The Crossbuck

THE OSWEGO VALLEY RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

Newsletter, January 2024, Volume 2, #1, Kent Dristle editor

PO. Box 205, New Haven, New York 13121-0205

Report on our Fall Train Shows

OVRRA was at the State Fair train show, held this year, as it has been for the past two years in the Expo Center. Many folks complimented us on the detail we've added to our layout, especially in the city area. The parkway bridge module continues to get a lot of attention on social media, YouTube, and from members of the general public. People appreciate the variety of scenes that are featured on the layout including the roundhouse/ turntable, meat packing plant, school with football field, grain elevator with wheat field, coal mine, and logging operations.

The following weekend, OVRRA hosted our own Holiday Express train show at the Volney firehouse. We sold 57 ½ tables (a record number). Besides the income from those tables, total revenue also included door receipts, raffle proceeds, and outright donations, amounting to $3335.00. After deducting $1358.65 in show expenses, we netted $1976.35. For comparison, our 2022 fall show netted us $1516.45. Again, we were complimented on the quality of detail on our layout.

Christmas in Mexico is a more relaxed time for us, where it's nice not to have other exhibitors and vendors in the same room competing with us for the public's attention. This year at Mexico, 183 people came through the door on Saturday with 32 more on Sunday. There were many excited kids as well as curious adults and we answered many questions, especially from folks hoping the either get started in hobby or get out that old train set and get it working once again. Our message that model railroading can be both educational and fun was well received.

OVRRA at Christmas in Mexico, '23

Your Layout Planning Committee at Work

At the September meeting of the Layout Planning Committee, goals were set for the fall and winter seasons. Fall goals that have been met include the upgrading of wheels on the layout carts, extension of the third track to the edge of the coal mine module, gapping rails and replacing turnouts where needed to eliminate short circuits, addition of local power to the switchback siding by the flour mill, the upgrading of streets on the city modules, and installation of figures on the city sidewalks. Works in progress include glazing windows on structures and adding signage to the buildings. We feel good about what has been accomplished and it shows in the compliments we've received at our train shows. The inside yard has been a big hit with club members as it has made it much easier to get their rolling stock on and off the tracks. We have noticed that the orange yard gets a lot more use than the blue yard. We believe it is because the orange yard can access both the inside and outside mainline tracks, while the blue yard only has access to the inside main. We have plans to address this.

This coming winter season, as weather permits, we want to install a **crossover** between the inside and outside mainline tracks on a new "waterfront corner module" that will replace the current meat packing corner module. Appropriate electrical wiring will be installed to make it possible for a train to exit the blue yard on to a short section of the inside main, and then cross over to the outside main, all with just one throttle transfer (local to outside main throttle). We also have plans to set up an **operating layout in the Legion** once again using the old 6 foot long yard modules, along with some of the modules from the traveling layout. Our goal is to make it possible for us to get some practice in with switching maneuvers and eventually conduct **operating sessions**. And finally, at some point soon, we'd like to bring local power to the coal/logging module side tracks. We going to be busy and would appreciate any help you're willing to give us. Thank you for all of your support.

It saddens us to note the passing of OVRRA member James J. "Joe" Stefferson 1951-2023. Joe was a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, the U.S. Army Reserves, and the U.S. Air Force.

Operating Sessions and OVRRA

by Kent Dristle with the assistance of Bud Dowie

For a good many years, OVRRA founding member Bud Dowie led bi-weekly operating sessions in the basement of his home on his HO scale layout. Many of us participated and thus, have some familiarity with how operations could be conducted on a freelance model railroad. For those who are not quite so familiar, the *goal of an operating session is to recreate realistic train movements on the model railroad that imitate the way operations were done on the real railroads*. This means, for example, specifically named trains are made up in a yard with freight cars to be routed to specific customers. Those cars are delivered to another yard, from which they may be switched into other trains or routed to a freight house or even to a customer's rail siding. For model railroaders it's about understanding bills of lading, car cards, waybills, switchlists, train orders, or combinations thereof, and the communications between engineers and dispatchers. To be sure, some concessions have to be made. Model railroaders do not want to buried under paperwork, so the system must be condensed and simplified. Time is also a limiting factor, hence the "fast clock" was born to address this, and as it turns out, the fast clock also helps compensate for "scenic compression" or the foreshortened distances between destinations on a model railroad. Schedules need to be flexible, especially when people are first learning the system, but when things go as planned, you have the immense satisfaction of a job done well *and* the realization that you have recreated a piece of history.

Does this sound like fun? For many folks, the answer is a resounding "yes", but one must realize that it takes time and patience to learn how to perform the tasks well (just like it is with a real job!) and it's a cooperative, team effort. Good preparation is important, but even so, you shouldn't expect instant success. I appreciated Bud's patience with me when I, as a newbie, attempted to execute all the switching maneuvers required to get the cars where they needed to be. We didn't try to keep to a strict schedule but just let people take the time they needed to complete their tasks without undue pressure. Once you have it figured out, it can be very satisfying to solve what was a vexing switching problem. (For the latest switching puzzle, please see page 8)

Bruce A. Chubb's *How to Operate Your Model Railroad* is an excellent guide to what can be accomplished by a dedicated group of modelers (say, a club) who want to try their hand at authentic operations. According to Chubb, there are four systems for the control of car movements on a model railroad. They are: **1) manual waybill, 2) card-order, 3) switchlist,** and **4) car markers**. We'll discuss the first two in this issue of *The Crossbuck* and the last two in a later issue.

Manual Waybill System

We start by generating "bill of lading" cards. One such bill of lading is made for "each commodity each industry can ship to another industry on your railroad." For example: machine parts from Acme Tool and Die Co. to a John Deere farm equipment assembly plant. The information on the bill of lading would include the name of the shipper, the commodity being shipped, type of freight car required, the consignee (the customer), and the destination. This is usually enough for model railroading purposes, but a prototype bill of lading would include much more information such as the weight, rate, and specific charges. Figure 1 shows a simplified bill of lading card. At the beginning of an operating session, the dispatcher will draw a number of cards at random from the bill of lading stack. The operator now has in his or her hands the shippers' requests for carloads of goods to be sent out. The operator will now search for the locations of the right kinds of empty cars needed to make up the train. Some may be in the yard, some may already be at the shipper, and some may have to be picked up along the way. Then, a set of "waybill cards" will be filled out for each specific car that is being used to ship the commodities out. To fill out a waybill, the required data is copied over from the bill of lading card, and then information about the specific freight car being used is added to the waybill, information such as the reporting marks, the car's number, and car type. Figure 2 shows a corresponding waybill card. With the waybills

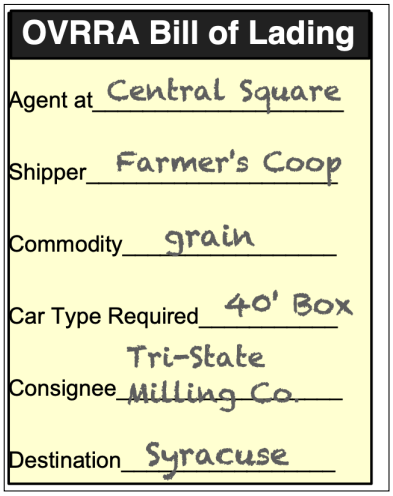


Figure 1: Bill of Lading card

complete, they are distributed around the layout near the locations of the specific freight cars they correspond to. Beginning with the waybill for the cars that were already in the yard, the operator assembles the train and then sets out along the prescribed route, picking up cars (and their waybills) along the way, dropping off empties, and, of course, dropping off cars to the customers as per the waybills' instructions. Normally, the waybills are destroyed after the cars are delivered (don't throw out the bills of lading—they can be reused). The exception would be if the spur is too full to take the car you want to deliver. In that case, the waybill is kept for the next operating session or whenever space is freed up on the spur. In the meantime, the car is spotted on the closest available spur. According to Chubb, the manual waybill system is best suited for a small layout that models a branch line with only a small number of cars to be moved. When used with larger layouts and larger trains, operators start to drown in the paperwork, especially all that copying of data from one card to another. To help solve that problem, we will next consider the card-order system.

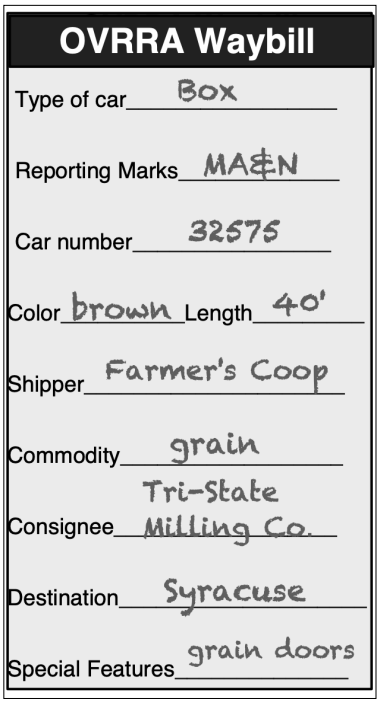


Figure 2: Waybill

Card-order Systems

In this system, the bill of lading or shipper cards are filled out in the same way they were for the manual waybill system, but rather than copy this information onto a waybill card, the bill of lading is *attached* (usually with a paperclip) to a "car card" which is already filled out with the specific information that describes that particular freight car. The combination of the two cards is called a "waybill". (Figure 3.) No cards are ever thrown away. Just as you would for the manual waybill system, you'd want to fill out the bills of lading ahead of time and keep them in a card deck from which you'd draw cards for each operating session. You'd also make out a car card ahead of time for each piece of rolling stock you own. It's certainly more efficient to match up two cards and clip them together than it is to copy information from one to the other. After all, model railroading is supposed to be fun, not drudgery!

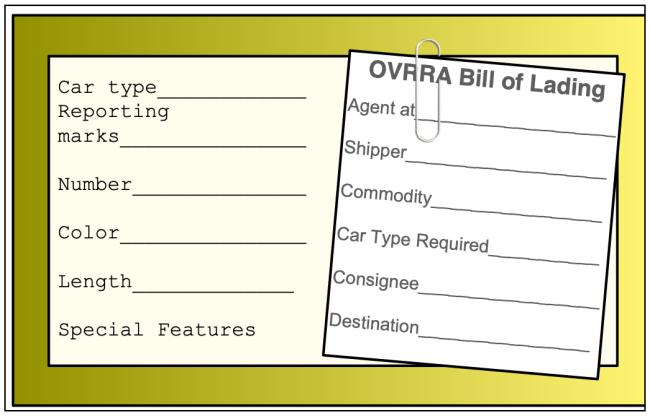


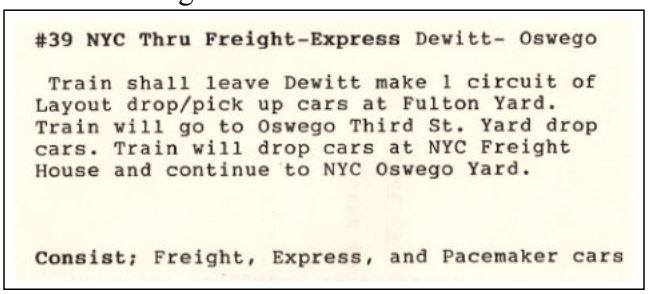
Figure 3: A car card with a bill of lading clipped to it becomes a waybill. After the goods are delivered to the customer, the bill of lading is removed which reveals the instructions for what to do with the empty car.

To prepare for an operating session, you should have a file box for each industrial siding, yard or station and fill them with the car cards of those cars at that particular yard. These are your "empties" that are available for use. You should organize the cars in the box according to type to make it easy to find them (especially important for larger yards). At the beginning of the operating session, you'd draw a group of random bill of lading (or shipper) cards from the pack, just as you would in the manual waybill system. Then go to your file box(s) of of empties and find a good match for the shipper's requirements and clip the cards together. When the car is delivered to the customer, unclip the cards, return the bill of lading to the deck and put the car card in the local empty car file.

Refinements to this system would include replacing the paper clips with card pockets on the car cards to hold the bills of lading, and the inclusion of special instructions on the car card for returning the empty car. Some modelers don't care for the idea of drawing random bill of lading cards and would rather have regularly scheduled trains that execute routine car movements. One way to accomplish this is to make up a set of train order cards which we will examine next.

Train Order cards

As it turns out, train order cards are important part of the history of OVRRA. Bud Dowie recently gave me a very yellowed copy of an article written by the late William Nickolas in 1993 about his vision for what operating sessions could become for OVRRA. He wisely realized that you couldn't implement the whole system at once, so he proposed starting with perhaps one train order card at a time and a set of waybill cards for the individual freight cars in that train.



#39 NYC Thru Freight-Express Dewitt- Oswego

Train shall leave Dewitt make 1 circuit of Layout drop/pick up cars at Fulton Yard. Train will go to Oswego Third St. Yard drop cars. Train will drop cars at NYC Freight House and continue to NYC Oswego Yard.

Consist; Freight, Express, and Pacemaker cars

Figure 4: A train order card which was used with the Historic OVRRA layout.

Figure 4 shows one of the train order cards which were to be used with the club's historic layout. Figure 5 shows the arrangement of modules in that historic layout along with the locations referenced on the card. During an operating session, train movements would be executed according to what each train order card called for. Nickolas envisioned having a dispatcher who would issue the train order cards to the operator(s) originally in a set sequence, and then later according to a clock schedule. Another goal was to have trains operated at scale speed. Figure 6 illustrates Nickolas' speed conversion table between the prototype and the HO scale model.

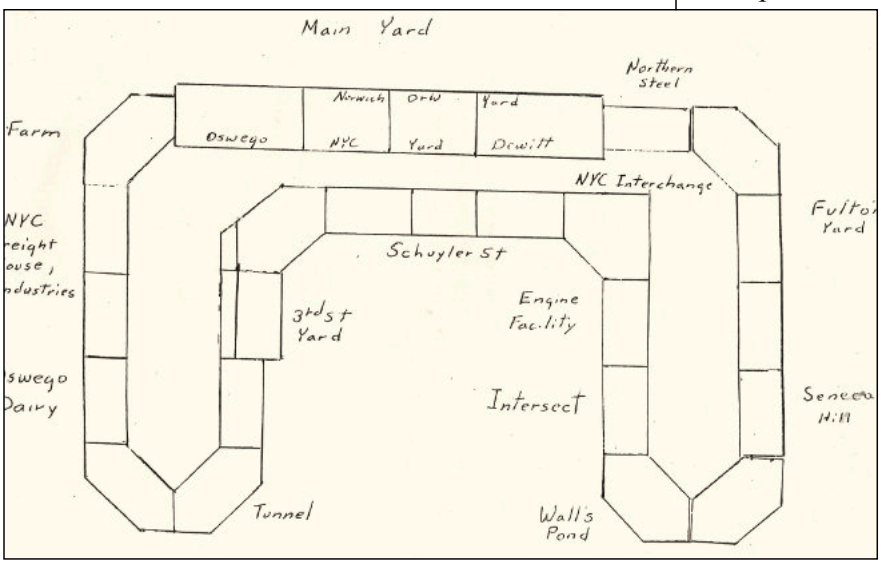


Figure 5: OVRRA historic layout 1993

Fig 6 Scale Speeds

	Prototype MPH	HO Inches per/sec
Classification	5	1
Yard	15	3
Within yards limit	25	5
	50	10
	75	15
	100	20

Can operating sessions become a reality for OVRRA once again? Possibly, but as Bud Dowie advises, they would most likely work best with a permanent layout set up within the old Legion building rather attempting to do it during at a train show. We are currently working on plans for how the modules could be arranged at the Legion so that this could become possible. We'll keep you updated. In the next issue of *The Crossbuck*, we'll talk about the last two car-forwarding, train movement systems being used by model railroaders which are *switchlists* and *car markers*.

Getting Started with your own Set of Cards

If you have access to a computer, you can create your own sets of bill of lading, waybill, car, and train order cards, and then print as many as you need.

Pre-printed cards are also available from MicroMark at www.micromark.com/Car-Cards-Pad-of-100 and www.micromark.com/Waybills-Pad-of-100.

Locomotive cards are also available at www.micromark.com/Locomotive-Cards-Pack-of-50

You can also buy 3 or 5 compartment bill box sets at www.micromark.com/Bill-Box-with-5-Compartments-Set-of-2.

Chris VanderHeide shows us how to print our own using Microsoft Excel at http://vanderheide.ca/blog/2018/01/04/excel-car-cards-and-waybills/

It may seem like at lot of work to set up the system, but once done, you'll get many hours of operations from it.

Prototype RR Hand Signals

Hand signals provide a way for train crewmen to communicate over longer distances provided there is a good sight line between them. Retired engineer Vann Dristle and his brother Kent demonstrate several common ones.

STOP: lantern swung in a wide arc at right angles to the track.

REDUCE SPEED: lantern held out horizontally at arm's length.

EASY DOES IT: lantern is held horizontally with slight back & forth motion as an indication of desired speed.

PROCEED FORWARD: lantern raised and lowered vertically.

BACK UP: lantern swung vertically in a circle at half-arm's length at right angles to the track.

APPLY BRAKES: lantern swung horizontally above the head when equipment is standing. (Wait, don't go!)

RELEASE BRAKES lantern held at arm's length above the head when equipment is standing. (Often followed with the proceed or back up signal.)

WHISTLE: lantern is moved up and down as if pulling on the whistle cord

Railroad History:

57 Years Ago this Month, Train Wreck in the Village of Bainbridge, NY on the Delaware & Hudson

On a bitterly cold evening, January 7, 1966, forty-two cars out of a 64 car D&H freight train jumped the tracks in the heart of the Chenango county village of Bainbridge, NY. One box car landed on top of Alice Johnson's automobile while she was waiting at the crossing. After more than two hours, the freight car was lifted off from the vehicle. Miraculously, Johnson survived the ordeal with only minor injuries. The couple living in the house next to that crossing at 8 West Main Street were not so lucky. Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Delello, Sr. were killed instantly when the wrecked train smashed through their home, setting it ablaze. Derailed freight cars also smashed through the Bainbridge Fire Station taking out the station's water standpipe along with a significant portion of the first floor (leaving part of the second floor hanging in mid-air) and temporarily trapping the fire trucks within the building.

Helicopter photo of the wreck taken the day after. Tri-Town News

Fire trucks from surrounding communities were immediately called in to assist. Besides the Delello home, many freight cars were also set ablaze. Of particular concern was a tank car leaking naphtha, some of which found its way into the basements of adjoining buildings. Firemen also had to concentrate on keeping two LP gas tankers cool in order to avoid a catastrophic explosion should the fire reach them. Their efforts paid off and a bigger conflagration was avoided. Firemen battled the fires continuously from Friday evening, and throughout most of the next day until they pulled the last hose at 7 pm, Saturday. By that time, many of those fireman had been fighting the fires without rest for 18 hours straight.

The cause of the derailment wasn't immediately apparent. It was estimated that the train was traveling at 60 mph when the wreck occurred, which was the legal speed limit at the time. 130 yards of track were pulled up and taken to Colonie where they were reconstructed and carefully examined. Ultimately, the cause of the derailment was found to be a switch. Apparently, one of the freight cars "picked the points of the switch" followed by another and then another. Today, only a single track remains through Bainbridge and the speed limit for trains has been substantially reduced. The firehouse and police station were reconstructed, but sadly there was no way to bring back the lives lost. Anthony Delello had faithfully served for 58 years on the D&H as a crossing guard at the very same Main Street crossing just yards from the spot where a derailed freight took his and his wife's lives. Although these events happened more than a half-century ago, they are still fresh in the mind's of many of Bainbridge's residents.

Police and Firefighters inspect the devastation Tri-Town News

References:

The Tri-Town News, Sidney, NY January 7, 2016
The New York Times, January 9, 1966
The Sidney Record & Bainbridge News, January 12, 1966
The Binghamton Press, July 20, 1966

OVRRA Train Show Schedule for 2024

May 4-5…..Spring Time Express Train Show...Volney
*Sept. 7-8….Thousand Islands Train show….Clayton
*Nov. 2-3 …..Great NYS Model Train Fair...Syracuse
*Nov 9-10… Holiday Express Train Show…...Volney
*Dec 7-8…..… Christmas in Mexico……....Mexico

*Tentative Dates

A Short Line History of HO Scale Couplers, Part One

By Steven Rogers

As I have acquired larger quantities of rolling stock from estate collections, I began to find many cars and kits with couplers that I could not identify right off of the bat and required the prodigious use of Google Search to pin down the type and manufacturer. Up through circa 1955 there were two types of couplers supplied with HO scale kits or available to scratch builders; cast metal (and later plastic) AAR type dummy knuckle couplers and hook and loop style couplers. Each of these types had quite a few manufacturers, each with their own variations that did not allow one manufacturers product to work well (if at all) with another manufacturer's or with the opposing type. The cast dummy coupler looked prototypical and often to scale, so they looked great on a static model that was for a display. The dummy couplers could not automatically couple or uncouple, requiring that one be slid over another to interlock them and often caused derailments and uncoupling between cars as one would attempt to move over the rails. It is my understanding the MDC dummy couplers were particularly well known for these problems. There were several variations of the hook and loop type couplers, which are still in use today, Bachmann's HO scale Thomas the Train engines and cars use hook and loop style couplers and the engines all do not have front couplers, so they are unable to shunt cars as they would say in Britain! The advantage with the hook and loop style was they would automatically couple together, sometimes even with another manufacturers design, uncoupling was the problem, requiring the movement of the hooks upward so they would disengage from the opposing loops. The Baker coupler, used by famous model railroaders John Allen and Whit Towers, was a hook and loop type used in the 1950's. John Allen never used any other type of coupler on the Gorre and Daphetid and allegedly turned down a offer by Kadee to upgrade all of his engines and rolling stock for free! The Baker coupler had a more vertical profile loop for the hook to latch to. Baker couplers have not been produced or available for at least 6+ decades, supposable the tooling wore out in the mid 1960's and was never replaced. I have never seen a Baker coupler except in some old photos and sales literature.

The most common hook and loop style coupler was the Mantua which was made from stamped brass sheet and steel pins. These would automatically couple when pushed together but uncoupling moving metal pins that were underneath the hook portion of the coupler. I have several pieces of rolling stock with Mantua style couplers and the work well until they need to be uncoupled, which I find usually requires the 0-5-0 to assist! Mantua couplers can still be purchased on e-bay and other online sources.

Cast dummy-metal

Cast dummy-plastic

Mantua Hook and Loop

X2F Large hole

X2F Small hole

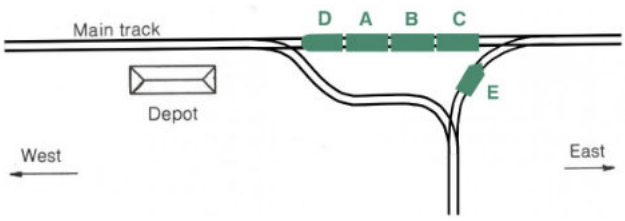
This brings us to everyone's favorite, the X2F, "horn-hook", or often misnamed NMRA coupler of the 1960's (actually 1957 until the 1990's), this was the coupler of choice of model manufacturers for both kits and train sets as the X2F was cheap, easy to couple, and could be uncoupled with a pick or small wood skewer, usually. In the mid 1950's the NMRA formed a committee to design a coupler that met the criteria of standard S-2 for couplers. There were many prototype designs; the X, X1, X2 through X2E and finally the X2F. Because the design was for the coupler head and it was an NMRA standards design, manufacturers designed different types, the Athearn large hole shank for body mounting in the frame or a coupler box and the Tyco small hole shank for talgo truck mounting. There are numerous variations on shank design and shape and are often not interchangeable between manufacturers. The nice thing about X2F couplers is that regardless of the shank or mounting type, they will automatically couple with each other due to meeting the S-2 NMRA standard. Uncoupling is of course anther issue that was fairly easy to do by hand with a pick or skewer, remote uncoupling was supposedly accomplished using an end uncoupling ramp that could be installed on a stub siding. I remember one of these in either my first Tyco train set of the AHM set that was my second. I found several of these in a box of Atlas sectional track and have yet to set one up and see how it works.

Taglo mounting of X2F couplers on trucks allowed for the common 18" radius curves which are the norms in train sets but have a bad reputation for causing derailments during backing maneuvers. My experience has been that this was more often due to the light weight and uneven weighting of the rolling stock more than the X2F its 'self, as derailing of a light car is not uncommon with modern magnetic knuckle couplers, thus the reason for the NMRA standard on rolling stock weighting, 1 ounce plus ½ ounce per inch of car length.

I will continue with HO scale coupler evolution in part two of this article for the next issue of *The OVRRA Crossbuck*.

Switching Puzzle #3
Turning a passenger train with a wye

We begin with a passenger train (a college football special) that has been traveling east, having just pulled into the depot to unload a group of students who wish to attend the game. The goal for the train crew is to get the train turned around for the return trip home (facing west) and standing in front of the depot ready to load. This must be accomplished with the existing stub ended wye where there is a re-fueling station for the engine on the right (east) leg of the wye. The stub end can only hold one car (or one engine). The left (west) wye leg can hold no more than three cars. The right wye leg can hold only one car. Not only must the engine (E) be turned around but also the observation car (D) so that its platform faces outward at the rear. The other cars (A, B, C) need not be turned or reordered. How can this be accomplished in the fewest number of moves? The first move is already shown in the diagram with the engine E being refueled. Every time the engine stops to reverse, couple, or uncouple cars is considered a move. Solution will be in the next issue of *The Crossbuck*. [This puzzle and the accompanying diagram come to us from Bruce Chubb's *How to Operate Your Model Railroad*]



Dues Reminder for 2024

Annual Dues as established in the Bylaws:

Regular Members	$24
Family Membership	$48
Junior, Youth, and Associate Members	$12

If you've already paid, Thank you!
If you haven't paid yet, please do so soon. The club has expenses in all months of the year.

OVRRA has a new facebook page.
www.facebook.com/OVRRAinc

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