



The Yardmaster

Southwestern Michigan Division



December 2023

Website: www.ncr-div9.com



This month's train photo was provided by Joel Pyard.

Featured Articles this Month:

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Non-Train Related Holidays & Special Events - December

- **Pearl Harbor Day 12/7**
- **First Day of Winter 12/21**
- **Christmas 12/25**
- **New Years Eve 12/31**



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Editor's Comments

I hope you notice the train picture appearing on the front page, which was submitted by Joel Pyard. He has quite a few photos on display at the Illinois Railroad Museum. If you would like to see more his work please click on the link below.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12f9Gspf0Mhcd960swo51bfWp6EQDZOxC?usp=drive> link

If you have a photo or photos that you would like displayed in future issues of the Yardmaster, please email them to me.

alanwbau@gmail.com

I am hoping we get a lot of pictures to choose from each month.

In this edition I have included a few photos that are relative to the season and not particularly related to Model Railroading.



Division 9 Officers

Superintendent	- Garry Johnson	elecsprk@gmail.com
Assistant Superintendent	- Joel Pyard	pyardj@comcast.net
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Scribe & Newsletter Editor	- Alan Bau	alanwbau@gmail.com
Trustee	- Doug Van Meter	vanmeterda@gmail.com
Trustee	- Casey Bartman	Casey@GR-MI.com



First Day of Winter is December 21st.



Upcoming Division Nine Membership Meetings & Events:

Meetings & Events	Date	Location	Presenter & Topic
Membership Meeting & Layout Tour of Dave Vinci's layout	Saturday December 16 th @ 9:30AM	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	Joel Pyard GR&I Part 2
Board Meeting	January 7 th 2:00 PM	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	
Membership Meeting & Layout Tour at KMRHS Club	Saturday January 20 th 9:30 AM	Kalamazoo Bridge Club	Presentation on the Grand Elk Railroad by Chadd Thimesch General Manager

Meeting Location Addresses

Kalamazoo Bridge Club: 648 Maple Hill Drive Kalamazoo, Mi. Driving Directions on next page	Colonial Kitchen 330 N. Drake Road Kalamazoo, Mi.
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December 18th Membership Meeting at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club

Joel Pyard will be presenting part 2 of his presentation on the GR&I Railroad. If you recall Joel presented part 1 last December. At the conclusion of the Membership meeting we are invited to a layout tour at Dave Vinci's. His address is 51065 Oak Drive in Kalamazoo.

January 20th Membership Meeting at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club

Presentation on the Grand Elk Railroad by General Manager Chadd Thimesch. We have then been invited to attend a layout tour of the Kalamazoo Model Railroad Historical Society located at 9336 North Riverview Drive.

February 17th – Location Kalamazoo Bridge Club

Andy Keeney will be making a presentation on Model Railroad Operations.

March 16th – Layout Tour & Op Session

Layout tour of Andy Keeney's layout, followed by an Operating Session. Andy's address is 6850 W. Herbison Rd., Dewitt, Mi.



Driving Directions to the Kalamazoo Bridge Club

Kalamazoo Bridge Club
648 Maple Hill Drive
Kalamazoo, Mi. 49009

The Kalamazoo Bridge Club is located in the West Main Place Shopping Mall at 648 Maple Hill Drive in Kalamazoo, Michigan, 49009.

We are located near the Rt. 131 and (M43) West Main Street interchange. Exit Rt.131 onto West Main Street (Exit 38) going eastbound, turn south at the first traffic light (Maple Hill Drive) and drive to the south side of the West Main Place Mall which will be on your left, turn east and drive down the short hill and turn left (north), to suite # 648.

Maple Hill Drive is located between The Texas Corral Restaurant and Long John Silvers. Remember to turn South off of West Main Street.



Southwestern Michigan Division meets with Michiana Division

On November 11, 2023, I "crossed the border lines" between the North Central Region (Division 9) and the Midwest Region (Michiana Division) to attend one of their meetings. Michiana members Ron Christenson and Greg Buelmann put on two great presentations on completing the requirements for the AP Award on Model Railroad Engineer - Electrical for model railroaders, which is a part of the Master Model Railroader (MMR) program. Yes, I learned a lot! In addition, I got to tour three interesting layouts in the Stevensville, MI area. Three brief reports and photos from the layouts are included in this newsletter.

I really recommend that model railroaders experience what other model railroaders are doing in other Regions and Divisions! Take time to find out what they are doing and where they are meeting and go and attend!

Rich Mahaney
NMRA NCR President



Upcoming Train Shows

Recently, subscribers to the Train Show List received the following email announcing some significant changes were taking place.

Train Show List

The full list of shows is available here on the brand new website, which allows you to subscribe and submit your events directly. More features will be coming soon!

<https://www.trainshowlist.com>

Given that we are reaching almost 1000 subscribers every other week, please consider making a donation as part of your event's marketing budget. Please visit the TrainShowList site and donate via PayPal. Thank you for your support!

If you click on the above link <https://www.trainshowlist.com>, you will see the following information about the new website.

Welcome to the Train Show List!

The Train Show List was originally created by Ken Skopp and Bill Abraham of the Grand River Valley Model Railroad Club. This new website replaces the old spreadsheet and allows for more automated submission and management of both events and subscribers. New features will be added to the site as time goes on.

The emailed list has also been automated and has been switched to a weekly send instead of bi-weekly.

Please send feedback to **updates@trainshowlist.com** as to how we can improve this service.

Thank you!
Bill, Chuck & Eric

On the left side of the page, there is a series of selections that provide you access to a lot of information or allow you to take certain actions. These selections are displayed below along with a brief description.

About this site – You will be directed to the paragraph displayed in the previous page of this newsletter.

Show Listings – Date, Event Name, Location, Actions.

Choosing the action button you will find more detailed information about the event, including:

- Event Name
- Event Details – dates, location address, a link to Google Maps
- Contact Information
- Link to the Event Website
- Date of last update.

Advertise – Allows you to advertise your event.

Add an Event – Allows users to add events to the list.

Subscribe – Allows you to subscribe to the weekly newsletter.

Donate - Allows you to make a donation to help cover the expense of maintaining the website.

Starting with the December Yardmaster, the list of upcoming shows has been replaced with a link to the Train Show Website. The web address is displayed below. To see the details click on this link. <https://www.trainshowlist.com>.

There are several benefits to be gained by replacing the Train Show List with a link to the new website. The information will be more up-to-date, there are more details available, there is a direct link to google maps if you need driving directions, the chance of making an error in copying the information over to the newsletter is minimized and the time involved in creating each edition of the Yardmaster is reduced.



NMRA NCR – Division

Membership Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2023

Colonial Kitchen

Attendees In-person:

Garry Johnson, Bob Lawrence, Jim Fankhauser, Greg Stonerock, Dick DeVisser, Bob Provot, Rich Mahaney, Joel Pyard, Alan Bau, Greg Marvin

Attendees via Zoom: Dave Vinci, Doug VanMeter, Doug Harding (Presenter)

Meeting was called to order by Superintendent Garry Johnson at 10:02 AM

Officer Reports:

Superintendent – Garry Johnson reported that he has missed that last few events as he is dealing with some personal family issues. Garry also told the group that he had 4 Locomotives supporting the military on display at the meeting. Pictures are on display on page # of this issue.

Assistant Superintendent – Joel Pyard – nothing new to report.

Paymaster – Bob Lawrence reported that we have a change in name on our bank account. This was done to recognize our organization as a small business, eliminating us from certain bank charges.

Scribe -Alan Bau – Reported that our submission for the Winter Hotbox Newsletter has been submitted to the editor.

Minutes for the October Board Meeting and the September Membership Meeting were included in the November Yardmaster. The December Membership Meeting will be held at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club.

Upcoming Schedule of Events – Rich Mahaney

- At the conclusion of our business meeting, Doug Harding made a presentation on Icing Operations and the Railroad Industry. We are also invited to attend a layout tour at Dick DeVisser's house.
- **Membership Meeting Schedule**
 - December 16th at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club - Joel Pyard on the GR&I Part 2 followed by tour of Dave Vinci's layout.
 - January 20th at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club – Discussion with a representative of the Grand Elk Railroad on the status and future of the railroad. This program is tentative at the time these minutes were prepared and will be confirmed or updated as information becomes available. A layout tour of the Kalamazoo Historical Model Railroad Club follows.
 - February 17th at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club - Andy Keeney will present a review on model railroad operations.
 - March 16th – Layout tour of Andy Keener's layout followed by an Operating Session.

- Other Information presented by Rich.
 - Our participation in the October Kalamazoo Train Show was quite successful. We have added 12 potential members to our Yardmaster Newsletter Distribution List.
 - The 2024 NCR Convention will be held in Northville, Mi. this year.
 - The July 2025 NMRA National Convention will be held in Novi Mi.
 - Santa Claus will be making a visit to the Kalamazoo Historical Model Railroad Club on Saturday Dec. 9th

Other Business:

- A discussion on the success of our involvement in the Kalamazoo Train Show revealed that we want to participate in future local train shows.
- Rich Mahaney suggested that we allocate some money to create a Poster Board regarding Division 9 Activities for future train shows and other events to promote Division 9. A motion was made by Jim Fankhauser and 2nd by Greg Stonerock to create a Division 9 Poster for train shows and other events. Motion passed. Rich Mahaney will store the poster at his house and make it available to other members & organizations.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 10:33 AM.

- Doug Harding presented a clinic on Icing Operations and the Railroad.
- After Doug’s presentation – we were all invited to tour Dick DeVisser’s house and see his layout.

Respectfully Submitted:

Alan Bau

Division 9 Scribe & Newsletter Editor



For Sale Items

Do you have an excess inventory of cars, supplies, etc. which are just taking up space and most likely will never be used? You can list these items here and try to sell them, so you can buy more train stuff.



To list your for-sale items here, send your list of items along with a picture if one is available, a description of your item(s) along with your asking price and contact information. If you wish your item(s) to be listed in the upcoming newsletter, you need to submit them along with needed information no later than the 25th of the month.

Send your information to alanwbau@gmail.com.



Photos of Garry Johnson's Military & First Responder Locomotives

Garry Johnson brought these 4 locomotives and put them on display at our November Membership Meeting. All of these locomotives have a theme saluting our Military or First Responders.

Photos were taken by Rich Mahaney



Ask Dave – December 2023

Question: Are Snubbers at the end of a bus line really necessary? My research reflects both yes and no answers. Do you have a strong opinion either way?

Dave's Response:

There are a lot of opinions about snubbers. There are a number of factors that the snubber is supposed to correct that involve distortion of the digital signal. Some of this is difficult to follow if you are not an electrical engineer. At the bottom you'll find some articles that have technical information. I think for most applications, you should follow the advice of the system manufacturer you have chosen.

Here's what NCE says about snubbers:

"At the end of long buses, the square wave of the DCC signal can become distorted and cause excessive voltage that could potentially damage a decoder. NCE Corp. suggests placing a snubber, shown in **figure 1 at right, at the end of a long bus.**

Digitrax doesn't recommend using a snubber on its system.

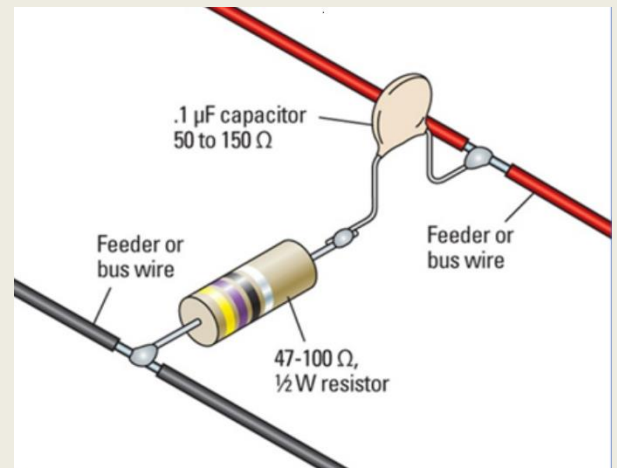
Testing. As you wire your layout, frequently test your work by shorting the rails together at different locations. Your DCC booster should shut down. If it doesn't, check to make sure you have enough track feeders.

Dividing your track bus (and the track above it) into electrically isolated sections that are powered by additional boosters or protected by DCC circuit breakers will make it easier to diagnose short circuits."

I have an NCE dcc system with the track bus split into 2 lengths, one each way, of about 40 ft each with a snubber on the end of each one. I am not as familiar with Digitrax so, I don't know why they don't recommend snubbers.

At the risk of going down the rabbit hole, I think there are a few dcc wiring conventions that help maintain the integrity of the digital signal which is what we're looking at.

Track buss wire: I like No 12 stranded wire as it has the benefits of being flexible and resistant to breakage and nicking when stripping. The larger size has less voltage drop. This size is generally recommended for runs of 20ft or more but it is dependent on scale and amperage see the table below.



Snubbers. A capacitor and resistor in series can help dampen the distortion of DCC signals. NCE Corp. recommends a 0.1µF capacitor and a 1/2-watt resistor somewhere around 50 to 150Ω.

Figure 1

Scale	Bus Length			Feeder Length	
	<21 ft	21-40 ft	>40 ft	<5 ft	<10 ft
G	12	10	8	16	14
O					
S					
HO	14	12-14		18-22	18-20
N	16	14	12	18-22	18-20

Figure 2 - Recommended Wire Sizes

Twisting the Track Buss wire: This serves 2 functions, first it reduces the impedance by minimizing the inductive properties of the wires (read that as maintaining the digital signal). Second, it looks better. Some folks say it isn't necessary, but I think it makes it easier to keep some separation between the command bus and the track bus (some sources say 4 to 12" apart). One source I read noted that untwisted track bus wires will "induce" a voltage into another pair/single wire if it is too close and parallel to the track bus wiring. Twisting is not about voltage drop.

The twisting the wires also creates capacitance which makes a leakage path for the dcc signal thus degrading it. Over twisting should be avoided as that increases the capacitance, so, how much to twist? Anywhere between 1 to 3 twists per foot. From what I have read, the idea is to keep the two wires of the Track bus as close together as practical which can be by twisting or by using wire zip ties to keep them together. Both methods have been reported to work equally well with the zip ties being easier to separate them for feeder drops, especially if you are using suitcase connectors.

Divide the track plan into blocks: This makes it easier to install track detection. Also, cut both rails and install insulated rail joiners. It is recommended to attach the feeders to the center of each block as opposed to at just one end.

There is a lot more to this if you want to really get into how the dcc actually works. For the most part the best advice I can give is: **Read the instructions** that come with the systems, circuit boards, circuit breakers, auto-reversing boards, etc. Most manufacturers have well documented their products and the included instructions will give you good results, if you follow them. It is possible and easy to let the smoke out of boards, decoders and other devices if you don't read the instructions. Ask me how I know that.

I hope that helps.

Further Reading for those wishing to go down the rabbit hole:

[Designing RC snubbers](#)

[Resistor-Capacitor \(RC\) Snubber Design for Power Switches](#)



Rich's Travels

Rich Mahaney travels around quite a bit and likes to take train photos as evidenced by the photos on the next few pages. Rich takes all of the photos included in this column.

If you are modeling Pere Marquette Railroad cabooses for your model railroad layout, there are quite a few of them on display in west Michigan to get photos for accurate color, painting, PM logos, measurements, etc. These PM cabooses I photographed at the following locations:

1. Holland, MI, by the old train station
2. Grand Haven, MI in the downtown train display
3. Muskegon, MI by the old train station
4. Owosso, MI at the SRI museum with other cabooses

Rich Mahaney



CSX Train

Saw this CSX train heading through Holland. Also stopped in Grand Haven for a few photos of the PM 1223 and the train display there in the park.

I was out doing caboose photos for another project for some friends in Canada. Stopped for caboose photos at Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegon, Whitehall, Grant, Sparta, Ravenna, Coopersville and Comstock Park. The weather was nice for a day out drive and trip!

Rich Mahaney



Locomotive & Tank Cars

Saw this train in Muskegon with several hazmat tank cars, it went on to North Muskegon after passing through downtown Muskegon and their railroad yard. Nothing like some nitric acid and other corrosives.



8 Hatch Reefer

On November 14, Jill and I took off for a cross country trip for railroad photos for several projects I am working on. In Port Huron, we visited the south side of the Port Huron CN yard (1904 32nd St) to view an old Port Huron and Detroit (PH&D) caboose that is on display. And sitting right next to it is an old 8 hatch reefer car. 8 hatch refrigerator cars were popular with the CN and CP railroads, but never really caught on here in the United States. You can purchase these 8 hatch reefer cars from some Canadian manufacturers and then can be found on eBay for sale. I have several of these HO refrigerator cars in my refrigerator car collection. The refrigerator car sitting next to the caboose is a GTW 8 hatch refrigerator car, it had been sitting in Holland, MI for some 40 years and was being used for storage at a business. It is GTW #206447 and was built in Renton, WA in 1955 and was probably used until approximately 1972 or 1973. The PH&D Historical Society is trying to restore this refrigerator car and the caboose, and they sit next to the old PH&D office building in Port Huron.

Rich Mahaney



This photo to the right was not taken by Rich Mahaney



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Ron Christenson Layout Photos

This layout owned by Ron Christenson uses what are called or known as "cartridges or cassettes" to bring railroad cars on to or off of his layout. These are "staging yards or staging tracks" for model railroad cars. I have seen model railroads use car floats or car ferries to also do this for their model railroads. These boards and tracks attach to the layout for their use. This is an easy way to add "staging tracks" to a layout where there is limited room for staging yards. These boards and tracks attach to Ron's layout near a yard.

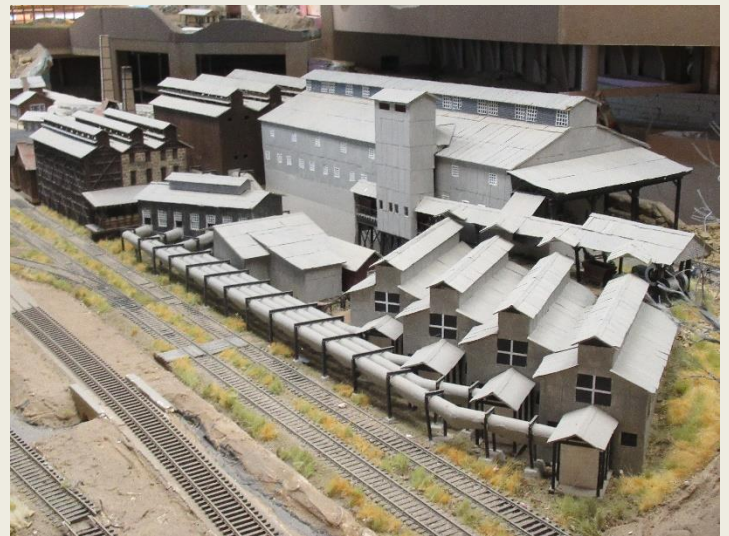
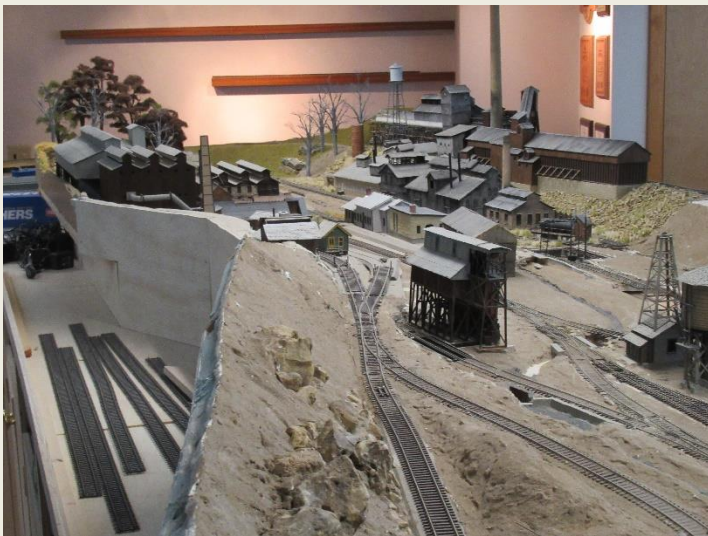
Rich



This Stevensville area layout is owned by Rod Thomson.

Rod is modeling the zinc mining and refining of lead and zinc in the Mineral Point area of WI. Rod's layout has a large model of a zinc plant and Rod has done extensive research of the refining process and manufacturing process of zinc to make zinc oxide and sulfuric acid. The plant is scratch built and takes a large spot on his layout, which is still under construction. There are some large pipes attached to this plant model which add an interesting visual impact. Rod has a number of small zinc mines on the layout to feed the industry its needed raw materials. While you look at the models, Ron can explain the industrial processes used to produce zinc oxide and sulfuric acid. Rod has been modeling buildings on his layout from the original photos of Mineral Point. The real Mineral Point, WI still has a variety of reasons to visit there for its history, the old railroad station, its Cornish people (came from Cornwall England to do mining) and culture and historic buildings. Rod has even modeled the trees with damaged or no foliage due to the harmful vapors coming from the plant manufacturing processes.

Rich



John Nye's Layout Photos

This large Stevensville, MI area layout actually has an operating "hump yard" on it for sorting out railroad cars for its yard. The owner and builder is John Nye and he has an interest in modeling several railroads on his layout that interconnect with each other. The Great Northern Railway has a predominate place on the layout. There is a railroad yard that is built on a peninsula which has a working "hump yard" as part of a yard. While I was touring the layout, there was a demonstration of how it works. Pretty neat and pretty good ideas!

Rich



Here are a couple of photos of the entrance to the CN Railroad tunnel that goes to Sarnia, Canada. It is pretty good for taking photos when you have a western sun lighting up the tunnel entrance. Don't hang around very long taking photos as I am sure CN and the US Homeland Security have camera watching everything. These photos were taken just east of the Port Huron Amtrak/CN train station parking lot. You can always stand at the Amtrak station to park and take photos of trains going east or west bound.

Rich Mahaney



Steam Locomotives

On a nice weather day, it is always nice to go to Grand Haven, MI and down along the Grand River as it heads to Lake Michigan visit the display of Pere Marquette equipment on display. There is steam engine PM 1223 (a sister or brother to the PM 1225 that is in Owosso at the SRI), a 50-foot PM box car, a PM caboose and a GTW caboose. Next to all of this is the old GTW coaling tower in the old GTW yard. Not far away to the east is one of my favorite old PM train stations (now a law office, back by the still in service tracks) and further to the west is the old GTW train station that is now the city of Grand Haven Museum at the west end of downtown Grand Haven. There are plenty of places to shop and eat in downtown Grand Haven plus the railroad displays and stations.

Rich Mahaney



Steam Railroad Institute

On a recent trip, Jill and I stopped at the Steam Railroading Institute (SRI) in Owosso for a couple of photos of the Pere Marquette 1225 steam locomotive for another project I am working on for some Canadian friends and to see an old friend Dean Pyers, who is now the Executive Director of the SRI. Dean served on the Board of the Northcentral Region of the NMRA for a number of years. For years, you could find Dean riding in the passenger cars of the SRI PM 1225 steam train excursions helping visitors. The PM 1225 steam engine is currently pulling train trips with holiday travelers between Owosso and Ashley, MI until the end of December. All of the seats are sold out, but there are great photo opportunities of the PM 1225 with smoke and exhaust blowing out as the train runs in and between Owosso and Ashley. We will stop for action photos of the train on Dec 3, on our way home from teaching in Traverse City, MI. Remember the PM 1225 is the train engine source for the train in the movie the "Polar Express".

Rich Mahaney



November Clinic Recap

Doug Harding presented another great Zoom clinic for Division 9 on November 18th to a group of Division 9 members both at the Colonia Pancake Restaurant and more people online (including David Gunn, all of the way from Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia). Doug's presentation looked at where does the ice used for refrigerator cars comes from, the actual process of icing refrigerator cars with ice and salt, different designs of icing docks, the use of ice in refrigerator car bunkers and on the top of products, pre-icing, final icing and in route icing and the tools used for icing activities and operations. Doug also talked about the variety of places that the railroad could deliver ice to beyond the ice used for cooling refrigerator cars. It was very interesting and as always Doug presented a great clinic! Below are a few photos related to Doug's presentation.

Rich Mahaney



**Looking for that last minute gift for your favorite modeler?
Here's a couple of suggestions.**



The Kalamazoo Model Railroad Historical Society has just taken delivery of a new HO club car that is for sale for \$32 each. Contact Jim Glenn at btrailroad@sbcglobal.net or the Kalamazoo Model Railroad Historical Society on their website.



The NRC Division 3 in Fort Wayne, IN is selling a new HO box car for the Division for \$35 each. The car has the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad ("The Fishing Line", cool logo) which traveled through MI north and south through Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids to all of the way up north. For this car you can check out the NMRA NCR Division 3 website or contact División Superintendent Bob Jones at broadwaylimited15@yahoo.com.



Wrap-up For Another Month

As I am writing this the weather is 50 degrees and sunny. Last month it was snowing like crazy. Strange!

I would like to thank all those that have contributed to the Yardmaster during the last year. This newsletter wouldn't be possible without your many contributions. Thank you so much for your help. I sincerely hope we can continue this for a long time.



That's it for 2023, I hope you like the Yardmaster. If you have any comments, suggestions, etc. please let me know. Hope to see you at the December Membership Meeting on December 16th at the Kalamazoo Bridge Club.

One final point. All of us on the Division 9 Board wish you the merriest Christmas possible, Stay Safe and have a Great New Year and remember the reason for the season.

alanwbau@gmail.com

Alan Bau
Divisions 9 Scribe & Newsletter Editor

