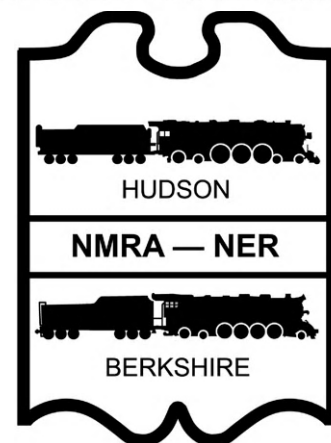


FORM 19

**The Official Newsletter of the
Hudson-Berkshire Division
of the NER NMRA**



Order Number 371

December 2021

Next Division Meeting

No December meeting due to the GTE

January 2022 Meeting

“JMRI DecoderPro Clinic”

James Lauser will present a clinic on using Decoder Pro

Exact date and location will be announced in the January 2022 Form 19

From the Editor By MARK SKLAR

This is the last edition of the Form 19 for 2021. The year went by fast and hopefully we will start getting back to normal sometime in 2022. I am working on signals for my layout. It has been a lot of work rewiring the layout and adding all the parts to make it work. It should be all working in another month or two. What are you working on? The HBD members would like to see what you have built. I am asking for a picture or short article that we could publish in the Form 19. Please send it to mark4527841@gmail.com.

The GTE train show was a success as Irwin Nathanson describes in his “Ready Line” starting on page 2. Doug Dederick has a tribute to the volunteers that made the train show and our division a success on page 7.

Ben Maggi has an excellent article starting on page 4 about lessons learned on completing his MMR AP certificate for cars. He shares his experience and gives advice on scratch-building his cars.

Part 10 Tips for Operation “Caboose Operations” is on page 9 by Ken Nelson. This is the last installment from Ken. Thank you Ken for this series, which I hope the members enjoyed as I did..

See you here next month.

-Mark



Form19

The *Form19* is published ten times per year for members of the Hudson Berkshire Division.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Division. Products and publications mentioned in *Form19* in no way constitute an endorsement by the Division.

Contributing to the Form19

The *Form19* staff welcomes all contributions. Letters, articles, photos, and other items may be mailed or e-mailed to the editor. Please include a note if you would like materials returned. Suggestions also welcome.

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The Ready Line

By Irwin D. Nathanson

As I get older, it seems like Time has a Doppler Effect...it keeps passing by faster and faster. And here this is, my last Ready Line column for 2021! Where did 2021 go? And, what a year, our second year with COVID-19. Sadly, our membership has gone down. We've lost two dear members, and others have moved to warmer climes to the south. Others have, for various reasons, decided to become less active in the division, hopefully on a temporary basis. More or less, it seems we've learned to deal with the pandemic, to move safely forward as best we can, to hold in-person division meetings once again, and to re-invent ourselves as much as possible. In January your Leadership Team will meet, to outline our plans for 2022. So, stand by for more details.

Mentioning HBD leadership, we held our elections last month. Doug Dederick was re-elected as your Vice President, and John Valachovic was elected as a Board Member. Thanks for agreeing to serve, guys, much appreciated.

Now let's turn to our **Great Train Extravaganza**. Let me start with the bottom line: *GTE 2021 was a big success!*

Here is a quick summary:

- Table count was down about 15% from 2019. We need to brainstorm on how to recruit more vendors. Former GTE Chairman Rich Smith had a good suggestion; more on this in the February Form 19.
- Layouts were good but we still need more.
- Number of (paid) adults: 1,683
- Number of (free) kids: 473
- Total attendance: 2,156 which is about the level we were at pre-COVID
- Total ticket sales (at show plus advance/on-line): \$11,786
- I don't have total expenses yet but profit for HBD will be \$5,000 +
- Cash donations for Toys for Tots: \$548!!! This will go towards our donation of train sets for Christmas 2022. We also collected several donated, new, unwrapped toys which we will deliver to the Marine Corps for this year's U.S. Marine Corps campaign!
- There was a major issue with the parking (all due to OGS – the State of NY office which manages the convention center) for the first hour or so...big backups getting into the parking lot. Several peo-

(Ready Line Continued on next page)



(Ready Line Continued)

ple called me to say they gave up and went back home...

- Most (if not all) the vendors seemed happy.
- No TV stations came this year.
- We conducted an extensive visitor survey to determine where best to spend our advertising money. Clear winner: the plastic road signs! More on this soon as well; I need some time to analyze/summarize the data.

The success of GTE 2021 was to a very large extent due to excellent planning and management on the part of our

GTE Chairman, James Lauser. He has done a wonderful job and we are so lucky to have him on our team! I also need to mention his right-hand-person, Sarah Lauser whose work before and during the show was also invaluable! Well done, Lausers! (As most of you know, James is also on the HBD Board, and Sarah is our HBD Recording Secretary.)

I also need to give a big shout out to all our members who volunteered on Saturday and Sunday to make the show such a success. Many thanks, guys! The show could not have gone on without you!

I'd also like to mention two special / non-member volunteers: Sarah's Mom and Dad! They sure put in a lot of work this

weekend! And wow, am I impressed with Sam, Sarah's Mom! What amazing energy! Besides her smarts and good humor, she sure makes great home-made cookies! (Be sure to volunteer next year to get some.)

I'm looking forward to next month's meeting to hear James' "Decoder Pro Clinic" and to personally wish all those attending a healthy and happy holiday season and a happy new year. And to those who won't be able to make it, I send you those greetings now! Take care, everyone, stay safe and happy!

Irwin

Upcoming Events

No December meeting due to the GTE

January 2022 Meeting

"JMRI DecoderPro Clinic"

James Lauser will present a clinic on using Decoder Pro

Exact date and location will be announced in the January 2022 Form 19

JMRI DecoderPro is the cheap and easy way to program your locomotives' DCC decoders from your computer. No more complicated programming via your throttle. No more looking up CVs out of huge tables in your decoder manual. Just click some easy to understand options, push a button to program, and you're done. This clinic will go over what you need to get started, setup, and what it looks like to do several common programming tasks.

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MMR Cars – Lessons Learned

By Benjamin Maggi

Our April Hudson Berkshire virtual meeting had a great program presented by Ed O'Rourke about how to build cars for the Master Model Railroader program. Having just completed the requirements for that certificate last year, a lot of what he said resonated with me. I wish I had heard it a year ago when I was working on mine! As I listened to his presentation some thoughts started to go off in my head, and I figured I would share a few things that I learned along the way while I built my cars. I don't claim that my way was the *right* way, but it certainly worked for me.

Because I wanted the challenge, and since I wasn't sure how well my models would do in the merit judging competition, I decided to scratch-build all eight. I didn't think I could take a kit and add enough details to earn 87.5 points. True, you only need four cars to do it, but I thought scratch-building would be fun and I wanted to push myself. And let's face it, many kits are just a pile of raw parts with instructions included. Scratch-building isn't as tough as it first seems.



Here are some lessons I learned along the way:

1.) Start Small

My first car I built was a bobber caboose. I figured since I was starting off fresh without any experience I should pick something easy, and a bobber caboose seemed pretty simple. The prototype I picked was D&H caboose #10, now enshrined in Oneonta. It had minimal brake detail, no cupola, few windows, and only 4 wheels. How tough could it be?

As it turns out, since I was attempting to scratch build everything I made a lot more work for myself than I originally intended. I built the windows, smoke jack, axle boxes, end railings, end steps, and doors from scratch. It was rewarding, but time consuming. Had I picked a more complex prototype to model, I don't know if I would have been able to finish it.



2.) Pick Something You Want to Model

It might be tempting to grab the first kit or set of plans you come across to build, but let me tell you that there will be times when you

don't want to work on your model. You will hit a stumbling block, or make a mistake that seems irreparable, or life will get in the way. During those times, if you picked something you actually care about you might be more inclined to work on it. I have a personal connection to all eight cars I built. Two are based on railroads I currently model (D&H, B&M), two are based on railroads I loved as a kid (Conrail, BN), two are based on British trains which I have a passion for, one was a car I always thought was neat looking (Borden milk tank car), and one is based on a prototype belonging to a short line I co-own (M.O.W. boxcar/flatcar). One was a Great Western Railway cattle wagon, which I picked solely because I thought my wife would find the cows I put inside of it cute. It worked!



3.) Learn in Incremental Steps

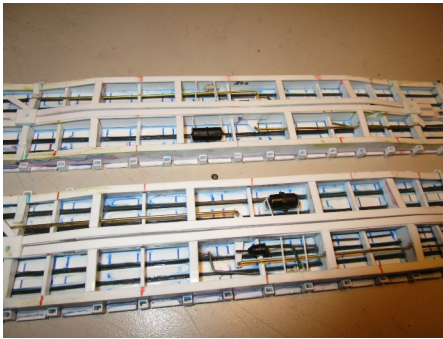
After my first bobber caboose, I realized I needed to learn a lot of new skills. So I looked online for

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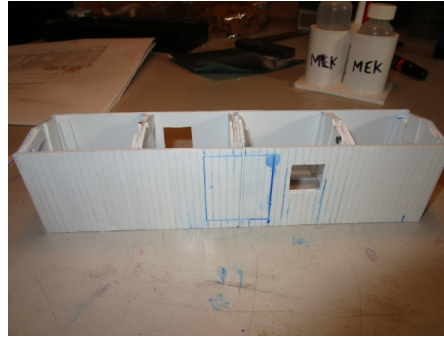
help in scratch-building train cars and found this excellent website by the NMRA's Lone Star Region (<https://www.lonestarregion.com/node/5>) They have a four-part clinic on how to scratch-build flat cars that literally walks you through every step of the way on measuring, cutting, filing, and gluing a styrene flatcar with full underbody detail and handmade detail parts. It taught me the fundamentals of freight car under frame design, which I used on three other cars. I recommend everyone at least casually skim through the clinic to see how easy it can be.



4.) Don't Be Afraid to Branch Out

When I was building a bobber caboose first, I knew my model would be tiny. Working on something small seemed like a smart idea, but I wanted to be able to see the details I was adding. So I built mine in O scale. Am I an O scale modeler? No. But it was fun to work in a new scale. Most of my cars are HO, but when I was talking with Irwin Nathanson one day he said "Ben, you love British trains. Why aren't you building something in OO scale?" It was a good question, and it led me to build something in 1:76 scale. I have recently discovered I

love Maine 2-foot gauge trains, so I built something in On2. It is destined to sit in a display case, but I am glad I tried new scales.



5.) Budget Your Time Wisely

Scratch-building cars takes time, I won't lie. I averaged 10-30 hours per car. One good thing resulting from this pandemic is that I had a lot more free time than before to work on projects. Before COVID, I assumed it would take me two years to build a single car. Then Covid started, and I built seven cars in six months. I worked a little bit every day and had multiple projects going so that when I had to stop to let glue or paint dry, or wait for parts to arrive in the mail, I could jump to something else. If you don't work on it regularly, you won't complete it. And if you are building similar cars, work on them together so that you can economize your time.



6.) Don't Be Afraid to Take Breaks

My first caboose took nearly two years to build. I ran into some

problems I didn't know the answers to, and I set it aside for long periods of time. It is much better to wait and research the problem, than push ahead and make the problem worse. I usually found when I came back to a project later a solution had presented itself.

7.) Ask for Help

When I started, I asked a lot of questions of Bob Hamm and Kevin Surman. They were patient and gave me great advice. For prototype-specific questions, I went online or asked others with more experience. I also read magazine articles that discussed scratch-building and learned new techniques. Until I started my MOW car, I assumed all 40-foot boxcars were the same. Wrong! I asked a friend who custom builds cars for a living and he gave me a quick primer on different types of boxcar ends, doors, etc. I was able to use that information to build a more accurate model. However, there is some information that just isn't easy to find out, like what the underframe of a Borden milk tank car looks like. No published plans show it, commercial kits for it have different underframes, and there is



only one surviving example. So after trying every way possible to get pictures of the underframe, I gave up and based mine off of other express reefer underframes. Is it correct? Ummm... can you *prove* it isn't?

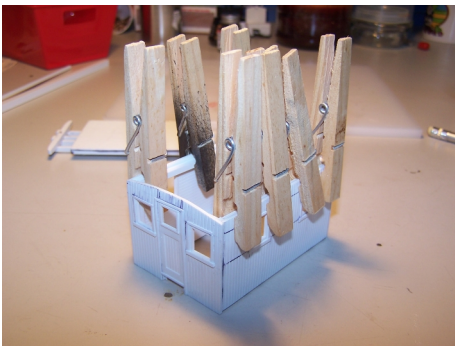
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8.) **Don't Give Up!**

One of my cars came together well but I messed up the paint job. I could have cried I was so upset with it. Then, I had a conversation with myself that went like this: "Ben, you want to be a master model railroader but you are afraid to strip paint off of a car?" After hearing that monologue in my head over and over, I removed the paint (it wasn't tough) and repainted the car. I can't believe I nearly let fear stop me from finishing the car I worked so hard on. On another model, I waited so long to assemble the walls that they had warped. I tried boiling them in water but that didn't help. Finally, a lot of bracing and clamps did the trick. But I had to stop and think it through first.



9.) **For Monotonous Tasks, Put On Something Soothing**

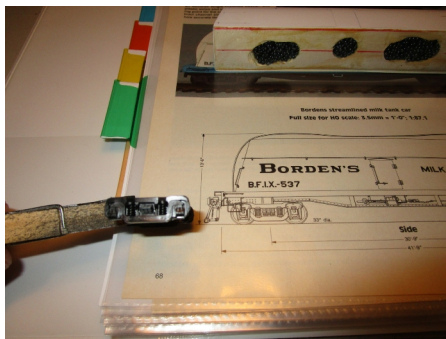
For many of our projects we have to do repetitive tasks, like applying decals or cutting pieces of styrene to the same length. I found that when I put on the radio or movies the projects flew by. I should clarify that I listened to dozens of movies over the course of my car building but never watched them. I instead put them on in the background to listen to. I especially enjoyed James Bond and Mission: Impossible films, though the car chases and gun fight

scenes were never very interesting (because I never could see what was going on). If you like music, put some on. Or listen to a baseball game. Whatever you choose, the background noise will help you pass the time. But don't let it distract you when you are making crucial measurements or cuts!



10.) **Try Something New... Learn Something New**

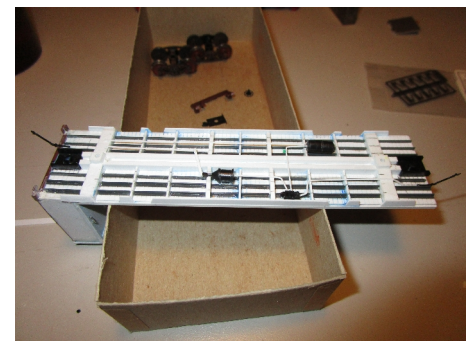
My fourth car was a steel B&M milk car with lots of rivets. Having never used rivet decals before, I thought this would be a perfect time to try them. I also decided to scratch-build the ends, roof, and plug doors. Truth be told it wasn't too tough, but adding rows and rows of perfectly straight decals was trying at times. After that car, I decided to do something... anything... different so I built a Borden milk tank car that had a formed styrene shell over a wood former. I then built a wooden-prototype Maine 2-foot gauge dairy



car with wood sides and ends, no roofwalks, or even brake gear. It was fun to learn new techniques like contact cement laminations, weathering styrene to look like wood grain and simulating a tin roof.

Conclusions

The purpose of the program isn't to make you follow a strict set of rules, or become buried in a mountain of paperwork. It is designed to make you a better modeler. From building these eight cars, I learned a lot about prototype research, drawing up plans or taking dimensions from pictures; styrene car construction, wood car construction, different brake systems, decaling, and painting techniques. I found that O scale models have a nice heft to them, and On2 models aren't that much larger than HO. And once you have built one detailed underframe, you can generally build them all. It is just about bending wire, or styrene rod, and connecting some parts together. I missed out on not doing anything in N scale, so for my Structures certificate I am intentionally building something small. Had I never attempted this certificate, I wouldn't have developed the skills that I can apply to other things like structures and scenery.



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The process wasn't always easy, but I found out the more I asked the better my models were. I could have definitely made things easier on myself by starting with commercial kits, but this was a personal journey for me and I wanted to do it my way. I wrote very detailed commentaries on how I built my eight cars and put them on my blog, <https://dandhcoloniemain.blogspot.com/>

I included all the mistakes I made, all the victories I had, and all the things I learned.

That being said, I can now appreciate why people pay \$40-50 for a ready-to-run boxcar. The details on it are amazing, and it only takes seconds to make it layout ready. I feel confident to attempt to scratchbuild anything now, but when my wife asked me to build some more cattle wagons I said I would

rather buy them than make them! Besides, over the Christmas holiday Irwin innocently again asked me why I wasn't building anything for the Structures certificate. At the time it didn't interest me, but after pondering his question for a while I decided to dive in. Stay tuned...

Volunteers

by

Doug Dederick

A simple definition of **volunteer** is: a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task.

The definition of **volunteering** is: a voluntary act of an individual or group freely giving time and labor for community service.

Recently we held our annual "Great Train Extravaganza" for the first time since canceling last year due to COVID. As was reported by our President Irwin Nathanson it was "A big success" in a year filled with unknowns. Of course a lot of the success of any train show is the attendance and ticket sales. But it takes a lot of work before the doors open to the public, and once the doors are open, it takes organization and a staff to make it run smoothly. I can not say enough about both!

James Lauser **volunteered** to take over organizing and running the show from **volunteer** Rich Smith, who led the way for us to purchase the show from the previous owners and built a strong foundation for James to build on. James and Sarah have done an outstanding job under some tough conditions. Sarah and James do a lot of the work in the months leading up to the show, but also need many **volunteers** to pull it off: **Volunteers** to put out signs and flyers, to help vendors unload and to get their loaded carts safely where they need to be, to sell tickets and check for wristbands, and hand out masks if needed. **Volunteers** to man the Hudson Berkshire table and talk to the public about the NMRA and the Hudson Berkshire Division. **Volunteers** to work the "White Elephant" table. **Volunteers** who

freely offer their time and labor for the benefit of **OUR** Hudson Berkshire Division. That is what makes the show successful!

I can not thank all of our members that have volunteered this year and in past years enough. **Volunteers** are what drive the Division and are what move us forward. Without **volunteers** the Hudson Berkshire Division is only a name, a shell of itself.

For those of you that have not yet **volunteered** I urge that you do so in the future. It can be a great way to get to know your fellow members. I have always said that "THIS IS YOUR DIVISION". Be a part of it. It can be so rewarding to be a part of an organization, club, and a family. How much depends on **you!**

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For all of you that have **volunteered - Thank You!**

This year's list of show volunteers are:

Greg Whittle, Bill McChesney, Tom Plesnarski, Jim Kirby, Ed Skowronek, Chuck Haley, Mike LaCasse, Mike Hachey, Brian

Dermody, Fred Steitz, Kevin Surman, Bob Hamm, Jeff English, John Arnold, John Valachovic, Bruce Johnson, Rich Smith, Dennis Hultay, Karl Butler, Ernie Burkhart, John Corini, Don Klose, John McBride, Irwin Nathanson, Shawn Newton, Mike Romanowski, Jim Sapienza,

Wendy Stebbins, Ken Wheeler, and Mike White.

A special thanks to Sarah's parents, Don and Sam Toner, and all the rest of the **volunteers** who are the true **essence** of the word!

Doug Dederick

November HBD Meeting

The November HBD meeting was held at the Upstate Model Railroaders, Inc. In South Glens Falls, NY. Here are a few pictures thanks to Ben Maggi. Thank you Upstate Model Railroaders for inviting us.





TIPS FOR OPERATION

Part 10

By: Ken Nelson

As we reach the conclusion of our series on operation, let us look at the last thing on a freight train, the caboose. The use of cabooses can add operating interest to our trains in several ways, so let us finish with tip number 10.

CABOOSE OPERATIONS

Besides acting as a shelter for the crew, the caboose usually had a gauge to monitor the train's brakes, a brake valve for emergencies, and a table for the conductor's paperwork. Up into the 1950s, many cabooses were assigned to a particular crew, and contained beds, a table with seats, a sink, stove, ice box, and a toilet. When reaching a crew change point, the caboose would be removed from the train and a new one for the new crew was added. Since we try to avoid switching an entire train onto a caboose (See tip number 2), this caboose change would be done by a switch engine. When a train needing a caboose change approaches the yard, you must have the switcher ready to

remove the caboose and add the new one. Here again, a safety stop would be used.

If you tend to run more trains in one direction than the other, you will soon run out of cabooses. Plan ahead and you can either run a freight train with two or three cabooses on the end, or run a caboose hop, a train carrying just cabooses from one terminal to the other. This adds visual interest to an operating session.

If you have several different-looking cabooses, use the oldest ones for the local freights and the newer looking ones for the road freights. The newer cabooses would probably have better springs and suspension, plus more accommodations inside to make the longer ride more comfortable.

When a different railroad brings an interchange train to your yard and ties up for the night, its power and caboose would usually be kept separate, and used just for the return trip by the same railroad. You would take the caboose to the caboose track for service. The crew may or may not sleep in the caboose overnight.

Each of the above examples would require a separate caboose track in a relatively quiet part of the yard, where a crew could sleep overnight if desired, and the caboose could be serviced with ice, water, propane, etc. Many such prototypical procedures provide us with a way to have more fun with cabooses.

Switching work such as this is typical with our trains at many cities and towns. Two trains become one, one train becomes two, baggage, express cars, diners, and cabooses are added and removed from trains. Locomotives are changed at large terminals, especially in the days of steam, and DCC makes such moves easy and simple. One coach destined for a different city may be set out to be picked up by another train. Most modelers find operation such as this to be a lot more fun than just running a train around in circles. This brings our sessions to a close. I hope you have picked up some pointers.

The end.

You have probably received an email from the Northeastern Region office announcing that the latest issue of the Coupler is now online. The NER website is - [NER Coupler](#).



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<http://www.hudson-berkshire.org/>

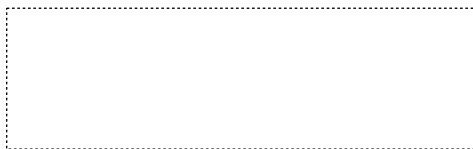
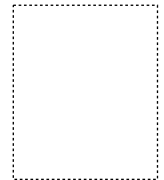
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