



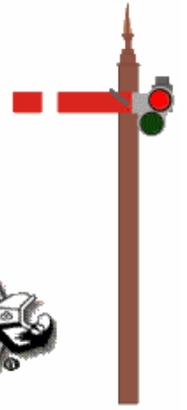
The Semaphore, The Official Publication of Land-O-Sky, Division 15, Southeastern Region, NMRA



The Semaphore

LAND-O-SKY
DIVISION 15, SOUTHEASTERN REGION
NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION
AND
WNC MODEL RAILROADERS, INC.

JOHN WILLIAMS, SUPERINTENDENT
ROBERT BELL, ASST. SUPERINTENDENT
KEN GRAZIN, COMPANY CLERK
JIM FIQUA, PAYMASTER



April 2009

VOLUME 38, NO.8

Our next membership meeting is on Thursday, March 5th at 7:00 p.m.
Send comments about and contributions to this newsletter to [the editor](#).
Please keep us informed of changes in your address, phone number or email address.



Vintage Asheville Street Car

See the rest of the story [inside](#)



IMPORTANT NEWS FOR OUR MEMBERS

Our next meeting is Thursday, April 2nd at 7:00 pm.

Our normal business meeting which will start at **7 PM** on **Thursday April 2nd**.

Clinic: "Unique Buildings for your Model Railroad" by: Gordon Fewster.

Summary: Gordon suggests ways to make the buildings on your model railroad more unique. There will be examples ranging from a (very) mild kit-bash to a one-of-a-kind modular building. Techniques will include signs with decals made on a home computer, and the latest newly painted and lettered rolling stock from the Ontario Southern Railway will be on display.

Operating Sessions on the LOST RR

Sessions: Saturday, April 11, and Sunday, April 26, at 2:00 pm.

Module Showing: The division will take the LOST RR (HO modules) to Hickory for their 4 April show. (The sponsoring club claims they will rent 250 tables for the show, so it should be a big one.) Your help is needed on April 3: for loading, setting up; and April 4th: for running trains, and packing the modules and unloading at the barn. Please contact **Wally Brown** at 683 – 1976 if you can help.

THE OPERATIONS & MODULES COMMITTEE MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 16 AT 7:00 PM.

Have an interesting idea for a clinic that you can do. Please call Fred Coleman to schedule your time today! Hurry, there is a limited time offer, call now for your preferred placement.

Health And Welfare

With sad hearts, we announce that member **Tim Wagner's** wife, *Sharon Kay Hennessey Wagner* passed peacefully before sunrise on Friday, March 13, 2009 at the SOLACE Center in Asheville of pancreatic cancer.

Sharon is survived by her husband of nearly 44 years, **Tim**; her mother, *Alma K. H. Mosley*; son, *Bill* of Gainesville Fla., and wife, *Terri*; son, *Rob* of Richmond, Va., and wife, *Erin*; son, *James* of Greenville S.C. and wife, *Currie*; daughter, *Kristina* of Ponce Inlet, Fla. and husband, *Mason*; and son, *TJ*, of Atlanta; 10 darling grandchildren; and siblings, *Tom Hennessey*, *John Hennessey* and *Kristina H. Specht*.

Our thoughts and prayers are with **Tim** and his beautiful family and we share their sorrow.



Minutes of our March Meeting

Ken Granzin, Company Clerk

President **John Williams** called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. The meeting was held in the barn because of a scheduling conflict. There was no Treasurer's report because of the absence of the Treasurer.

Fred Coleman reported on the annual train show held at the Asheville Civic Center 20-21 March. Attendance was 960. While attendance this year was higher than when the show was held at the Haywood County Fairgrounds, the high cost of nearly \$3700 for renting the Civic Center greatly affected the profit margin. Given the high cost of renting the Civic Center, Fred is looking for (and asking help in locating) alternative venues for next year's show. Fred thanked **Penn Bullock** and **Mike DeVore** for serving as overnight security guards on Thursday and Friday nights. Hiring professional guards would have very expensive and the contribution of Mike and Penn is much appreciated. Vendors were generally pleased with their success at the show. John thanked all workers for their contributions to the show.

The next work session in the barn for the HO layout will be held Tuesday, 10 March at 2 p.m. The next operating session will be held Saturday, 14 March at 2 p.m.

Penn Bullock reviewed the schedule for working with the Eliada kids. There are now four sessions held every Tuesday and one session on the second Saturday of the month. Penn once again called for more club members to join in this program, and he noted that help will be especially necessary during the summer months when some of the regular workers will be absent..

Dan Lang reported on progress at the Apple Valley Club. The club is considering recreating the Asheville Division of their railroad. Dan also reminded members of the upcoming NMRA convention to be held this summer in Hartford, CT. Ballots sent to NMRA members recently for electing officers were invalid and voting must take place a second time. Dan will hold an open house for viewing his railroad in his new abode on 25 March from 2 to 5 p.m.

John reported that work on the layout at Lake Junaluska is proceeding well. Track-laying is almost complete and work on scenery will begin soon. John encouraged members to participate in this work. Contact John for information.

The club will once again take the HO modules to Hickory for their 4 April show. The sponsoring club claims they will rent 250 tables for the show, so it should be a big one.

Ben Bartlett presented the Golden Spike Award to **Joe Norris** and a NMRA Volunteer Award to **Jim Fuqua**. John presented **Bill Siebert** with an award for introducing the t-trak concept to area cub scouts.

John spoke of his recent trip to Denver and extolled the Caboose Hobbies store as worth a visit from any model railroader who visits Denver. John proposed a road trip to the transportation center in Spencer for some time in May. Members should communicate their interest in this trip to John.

Fred reported on health issues regarding some club members and friends of the club.

Following the business session, **Mike Nicoletti** provided a detailed description of how model railroaders can use current technology to automate the operation of their DCC layout. Mike's focus was on the use of decoders and BM1, BM2, and MP3 modules sold by Lenz, a German company. It is possible to automate control of such functions as rate of braking, point of stopping, switching turn-outs to safely protect routes, and keeping trains from entering occupied blocks. Mike very generously provided extensive notes in printed form, complete with many diagrams for connecting modules; if you missed the meeting, you might ask a member who attended to loan you his printed notes.



TROLLEY CAR SOLD ON E-BAY

The Asheville Citizen-Times recently reported that the Asheville trolley car that was offered up on eBay will stay in Asheville, well, Woodfin, to be precise, but it will stay in the mountains. “We were thrilled to get it, and we’re thrilled to keep it in town,” said Rocky Hollifield, whose nonprofit group, the Craggy Mountain Line, bought the car for \$5,000. The Craggy Mountain Line hopes to open a train museum on three miles of track it owns in Woodfin. They will completely refurbish the Asheville trolley car, a 1927 “Birney Safety Car” manufactured by the J.G. Brill Company of Philadelphia.

Hendersonville resident David Burns, 19, put the car on eBay and plans to use the proceeds to pay for college tuition. His grandmother, Barbara Rouser, acquired the car about a decade ago when she bought a home and property in south Asheville. At the time, a couple was living in the trolley car, which remains in fairly good shape, although it could use some roof repairs. Carolina Power & Light Company purchased 10 of these cars to operate on the streets of Asheville, which had one of the country’s earliest trolley systems. Service began in 1888 but had ended by 1940. Hollifield said he’s aware of three Asheville trolley cars still in town. “This is the best one,” he said. “Cosmetically, the car is mostly intact.”

(note: picture of present condition in the Asheville Citizen Times shows it will require much TLC during restoration)

NC Transportation Museum Events in April

April 4 Antique Tractor Show The Iron Peddlers Antique Power Club will display antique tractors and farm equipment from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Kids can compete in the Kiddie Tractor Pull. Free event.

April 7-10, 14-17 Spring Fever Train Rides As the weather warms, take advantage of these special train rides during the second and third weeks of April. Train rides are \$6 for adults and \$5 for children. Two and under ride free if they are sitting on a parent or guardian’s lap.

April 16 Spring Home School Day

Home school children and their parents visit the N.C. Transportation Museum. Pre-registration is required. For information, call Brian Moffitt at 704-636-2889 ext. 257.

April 18 Events

1) Annual Studebaker Car Show Event

2) Volunteer Open House

All memberships are for one year and include the following basic benefits, with additional benefits for certain membership levels as noted:

- The public meets museum volunteers in our annual recruitment effort
- **Membership Day** A day full of fun with special activities and train rides especially for members.





If all the great special events at the N.C. Transportation Museum keep you coming back for more, it's time to consider a museum membership! You'll get free rides on our daily train for you or your whole family*, a discount in our Gift Station, discounts on certain ticketed special events, a subscription to our ShopTalk magazine, and an invitation to a day of a special activities just for members NCTM memberships are affordable, and grant you access to more than 250 other museums through our membership in the [Association of Science-Technology Centers](#). But most importantly, your membership supports museum programs, so we can keep offering the fun and educational events that keep you coming back again and again!



All memberships are for one year and include the following basic benefits, with additional benefits for certain membership levels as noted:

- Free train rides, Excluding Special Events
- Free Turntable Rides
- 10% Discount at the Museum Store, *The Gift Station*
- Subscription to *Shop Talk*
- Recognition in *Shop Talk* as a Member
- Invitations to Members-Only Events
- Advance Notice of Special Events

For more information, [click here](#)

April 25 "Hoofing it By Mule Across North Carolina" by Bernie Harberts, brought to the Transportation Museum in association with the N.C. Humanities Council. Harberts will have tales of his journey and bring two mules that carried him across the state. Free.

Why is standard gauge such an un-standard size (and what does it have to do with NASA's Space Shuttle)?

The US standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that's the way they built them in England, and English expatriates built the US Railroads.

Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used. Why did 'they' use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.



Okay! Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads in England, because that's the spacing of the wheel ruts. So who built those old rutted roads? Imperial Rome built the first long distance roads in Europe (and England) for their legions. The roads

have been used ever since.

And the ruts in the roads? Roman war chariots formed the initial ruts, which everyone



(Continued on page 6)



else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8 .5 inches is derived from the original specifications for an Imperial Roman war chariot. And bureaucracies live forever. So the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's ass came up with it, you may be exactly right, because the Imperial Roman Army chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war horses.

Now, the twist to the story. When you see a Space Shuttle sitting on its launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs. The SRBs are made by Thiokol at their factory at Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs would have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory happens to run through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track, as you now know, is about as wide as two horses' behinds.



So, a major Space Shuttle design feature of what is arguably the world's most advanced transportation system was determined over two thousand years ago by the width of a horse's ass.

7th Annual NC Railroad Extravaganza

Saturday April, 4th

9 AM to 4 PM

Metro Center, Hickory, NC

DIRECTLY OFF I-40 AT EXIT 125 (LENOIR-RHYNE BOULEVARD)

ADMISSION: \$3; CHILDREN 10 & UNDER \$1

FREE PARKING

HOSTED BY ALEXANDER CHAPTER, NHRS