

# NMRA BULLETIN

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2023 NMRA National Convention Dates and National Train Show Reservations:  
Dallas, Texas August 20 – 26, 2023 (<https://www.2023texasexpress.com/>)  
Train Show Booth Reservations—Jenny Hendricks Registrar - P.O. Box 1328, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384-1328  
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• 2024—Long Beach, California

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## ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

### NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT AUGUST 2022 GOLDEN SPIKE

#### Mid-Eastern Region

Bruce Barrett, Clementon, New Jersey  
Dale Leasure, Toms River, New Jersey

#### Niagara Frontier Region

Frank Battaglia, North Tonawanda, New York

#### Northeastern Region

John Gillespie, Greenlawn, New York

#### Southeastern Region

Michael Floyd, Leeds, Alabama

#### Sunshine Region

Stacey Elliott, Quincy, Florida

### MASTER BUILDER - CARS

#### Mid-Eastern Region

David Albertson, Forked River, New Jersey

#### Southeastern Region

Roberta Dean, Crossville, Tennessee

### MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY

#### Mid-Centiment Region

Dean Smith, Rolla, Missouri

#### Sunshine Region

Andy Zimmerman, Tallahassee, Florida

### MASTER BUILDER - PROTOTYPE MODELS

#### Northeastern Region

Thomas Emmett, Newport, Rhode Island

### MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

#### Southeastern Region

Jerry Lachapelle, Memphis, Tennessee

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Richard Mossholder, Santa Rosa, California

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#### Northeastern Region

Christopher Carfaro, Richmond, Vermont

### MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® 714 Thomas Emmett, Newport, Rhode Island

AP QUESTIONS: If you have questions about the AP program or requirements, start with your local or Region If you still have questions, contact Frank Koch at [fjkoch@hotmail.com](mailto:fjkoch@hotmail.com).

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## TOM EMMETT

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #714

As with most model railroaders, I got started as a youngster. I was about six when I received a Lionel O-27 train set for Christmas. It was on a simple 4x8-foot plywood table, and the trains just went around and around like so many beginner's layouts. A few years later, we moved to Hobart, Indiana (about 40 miles SE of Chicago), where my house was half a block from Nickel Plate's main line between Chicago and Fort Wayne, Indiana. Growing up, my friends and I spent a lot of time around those tracks watching trains, and the Lionel layout grew into an 8x12-foot plywood platform but without much detail. Still, it was fun. Between the proximity to a real railroad (by now Norfolk & Western) and my friend's HO layout, I was convinced to switch scales, and I never looked back.

I left the hobby after high school when I went to college at Purdue. My trains sat silent. Following graduation and commissioning in the U.S. Navy, I went to flight school. But in 1978, while deployed overseas, I happened upon an issue of *Railroad Model Craftsman* at the base's store. It re-ignited my interest. When I returned stateside, I collected all the trains and buildings from the Hobart HO layout. The locomotives were not in good shape, so I started acquiring more up-to-date models. I repainted and decaled the new ones for CN. I built a layout in my apartment in Jacksonville, Florida. I put down track, but no scenery, and the trains ran a few times before I had to move. Being in the Navy and moving every two to three years was a fact I lived with, but wherever I went, I tried to keep my hand in the game. I kept everything except the benchwork when I left Jacksonville for Charleston, South Carolina.

In Charleston, I joined a model railroad club, which did not have a permanent layout. Instead, it had a HO module group that would put on train shows at the local mall a few times a year. I built two 2x4-foot modules. Mine was a switching layout with some rail customers. I even used a few buildings from the Hobart layout: a passenger station, a factory, and a freight warehouse. I did a better job with scenery and finishing than I had done in the past. I learned a lot during that build. In 1983,



when it was time to move again, I crated the two modules and headed off to Omaha for two years. There, I started another layout, incorporating the two modules. Then it was moving time again, this time to the Azores. The layout benchwork went into the dumpster. The two modules were recreated and — along with the locomotives, rolling stock, and buildings — went into long-term storage. While overseas, I built a small 4x6-foot layout in my Bachelor Officers' Quarters room. A scene divider running cater-corner created two quite different scenes with the track making a simple oval with a couple of switches for customers. I learned even more about terrain building, scenery, kitbashing structures, and weathering techniques for structures, rolling stock, and engines.

The train table stayed in the Azores, but the buildings, cars, and the locomotive returned stateside with me to Norfolk, Virginia, in 1985. I built another layout anchored on those two modules. This one was an around-the-room design with an open center. I reused the structures from

earlier layouts and built more. Kitbashing plans from *RMC* and *MR* came in handy for new buildings, and I worked on scenery construction techniques such as water and backdrops. This layout was built knowing that it would have to be moved again, so when I headed off to Keflavik, Iceland, for two years, it was all crated again.

I moved back to the States in 1992, retired from the Navy, and married. My wife and I moved to an apartment in Arlington, Virginia. There was no room for a layout, but I did go to train shows in the DC/Virginia/Maryland area, where I picked up ideas for future use.

In 2001, we moved to Newport, Rhode Island, and I finally got the chance to build a permanent layout. It is in a 10x30-foot room at the back of the garage. Layout construction began in 2008.

I built the layout's perimeter first, which gave me space in the middle because the room was narrow. I also took my time to practice the scenery, track laying, wiring for DCC, and other construction techniques because I only wanted to do this once. Then

I built the peninsula portion. It took a few years to complete.

The layout is a single-track main line in a sort of folded or collapsed oval. The time frame is primarily the late 1970s and early 1980s, with first- and second-generation diesel locomotives. I do have one brass steamer I run for excursions. The main line provides for continuous running by one of three Class I railroads I choose to operate depending upon a coin toss, a roll of the dice, or my mood. Either Canadian National; Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; or Chicago & North Western will show up. CB&Q still exists on my railroad. The concept is for the mainline train to deliver and pick up cars at an interchange yard with my freelance short line, the North Bay Railroad (NBRR). I do not conduct operations in the sense that I have any sort of timetable or schedule. I put together a switching problem I make up from index cards for customers and more cards for railcars appropriate for their product. The big railroad provides full or empty cars to a small interchange yard with the NBRR. The North Bay switches these out, and empty or full cars are returned to the yard for pick-up by the next major railroad train. That completes what I call a cycle. All locomotives have DCC with sound. Some are factory-equipped, and some I converted and upgraded myself.

I should also mention that most of the locations are associated with English crime and mystery authors and their characters, actors who portrayed the characters, or places in their works or works of other writers. Dorothy L. Sayers is our favorite mystery author. She wrote in the 1920s and 1930s, and her hero character is Lord Peter Wimsey. There are references not only to her books, but also to the works of Arthur Conan Doyle, Colin Dexter, Agatha Christie, Anthony Horowitz, Garrison Keillor, and actors and characters such as David Suchet, Joan Hickson, Michael Kitchen, Rumpole, Foyle, and Morse among many others.

I do not have any off-scene staging. Instead, I make up the initial delivery train on a sidetrack representing another line that joins the layout. I gather the locomotives, caboose, and cars from storage shelves below the layout.

I joined the NMRA and the Little Rhody Division in 2016. Soon thereafter, I got interested in the NMRA's Achievement Program. I thought my layout might be worthy of the Golden Spike, so I invited

our Division's two judges — Justin Maguire, MMR®, and Steve Erickson — to look it over. They also determined that it qualified for Master Builder – Scenery, which got me started. Still, I did not initially target Master Model Railroader® as a goal, just a few areas that really interested me, so I set to work on those. Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical came next. In 2018, I added a second level that sits atop most of the perimeter portion of the layout. Cars are transferred between the two via a single-track tray. I call it the Yooper Division in a nod to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This allowed me to work on Master Builder – Structures and Model Railroad Engineer – Civil.

The club does not have a permanent layout. Instead, it has a T-Trak N-scale modular layout that is set up at its meetings, libraries, and train shows. I built three 3-foot modules as my contribution to the display. Participation in the T-Trak group and on the Division's Board of Directors helped me satisfy the requirements for Association Volunteer. I also built a portable HO switching layout the club can use at shows and open houses. The idea is to have visitors solve a simple switching puzzle problem and perhaps generate some hands-on enthusiasm for the hobby.

At about the time I finished the AP Structures qualification, several friends and members of Little Rhody encouraged me to keep going for MMR®, including Justin and Steve, as well as Mike Tylick MMR®, Sue Osberg, and Steve Ryder.

I knew I needed two more qualifications, but the thought of either AP Cars or AP Motive power was a bit intimidating. I chose AP Cars. However, once I got started, I found it to be one of the most interesting and satisfying of the categories. I especially enjoyed researching a type of car or a specific prototype car and then watching it come together into a finished model.

The same can be said for the last AP category I chose: Master Builder – Prototype. I modeled a portion of a small yard and interchange from my hometown. The main line was, as I mentioned, the N&W, and it interchanged with the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (EJ&E). The portion I modeled in HO ended up being just about seven feet long but only 13 inches deep. It will eventually become part of an industrial switching layout that ties into the main layout.

In summary, obtaining MMR® has been a challenging, though occasionally frustrating, but very rewarding journey and, above all, just plain fun.

### **Certificates Earned Tom Emmett, MMR #714**

**Master Builder – Scenery  
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical  
Master Builder – Structures  
Model Railroad Engineer – Civil  
Association Volunteer  
Master Builder – Cars  
Master Builder – Prototype Models**

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