The Crossbuck

THE OSWEGO VALLEY RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

Newsletter, July 2025, Volume 3, #3, Kent Dristle editor

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

Major Milestones for OVRRA

What an exciting times these past three months have been for OVRRA and its new home, the Mt. Pleasant Grange. Shortly before our Spring Express train show, hardworking club members finished the ramp from the parking lot up to the double door entrance to the Grange. And speaking of that Spring train show, we sold a record number of tables to our vendors as well as made a handsome profit. We finally emptied out our storage units and moved our stuff into the Grange, and on June 14, 2025, after more than a year of hard work of preparation we finally got to run trains on a club layout in our new home, the Mt. Pleasant Grange! On Saturday, June 21, OVRRA members were glad to lend their assistance to Grange members as they resumed monthly **waffles breakfasts** which had been on hiatus since the COVID pandemic. As an added bonus, the waffle breakfast provided an excellent opportunity for OVRRA to demonstrate the operation of its club layout to those who came to partake of the delicious food. For more details on the train show, the Grange layout including the resurrected big yard, and more, check out the articles in this issue of *The Crossbuck*. ■

Spring Time Express Model Train Show Results

The 2025 edition of OVRRA's Spring Time Model Train Show was a great success by all measures. We sold a record number of 70 tables to vendors and picked up significant income from door receipts and raffles proceeds as well. Attendance was very good with 232 people passing through the doors on Saturday and 199 more on Sunday. According to conventional wisdom, attendance at indoor activities such as our train show is higher when the weather is rainy and Mother Nature didn't disappoint us that particular weekend copious amounts of rain, especially on Saturday. We had our usual expenses such as the hall rental fee, food and beverages, payouts to exhibitors, advertising, trailer loan, and janitorial expenses. In the end we cleared $2720 as our net profit for the show.

Charlie, Steve, and Secil noted that we have a regular set of vendors who keep coming back and a number of repeat customers, not just showing up for the spring show but for *both* the spring and fall shows. The decision we made five years ago to host a spring show in addition to our tradition fall holiday show was certain a very good one. In spite of the fact that our traveling layout has been in storage for about a year and only taken out when needed for shows, our set up and take down of the layout went very smoothly. Our efforts to stay organized and focused have paid off. Many thanks to all the people who contributed to the success of our latest show. ■

Figure 1: OVRRA members Tina Rogers and Charlie Hewlett assist at the waffle breakfast

Figure 2: Grange president Pam Mossotti serves up waffles from the kitchen

Update at the Grange

Much progress has been made at the Grange in the last three months. The ramp from the parking lot to the double door entrance has been completed. Not only is the first floor of the Grange wheelchair accessible, but OVRRA now has the ability to move our module carts and other items on wheels easily in and out of the building. Many thanks to Charlie Hewlett, Secil Brown, Bill Dexter, Kent Dristle, Steve Rogers, Paul Natoli, and others for their efforts in getting this major piece of construction done.

With the heating/cooling system installed and operational and the final coat of finish on the floors, OVRRA has reached a milestone in its efforts. As of the end of May, our organization has finally been able to empty out our storage units and move our stuff into the Grange. We have not been able to get all of our club's belongings organized into their final locations yet because there are still quite a few moldings that have yet to be installed, but it is satisfying to know that we are moved in.

Because of the long delay in getting the heating system up and running, we did have to repair some burst water pipes in the basement kitchen area. Fortunately, the only real damage done was to the pipes themselves. OVRRA members found and replaced split pipes in eight locations including two under the kitchen sink. We also installed several new shut-off valves and made provisions for having the lines blown out with air for future winter seasons. All of the plumbing is repaired and fully operational now and was put to good use during the Grange's June waffle breakfast.

Work on what in most cases is the re-installation of molding has begun and will continue on into the summer. We do have plans to reconstruct the back deck off the kitchen and install insulation in the attic. We are also looking at ways to improve the energy efficiency of the existing windows. As we look forward, what is already proving to be a great home for us will only get better. ■

OVRRA will be exhibiting our traveling layout at the Thousand Islands Train Show in Clayton, NY on Sept 6-7. See you there!

OVRRA also has a facebook page

www.facebook.com/OVRRAinc

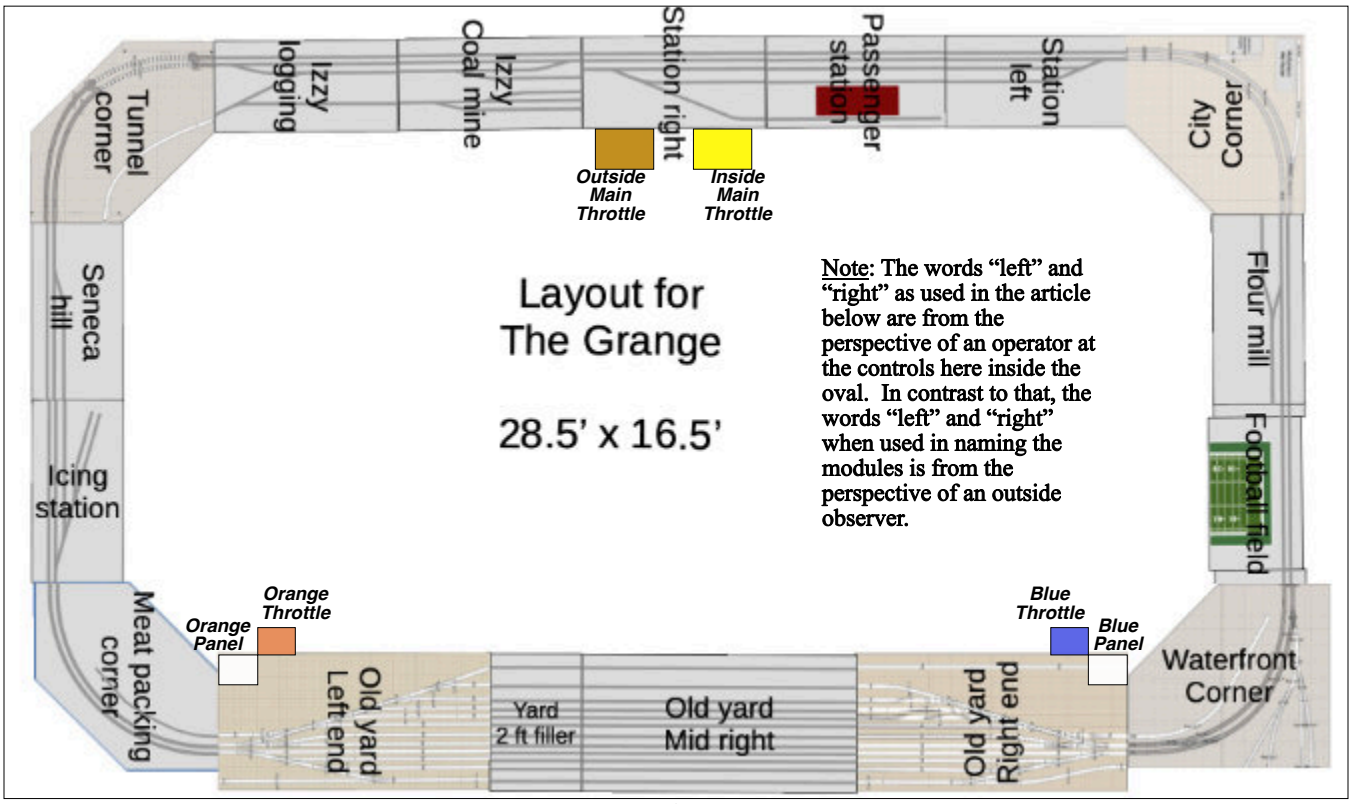
An Operational HO Scale Layout at the Grange

Having an operational layout for club members to enjoy and use at our club headquarters has been a goal for quite some time. Yes, we did have one many years ago at the Legion building in New Haven, but then because of space constraints we were restricted to having an operational layout only at the train shows we attended. In the last few months OVRRA occupied the Legion building, efforts were underway to set up an operational HO scale layout again. We got as far as rewiring the four old yard modules, each six feet long, so that the yard tracks were powered once again. But before we could finish setting up the rest of the layout, we got notice that we'd have to vacate the building as the owners wanted to sell it.

A little over a year later, we are now moved into our new home at the Mt. Pleasant Grange and finally have the opportunity to set up an operation HO scale layout. The emphasis is on operations which means being able to do switching both in the yard and at trackside industries, making up trains, and running them much like it's done on the prototype railroads. After reviewing several different options for the track plan, the layout planning committee decided to implement the one shown here on page 3. The committee has chosen to include some modules from the traveling layout as well as many of the old six-foot long yard modules that would fit in the available space. As it turns out, three of the four old yard modules are now included as well as a two-foot long filler section that gives us up to 16 feet of actual yard track. The rest of the layout features many sidings for a good variety of rail customers as well as passenger and freight stations. What's not included in this configuration are the engine servicing facilities/ roundhouse and inside yard that are still part of the traveling layout.

At each end of the big yard is a drill track. The purpose of a drill track is to provide a long stretch of track apart from the mainline where a train can be assembled from cars located on a variety of different yard tracks. Otherwise, as cars are added to the train, the engine and lead cars would have to pull out on to the mainline track numerous times during the back and forth switching maneuvers. The use of the drill track for switching keeps the mainline clear. The same blue and orange power packs that are used with the interior yard on the traveling layout are being used on the Grange layout for local power at the left and right end of the big yard. See the articles on the next pages for more details on yard operations. ■

Find us on the web at OVRRA.org



Operating the *New* Electrical Panel Boards of the Old Yard Modules

As most of you know, the four large yard modules that for many years were part of the traveling layout, have now been retired. Three of those four have now become a permanent part of our club's home layout at the Grange. (We would have liked to have used all four but we only had room for three of them plus a two-foot filler.) Additionally, most of you know that it has been quite a long time since we've been able to run locomotives on their own power in those yard tracks. The yard tracks were electrically dead, but now, all of that has changed. *We have completely rewired all of the yard tracks on those modules. They are all operational once again!* To find out more about how the new system works, read on…

The New Features

We now have two medium sized electrical panel boards, one at each end of the yard, and a tiny one right in the middle. More about that little one later. We've set it up so that we have the option to operate it as two independent yards. Rail gaps near the middle separate the two yards. (The gaps were an original feature of the yards.) For the left end, we've borrowed the power pack from the "blue" interior yard on the traveling layout, so we're calling this one on the Grange layout the "blue" yard as well. On the right end, we have the "orange" yard and its power supply. These two power supplies give us the capability to run trains off from *local power* on those yard tracks numbered 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 which are accessed from the inside mainline. In the middle, we have a transition block that can be powered from either the blue end or the orange end by throwing the electrical switch either left of right on the tiny panel board in the middle. It makes good sense to have local power available for these tracks as it makes a perfect companion with the drill tracks, one on each end, that can be used by locomotives switching cars through the ladders and making up trains without fouling the mainline. Other yard tracks (such as tracks 1, 2, 4, and 6) are powered only from the mainline power supplies since they have no drill tracks nearby and cars cannot be switched in and out of them without the use of the mainline. Of course, mainline power is also available for the tracks that do have the local power option.

Operations in the Yard

The best practice is to back your train into the yard off the mainline. There are two ways to set this up: One is to run the train forward until the last car is clear of the yard turnout, then stop. If you plan to use local power later for switching maneuvers, your train needs to be on the inside mainline. Set switch C on the blue panel board or switch H on the orange panel board for "inside main power" and then set the turnouts for the tracks you wish to use. The second method is to use a run-around track (track 1 or 2) to

get your engine on the other end of the train. Then pull forward and proceed as in the first method. Once your engine clears the mainline turnout, that turnout can be reset to the main.

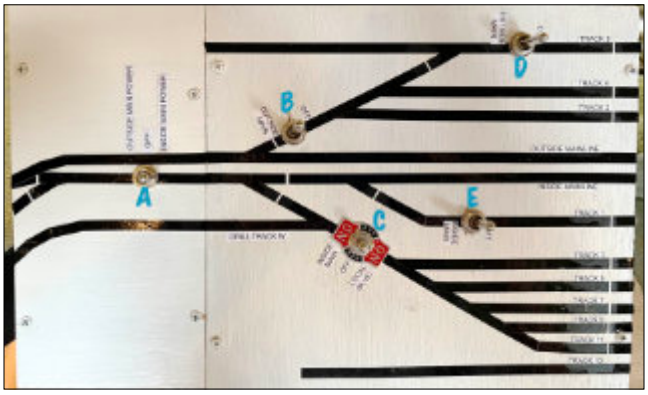


Figure 3: Electrical Panel at the Blue (West) End of the Yard with electrical switches labeled.

If you need to break your train up into sections, then you can make use of the drill tracks. Set the DPDT switch to local power, and then instead of moving out on to the main, use the drill track to pull forward far enough so that you last car clears the turnout to the yard track you wish to use. Local power is not currently available for any of the 3 tracks coming off the outside mainline. If there is a demand for it, we could add it in the future.

As an alternative, you could run your train forward into the big yard, uncouple the engine and leave the train for a yard switcher to break up into pieces, or you could do that with the road engine. Bringing the train forward into the yard may require you to run your engine across the transition block (see below) from the blue yard to the orange yard or vice-versa. By backing it in, you may be able to avoid that. If the opposite end of the yard tracks you wish to use are already occupied, you may have to back your train in on your end.

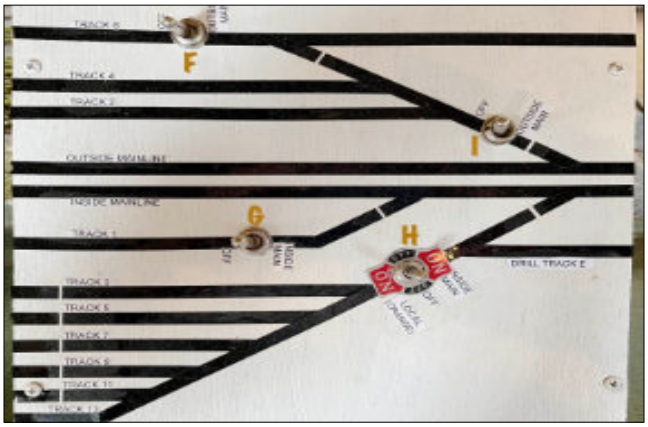
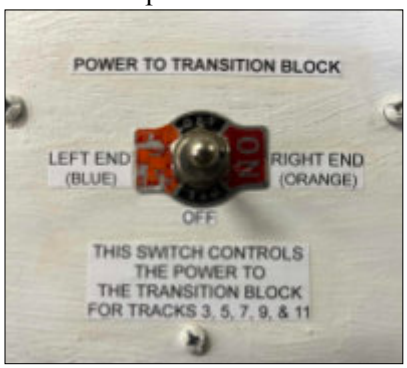


Figure 4: Electrical Panel at the Orange (East) End of the Yard with electrical

The Yard Transition Block

All tracks, except for the two mainline tracks are electrically gapped in the middle, which creates two separate yards. Tracks which have local power available to them have to have a transition block between the two yard halves, and so these tracks have two sets of gaps, one at each end of the transition block. **Never run your locomotive across the gaps until you know for sure that the same power source feeds the rails on either side of the gap!** Check the position of the electrical switches on all three of the panel boards.



For example: Suppose you need to run a locomotive from the blue yard into the orange yard using local power (track 3, 5, 7, 9, or 11). Before crossing over from the blue yard into the transition block, check the DPDT switch on the little center panel and set it to the "blue" yard position if it isn't already set that way. Check to see that the DPDT switch on the blue yard panel is set to "local power". Then, you may run your engine from the blue yard into the transition block. Then STOP. Reset the switch on the little panel to the "orange" yard position. Check to see that the DPDT switch on the orange yard panel is set to local power and that the throttle on the orange yard power supply is turned all the way down to zero. Now you may proceed across the second set of gaps into the orange yard.

Is it ever possible to go straight through from one side to the other without stopping? Technically, yes but only if your are operating on mainline power. Before moving, check to see that the DPDT switches on both the blue and orange panels are set to mainline power and that the switch on the little panel in the middle is *not* in the OFF position. (It makes no difference if it is set to the left or right, just that it's not off.)

On all other yard tracks that don't have the local power option, can you go straight through from one side to the other without stopping? Again, yes, but you should stop first and check the position of the switches on the two main panels to be sure they are not in the off position. In fact, b*efore you make any maneuver, always stop and check to be sure turnouts are set properly and electrical switches are in the correct position*. When your operating session is done, please turn all electrical switches to the "off" position so there are no nasty surprises for the next persons who use the layout. ■

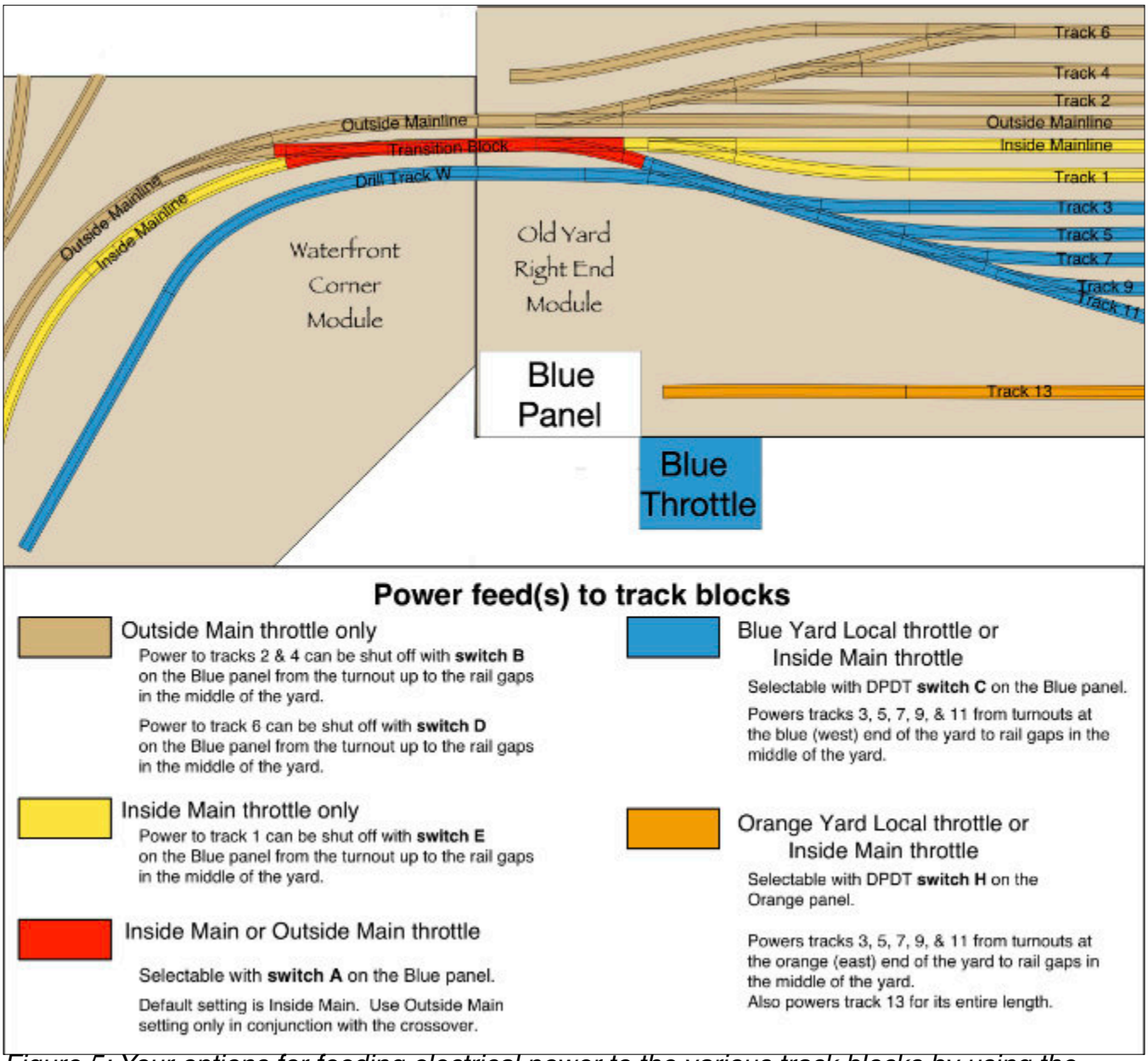


Figure 5: Your options for feeding electrical power to the various track blocks by using the electrical switches on the blue and orange panel boards.

Using the Crossover Track-Part 2 Operations on the Grange Layout

Note: To learn of crossover track operations on the Traveling Layout, please refer to the "Crossover part 1" article on page 3 of the October 2024 issue of *The Crossbuck* which can be accessed at www.ovrra.org/news

It is now possible to make use of the crossover track between the inside and outside mainline tracks on the Grange layout. What this does for us is to allow Outside Mainline access to the odd numbered yard tracks of the big yard that were previously only accessible from the Inside Mainline. Just like on the Traveling Layout, we also have a Transition Block on the Grange layout (shown in red on the diagram) which can be powered by either the Inside or Outside Mainline throttle. Selecting the power for the Transition Block was done with a rotary electrical switch on the Traveling Layout. Even though we don't have a rotary switch for the Grange layout, we can accomplish the same thing with a pair of DPDT switches. To find out how, read on.

Bringing a train out of the Blue Yard on to the Outside Mainline

If you haven't already done so, make up the entire length of your train using local (blue throttle) power, using the drill track as necessary. Back your train into either track 3, 5, 7, 9, or 11 and have the lead engine parked on the ladder track behind the rail gaps just before you would enter the transition block. Before you switch to the Inside main throttle, check to ensure that anyone whose train was already traveling on the inside main has parked their train on an unpowered siding and that they will keep it there until you have gone through the crossover. For example: They could pull their train into track 1 and then switch off power to that track using electrical switch E on the blue panel or electrical switch G on the orange panel. Electrical switch A should already be in the "inside main" position. If not, flip the switch that way. Set the turnout on the main for the yard position. Flip switch C on the blue panel to the "inside main" position. Now, using the inside mainline throttle, you may pull your lead engine into the Transition Block. Stop your engine in the Transition Block before you'd enter the crossover. Set the crossover turnouts to the crossover position. Now you may flip electrical switch A to the "outside main" position. Using the outside mainline throttle, power your entire train through the rest of the transition block and through the crossover on to the outside mainline. Once the last car has cleared the crossover, reset the crossover turnouts to the mainline position; reset the main blue yard turnout to the mainline position, AND flip electrical switch A back to the "inside main" position. Now, the train that had previously pulled off the inside main may re-enter the inside main and resume its journey. It's also good practice to flip switch C to the "off" position.

Bringing a train out of the blue yard or even the orange yard on to the Inside Mainline is pretty intuitive. It doesn't involve the use of the crossover. Just make sure that switch A on the blue panel is set to the "inside main" position. In fact, the *only* time switch A should be in the "outside main" position is when someone is about to use the crossover.

Bringing a train from the Outside Mainline into the Blue Yard

If you are on the outside main, heading in the clockwise direction, this will be a fairly straightforward movement. First, make sure the inside main is clear. Anyone on the inside main should be instructed to park their train on an unpowered siding. Next, set electrical switch A on the blue panel to the "outside main" position. Set the crossover turnouts for crossover operation. Now you may power your train through the crossover into the Transition Block. Stop your train with the engine in the Transition Block. Set the blue yard turnout so you can enter the yard, flip electrical switch A to the "inside yard" position AND flip electrical switch C to the "inside yard" position. Now, you may pull your train into the blue yard. Once your engine has passed the rail gaps at the end of the transition block and your engine is completely in the yard, you may stop and then put switch C in the "local power (blue yard)" position. Once your last car clears the yard turnout, set the turnout back to the mainline position. Use the drill track as needed to break up your train on to various yard tracks.

Figure 6: A long view of the big yard, the meat packing house, and the crossover.

Bringing a train from the Outside Mainline into the Orange Yard

Whenever you want to move a train from the outside main to the orange yard, some backing up will be involved no matter which direction you were originally moving in. Let's say you were going clockwise around the big loop on the outside main. Follow the directions given above for moving through the crossover into the Transition Block, stopping the engine, and moving switch A to the "inside main" position. Instead of entering the blue yard, you will proceed ahead on the inside main until your last car clears the switch for entering the orange yard. Stop. Flip switch H on the orange panel to the "inside main" position. Now it's time to set your turnouts so you can enter the orange yard and move into the desired yard track. Carefully back your train up until the engine passes over the rail gaps and your entire train, including the engine is entirely inside the orange yard. At this point you can flip switch H over to "local (orange) power" and with the help of the drill track, disassemble or distribute your train cars on to which even yard tracks you want.

Bringing a train out of the orange yard so it can (eventually) enter the outside mainline also

involves backing up. Bringing the train out of the orange yard onto the inside mainline is pretty straightforward. Once the last car clears the yard turnout, stop. Go down to the crossover and set the turnouts so you can go through the crossover. Switch A should already be set to the "inside main" position, but check it anyway. Now carefully back the train up on the inside mainline until most of it has passed through the crossover. Stop when the engine is still in the Transition Block and *about* to enter the crossover. Now is the time when you should flip switch A on the blue panel over to the "outside main" position. Now, using the outside main throttle, you can finish backing your train through the crossover onto the outside main. Once the engine clears the crossover, stop and reset the crossover turnouts to the mainline. Reset switch A to "inside main" (which returns the Transition Block to inside main power). Now you may move your train forward on the outside main.

Conclusion

Of course, these aren't the only maneuvers you can accomplish with the crossover on the Grange layout, but if you've mastered these, the rest should come easily. Presently, we do not have a crossover near the end of the orange yard but if there is enough demand for one, we could put one in there as well. ■

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There are 2 ways:

- Go to OVRRA.org and click the "Donate" button
- Or Scan the QR code to the right

Contributors to this issue:

Kent Dristle

Steve Rogers

From the "You Never Know What You May Have" Department

By Steve Rogers

Once in a while you see something and realize that you have one of those that came from someone or some place and you had no idea what it was until you saw in a magazine or on an internet social media feed. I am a member of a Tyco group on Facebook and every once in a while something is posted that I did not know what it was and that I have one. Back in the early 1960's Tyco made an animated box car with a brakeman on the top that moved back and forth from end to end along a track where the running board would be (see photo below).

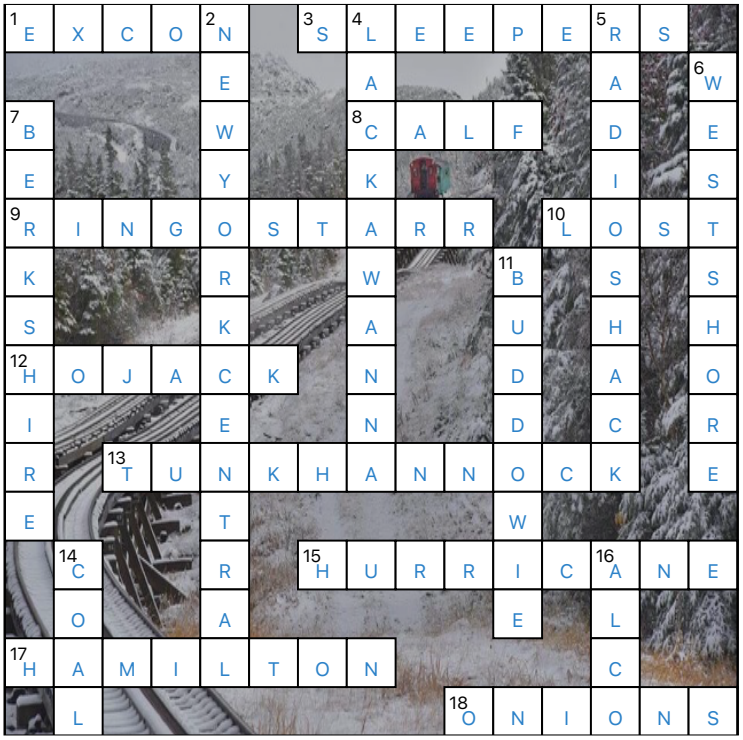
There were 5 rubber bands that went on a series of pulleys and connected to the wheel sets in the trucks that allowed the figure to move back and forth. The cars came in two road names, Minneapolis and St. Louis in red and the Toronto Hamilton and Buffalo in yellow. I have the MStL, which appears to be the more common of the two. I quickly located a YouTube video that showed a car rebuild and how it works.

As I disassembled the car, I noticed it was missing a stirrup step (how common) and quickly saw the Mantua-Tyco lineage, cast and stamped metal trucks with plastic wheel sets and a cast metal frame (if you have ever assembled one of the old Tyco-Mantua box car kits this will be familiar). What was not normal was the frame holding the rods and pulleys for the rubber bands (see photo below) all of the parts are held together with small screws so you can more easily replace the rubber bands. I have begun the process of cleaning the parts and searching for rubber bands of the correct size so I can begin to reassemble the car.

I have not been able to figure out what the brake man figure is, a 3D figure or maybe a flat figure that was a two-sided print and how the brakeman figure attaches to the top rubber band. There was a figure rattling around inside the box car but I am pretty sure that it is not the original as there is no pin or clip for it to attach to the rubber band through the slot in the top of the car. I have looked online, but so far have not been able to see an original with enough detail to make it out. I plan on body mounting the couplers, replacing the broken stirrup step, and putting metal wheel sets on the trucks and then running the car at shows! ■

Solution to OVRRA Crossword Puzzle #1

Note: Crossword Puzzle #1 appeared in the April 2025 issue of *The Crossbuck*.



OVRRA partners with the Mt. Pleasant Grange's Waffle Breakfasts

On the third Saturday of each month through October, the Mt. Pleasant Grange will host a waffle breakfast. Concurrently, OVRRA will open its Grange train layout for public viewing during waffle breakfast hours. Waffle breakfasts are held in the Grange's downstairs dining room. OVRRA's HO scale layout is set-up upstairs in the large meeting room. This has already proved to be a great way for OVRRA to increase its public visibility and to promote club activities. In a similar way, this is beneficial in promoting the Grange's activities. Future waffle breakfast dates are July 19, Aug 16, Sept 20, and Oct 18.

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