



The Crossbuck

THE OSWEGO VALLEY RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

Newsletter, April 2024, Volume 2, #2, Kent Dristle editor
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A Possible New Home for OVRRA

by Kent Dristle and Charles Hewlett

For well over a year, OVRRA members have been searching for a new home. Why now? It's true that OVRRA has resided in donated space provided by American Legion Post 1532 for close to forty years in the old schoolhouse building in New Haven, NY, but now both parties recognize that they are unable to keep up with the rising costs of building maintenance. The Legion is currently in negotiations with a buyer for the property and have given us sixty days notice (beginning March 7) to vacate the building. OVRRA has had no other option but to begin moving our club's possessions into storage. However, there is a ray of hope.

Our search for a new home has turned up one very promising prospect, which is the Grange building in the hamlet of Mt. Pleasant, on County Route 45 about half-way between Seneca Hill and Palermo. Recently, OVRRA officers met with Grange officers and were given a tour of the building. The specific space within the building that would best meet our needs was the main floor grange hall, with approximately 1200 square feet of floor space, not counting the stage which would add on about 400 additional square feet. The basement level floor is currently where most Grange activities take place, most notably their signature Belgian waffle breakfasts. The basement level is where their bathrooms and kitchen facilities are to be found.

The building is basically sound, is sturdily built, has a good roof, and a new 200 amp electrical service, however much work would have to be done before OVRRA or anyone else would want to occupy the main floor, including plaster repair/replacement, additional electrical outlets, and an upgrade to the heating system that would include the addition of heat to the main floor area. OVRRA officers indicated that we may be able to work with the Grange on helping to bring about these kinds of repairs/upgrades, in a way quite similar to what we have done in the past for the Legion at their building. Both OVRRA and the Grange have recognized the potential benefits to working together, provided

both organizations' concerns are adequately addressed and that our interests don't conflict.

As of this writing, we are waiting to hear back from Mrs. Pamela Mossotti, the President of the Grange. When we get word that they will accept OVRRA as sharing the unused space that is the main floor of the Grange building, we will have to work out a formal agreement that protects both the Grange and OVRRA. There are many details that will need to be addressed. Then we will be able to establish a plan for moving forward with the work that is needed and the funding for the renovations. Fund raising by both organizations will be needed. Nevertheless, we are cautiously optimistic over the prospect that the Mt. Pleasant Grange building *may* become OVRRA's new home. Although this is our best prospect so far, please keep in mind that it is too early to start any kind of celebration. OVRRA members should check their email often for updates, and please continue with your efforts to support us through your attendance at business meetings, your assistance in the temporary storage of our materials, in fund raising efforts, and in lending your helping hands at our train show events. Thank you. ■



Figure 1: Mt. Pleasant Grange

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Layout Planning Committee

Progress Temporarily Halted

The Layout Planning Committee last met on December 31, 2023. At that meeting priorities were set for 2024 which included building a new waterfront corner module to replace the existing meat packing corner module. This new module would feature a crossover between the inside mainline and the outside mainline tracks and would enable trains to exit the “blue” interior yard and enter the outside main, via the crossover. Construction has begun on that new module, and we had every intention of having it ready for our Spring Train show in May.

However, the impending sale of the Legion schoolhouse building has completely changed our priorities. Since receiving notice from the Legion that we had sixty days (beginning on March 7) to gather up all our club’s possessions and vacate the building, our entire focus has changed to moving all our items into storage. We have not abandoned the crossover project and the necessary rewiring of track power to make it functional. In good time, it will be finished and become part of the traveling layout, once the dust settles from having to move out of the building that has been our home for nearly forty years. When the time does come, we will have a feature article about it in this newsletter to get everyone acquainted with its operation. Stay tuned.

Another priority the committee had set for this year was to rewire the four old yard modules so that all tracks were once again powered. *That has been accomplished!* Our original intent was to set them up in the Legion building as part of a permanent operational layout (not to be confused with the traveling layout we take to train shows). Unfortunately, those four yard modules have been temporarily packed away into storage for the same reason as given in the paragraph above. They are fully functional and ready to go whenever we do have available to us a place in which they can be set up. Again, we will feature an article in this newsletter on their operation when the time comes. In the meantime, we’ll all just have to be content with running our trains on the traveling layout when we have it set up for train shows. Thank you for your patience and understanding. ■

Sanborn Maps as an information source for building models

by Tina Rogers

I was recently introduced to Sanborn Maps. Sanborn Maps are free resource documents that are available online through the Library of Congress. The maps were produced by the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. The maps include information about buildings such as their construction materials and sometimes even measurements. This information is very helpful when trying to build a model of a historic building from scratch.

The drawbacks of Sanborn maps are that not all cities are mapped and not all parts of the cities that are mapped are available. If you are looking to model a specific building you may not find it, but if you just want to explore them and find a building that is interesting to you then the map works wonderfully.

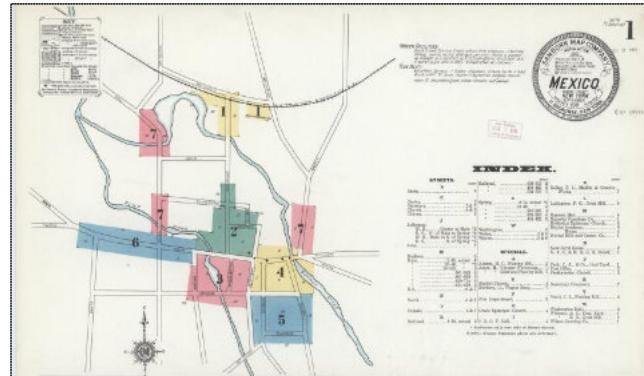


Figure 2: Sanborn map of Mexico, NY, Sept. 1911

These maps are also helpful if you find a certain city is mapped and it is one that you would like to model in a particular time frame you can see what businesses and other buildings were near the railroad tracks and what the names of the companies were. This could lead to further research in newspapers to find pictures of the buildings.

I started looking at Sanborn maps for Mexico, NY in 1911. The key is on the primary image usually and you will want to enlarge it enough to read all of the details. I chose to look at the building that I know as Becks Hotel. In 1911 the building was known as New Boyd Hotel, and was located on Main St. and Railroad St. What I wanted to see was in the section of the map shown as area 2, and after enlarging the image I could identify the building materials, measurements, where the second floor was located, where doors were located, and other information about the building.

This is a great start toward designing a scaled model of the building. If you want to see what is

available look online for Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps through the Library of Congress at www.loc.gov. ■

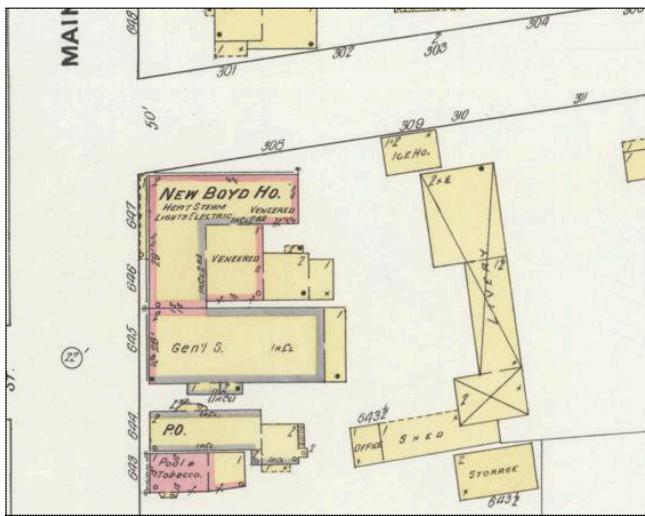


Figure 3: Enlargement of area 2, rotated 90° clockwise

Solution to switching puzzle 3

(puzzle 3 appeared in the January 2024 issue of *The Crossbuck*)

We begin with the engine being refueled on the east leg of the wye. At the conclusion of refueling, the engine should move back onto the mainline via the east leg of the wye. Then, backing up, couple onto the train and push it back past the points of the switch to the west leg of the wye. Next, the observation car will be uncoupled. Then the engine will pull all the rest of the passenger cars onto the west leg of the wye. As soon as car A clears the mainline switch, the engine stops and uncouples from car C and pulls forward into the wye stub, leaving A, B, and C on the west leg of the wye. The engine E now backs through the east leg of the wye, back on to the mainline where it stops long enough to throw the switch back to the main. The engine now moves forward on the main past the wye and the station until it reaches the observation car D, where it couples on to it. The engine reverses and pulls the observation car D back on the mainline until it clears the switch to the east leg of the wye, then stops. The switch is thrown and now the engine pushes the observation car D all the way into the stub end of the wye, where it uncouples from it. The engine alone returns to the mainline via the east leg of the wye. The engine now moves forward (west) on the main, all the way past the switch for the west leg of the

wye. That switch is thrown and the engine backs into the west leg, coupling onto car A, and pushes cars A, B, and C, back onto the wye stub where they couple onto the observation car D. Now the engine pulls the entire train forward, via the west leg of the wye onto the mainline. It may now backup as far as needed to reach the station platform where it stops to board passengers. Done! ■

A Short Line History of HO Scale Couplers, Part Two

By Steven Rogers

In part 1 of this article I discussed early HO scale coupler designs up to the misnamed NMRA or X2F couplers that became the train set standard of the 1960's to 1990's. This brings us to the model knuckle coupler designs Keith and Dale Edwards Founded the Kadee Quality Products Company in 1940 initially producing turnouts. After WWII the twin brothers began work on developing a realistic appearing knuckle coupler that would automatically couple and magnetically uncouple. The no. 5 Kadee coupler was developed in 1956 quickly became the de facto coupler of choice for HO scale. The use of metal in the shank and knuckle parts leads to a strong and durable design.

Another early model knuckle coupler design was the McHenry which was made with more plastic components and often had a clip in shank that connects to various types of truck king pins. Horizon Hobbies bought McHenry in the mid 2000's and these are now used on Athearn models, also owned by Horizon Hobbies.

When Kadees' patent on their design expired other manufacturers quickly released other designs of magnetic knuckle couplers in HO scale. The Bachmann E-Z mate and Accurail Acu-mate are 2 of these. Both use plastic in the majority of their design, with only the trip pin being metal and therefore producing magnetic uncoupling. The heavy dependency of plastic in these designs makes them cheaper than comparable Kadee couplers and often less robust and durable ad they are easier to break and therefore fail.

No matter which manufacturers' knuckle couplers you are using, converting older rolling stock and locomotives is often a time consuming and frustrating process of trimming, filling, drilling, tapping, and screwing the new couplers and mounting boxes onto our models. Kadee has made this quite a bit easier with all of their different coupler boxes and coupler designs, especially with the under set and over set shanks to allow for easier coupler height adjustment beyond shimming the coupler box or the truck bolsters to adjust for coupler knuckle height, ■

Operating Sessions-Part 2

by Kent Dristle with assistance
from Bud Dowie

(Part 1 of this series appeared in the January 2024 issue of *The Crossbuck*)

The goal of any model railroad operating session is to imitate the kinds of train movements done by the prototype railroads as they pick up goods and deliver them to their customers. Recall that there are four principal car routing systems used by model railroaders: manual waybill, card-order, switchlists, and car-markers. We covered the first two in our part 1 article. Now we turn our attention to the last two.

SWITCHLISTS

Switchlists are based on the “wheel report” or “conductor’s car and tonnage report” form used by the prototype railroads. This report

SUNSET VALLEY RAILROAD SWITCHLIST AND WHEEL REPORT					
Conductor	Train No.	Engine No.			
STATION LOCATION	C O D E	SET OUT		PICK UP	
		INIT.	NO.	T	CONT.
FILLMORE					
Car shops (purple)	1				
House tracks (purple)	2				
Engine yard (purple)	3				
Industries (orange)	A				
EAST FARM (GREEN)					
Valley Lumber	B				
Central Electric	C				
Rear house track	4				
Front house track	5				
Coal yard	D				
Warehouse	F				
Sunshine Bakery	G				
Junk yard	H				
Two Cee Co.	E				
PRAIRIE CROSSING (RED)					
House track	6				
Stock pen	J				
Feed Co.	K				
Grain elevator	L				
SAN CLEMENTE (YELLOW)					
Union Ice	M				
Oil Field	N				
Sunkist	P				
SNAKE CREEK (BLUE)					
Sawmill	O				
Purina Chows	R				
Mine	S				
House track	7				
WALNUT HILL (WHITE)					
Freighthouse	8				
Consol Petrol	T				
Show-El Coal	U				
Sven Jorgenson	V				
Springer Transfer	W				
Swift & Co.	X				
Hap Hazard Box	Y				
MOUNT LOUISE (BROWN)					
L.c.l.	9				
DUNSMUIR SUMMIT (SILV)					
Interchange	Z				
AAR CAR TYPE CLASSIFICATIONS:			WHEEL REPORT:		
P-passenger	G-gondola	T-tank	No. Thru-		
B-baggage	H-hopper	L-special	Max. Trans-		
M-mail	F-flat	N-caboose			
X-box	V-ventilator	W-work	Max		
R-refrigerator	S-stock				

Figure 4: Sunset Valley RR switchlist

condenses all of the car movements of a particular train into a single-page listing. From the point of view of the train crew, the wheel report is a listing of each car on the train, their reporting marks (such as NYC), the car number, car type (boxcar, covered hopper, etc), loaded or empty, type of load, tonnage of load, point of origin, destination, arrival date, and miles traveled. This listing can be simplified for model railroading purposes. Here are two examples: The first comes to us from Bruce A. Chubb's very informative book, *How to Operate Your Model Railroad*, which shows, in Figure 4, a switchlist once used by the Sunset Valley (Model) Railroad. (The colors and codes on the form refer to the car marker system we'll talk about later.)

The second example, shown in Figure 5 comes to us from Bud Dowie, which is simpler yet. Starting with the first column, “initials” refers to the car’s reporting marks (such as

SWITCH LIST			
Engine No.	Date	20	
Initials	No.	L/E	Comments
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			

Figure 5: Bud Dowie's switchlist

N.Y.O.&W.), then the car number, L/E means “loaded or empty”, and the “comments” column is where you list the pick up location and the set out location for each car. This form can be used as a check list to indicate that each car movement has been accomplished. If, for some reason, the car movement can’t be done, such as the siding being full, or we have a damaged truck or coupler, then a note of explanation is written to assist the yardmaster in setting up the switchlists for the next operating session. Some model railroad clubs will create an auxiliary car-routing list that shows where every car should be at the start of the operating session, as well as a destination list that shows what their positions should be at the end of the session.

CAR-MARKER SYSTEMS

All the car routing systems discussed so far involve paperwork that has to travel along with the train to its destination(s) being managed by the person (operator) controlling the throttle. In a DCC system with walk-around control, one operator (engineer) can stay with the train. On a standard DC layout, like OVRRA has, train control can be handed off from a mainline throttle to a local yard throttle, manned by another person. The paperwork, then has to be handed off as well. The “car-marker system”, also known as “tab on car” eliminates the traveling paperwork. In this system, the waybills actually travel with the cars. The earliest systems utilized colored thumbtacks affixed to the car tops. In later incarnations, paper, or more permanent styrene “tabs” were created with colored markings applied to their tops. Different colors were



Figure 6: A car marker system

assigned to the various shippers and consignees. Switching operations involved matching the colors on the car tabs, and sometimes alphanumerical characters as well, to the appropriate locations on the layout. For people who didn’t like all the paperwork that goes with the other car-routing systems, this was a godsend, but the system does have its detractors. Most objections center around the very unprototypical appearance of the colored markers on the car tops. For many, this destroys the illusion of realism in model railroading, at least as far as the appearance of the rolling stock goes. Others will argue that it’s a reasonable trade-off because of the gain in realism in operational movements.

IN SUMMARY

The bottom line is that whatever car routing system works well for you, is the right one for you to use. There’s no harm in trying several systems out before making a final decision. Some modelers even create hybrid systems that are combinations of the four systems we’ve described here. Yes, it may take some time to get all the bugs worked out of your system, but once you do, you should gain a lot of satisfaction from it and have some fun as well. ■

[Sources: Chapter 11 in Bruce A. Chubb’s book *How to Operate Your Model Railroad* and discussions with founding OVRRA member Bud Dowie.]

OVRRA Train Show Schedule for 2024

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

*Tentative Dates

OVRRA Officers for 2024

President.....	Kent Dristle
Vice-President.....	Steve Rogers
Secretary.....	Charles Hewlett
Treasurer.....	Secil Brown

How-to Clinic

Track Ballasting

by Kent Dristle

One of the easiest ways to add realism to your model railroad is to ballast the tracks. Yes, there are some manufacturers that sell track already mounted on a ballasted roadbed such as Atlas Tru-track or Bachmann E-Z track, but nothing looks better, in my opinion, than track that you have ballasted yourself. Woodland Scenics makes ballast in a variety of colors and sizes so you are bound to find something that will look correct on your layout.



Figure 7: Track ballasting supplies

First things, first. If you have not already done so, you should paint and/or weather the plastic ties and paint the sides of the rails a rusty brown color. I like to paint the ties first. Then when I paint the sides of the rails, if I should get some rusty colored paint on the tie plates, no problem! It actually looks more realistic that way. Some people like to spray paint the ties and rails. If you go that route, then be sure to mask off the tops of the rails and the points of turnouts. (Automotive pin striping tape works great for that!) I've learned the hard way that it's very labor intensive to have to go back later and scrub the paint off the tops of rails and you can really foul up the electrical contacts in your turnouts with paint if you are not careful. OK, now that this is done, let's get on to the actually ballasting.

HERE'S WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

1. **A supply of ballast** in your chosen color: Light gray for mainline tracks, darker grays, browns, or even black for secondary tracks. If you're modeling the steam era, then black cinders, even for the mainline might be the way to go. Keep in mind that seldom used tracks will have very little or no ballast showing. For those,

you may want instead to apply something that looks like grass and weeds. Again, Woodland Scenics has a number of products that will fill this need.

2. **An adhesive or glue** to stick down the ballast: Some modelers will dilute white glue with water for their adhesive. I like to use **dilute acrylic matte medium**. I use a ratio of 3 parts water to 2 parts matte medium, but if your brand of matte medium is particularly thick, you can increase the water up to 5 parts to 1. Unlike white glue, matte medium will not leave a glossy sheen after it dries.



Figure 8: Preparing the fluids

3. **A wetting agent**: Some modelers will put a drop of two of dishwashing detergent into a pint of water. I like to use isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol diluted with water. The rubbing alcohol you buy in the drug store comes in two concentrations: 70% and 91%. You can use either but you'll surely want to dilute them with water, at least 1:1, if not up to 2 or 3 parts water to one part alcohol, otherwise, you're wasting you money.

4. **Applicators** for the wetting agent, glue, and maybe even the ballast as well. For the wetting agent and the matte medium, I use a pair of eyedroppers. Don't try to use the same one for both or you'll cross contaminate the solutions. I pour out my dilute solutions into a couple of plastic measuring cups. Go buy some cheap cups you can use just for this purpose. Alternatively, you can use small shallow jars you may have on hand. You can buy fancy, commercially made applicators for track ballast, but I just use a folded index card, paper towel, or even my fingers!

BALLASTING THE TRACK:

Begin by spreading the ballast between the rails. Work slowly and spread the ballast into the recesses between the ties as you go. Keep the ballast away from the flangeways and off the tops of the ties. Also keep ballast away from throw

rods, turnout points and frogs. You do not want a wheel flange prying loose a stone, only to be tossed up inside the truck where it could get lodged between gears.



Figure 9: Spreading the ballast

Next, spread the ballast along the outsides of the rails. The ballast should slope down naturally along the edges of the roadbed. How much ballast to use? Again, keep it off the tops of the ties. Otherwise, you can use as much or as little as you want along the sides of the roadbed according to how much rail traffic this piece of trackwork will be getting. High volume, well maintained mainlines often have a “knife-edge” boundary between the ballast and the surrounding scenery. For a lightly traveled spur line, you can show where the weeds and grass have invaded the right-of-way.

When you are satisfied with how the ballast is spread, then pour out your wetting agent and your adhesive into little measuring cups or jars and have your eyedroppers at hand. Don't try to do everything at once. Work only in a small area at a time. Using the eyedropper, apply the wetting agent by keeping the tip close to the



Figure 10: Applying the wetting agent

surface of the ballast. When drops fall from too great a height, their impact can push aside your carefully arranged ballast, leaving bare spots you'll have to repair. Be sure to get good coverage and penetration.



Figure 11: Applying the matte medium

Then apply the matte medium over the area you just wet down. The wetting agent breaks the surface tension on the matte medium so it will flow into every little nook and cranny and, when dry, will bond firmly to the substrate. If you accidentally try to apply matte medium where you haven't already applied the wetting agent, the matte medium will just bead up on the surface. To fix that, just apply a drop or two of wetting agent to that spot and the matte medium will start to flow. Again, keep the matte medium away from moving parts of turnouts such as throw rod and point rails. The last thing you want to do is to glue your turnouts down in one position. Make sure there are no pieces of ballast stuck where they shouldn't be. If you find any, sweep them away with a Q-tip, brush, or even a small piece of wire. Do it now before the glue dries. Give your project at least 12 hours to set up. Then polish the tops of the rails and you should be all set.

Some modelers like to spray on the wetting agent and the adhesive. It takes practice to get this right. If the spray is in the form of larger droplets, or worse yet a stream, instead of a fine mist, then you'll push the ballast out of position and leave bare spots. And don't forget to mask off anything you don't want the overspray to fall on such as nearby structures. For me, all the extra prep work and attention that spraying requires isn't worth the small amount of time you'd save. Using eyedroppers, I can easily control exactly where the liquids will go. Using these techniques, I'm sure you'll be amazed at the results you get, and you'll know it was well worth the effort. ■

Switching Puzzle #4

Two single track railroads meet at grade level at a diamond. Running north and south, we have the Awesome and Northern Railroad. Running in the east-west direction we have the Fabulous and Western R.R. There is an interchange track between the two roads at the diamond that can hold at most two cars. The worst possible situation is when four trains approach the diamond at once, one from each direction. Many folks call this a "jackpot". This is the set-up for our current switching puzzle. The trick is to get the trains around each other so that each can continue on its way without undue delay. To further complicate matters, we have freight car E sitting on the interchange track. Northbound train D on the A&N has orders to pick up car E and transfer car D2 over to eastbound train A on the F&W. Train A has orders to not only pick up car D2 but must also set out car A1 on the interchange track to be picked up by a later train.

After all switching movements are accomplished, engine A will have cleared the diamond and be heading east on the F&W with cars A2 and D2 behind it. Engine D will be northbound on the A&N pulling cars E and D1. Engines B and C

will also have passed the diamond and be moving southward and westward, respectively, with no change to their consists. And finally, car A1 will be left sitting on the interchange track, waiting to be picked up by a later train. How can all of this be accomplished quickly and efficiently in the least number of moves? ■

