The CRM&HA Newsletter

Editorial
By Dennis Moriarty

Brian d'Entremont will be in Grenoble France until December. So others will fill in as acting Stationmaster until he returns. Brian was kind enough to send us an article about Grenoble and the rail traffic where he is living. Look for the article in this newsletter.

Jim Reece wants to finalize the bylaw revisions in the near future. Therefore, the suggested bylaw changes presented by Bob Hanson are being reprinted in this newsletter. Please study them and make suggestions at the next meeting.

Mark your calendars. This year's picnic will be at Dale Reynolds house on September 24th. Dale will supply beverages and paper products. The club will supply the meat dish. Please be prepared to bring a dish to pass and BYOB. More details will be in the next newsletter. It will be decided by August if we will have the regular meeting on September 1st, or hold a short meeting at the picnic.

This month the newsletter features General Electric engines. Contact me to get your favorite rail line featured. http://usloki.tripod.com/

Dale Reynolds is the Program Chair for the Association. Dale is responsible for the meeting programs. Please contact Dale if you can do a program on November 2nd. (Maybe September 1st?)

Please **send information** for the next newsletter to **MQK@CHARTER.net** or hand it to me at a meeting before August 12th.

Thank you Jim Reece, Bob Hanson, and Brian d'Entremont for your contributions to the newsletter this month.

Also, thank you Howard Garner for managing the club website.

Minutes –Meeting
(Central Library)
May 4, 2006

President Jim Reece called the meeting to order with 12 members in attendance. There were no new members or guests present.

By-laws Discussion of the by-law changes has been postponed due to Bob Hanson's absence.

Club Insurance Dennis Moriarty is working obtaining an estimate for insurance for the club. State Farm has responded that they do not provide this type of insurance.

Disposition of the layout Some repair work has been done on the HO layout over the last month to prepare for the show, but no progress has been made on the design of a new layout or transportation system since the last meeting. There was again a brief discussion of the fact that transportation options must be integral to the layout design process.

Train Show Jim Reece reports the following incomes and expenses:

$330 Door admission (82 people)
$75   Vendor table rentals
$189 Club store.
($98) Truck (Bob Folsom)
($110)   Signs (Jim Reece)
($151)   Advertising (Bob Hanson),
($35) Other expenses reported at the meeting

It was noted that the cost of the signs is a capital investment while the club store income represents a reduction in inventory. The manager of Mutt's reported income of $1100 for the period of the show

verses $500 for the same period on an average Saturday.

There was discussion of the virtues holding another show in this location verses other possibilities. One possibility may involve coordination with the NRHS board of directors meeting next April if it is located in Greenville. Howard Garner indicates that a decision on the location of this meeting is imminent.

Railfan Reports/News Mac McMillin reports that he is in search of HO Lionel talgo couplers.

Presentation After the adjournment of the meeting, Howard Garner gave a presentation on methods of historical research.

Respectively Submitted
Brian d'Entremont Stationmaster

Minutes –Meeting
(Central Library)
June 1, 2006

President Jim Reece called the meeting to order at 7:19 with 13 members and no guest in attendance. The treasure's report issued by Howard Garner showed that on May 26, 2006 the club had a bank account of $10,732.33.

By-Laws Discussion of the by-laws change was deferred until after the complete text of the changes is published in this newsletter.

Train Show It was reported by Jim Reece that the train show at Mutt's on April 29 achieved a net income of $185.07.After a discussion of the show, a motion was made and seconded to have next years show at Mutt's. Further discussion determined Jim Reece would make arrangements with Mutt's to host the show in mid to late February.

At this time it was decided not to plan on hosting a train show for the NMRA convention. May reconsider after reviewing the NMRA convention schedule at the next club meeting.

Layout Rob Seel plans to have a meeting with the layout committee to discuss if any major changes to the layout should be considered at this time.

Picnic Dale Reynolds has invited the club to have its annual picnic at his house this year. The date agreed upon is Sept. 24, 2006 at 3:00 PM. Please be prepared to discuss the food details at the July meeting.

Respectively Submitted
Jim Reece Acting Stationmaster
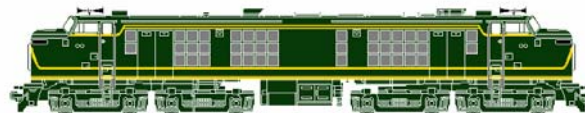
CEO REQUEST
BY JIM REECE

I have asked Dennis to republish in this newsletter the work Bob Hanson did on updating our Articles of Association and by-laws. Please read this so we can be prepared to discuss and maybe complete this business.

Updating of our Articles of Association and By-Laws
By Bob Hanson

At the request of the membership, Bob Hanson has reviewed the by-laws and is proposing the following revisions to them. Anyone who has any additional comments should send them directly to Bob. Then---- According to the laws governing our Association---any changes to the above must be offered to the members for comment at the meeting before they are to be voted upon.

Sections in the attachment say----NOW READS---- followed by a section that says ---CHANGE TO----.

All items in red are the proposed rewrites.

January, 2006 Review of the Articles of Association and the by-laws of Central Railway Model and Historical Association

Articles of Association-----

Article V: Board of Directors---Section 1, Subsection B.

Now reads-----B: Division Superintendents (Vice-Presidents)
(One for each interest group (consisting of four or more members) and one for a General Interest Group)

Change to-----B: Division Superintendents (Vice-Presidents)
(One or more as directed by the membership to carry out the business and affairs of the Association)

*****End re Articles of Association*****

By-Laws-----

Article 1: Meetings---Section 3. Classes of Meetings, Subsection B

Now reads-----REGULAR MEETING, shall be held on the third Thursday of each month at 1930 hours--------------

Change to-----REGULAR MEETING, shall be held monthly at a date, time and location as determined by the Board of Directors and notified to the membership.

Subsection E. BOARD MEETINGS of the above----

Now reads-----Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held monthly, or as deemed necessary, but no less frequently than quarterly.

Change to-----Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held as deemed necessary but no less frequently than annually. This Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors may be held in conjunction with the Association's Annual Meeting.

Article II: OFFICERS---Section 2—DIVISION SUPERIN-TENDENTS (Vice Presidents) shall:

Now----delete Subsections A., B., C., and D in their entirety

New-----A. be elected as deemed necessary by the Membership to carry out the needs of the Association.

      B.   preside over any Regular, Annual or Special meeting of the membership from which the Chief Executive Office is absent

      C.   in the event that the Association has caused to be elected more than one Division Superintendent, the Division Superintendent with the lowest membership number shall be considered the senior member.

Article III: TERM OF OFFICE, Section C:

Delete this entire section---it dealt with elections at the inception of the organization and is no longer pertinent.

Now-----
Article IV: ELECTIONS: Section 1, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PAYMASTER, STATIONMASTER

Now-----The above named officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association or, if a vacancy occurs----------

New-----
ARTICLE IV: ELECTIONS: SECTION 1, ALL OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

New-----All officers of the Association shall be elected so that there is no complete changeover of officers in any one year, as provided in Article III, Section A., or, if a vacancy occurs-----------

ARTICLE IV: ELECTIONS:

Delete in its' entirety Section 2 and accompanying Subsections A, B and C.

New-----ARTICLE IV: SECTION 2; MEMBERSHIP INTERESTS
All regular members may declare any specific interests they have with regard to railroading in any form, and whether or not they have multiple interests. The Stationmaster will keep a permanent record of such interests with the understanding that a member may from time to time wish to change his or her indicated interest by relaying such desire to the Stationmaster in writing.

ARTICLE VII: RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS:

Now-----Section 7. Cooperation with the declared Interest Groups, for the unity and strength of the Association.

New-----Delete Section 7 in its' entirety.

SER-NMRA Convention report
By Howard Garner

The SER-NMRA convention was held at Whispering Woods resort in Olive Branch, MS (a suburb of Memphis TN) last weekend. This was a fantastic convention the finally surpassed the 2002 TextilExpress convention that the club sponsored in Greenville.

The highlights of the convention include a tour of the FedEx sorting facility at mid-night. A tour of the trolley system and trolley shops, and the usual clinics and contests. The guest speaker was "Elvis Getsly" or Charlie Gets, NG & SL Gazette author, NMRA official, and a member of the California Attorney Generals staff. Seeing Charlie dressed as Elvis, complete with jeweled jump suit, hair and towels for the ladies was just hilarious. Charlie give his usual entertaining speech, poking fun at the locals, but also reminding us of what the NMRA is doing for us today. Between a good company store and a great dealer train show, I came out even. Over, all a very enjoyable weekend.

Next year the convention will be in Cartersville, GA just north of Atlanta. Cost only $35 for advance registration for NMRA members. Tours will be FREE. Dinner will be next to the track in downtown Cartersville where 50-60 trains pass per day. Web site www.piedmont-div.org/ser2007

The 2007 convention will be sponsored by the Asheville club and be held west of Asheville in the Maggie Valley area. More details later. 2008 will be Pensacola FL.

Photographs from Grenoble, France
Brian d'Entremont
May 25 – June 10, 2006

As I believe most of you know I am in Grenoble France and will be living here for until December. Grenoble is located in the Alps near the boarders with Switzerland and Italy. The city is in the wide valley between two converging rivers, the Isère and the Drac. In stark contrast with the towering mountains of up to 10000ft that start immediately at its edge, the city is actually quite flat. While of small significance in terms of the national rail system, Grenoble, and more specifically the neighborhood where I live and work near the actual intersection of the two rivers, is kind of the neck of a funnel where all traffic in and out of the region must go. It is here that the rail line from Lyon comes up the Isère and bifurcates into branches following each river. With a growing number of major national and international scientific research centers, the city of

Grenoble also generates more than its share of passenger traffic. The Grenoble train station is about a thousand feet one direction of my apartment, and the freight yard about a mile in the other direction.

These self-propelled diesel rail cars are symmetric with streamlined cabs on both ends, but are typically run as coupled pairs. They provide regional express service for the Rhone-Alps region. This train is approaching the Grenoble station from the direction of Lyon.

This TGV has just been parked for the evening in the passenger train facility. Grenoble has TGV service direct to Paris, but shares standard track with other traffic (including freight) until Lyon, about 60 miles away.

The coaches of the older trains are entitled to less security than the TGV and tend to be heavily decorated.

Lest you mistake the solid string of tank cars on this double-headed train as a new economy-class coach, the second unit bears the large inscription "FRET" (freight). However, the lead unit is at least cosmetically identical to those seen on many local passenger trains (such as the one shown above).

There is a Caterpillar infestation in the local freight yard -- earthmoving equipment that is. There are trains full in the yard and dozens of brand new Caterpillar equipment parked all over on the ground. These and the tank cars (of unknown content) seem to be the staples of the freight service here.

The same yard viewed from the vantagepoint of a nearby mountain.

Grenoble is roughly the size of Greenville, but has excellent public transit system including 3 tramlines, city buses, and regional buses going deep into the surrounding area. This tram stop is immediately behind my apartment and I ride it several times a week to go into the city. The system still appears to be rapidly expanding with new construction in several places.
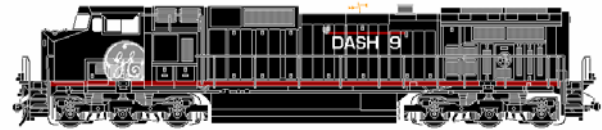

COMPUTER CONTROL
By Bob Folsom

I hope this is not a case of that phrase "to make a short story long..."

I had been thinking for some time that it would be possible to have a computer control my layout. I assumed at first that I would have to create the interfaces and programs from scratch, which of course kept me from doing anything about it. Then, more recently, I had several rude awakenings in the form of collisions which indicated that there should be some kind of protection system on my layout to keep trains from catching up to each other when running the layout by myself. I had decided that Dennis Moriarty's detection system would be the quickest and easiest way to accomplish this. Dennis graciously came over one day to help plan it and show me how to create the detection units. In the meantime, I was also spending a lot of time getting more bugs out of the layout and getting the reverse sections to work better. Well, the layout worked pretty good at Christmas but of course I had several engineers running the trains (Brian d'Entremont, Rob Seel, Mitchell West, Michael West, and Diviyesh Patel) so I still was not pushing very hard to get the detection program going.

Somehow, the computer idea surfaced again, and Brian convinced me to skip the local detection idea and jump in with computer control. So we both did some research and came up with the names of several commercially available computer control programs. We downloaded some free trial software to experiment with, and I ordered the unit needed to allow the computer to talk to the DCC system. I decided on a product called "LocoBuffer" and it cost in the neighborhood of $75. After all that worrying I had done about interfacing with the computer and the whole problem was solved in one simple and relatively inexpensive step. I had a lot of fun looking at these software programs and there are some really cool products. You can create a control panel right on your computer screen. One company even sells one that looks like a 1940's interlocking control board. However, I had no luck getting any of the free commercial downloads to operate. So we started looking at some of the open source programs available through JMRI (Java Model Railroad Interface). At Christmas, Howard Garner had shown me a JMRI program designed to program decoders but I didn't realize at the time that there are even more possibilities available.

Incidentally, I would like to clarify something at this point. The commercial vendors all had decoder programmers for sale. The JMRI program is free. The next thing to be aware of is that there is a distinction between *using the computer as a throttle to run your trains* and *having the computer run the trains by itself.* There are programs out there that do nothing more than turn your computer into a throttle. That is a completely different thing from actually having scripted programs that send all the control commands automatically.

I was nervous about spending a lot of money on one of the commercial programs only to find out that they could not do what I wanted them to. So Brian and I plunged into the JMRI materials to see what we could come up with. It turns out that there were some sample commands using a Java-based computer language called Python (named after Monty Python). Actually, there is a variety of Python called Jython that is intended for simplifying the creation of control commands. I downloaded an entire Python tutorial looking for ideas on scripting an operating program. I got together with Doug Taft one time and we experimented with some commands and using a sub-program of the JMRI Decoder program we were able to observe DCC command packets being sent. We were able to send some of these commands one at a time and get a bell to ring or a whistle to blow, but could not put together a runable script.

Brian came over on a Sunday afternoon about a week before he was to leave for France. We got to looking through the JMRI stuff at greater length, and low and behold, there were some test programs for decoders that had all the commands that Doug and I did not have. Within the hour, we had scripted a program that would turn on the headlight, ring the bell, blow the whistle, start and stop the train! We then referred to the Python manual and found some loop examples that would allow more complex whistle blowing and the ability to accelerate or decelerate at whatever pace you would desire. Before Brian left that evening, we had a train start up and accelerate to maximum speed using the 128 speed steps and then decelerate to a stop. *This was the needed breakthrough!* I took the program Brian and I had created to Doug Taft's (he had already obtained his LocoBuffer) and in minutes we had two trains running around his layout blowing their whistles at regular intervals, and coming to a stop after making the desired number of trips around his layout. Needless to say, we were ecstatic!

It is now several weeks since the operating session at Doug's. I am now able to have a passenger train powered by a steam loco start ringing its bell, turn on its headlight, blow two whistle blasts to indicate departure, slowly accelerate, stop ringing its bell, upon reaching full speed, blow the four (two long, one short, one long) whistles for grade crossing approximately every 30 seconds, make three station stops (with all the necessary bell ringing and whistle toots), and return to staging (about fifteen minutes worth of action). The computer control of acceleration or deceleration is phenomenal, especially when starting. You can't even achieve that when using a hand-held throttle. Incidentally, I should also mention that attempting to use the computer as a throttle is quite unsatisfactory.

I cannot begin to express what a thrill it is to see all this action happen automatically! It literally puts me trackside fifty years ago watching a N&W class J with passenger train arriving and departing; or its like actually riding the train, hearing the whistle blow for grade crossings, and hearing that never-flagging exhaust.

One of the attached pictures shows my laptop with the LocoBuffer on the right attached to a USB port. On the screen are some of the JMRI tools, a throttle (which as I mentioned is a lousy way to control a train), a small box for turning track power on, a small box in which to enter the number of the train you intend to run with your script, and the JRMI DecoderPro Menu box. On the right side of the screen, the program that runs the train is open.
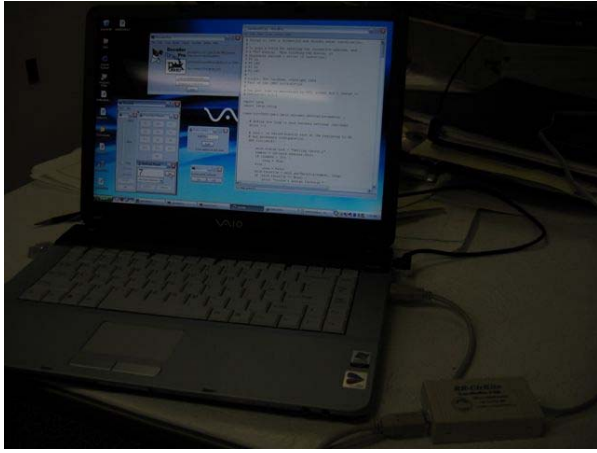
I am writing this article at this time because I want everyone in the club to know that I am very glad to share what I've done so far with anyone who wants to try this. Any fairly recent computer with Windows and USB ports can be used. If you have DCC on your layout, you can have computer control, right now, for only the cost of the LocoBuffer.

What's next?
I'm really getting nervous now. The other picture shows a unit that I have wired up and installed on the layout. It is a Digitrax BDL168 with two Digitrax RX4's attached to it. The BDL168 is a detection unit
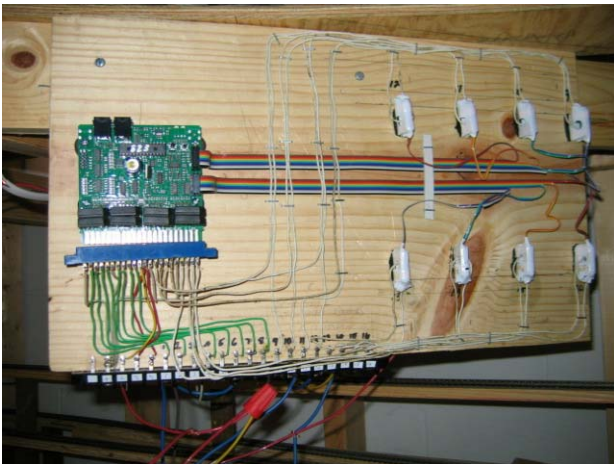
that can handle 16 detection sections. The RX4's have the power wires for eight of the blocks passing through them, and can read the digital signals passing through and send that information back into the LocoNet system so it can be read by a computer (or hand-held throttles). The computer program reads the true or false indications of the sensors associated with the 16 detection sections. The RX4 transponders relay the address of the decoder in that particular section of track to the computer which can then instruct that decoder to bring a loco to a stop, blow a whistle, ring a bell, turn on ditch lights, or even throw switches to divert the train to a specified track such as in a staging

yard.

I see all this being possible with the scripting examples in the JMRI Decoder Pro program. I have done some preliminary wiring to establish 14 detection blocks, and still have a few more gaps to cut and feeders to install. I am getting a power supply for the BDL168, and should be ready to get it in service within the month. Testing will probably begin by observing read-outs on a hand-held throttle or computer screen to see if the detectors and transponders actually work! Then comes the programming! Whew! If this works, I will have solved the train control problem because if trains start catching up to each other, they can be "trapped" in the staging areas until there is plenty of running room again. There will also be the opportunity to have trains make a station stop or activate grade crossing gates and signals.

I hope I can have this working by Christmas, but whenever it does start working, again I will be glad to help anyone else who wants to try it.

Interesting Websites
http://www.piedmont-div.org/ser2007/

This Month's Tips
Please send me your tips, for future newsletters.

CMR&HA TRAIN CREW
Engineer and CEO: Jim Reece
General Division Super: Rob Seel
Stationmaster: Brian d'Entremont
Paymaster: Howard Garner
Large Scale Division Super: Bob Hanson
Program Chair: Dale Reynolds

Image Copyright 2002 by R. Ruesch, Engine Shop

Future Meetings Programs
July: Bob Hanson
"TBA"
August: Margo Torelli
Painting Backdrops
September: Dale Reynolds
"Annual Picnic"
October: Mac McMillin
"Vintage Steam Films"
November: Open
Also officer nominations
December: Bob Folsom
"Christmas Party"
Also elections

Web Site
http://www.cwrail.com/crmha/

I have no new additional information to discuss since the last meeting so I decided to present some photos showing the construction process of my gorge on the L&N Branch.

A gorge on *The Family Line's L&N Branch*

Scratch built bridge and supports using Micro Engineering Girder Bridge parts.

My first time to use Styrofoam.

Start with paper, tape and gator board.

Developed waterfall (top left) and mountain by adding plaster cloth.

Added molded rock outcroppings.

Stained rock outcroppings.

Applied paint.

Top view shows falls bridge (top left) as two Seaboard Coast units start across the bridge toward the yard.

Middle of the bridge leading to the yard.

The end of bridge as the line approaches the yard. Notice dirt road in the background that winds down to the water.

As cold water rushes over the falls (top left), this makes a great swimming hole close to a busy train yard.

Central Railway Model & Historical Association
Membership Application

Name:_____ Date:_____

Address:_____ Phone:_____

City:_____ State:_____

E-Mail Address:_____

1. Declared Interest Group: Modeling   Collecting   RR-History   Railfan   General   (Circle yours)
2. Other Railroad Interests: _____

3. Modeling Scale: Z   N   HO   S SN3   O   G   (Circle yours)
4. Railroad Memberships: NMRA   NRHS Other?_____
5. Do you have a home layout?   Y   N   Open to Visitors? Y   N
6. I can help the Association by:
   ( ) Working on one of the modular projects
   ( ) Helping with set-up and operation of layouts at shows.
   ( ) Organizing an excursion to a show or museum.
   ( ) Serving on a committee (i.e. Audit, Publicity, etc.)
   ( ) Serving as Officer or Director.
   ( ) Preparing a short program for monthly meeting.
   ( ) Other:_____
7. Please record my membership in the Association for the year. Enclosed is my (check) or (cash) for
$20.00, Send to CRM&HA, PO Box 826, Pickens, SC 29671-0826.   Phone (864) 878-4705
   Signature _____

CRM&HA
PO Box 826
Pickens, SC 29671-0826

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