

NMRA BULLETIN

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**Have you changed your address or
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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

rev 11/20/2022

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

NMRA AP CERTIFICATE REPORT

OCTOBER 2022

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Steve Salotti, Collegeville, Pennsylvania

North Central Region

Richard Helmick, Ypsilanti, Michigan

Southeastern Region

Lloyd Coon, Chattanooga, Tennessee
Dieter Grethmann, Hampton Cove, Alabama

MASTER BUILDER - CARS

Mid-Central Region

Roy Allan, Terrace Park, Ohio

Rocky Mountain Region

John Volp, Arvada, Colorado

MASTER BUILDER - STRUCTURES

Northeastern Region

James Whatley, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

MASTER BUILDER - SCENERY

Mid-Eastern Region

Steve Salotti, Collegeville, Pennsylvania

Midwest Region

Dave Mashino, Kokomo, Indiana

Southeastern Region

Norman Lundin, Newman, Georgia

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - CIVIL

Southeastern Region

Thomas Langdale, Walhalla, South Carolina

MODEL RAILROAD ENGINEER - ELECTRICAL

Mid-Eastern Region

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Steve Salotti, Collegeville, Pennsylvania

Midwest Region

David Mashino, Kokomo, Indiana

Northeastern Region

Dennis DeAngelis, Northport, New York

Rocky Mountain Region

Robert Connolly, Harrisville, Utah

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Dennis Janssen, Waukesha, Wisconsin

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Leonard Cope, Bainbridge Island, Washington

Pacific Southwest Region

Marshall Wales, Peoria, Arizona

Southeastern Region

Craig Gardner, Birmingham, Alabama

MODEL RAILROAD AUTHOR

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Richard Steinmann, Reston, Virginia

Mid-Continent Region

Glenn Koproske, Fenton, Missouri

Pacific Southwest Region

Paul Buhrke, Tucson, Arizona

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER®

MMR® #719 Richard Steinmann, Reston, Virginia

MMR® #720 James Whatley, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

MMR® #721 Paul Buhrke, Tucson, Arizona

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 fjkoeh@hotmail.com.

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ROBERT B. RODRIGUEZ

EARNS

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER® #718

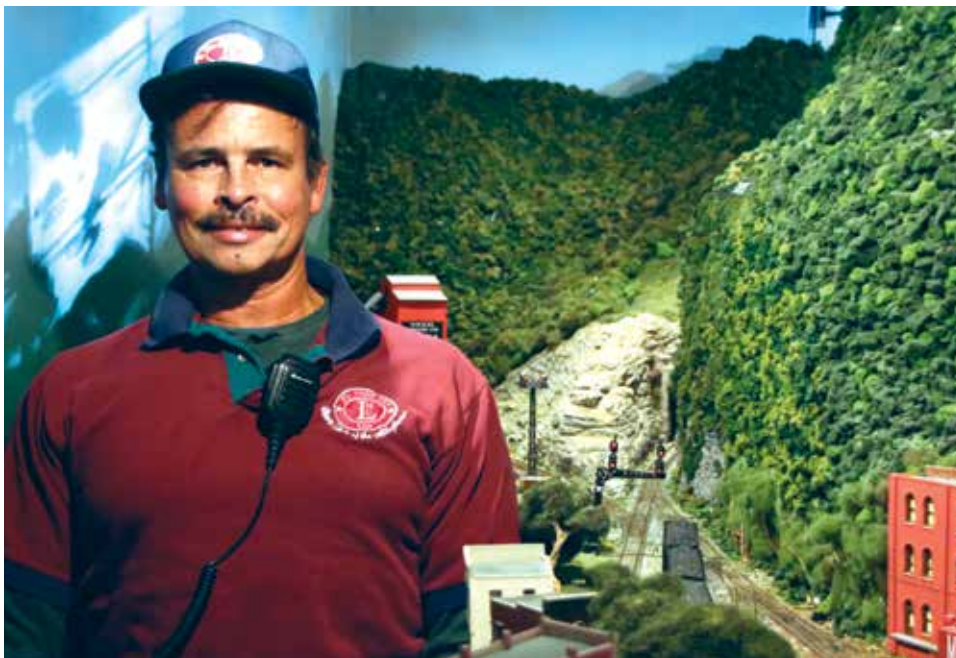
Like many, my interest in model railroading started as a child when my parents bought me a Fleischmann Pennsylvania steam locomotive train set when I was around 8 years old back in the 1960s. With its simple oval brass HO-scale track, it consumed many days of my attention. Soon after, we purchased a track plan book from Atlas, a 4x8-foot sheet of plywood, and some folding legs. My journey into the depths of the hobby began.

That 4x8-foot layout stayed with me through high school, college, and into my first townhouse I purchased in my early 20s. As work and family consumed more of my days, the layout gathered dust in a small unfinished section of the townhouse. Eventually, my wife suggested I go to a meeting with a group of guys who were trying to start a model railroad club. Her friend's husband was the orchestrator of the idea. I did attend and became very involved with the construction of the club's first layout in the back of a local hobby shop. At that point, I realized I needed to learn a whole number of skill sets as we progressed with the layout construction.

My family moved to a single-family home a few years later, and I staked out a medium-sized area in the basement for my layout. Using some of the skills I learned while building the club layout, my new layout took shape. It was about that time when I learned about the NMRA. I eventually joined the NMRA. While going through all the opportunities the Association offered, I came across the Achievement Program. While it initially piqued my interest, I could not afford the time to participate in any of the categories at that point in my life.

Over the years, I continued to maintain my NMRA membership while I continued my involvement in my local model railroad club. We added the construction of modules, which were taken to many train shows across the area. Eventually, I was again involved with constructing another layout in the club's new location in Quantico, Virginia.

As I continued my involvement in the hobby, my skills became more and



more refined. Eventually, I was comfortable enough to tear down my layout and build a larger one in another area of the basement. I designed the new layout for operations. And even though I didn't know much about how to do operations, I sought out as much information as I could so I could learn about it. Of course, this was well before the internet was a regular thing, and Google wasn't even an idea yet. Eventually, I had enough information to conduct my first ops session. It was a big learning curve, and I made a lot of refinements early on to make each session go smoother than the last.

As I refined my operational scheme, I remembered there was an NMRA Achievement certificate for Chief Dispatcher. After looking at the requirements, I modeled my railroad's record-keeping on those criteria. Even though I hadn't formally decided to start my journey to Master Model Railroader®, I was on the road toward it, even if I didn't realize it.

After quite a few ops sessions, several of my operators and I realized we were within reach of the Chief Dispatcher certificate. We decided we would meet together to go over the other requirements and try to work alongside each other in support of getting the certificate. I held a clinic one afternoon where I discussed the other requirements and how to complete them. During the clinic, each attendee designed their own ops format and schedule and worked on the other

items needed for Chief Dispatcher. Since I was the keeper of the operating hours, I provided each attendee with their hours and dates of participation in each of the five areas. Soon, we had all our materials ready, and we submitted our first AP packet to the Division AP Chair. On April 1, 2009, four of us were awarded our Chief Dispatcher certificates.

Soon after, about eight of us met to discuss if we wanted to work on more certificates. The idea being that, through workshops, we would complete the work individually but work alongside each other to motivate us to keep moving forward. We decided that was a good idea since it is easier to focus on the work when others are working alongside you rather than on your own. What followed over the next few years were additional certificates in 2010. Shortly afterward, the interest level declined a bit, and we lost a few of the original group. We rekindled our interest again in 2015 as we worked on the Engineer Civil certificate. We came up with a standard board design to build our civil components. We ordered in bulk the supplies and jigs needed for the tasks at hand. Spreading the cost of parts out on a large order of supplies saved us some money. Then we set up a series of workshops to get us started on the construction of the components. We didn't finish the certificate requirements together, but each participant eventually completed all the requirements between 2016 and 2018.

There was another lull in my pursuit of the MMR®, but then COVID hit hard in 2020, and I found myself at my computer writing articles and gathering previously written and published materials to apply toward the Model Railroad Author certificate. In July 2020, I received my Author certificate.

With six certificates under my belt, only Master Builder – Cars was left. Somehow this one intimidated me the most. But after attending a couple of clinics on how to construct cars for the certificate, I realized it was doable. Again, three of us decided to work to complete the four scratchbuilt cars. We agreed on which four cars we would build and ordered all the needed supplies in bulk. Then we set aside Mondays for car workshops. Sitting side-by-side, we worked piece-by-piece to construct each car. Having others around you doing the same thing made a big difference. We would break for lunch and then resume

for a few more hours in the afternoon. Often, we would work individually on the cars throughout the week and reconvene on Monday to see where each of us was. Doing it in a workshop format really helped keep us all on track and move faster than if we had worked alone. It was a motivator as well as a social outing, and it made what, at first, seemed daunting very doable.

In September 2022, our cars were judged, and all our paperwork was submitted for our Master Builder – Cars certificate, as well as our MMR®. In early October, we received official notification we had achieved both.

The Achievement Program is designed to not only evaluate your skills but to encourage you to improve upon them. I feel that I have risen to a higher level of skill sets because of my involvement in the Achievement Program. I also thank all those who worked beside me and kept me on track as well as those

who had their MMR® and provided invaluable advice and guidance along the way. Those of special note who were instrumental in keeping me moving along are Mat Thompson (MMR®), Ernie Little (MMR®), and Pete LaGuardia (MMR®). If they didn't take an interest in my progress, I might have taken a siding somewhere and tied down my train. Thanks, guys!

With my MMR® under my belt, it is now time to get back to my layout and finish up some more projects now that I have newfound skills. After all, a model railroad is never finished.

Certificates Earned Robert B. Rodriguez, MMR #718

Chief Dispatcher
Master Builder – Scenery
Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
Association Volunteer
Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
Model Railroad Author
Master Builder – Cars

MMR EARNED

JOHN WITT

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER #707

I come from a railroading family — more precisely, a Milwaukee Road family from Portage, Wisconsin. My great-great-grandfather, August Witt, was in the mechanical shop. I have a turn-of-the-century photo (1898) of him with a 4-4-0 engine on the Portage roundhouse turntable. August's son Charlie also worked in the shop, and his son George was an engineer on the *Hiawatha* passenger trains.

On my grandmother's side, my great-great-grandfather was John W. Blossingham. His family was on the operations side and included his sons and cousins. John started as a dispatcher in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and worked throughout the state, ending up in Avery, Idaho, on the Milwaukee Road Pacific Division.

My father, Herb Witt Jr., joined The Milwaukee Road part-time prior to graduating from high school. His cousin, Albert Blossingham, taught him to be a telegraph operator at the Portage station. On third shift, Dad would re-send telegrams to local stations under the watchful eye of Albert.

When World War II started, my dad joined the 721 Railroad Battalion and



shipped out in 1942 to India to help the British in Pakistan move critical supplies from ships to the front lines in Burma. Dad was a proud member of the CBI (China, Burma, and India) Army group.

Dad returned from the war in late 1945 and rejoined The Milwaukee Road. He was a station agent up and down the line near Portage and, finally, West Allis,

a Milwaukee suburb. Dad left the railroad in 1954.

As a child, I received trains for Christmas: first, an American Flyer, then a Revell HO 0-6-0 steam engine. Dad and I built some running layouts and had hours of fun!

When my wife Connie and I moved to Ohio, I started building Campbell

buildings and LaBelle car kits. I started a layout in house number one, moved some of it to house number two, and some to house number three (the last house!).

Throughout the moves, I have stayed with my fictional layout — The Copper Peninsula Railroad — which is located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (UP). The Keweenaw Peninsula is at the top of the UP and runs from Copper Harbor at the northeast tip down to Hancock at the ship canal in the middle.

My layout is set in 1895 to 1910 and uses 4-4-0s, 0-6-0s, and Heisler steam locomotives, along with "Roundhouse" old-timer cars (34- and 36-footers). Copper is king on this layout, with lumber and fish also shipped. Historically, the mines in this area accounted for most of the copper used in the USA, with 23 active mines going as deep as a mile below Lake Superior.

My Copper Peninsula RR moves freight from Hancock to Calumet to Eagle Harbor and Copper Harbor. We also move some commodities to L'Anse, just to have interconnections to Lake Superior and Ishpeming, and the Milwaukee Road.

I enjoyed building the layout but never really held operating sessions. Trains were DC and mostly circled the layout. I

continued to be a "lone wolf" modeler until my friend Brian Barnt encouraged me to join the NMRA (Division 4) and convert to DCC.

My Master Model Railroader® story does not start with trains in my childhood — it starts with moving forward from a basement layout to joining the NMRA and Division 4. Lots of people helped me along my journey.

First, I needed to convert my engines to DCC. Frank Feko and Larry Madsen really helped me understand how to install and program the DCC decoders.

Then I joined the Module Group, whose primary focus is to expand the hobby to others while having the maximum amount of fun running trains! The entire team is very supportive and welcoming of new module modelers. Scott, Adam, Lee, Gary, Jeff, Bill, David, Tim, Steve, John, Jerry, and several others helped me with module ideas and signed me up for many fun hours of running trains for the public.

Then I began entering model-building contests, encouraged by Joe Filipiak. When I compared my models against some of our really great modelers like Jim Grell and Dave Lawler, I knew there was more to learn. John Hemsath encouraged me to get started down the MMR®

path and try to achieve a few awards. (The paperwork was daunting!)

I began by upgrading my home layout, fixing trackwork, adding a turntable, completing and putting signs on buildings, then adding more trees for scenery and building interior lighting. Then I started on the specific categories.

Now that the eight MMR® achievement units are complete, I am a Master Model Railroader®.

The next area to learn is operations, with the help of John, Joe, Brian, Larry, Gary, and Ron.

There is always more to do and learn. Thanks to all who helped me along the journey.

Feel free to ask me to help you achieve more from your modeling and have more fun!

Certificates Earned John Witt, MMR #707

- Master Builder – Cars
- Master Builder – Structures
- Master Builder – Scenery
- Model Railroad Engineer – Civil
- Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical
- Chief Dispatcher
- Association Volunteer

MMR EARNED

JAMES A. WHATLEY

EARNs

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER #720

I, too, received my first train set (a Triang-Hornby clockwork) at age five, and you can probably guess the rest! Around that time, I was also given the excellent children's book "The How and Why Wonder Book of Electricity," and thus began my two life passions.

I joined the NMRA in 1971 at age 12 and lived within the Niagara Frontier Region for most of my membership. Shortly after joining, I met the late Dave Roberts of Toronto, who was the NFR Model Contest Chair at that time. Dave was a very skilled tool and die maker and became an excellent mentor, sharing several modelmaking techniques and lots of advice with me. Dave gave seminars at local meets, and one memorable one was "Car Building Tips and Techniques." I particularly recall his recommended



procedure for mixing 5-minute epoxy, a method I have continued to use for the past 50 years. [Dispense two equal measures side-by-side on a scrap of cardboard. Look straight down to verify the overall diameters are the same. Look sideways to verify the heights are also the same. Adjust as necessary. Mix with one toothpick. Apply with another toothpick in case the one used for mixing contains unmixed residue.] Under Dave's tutelage, I earned my first two merit awards for a pair of CNR boxcars: a Taylor kit and a scratchbuilt. Later, I earned the Cars AP certificate.

At age 16, I joined The Model Railroad Club of Toronto (MRCT) and was able to work on their considerable electrical installation. I eventually implemented a Centralized Traffic Control signal system, first with relays and later, in the pre-Arduino days, by programming a Commodore 64 computer in Assembly Language. All these activities helped me earn the Electrical and Dispatcher AP certificates.

I was also an NFR - International Division member and attended many of their seminars. In January 1996, I met Alan Welch of Toronto, who presented an excellent clinic on working with brass. Al is a mechanical engineer, and he subsequently taught me how to solder with a two-gas miniature jeweler's torch, which opened the door to the field of rebuilding brass steam engines. Al also mentored me in resin casting and, more recently, laser-cutting, among other techniques.

I would also like to acknowledge the many others in the NMRA whose work and encouragement have influenced me, especially Ron Tuff, MMR®, and Dave Paterson, MMR®, of the HO Society of Model Engineers in Hamilton, Ontario. Bob Boudreau and Gerry Gilliland of the Saint John Society of Model Railroaders, whom I have known for at least 35 years, have also had an influence on my modelmaking.

Professionally, I studied to become an electrical engineer and spent my career at Ontario Hydro (later Hydro One) in Toronto. With the demands of work, my AP progress was relatively slow, although I managed to additionally earn the Author and Volunteer Certificates, leaving two more for post-retirement.

A visit to the Elgin County Railway Museum in St. Thomas, Ontario, led me to build a fully scratchbuilt model of

London and Port Stanley Railway electric locomotive L1, complete with working pantographs. This model was my third locomotive project undertaken with sufficient scope to earn a Merit Award, leading to the Motive Power Certificate in 2020. From time to time, I also built structures and finally completed the requirements for AP Structures in October 2022, with a scratchbuilt model of the Apohaqui, New Brunswick, CNR station.

While participating within the Niagara Frontier Region, I served as a Model Contest Judge, Assistant Model Contest Chair, and eventually Model Contest Chair. Later, I served on the NFR - International Division board, helping with their various activities. I also presented clinics from time to time.

In the fall of 2020, I had the chance to move home to Atlantic Canada, and I now live in Moncton, New Brunswick. At that time, my membership was transferred to the NER - Eastern Canada Division, where I was warmly welcomed. I was asked to serve on the ECD Board and, more recently, as the Division's AP Chair. I also help organize our monthly third Thursday Zoom seminar series.

Participating in the AP has been interesting indeed, and it now seems very anticlimactic to have reached the goal of MMR®. For me, this has been an interesting journey, with many friendships made through the NMRA, many seminars attended, and many techniques learned. I truly believe in the AP philosophy of

challenging yourself to try new things in the hobby.

I hope the NMRA and especially the AP will continue to gain the attention of young people, as I believe there is a close synergy with STEM education. I was fortunate to have had the incentive and exposure to start learning about and solving technical problems at a young age. For example, through model railroading, particularly the writings of the late Linn Westcott, I learned the basics of how transistors work before formally encountering this subject in school.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the encouragement of my late parents, Allan and Carol Whatley, for providing their unconditional support and providing opportunities for me to develop my hobby and career interests. I would also like to thank my wife, Annette, for her unflinching support and encouragement.

**Certificates Earned
James A. Whatley, MMR #720**

- Master Builder - Cars**
- Master Builder - Structures**
- Master Builder - Motive Power**
- Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical**
- Chief Dispatcher**
- Association Volunteer**
- Model Railroad Author**

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2022 50-YEAR NMRA ANNIVERSARY

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