-old Robert W. Downing who, as Burlington Northern chief operating officer, suggested to the railroad's board of directors that the line be built to serve the proposed low-sulfur coal mines south of Gillette.



Downing returned to the joint coal line last September and with other members of the [Lexington Group in Transportation History](#), climbed a slope overlooking Logan Hill to view the impressive, four-track main line. The day before, he had participated in a panel discussion about the coal line.

"I didn't have the slightest idea in 1974 that it would be this busy. I figured that ultimately we would have a double-track railroad from Gillette to Orin Junction. But at least at that time, no one was forecasting anything that would be needed beyond two main tracks. I am amazed to see it is three tracks almost all the way and that this one stretch [21 miles] at Logan Hill is four main tracks. Partly that is because the density of trains is so great that you have to have some available track capacity to do maintenance work. These are heavily used tracks and they need maintenance on the track on a continuing basis. Those extra tracks — the third track and the fourth track — provide that margin."

Was it a good decision? "Oh, definitely. No regrets at all. As far as I can see in the years to come we are going to need the capacity, at least at the present level of traffic. Perhaps we will not have to do more for some time. This takes care of capacity for the foreseeable future."

Downing went to work for the Great Northern in 1938. He was 56 in 1970 at the time of the merger of four railroads into Burlington Northern; his diplomatic skills helped make the merger a success. He served as president and chief operating officer from 1971 to 1973, and as vice chairman and COO from 1973 to 1976, stepping down in 1979.

Even before the merger, [Great Northern](#) and [Northern Pacific](#) had established a unit coal train from Montana to Minnesota. BN built tracks, some of the first to Powder River mines in Montana, in the early 1970s with the help of the mining companies. Eventually the railroad paid for them. "That was partially insurance to make sure the mining companies would actually go ahead and do their part and not leave us holding the bag if their plans did not work out." At the same time, the railroads had to fight off a proposed coal slurry line.

But "we weren't doing enough to take care of expected growth in the business" and after the annual budget meeting in August 1974, in only two weeks a BN team put together a \$2 billion plan to build the new Gillette to Orin line and increase capacity on existing secondary main lines.

(Continued on page 4)



As the official responsible for its railroad operations, Downing (with CEO Lou Menk's approval) recommended to the BN board that the company build a 127-mile line from Gillette to Douglas, Wyo., through a large area of coal deposits between two existing BN main lines. The board approved with one dissenting vote. As he and Menk, also BN's chairman, left the meeting, they agreed they would be out of jobs if the plan failed.

"We recognized the risk," Downing said, "but we knew we had to do it and the main problem was to convince our board of directors, the powers that be, that this was what we had to do, risk or no risk. As it turned out, fortuitously, it was the right decision. Of course, you don't know that in advance. I never cease to be amazed that there is that much business. But it is there."

About the time BN filed its application with the Interstate Commerce Commission to build the line, Downing said, "The [Chicago & North Western](#) came up and said, 'Oh, no, that's where we planned to go, you are invading our territory.' They weren't there, though. The [Chicago, Burlington & Quincy](#) had been in that territory for nearly 100 years and we felt rather indignant that they claimed it to be their territory when they weren't there."

Downing negotiated again. "The commission told us that they would like to have a Burlington Northern representative and a North Western representative come to Washington, D.C., and talk about these competing applications. I went to Washington with one of our lawyers and met North Western President Larry Provo and his lawyer. The commissioner handling the case informally told the four of us, 'You go into a room down the hall and don't come out until you have an agreement.' That was obviously what we had to do, and we did agree on a joint line with Burlington Northern to take charge of construction and the Chicago & North Western to pay its share, a half interest. They would build a connection at Orin Junction to the proposed new line."

Another monumental task was raising capital to purchase cars and locomotives needed to handle the expected new business. At that time the ICC would not permit railroads to enter into long-term contracts with their customers for movement of freight, although the mining and power companies who bought the coal could protect themselves. (This changed with the passage of the Staggers Act.) But BN negotiated a way through these "minefields" and completed the line in 1979 after Downing retired. BN also upgraded hundreds of miles of secondary main lines from Sheridan, Wyo., through Alliance to Lincoln, Neb., and North Kansas City, Mo.

Although retired since 1979, he keeps up with what is happening on "his" railroad. On his way to the Lexington meeting, he stopped at the newest mine, Signal Peak in the Bull Mountains north of Billings, Mont., for a tour. A polite, personable man, Downing has never lost interest in the railroad he helped create.

Adapted from "Huge chance, big payoff" published at www.trains.com

For more information on coal, see the current issue of Trains magazine

EVENTS FOR MODELERS:

Palmetto Division Meet

At the new Greenville Hospital System complex in Greer, SC: The Cottages at Brushy Creek, Community Center Meeting Room, 101 Cottage Creek Circle, Greer, SC 29650
From 9:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. There will be layout tours in the afternoon.

For more information go to their [website's calendar page](#).



EVENTS FOR MODELERS: (CONT.)

8th Annual North Carolina Railroad Expo

Sponsored by the Alexander Chapter-NRHS
Hickory Metro & Convention Center (The Hickory Metro Center is located at Interstate 40 Exit 125.)
Hickory, NC
April 10, 2010 from: 9:00am – 4:00pm
Check out their [website](#) for details

Spring Rails 2010

The French Board “N”pire RR Club at Whitmire Activity Center, Lake Pond Lane Hendersonville
April 24, 2010 from 10 AM to 4 PM
Check out their [website](#) for details

Land O’Sky Division Mini-Convention

Division 15, SER, NMRA, will hold a mini-convention from 9 AM to 4 PM in Dana, NC. Cost \$5 and held at the Dana Community Park Building. For more information [email Frank Pearsall](#)

2010 SOUTHEASTERN REGION CONVENTION



THE BIRMINGHAM SPECIAL

“YOUR LAYOUT,
FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY”

MAY 21-23, 2010
THE BESSEMER CIVIC CENTER

The clinics will evolve around giving you all the information you need to design and build your own railroad empire.

“The Birmingham Special” [Convention Registration Form](#)

For the latest information check out the [SER Website](#)

See [page 8](#) for a Schedule of Events, [page 10](#) for a registration form.



NMRA 2010 CONVENTION NMRA 75TH ANNIVERSARY

JULY 11-18, 2010

For the latest information check out [the website](#).



PICTURES FROM THE TRAIN SHOW



Kids follow Thomas[®] the Tank Engine anywhere



Eliada Home kid's T-Trak modules. Hope you saw some of their handiwork & imagination that we help spark!





APPLE VALLEY MODEL RAILROAD CLUB'S PROGRESS ON THE NEW ASHEVILLE DIVISION AT IN HENDERSONVILLE.



February 17

March 17



Ben Bartlett and other members of the **Apple Valley Model Railroad Club** check the operability of several turnouts on the new Asheville Division layout.



2010 SOUTHEASTERN REGION CONVENTION THE BIRMINGHAM SPECIAL

Don't miss your 2010 SER Convention in Birmingham!

Don't forget that April 20, 2010 is the deadline to register for the convention and the Hotel at the LOWER rate. Starting April 20th convention registration goes up \$10 for regular and \$5 for non-rail attendees. Hotel rates will go up at least \$10 per night.

Schedule of Events

Friday May 20th

8:00 AM Registration Opens - Attendees can pick up their registration packets
9:00 AM Convention Opens
9:00 AM SER Board Meeting begins in Track 1
9:30 AM Company Store Begins taking in Items
[See Web site for forms]
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM Contest Registration and display room opens
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM Layouts will be available
1:00 PM - 5:00 PM Clinics will begin in Tracks 1, 2, 3 & 4
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM Train Show Begins for Convention attendees
3:00 PM - 9:00 PM Company Store Opens
5:00 PM - 9:00 PM Train Store Opens to the Public
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM Dinner Break
7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Clinics Resume Tracks 1 & 2
7:00 PM - 9:30 PM Non-Rail Clinic Sips and Snips in Track 5
(Schedule may change) Flower arranging and wine tasting party
All attendees must be Registered & have a Badge in order to attend.

Saturday May 21st

7:30 AM Registration Opens
8:00 AM - 10:00 PM Prototype tour of Norris Freight Yard
[Must sign up when checking in at registration]
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Train Show Opens
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Company Store Opens
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Limited Layout Tours
9:00 AM - 11:00AM Non-Rail Clinic - Decorating Gourds
11:00 AM - Noon Non-Rail Clinic - Bookmark Weaving [Make and Take]
12:30 PM - SER/NMRA Model Contest Registration Closes
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM Model Contest Judging
1:30 PM - 4:00 PM Non-Rail Clinic - Antiques
4:00 PM - Train Show and Contest Room Closes
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM SER Cocktail Party
7:00 PM - 10:30 PM Dinner - After everyone is served we will
(Schedule may change) have the SER Annual Meeting. Banquet Guest Speaker will be NMRA BOD Tony Koester

Sunday May 22nd

7:30 AM - 9:00 AM Breakfast at YOUR HOTEL
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM Layout Tours

As some of you probably have heard by now we will be changing

the Sunday format to not have a Convention Breakfast. This is being tried as an experiment this year. By not having a breakfast we can save the cost of the breakfast and the renting of the hall. This reduces the attendees cost and allows for layout tours all day on Sunday. Since all the hotels in the area offer a free breakfast it should not add any additional cost for the attendees. After this year's convention we want to hear back from the attendees about what they think of this.

Convention Shirts

I want to mention our convention shirts because I do not want anyone to be left out. We are offering two styles this year. One is a tee shirt style that has "Birmingham 2010" on the front breast and a large size convention logo on the back for \$10. We are also offering a golf style shirt with a pocket that has the convention logo stitched on the front in color for \$20. Both shirts are a great buy and made of good quality. There is a place for you to order them on the registration form. We will have a few extras but I think they will go fast when everyone sees them. So make sure you order one if want one. There is an additional charge of \$2 for 2XL and 3XL sizes.

Clinics

I think everyone is aware that our convention theme this year is; **"Your Layout - From Concept to Reality"**. Almost all of the clinics will be around this theme. In keeping with this we have lined up a group of premier modelers and clinicians coming from all around the US. You have been reading their articles for years in the model railroad magazines. We have Paul Scoles, Tony Koseter, Brooks Stover, Cliff Powers, Jared Harper, Bob McIntyre and other members of the NMRA Layout Design SIG. The clinics will take you from design and planning right on through building and completion. There will be some make and take clinics as well as time for you to talk to the experts about your layout and ask questions.

Cliff Powers will be doing a 2 hour clinic on building a triple deck layout. Paul Scoles will be doing 4 hours of clinics on building your layout based on a series of articles that started running in the December 2009 issue of Railroad Model Craftsman and are continuing to run. Part of the clinic will include "Getting your hands Dirty".

Tony Koester will be doing a clinic on building a double desk layout with a question and answer period afterwards.

We will also have a special guest clinician coming from Australia. Dan Carmody, a member of the Australia Consult in Washington DC, will be joining us to talk about model and prototype railroading DOWN UNDER. This will be a good chance for us to see how another part of the world does railroading. Dan is excited about meeting all of us and sharing his modeling experiences.

Non-Rail Clinics

On Friday morning there will be a meet and greet. Carol Beatty will be there with other members of the Steel City crew to have a hot cup of coffee and tell you what there is to do while you husband is at the clinics.

She will have an extensive to-do list which will include local shops,



area points of interests including the train museum in Bessemer and the McWayne Museum in downtown Birmingham. Another very unique place is Pepper Place! You can join local chefs early in the morning and watch them prepare an item, or you can browse antiques and look at local produce, buy homemade foods and craft items. If you want to research prior to coming, you can go to these websites:

www.tannehill.org a Civil War park with RV and primitive camping, log cabins set aside for crafters on Saturdays and an iron ore museum; www.Birminghamtravel.com for info on antiques, etc.; and www.800Alabama.com for state tourism events. A great local restaurant is the famous Irondale Cafe – home of the movie “Fried Green Tomatoes”.

Starting Friday evening we have four great clinics planned for the ladies. On Friday night there will be SNIP & SIP. We have a professional florist coming in from Helena Florist that will give a class on flower arranging. Everything will be supplied including the vases and flowers. While practicing your flower arranging samples of wine will be available and everyone takes home their flower arrangement. Sorry men this is for the ladies only.

On Saturday morning Carol Beaty will be giving a clinic on making decorative gourds. Gourds: those weird looking, hard-shelled plants that are perfect for painting, dyeing, carving and weaving on, or just waxing. They can be decorated for the holidays or just for fun. After the class, there will be some various shapes to paint and take home.

Following Carol will be Marie Mattherly who will be doing a clinic on “Bookmark Weaving”. This will be a make and take project, one that will be relaxing, easy to understand, and once you know the basics, can be extended into making other projects. Marie says “If kids can do this, we can.”

On Saturday afternoon Brenda Cusker will be doing a clinic on antiques. She will talk about how to tell what things are worth, what’s old and what’s not. The ladies are invited to bring things from home to show and find out more about them.

Layout Tours

At I mentioned last month we will be changing the layout of the convention slightly this year. We will have a few layouts on tour on Friday and Saturday with the bulk of the layouts (and most that will be open on Friday and Saturday) open all day on Sunday. Layout tours will start at 9 AM on Sunday and go till 4 PM. We have a well-rounded group. A couple of G, some O, a few N & HoN3 and lots of HO. Plus we will have some at the train show. We will provide maps that will take you on a guided tour from one layout to the next to keep travel time to a minimum. Now that the WEB site problems are behind us we hope to have lots of convention information posted. Please visit the SER web site at WWW.SER-NMRA.ORG and clicking on the 2010 Convention to take a tour of what we will have.

Prototype tour

We currently have plans for a tour of the Norris Freight Yard in Irondale about 30 minutes from the convention center. Everything is on track as of now but things do change rather quickly in this day and age so we all need to keep our fingers crossed. This tour will depart at 8 AM on Saturday from the convention center. You will be able to sign up for the tour when you check in at the

convention. More details will be available at check in.

Train Show

We will have a train show in the convention centers large 12,000 sq. foot expedition center. The show will be open Friday afternoon and evening and Saturday all day. We plan on having several manufacturers on the floor plus several first time convention dealers. So bring lots of money.

Everything conveniently located

Bessemer is located 20 minutes from the Birmingham airport on I-59. The convention center and hotel are located one block off the freeway. The main convention hotel, The Hampton Inn, is located across the street from the Bessemer Civic Center. There are several other hotels in varying price ranges located a short distance down the street. All convention activities will be located in the easy-to-get-around Civic Center. Registration, train show and snack bar are on the first floor and the clinics, model contest and banquet will be conducted on the second floor of the facility. Elevator service is available. Layout and prototype tours are within a 20-mile radius of the Civic Center.

Company Store

The company store will be featuring a broad array of items. You will need to check your items in by 2 PM on Friday. The forms and tickets you need are on the web site so you can print and fill them out early so check in will be quick and easy. There is a limit of 50 items per attendee.

Last but not least is the Model Contest

We are hoping for a super model Contest. The Convention Committee has selected the theme of “Birmingham a Manufacturing City” as the special theme contest. Build something around the idea of Manufacturing and Railroad and enter the contest.

The SER contest chairman has also issued a contest challenge for a special prize for the Division that enters the most models. In order to make this contest fair for smaller divisions it will be based upon how many members you have in your division. If you are a division like Empire that has 26 members and 13 members enter a model that would be 50%. If you are Steel City who has 106 members and 35 members enter a model that is only 33%. Even though Steel City has more than double the number of models they would lose to Empire percentage wise. So come on and enter and take a prize for your division.

In Summary

We have a wide varied of different activities to keep everyone busy. We hope you will join us for what should be an enjoyable weekend.

Please visit our website WWW.SER-NMRA.ORG several times between now and the convention for the latest information and updates.

Our WEB master, Mike Broadway, is doing a great job of keeping everything updated in order to give you the latest and greatest news on the 2010 SER Convention information.

We look forward to seeing you in Birmingham in 2010.

TOM CUSKER, 2010 Convention Chairman

