



MAINE 3 RAILERS

M3R CLUB NEWSLETTER FOR FEBRUARY 2026

Our Next Meeting is Thursday Evening, February 12, 2026, at 7:00PM on Zoom. Watch for an invitation and link to join from our Club Secretary, Dana Lindsey.

CLUB HEADLINE NEWS

- Club Train and Doll House Show 10am-2pm, Valentines Day in Augusta
- MOT Shines at The Highlands
- MOT has Sweet Time at Wilbur's Chocolate Factory Store



President's Message - Full Steam Ahead into February by Bernie Pender

As we roll into February, I hope everyone is staying warm and finding plenty of time to work on their layouts, projects, and collections. Winter provides the perfect opportunity to focus on our hobby, whether it's building new scenery, fine-tuning models, or finally organizing those collections. There is nothing quite like the satisfaction of watching a train glide smoothly around the track as we put the finishing touches on a long-term project.

The Heart of the Maine 3 Railers

I want to encourage everyone to take pride in the community we've built. The friendships, knowledge-sharing, and support we've cultivated together are the heart of what makes this club so special. We aren't just collectors; we are caretakers of a great tradition.

Our Annual Show: All Hands-on Deck!

We are currently in high-gear preparing for our **Annual Model Train Show**. The Club depends on all members helping to make this event a success. Your input and physical presence are vital.

- **The Goal:** A seamless, professional show that celebrates our shared love of model trains.
- **The Challenge:** Let's show up in full force! I'm asking every active member to **reach out and bring another member to the show** who might not have been active lately.

Got an idea? If you have suggestions for upcoming meetings, activities, or ways to improve the show, don't hesitate to share them.

Together, we can keep our passion for model trains moving full speed ahead!

Bernie, President



Treasurer's Update: Dues Due NLT 02/28/2026 by Rick Hills

As a reminder, your annual club membership dues are requested by the end of February 2026. Annual Dues: \$20 Individual, \$25 Family, \$5 Youth

Please help us avoid the last-minute crunch and send your checks now to: Treasurer, M3R
PO Box 31, Amherst, NH 03031.



From the Editor **by Art Shean**

Through Rain, Snow, Sleet, or Hail the MOT Delivers!

While browsing on the internet, I came upon an article titled, “15 Once-Popular Hobbies That Practically No One Does Anymore.” It began with the following overview:

Remember when people spent their evenings sorting stamps or tuning into distant radio stations? The world of hobbies has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Many pastimes that once brought families together and filled free time have quietly faded away, replaced by smartphones, streaming services, and online activities.

The list included stamp collecting, coin collecting, ham radio operation, collecting autographs by mail, pen pals, shortwave radio monitoring, and you guessed it, **Model Train Collecting and Home Layouts**. Below is what they had to say about our hobby:

Model Train Collecting (Home Layouts)
Entire basements were transformed into miniature worlds where tiny trains chugged through detailed landscapes complete with towns, mountains, and working signals. Model train enthusiasts spent years building elaborate layouts, painting scenery, and perfecting every detail.

The hobby boomed after World War II when returning veterans had time and disposable income to invest in their passion.

Fathers and sons bonded over building track layouts and wiring electrical systems. Hobby shops dedicated entire floors to model trains, offering countless locomotives, cars, buildings, and accessories.

Clubs held exhibitions where members displayed their creations, competing for awards and admiring each other's craftsmanship.

Modern homes often lack the basement space needed for large layouts. The cost of quality model trains has increased significantly, making it an expensive hobby to start.

Younger generations gravitate toward video games and digital entertainment rather than hands-on building projects that take months or years to complete.

The hobby survives primarily among retirees who have the time, space, and money to maintain their layouts. Model train shops have closed in most communities, and manufacturers struggle to attract new collectors beyond nostalgic older adults.



Of course, their choice of box car added insult to injury. Unfortunately, a lot of what they wrote is correct. But when I was in the army at the start of a parade, I always had a hard time remembering if you stepped off with your left or right foot. Maybe that is why I am always out of step with the mainstream. I like to think that the Maine 3 Railers and the M3R Mobile Outreach Team in particular, march to the beat of a different drum.

Our doors are wide open, we left our cellars, and engage young, parents, and seniors in their backyards. No, our layouts may not be as refined and detailed as our predecessors, because we trumpet our hobby in person, in writing, and on the internet with the best. Yes, we use flashing

lights, sound, pictures, video, hands on, and lots of motion. But we are in competition with cell phones and video games.

Judging by the reaction we receive at our various venues, I think we are holding our own if not turning a few heads. Just think of the crowds we saw at the Cumberland Fair, our and other train shows, L.L. Bean, libraries, etc. Our next opportunity to impress is just around the corner.

See You at the M3R Model Train and Dollhouse Show, Valentines Day, February 14th. Bring a date, family, friends, and your entire neighborhood! Model Railroading is on the rise again in Maine and we are the catalyst to sustain its growth!

Don't Forget to share your next railroading experience with your fellow Club members by emailing your photos to me at ArtShean@comcast.net



2026 M3R Model Railroad & Dollhouse Show Update by Jeff Jacobs

The annual Model Railroad and Dollhouse show runs Feb 14th from 10AM to 2 PM at the Augusta Armory on Western Avenue, Augusta, ME.

Plans are coming together nicely. Richard Ridolfo reports the table rentals have come on strong as we near the 14th. Gene Thayer has our concession stand folks lined up and is working with Dan Nadeau, our Armory contact, on the Armory contract and details. Of particular concern was whether we would have 100 usable tables available. Dan reports that we have 120 to choose from. Our ad for the show is already appearing on the electronic Marquee in front of the building and Sam Carr has arranged insurance coverage for the event.

I distributed a task signup sheet which received great response from our members. Thanks to all who volunteered.

Art Shean has designed another scene filled display of O gauge trains near the entry.

Final show details will be covered at the February membership Zoom meeting at 7pm on the 12th of this month.

As usual the club will host a White Elephant sales table in the middle of the hall featuring M3R clothing, club cars, and used model railroad items. You may bring a few items to add to the table by contributing 20% of the sales price to the M3R club. Please be sure to share the table space with others.

This year we will have a seating area for club members to visit next to the food service area and the roll-up loading door.

We are expecting the usual large M3R member turnout so be sure to share the event with us and please tell your friends to visit us as well. See show flyer on page 30.

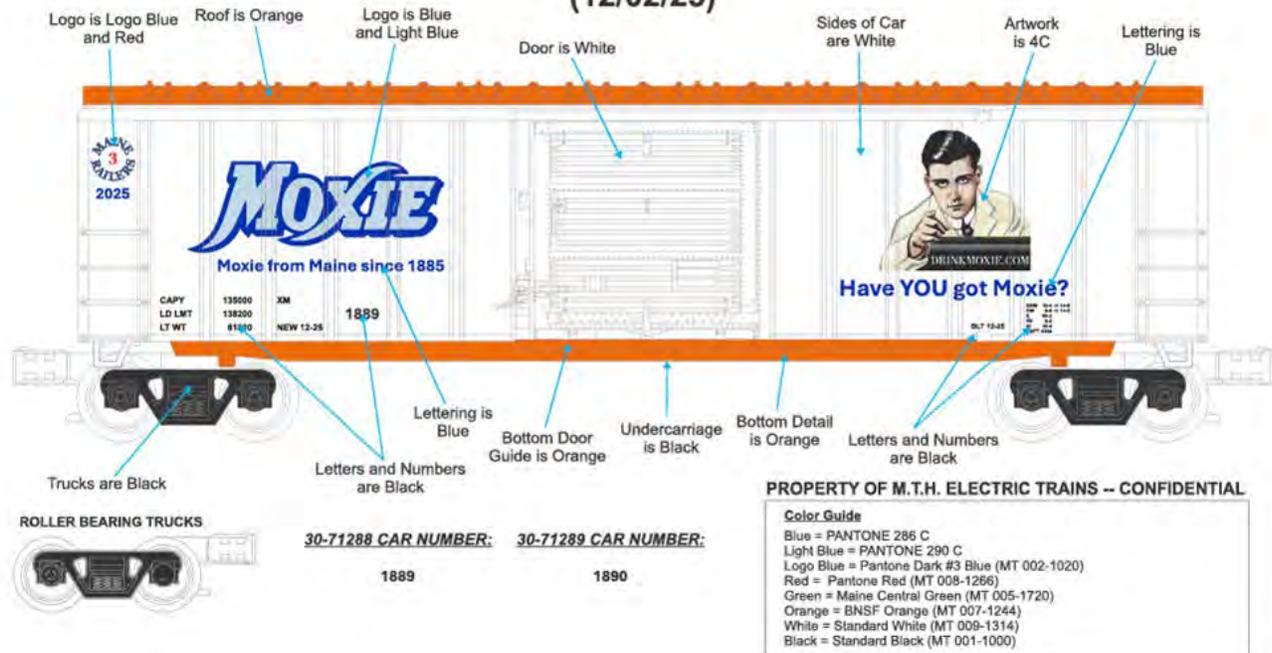


Club Car Committee Update - Some Good News and Some Bad by Richard Ridolfo

MTH provided final artwork for our 2025 Moxie Car. It is currently scheduled for March 2026, but I think it will miss that date. At present there are only a handful of cars left to sell. Should you want one, the price is \$75.00 with \$12.00 Shipping. Payment should be sent to:

Rick Hills
PO Box 31
Amherst NH 03031.

**RailKing - 2025 Special Projects (Maine 3-Railers)
Moxie - 50' Modern Boxcar (30-71288 & 30-71289)
Side View
(12/02/25)**



M3R YouTube Channel Update by Channel Master Carlton Spring

January saw the Mobile Outreach Team (MOT) busy again with two events. The first event was our annual visit to The Highlands in Topsham on January 15th. As in past years, this was a very well attended event as resident after resident visited us throughout our visit. The direct link to view the video is below.

Link to the 2026 visit to the Highlands: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Buss33a4cl0>

Our second event was our visit to Wilbur's Chocolates in Freeport on January 31st and February 1st. The biggest story of this year's visit was the COLD, both outside and in. Despite this, we had many visitors during both days who enjoyed the layout. We also tried running the trains differently. Check it out! The direct link for this video is below.

Link to the 2026 visit to Wilbur's Chocolates: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDnFb7KEFxl>



The Maine 3 Railers have Club Clothing Available for Purchase
by Dave Hodgkiss

Here are the current M3R clothing items for sale along with the newest pricing for them:



- Polo shirts -short sleeve - \$25 to size XL, \$30 for larger (dark blue)
- Denim shirts- Long Sleeve Blue- \$35 to size L, \$38 for XL, size XXL and XXXL \$43, Hats, with or without '25 years' - \$15



EVENT REPORTS:



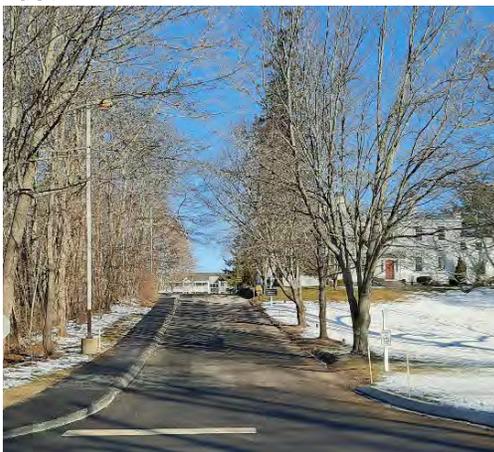
MOT Shines for Highlands Residents by Art Shean & Carlton Spring

The Mobile Outreach Team's (MOT's) first visit of 2026 was to The Highlands Senior Living in Topsham, ME on Thursday, January 15th. We arrived at 8 am, unloaded our vehicles and began setting up the 12x12 ft layout. This layout featured two independent track loops and two elevated trolley lines with elevated platforms, bridges, buildings, winter trees, roads, and vehicles. Interested residents arrived early to watch us complete set up. They continued arriving until we closed down and packed up at 3 o'clock. Overall, we had another wonderful visit with our friends at the Highlands.

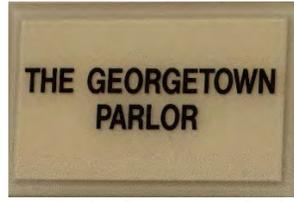


Venue

The Highlands is a senior living facility located on a picturesque former estate on Governors Way between the Topsham-Brunswick Bypass (Route 196) on the north, Elm Street in the Topsham Historic District on the south, the Topsham Fair Grounds on the east, and Main Street (Route 201) on the West.



Georgetown Parlor behind the Main Lobby Fireplace Wall



Multiple Columns in the Georgetown Parlor

A key architectural feature of the Georgetown Parlor is the numerous columns which enhance the room's esthetic appeal but create a significant challenge for the layout design. We decided to place the layout between two columns with the control table abutting one.

Layout

The final design included two independent track loops and two elevated trolley lines with elevated platforms, bridges, buildings, winter trees, roads, and vehicles.



- Location:** The Highlands Senior Living, 30 Governors Way, Topsham, ME 04086
- Setup:** 8-10am, January 15, 2026
- Ran Trains:** 10am-3pm, January 15, 2026
- Move Out:** 3-4:30pm, January 15, 2026
- Dimensions:** 12'x12', 120 square feet
- Tables:** 6 - 2.5'x6' Tables, 2-18"x48" Gap Fills, 1-24"x48" Raised Platform, & 1-2'x4' Control Table
- Track:** Two Independent Track Loops and Two Elevated Trolley Lines Using 92+ feet of Lionel FasTrack
- Bridges:** Two Elevated Trolley Platforms, four Lionel Elevated Trestle Sets, one 28" Double Track Wood Truss Bridge, one 40" Single Track Raised Three Span Truss Bridge, and one Single Road Street Girder Bridge
- Roads:** 39 feet of 6" Wide Asphalt
- Buildings:** Atlas -2, Carole Towne -6, Custom -1, Korber Models -1, Lemax -12, Lionel -1, Menards -18, & Woodland Scenics -6



Layout Highlights

When a layout is near Brunswick, ME, Doug Pollock demands that we display the model of the old Brunswick Town Hall with picture of the actual structure. We displayed this near his routine tribute to Veterans. Carlton's Market Basket Semi-Trailer was also on display.



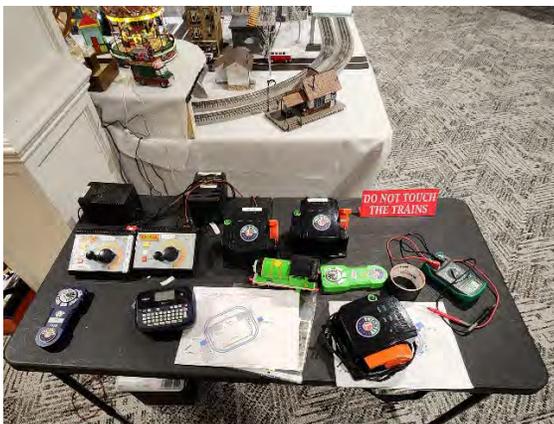
We displayed a small carnival on a raised platform featuring our new Gingerbread people Ferris wheel. The carnival included a trolley stop to accommodate visitors from the nearby town. We also increased our self-promotional billboards from two to four.



Some new items showed up this trip. They included two Carole Towne Village buildings – the Holiday Hub (a Pub) and Oliver's Novelties (a corner gift shop) and Johnnie's Hot Chocolate, a new Lemax hot chocolate truck vendor. Doug immediately got in line for a cup.



Some returning routine items included a busy control table and Club member gathering spot.



We also included several animated Lemax buildings that we thought were appropriate for the venue and anticipated audience. They included Ludwig's Wooden Nutcracker Factory and The Merry Music Box:



Crew



From Left to Right: Carlton Spring, Gene Thayer, Frank Folker, Jeff Jacobs, Art Shean, Doug Pollock, and Sam Carr

With a large crew, set up went smoothly. The observing residents commented on how efficiently the crew worked with little need of supervision.



Frank Folker went down on hands and knees on this project while Doug Pollock was pleased as punch setting up the Veteran's Tribute



Carlton Spring, Sam Carr, and Frank Folker Hard at Work

Residents and Visitors

What a great start to 2026 we had. The Georgetown Parlor is located at the intersection of two major hallways and the main building lobby. As such, we had residents strolling by during construction which intensified when we were fully operational. Residents and visitors arrived early and stayed late, participated in wonderful conversations, and shared memories and pictures of family members who worked on Maine's railroads. Many returned during the day as well as new faces after lunch. I'm sure that we'll see many of them when we visit the Topsham Public Library during February school vacation week. As in the past, the Highlands dining staff out did themselves with hardy portions of Shepherd's pie and fresh soft gingersnap cookies from the oven.

Thanks to all who made this such a worthwhile event.





Pack Up and Move Out



Setup went smoothly with The Highlands folks clearing the Georgetown Parlor and placing the requested tables in place before we arrived while a full M3R crew converged on time in the parlor ready to work. But moveout went even smoother. We dismantled, packed, and loaded the entire layout by a few minutes after four o'clock. Not bad with a 3 pm shutdown. Several residents hung around after we shut down and were impressed with our effort.



Ken Thorson Joined in the Fun during Pack Up





As Always, We Left the Venue as We Found It



Until Next Year We Bid The Highlands Senior Living a Fond Farewell

Photography by Art Shean & Carlton Spring



Surrounded by Chocolate for Three Days by Art Shean
Wilbur's of Maine Chocolates: Setup - Friday, January 30, 2026, 3-5pm,
Ran Trains - Saturday, January 31, 2026, 10am-5pm and Sunday, February
1, 2026, 10am-3pm, with Move Out - Sunday, February 1, 2026, from 3-
4:10pm.



Friday afternoon, January 30th, the M3R Mobile Outreach Team converged on Wilbur's of Maine Chocolate Factory Store to set up a compact model train layout for two days of operation. The people at the Factory clearly expected us with a sign on Lower Main Street, Freeport advertising our upcoming appearance and the five folding tables arranged per our design plan in place in the back activities room.

The crew included Sam Carr, Frank Folker, Jeff Jacobs, Doug Pollock, Art Shean, Carlton Spring, and Gene Thayer.



Gene Thayer and Doug Pollock



Carlton Spring and Art Shean



Frank Folker, Jeff Jacobs, and Sam Carr

The first challenge the crew encountered was passing through all the candy opportunities between the front door and the back activity room where we were scheduled to set up. As in the past, I succumbed to the temptation and bought my wife an assortment of chocolate turtles before the day ended – two each with pecans or cashews and dark or milk chocolate. Sort of a bribe for letting me out of the house for three straight days on a weekend.



We unloaded our vehicles through the front door facing Freeport's Main Street. With the snow this year we were unable to back our vehicles up to the door. Fortunately, we had a good-sized crew that humped our goods from the driveway into the front door.



With everything unloaded the crew promptly went to work assembling the 6'x18½' layout using four 2.5'x8' tables and one 2.5'x6' table provided by Wilbur's.

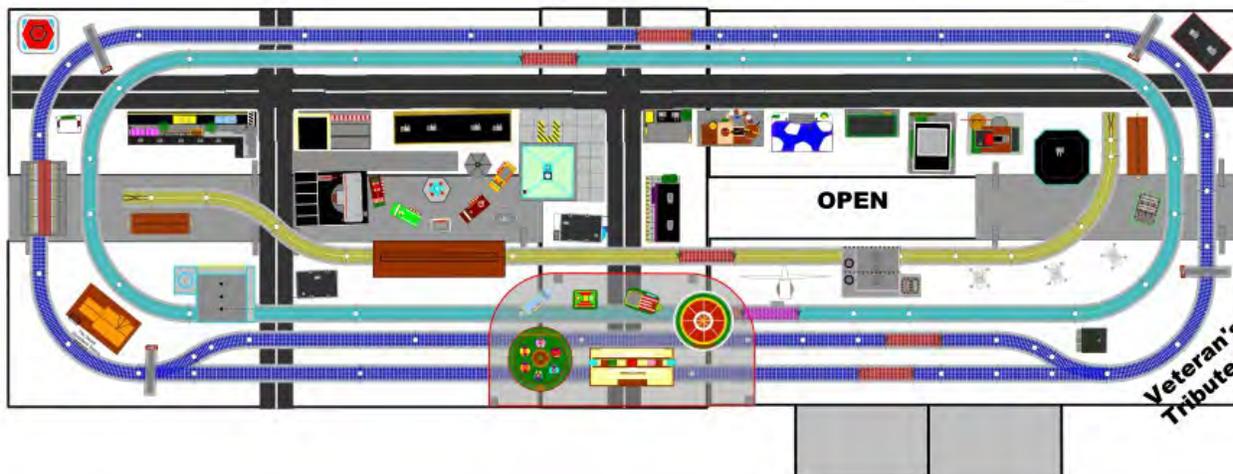


The crew worked quickly and efficiently placing the tables, inserting the 12"x48" Gap Fills, laying the table covers, paving the roads, and building a covered track bridge. At this point they took an extended break awaiting the arrival of the track. By the store closing time of 5pm, we finished laying the track and placing buildings. Due to store closing we had to defer the remaining set up activities until the next morning.

Saturday morning at 9:45am, Sam Carr, Carlton Spring, and I finished wiring, placing trees and vehicles, and powering up the engines. We were complete and ready for visitors by 11am and ran trains and a trolley until 5pm when the store closed. Two things we learned early in our visit – old homes are not well insulated and heat pumps don't heat well below freezing temperatures. The recent cold weather impacted the comfort level in the back activity room. As you can see, Sam came well prepared for the conditions.



The layout featured an outer main loop with a through-pass siding to stage alternate train consists, an inner loop passing under a carnival on a raised platform, and a reversing ground level trolley running from one end of the layout to the other. Overall, the layout used over 111 feet of Lionel FasTrack on the 111 square feet of tabletop and laid 30½ feet of six-inch-wide asphalt paving. The layout also displayed 41 buildings and accessories (Atlas -2, Carole Towne -5, Korber Models -1, Lemax -13, Lionel -2, Menards -14, MTH -1, & Woodland Scenics -4).



Layout Highlights

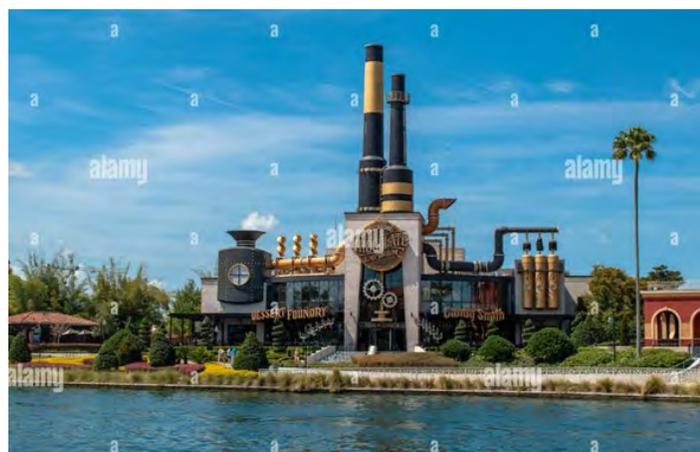
Despite the small layout we featured numerous attractions to entertain our guests and temporarily distract them from the candy in the next rooms. The first and most obvious was the Carvana Used Car Display Building. Carlton Springs favorite building. It sat on the corner near the entrance. Numerous visitors commented on the building and various individual vehicles on display within. More than one gentleman commented that they previously owned one of the displayed vehicles when they were younger.



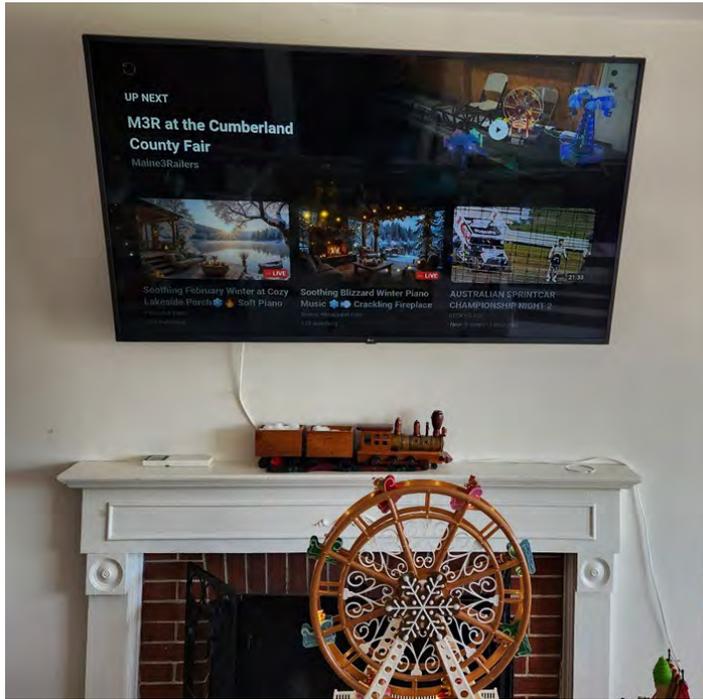
We placed the animated Lemax Chocolate Truffle Factory next to Carvana. This was a repeat performance from last year because it was a favorite among the Wilbur's staff.



I like the Truffle Factory because it reminds me of the Chocolate Emporium at the Orlando Universal Studios in Florida.



Saturday and Sunday, Sam connected the large screen video monitor in the activity room to YouTube. By so doing, visitors were able to view past Club layouts while enjoying the current layout.



Large Screen TV Connected to YouTube & Fire Station Operators

A short distance farther down Main Street on the corner with West Street, we placed Sam Carr's animated MTH Fire Station (Left Photo Below). As always both the kids and parents had to push the button at least once. On display for the first time, the Carole Towne Holiday Bed & Breakfast made its debut on Main Street. (Top Photo Below).



Next to the Bed & Breakfast we placed Miss Milly's Muffin Mill, an animated Lemax building. The placement seemed correct so that the Bed & Breakfast guests had access to fresh muffins, bread, and pastries (Right Bottom Photo).



As mentioned earlier, we placed a small carnival on a raised platform with both the main and inner track loops running beneath it. Center stage was the 2025 Carole Towne Gingerbread Ferris wheel. It debuted on our display at The Highlands Senior Living in mid-January.



As an alternative to all the chocolate throughout the store, we placed a food truck court just off Main Street between West and Bow Street behind the Strip Mall. Anyone want some gingerbread cookies, hot chocolate, and fried bread dough?



Finally, Sam and Carlton introduced the kids to the fun of running a train. Thanks to the Lionel LionChief System both the inner and outer loop engines were operated using handheld remotes. With a little instruction and some oversight, the kids grasped the concept quickly. Although they had to be reminded occasionally to keep the speed down around the curves.

Our Big Breakthrough



In early 2025, Sam Carr purchased a new **LIONEL 2445040 NEW YORK CENTRAL PACEMAKER LIONCHIEF 2-4-2 #1939**. On numerous occasions he and Carlton attempted to operate the engine using a universal LionChief remote and conventional transformer operation without success. With a few spare moments in between visitors, we researched the issue and found that the Pacemaker can be operated using the Lionel LionChief App with a Blue Tooth link to the engine. We tried it and it worked!

Later we tried to link the engine to a universal LionChief remote, and it worked as well. Conclusion: The Pacemaker may become a regular on future MOT displays.



With the Pacemaker in operation, Carlton ran two consists at the same time on the outer loop. Using his camera flatcar, he captured several dramatic scenes for his upcoming video. His YouTube video of this visit will become a must see!

Visitors

Visitor traffic on Saturday and Sunday was slow early but light and steady for the remainder of the days. With the limited space in Wilbur's activity room that worked out for the best. Most guests made a slow full loop around the layout with a routine stop at the MTH Fire Station. Most kids came back for at least one if not more pushes on the buttons. Everyone seemed to enjoy the show, and many went on to purchase items from the store on the way out to the parking lot.





Sunday morning at 10am, Doug Pollock and I joined Sam and Carlton to greet more chocolate lovers. Sal DeVita stopped by in the afternoon to test his new engine and an old used engine. Frank Folker returned in time to help break down and pack up the layout.



From Left to Right: Carlton Spring, Frank Folker, Doug Pollock, Sam Carr, and Sal DeVita

By 3pm the last visitors finished viewing the layout and the crew began breakdown and moveout ending another successful visit at Wilbur's of Maine Chocolate Factory Store - offering **Chocolates** by the Truck Load.



Photography by Art Shean and Carlton Spring



The View from Doug's Chair by Doug Pollock

Well, we were on a slight vacation at the end of 2025, but that all changed the other day at the Highlands in Topsham. I live in Topsham and know exactly where it is until I got lost for the 2nd time. For some reason, I took the wrong road and got lost again but found my way there. We started at 8 and were set up by about 9:45. It was a great layout, and Art brought the model of the old Brunswick Town Hall, an elaborate piece which was torn down years ago.

People started milling around before we finished setting up, which was great. We started getting more and more people and they were extremely interested and very talkative about everything. As the day went on, people never stopped coming and talking about the past and what their dad or brothers had for trains. This was the busiest we have ever been at this event. It was amazing!

Jeff met a lady from Hawaii (a resident) who had been involved in square dancing like Jeff Jacobs and his wife, and they had a fantastic reunion. I spoke to a lady that had on a heavy Navy sweater and asked if she had served. She said no, but her father, grandfather, and son did. In fact, her son is serving now. She wants people to remember – she is very proud.

Lunch came and it was a delicious Shepards pie. We enjoyed it very much. Gene Thayer is a Jersey Mikes fan, so he ate out. A while later the Kitchen Manager came by, and I asked about a cookie or something for dessert. Carlton also chimed in with a request for a piece of tin foil so that he could take Gene's Shepards pie home. Much later out comes the same gentleman carrying a piece of foil and a platter of cookies. They looked like ginger snaps, but they were fresh baked ginger softies. U could not eat just 1. We all tried but it did not work! We needed at least 2 - they were amazing.

Art Shean's wife stopped by midafternoon. They had fantastic cards on sale near our layout and she purchased a bunch. It turns out the card creator and artist is a resident and creates the whimsical funny beautiful cards which are \$1 each. The money raised goes to charity.

BREAKDOWN was a snap! All in all, it was an AMAZING time for everyone. It was a fantastic day, and we had many more people there than we have ever had. I could go on and on, but U had to B there. Also at the end, 2 gentlemen stayed and watched us tear most of the layout down.

A few Strange Past Railroad Laws from the Book, ***Railroad Fever***.

A New Jersey law prohibited any railroad from running on Sunday.

In Arizona it was illegal to let any water from the locomotive fall on the tracks.

It was illegal in Maine to wear spike shoes in railroad stations or on rolling stock.

Until we meet again, B Safe and keep the tracks clean, Doug



Fish Cars - Who Knew??? By Jan Williams

In the 1880s government conservation agencies became concerned about midwestern ponds and lakes becoming overfished. They came up with a scheme to transport fish from eastern hatcheries to the midwestern lakes; the railroads developed dedicated cars to transport the fish. Existing photos show obsolete coaches filled with tanks of water.

When Pat's Trains came up with a model fish car, I had to bite...



Editor's Note: Stumbled upon this while reading the Fall 2025 Phi Kappa Phi Forum. Thought our members might find it interesting and entertaining.



THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE RAILS by ROBERT KLOSE

The celebrated travel writer Paul Theroux once made a comment that immediately resonated with me:

"Ever since childhood... I have seldom heard a train go by and not wished I was on it."

I am blessed by having a train running through my Maine neighborhood. Three times a day, I hear the premonitory rumble. Like a little boy, I run to the window to count the boxcars. If the weather is agreeable, I hurry down the street to wave at the train driver. Again, like a kid, I am thrilled if he waves back.

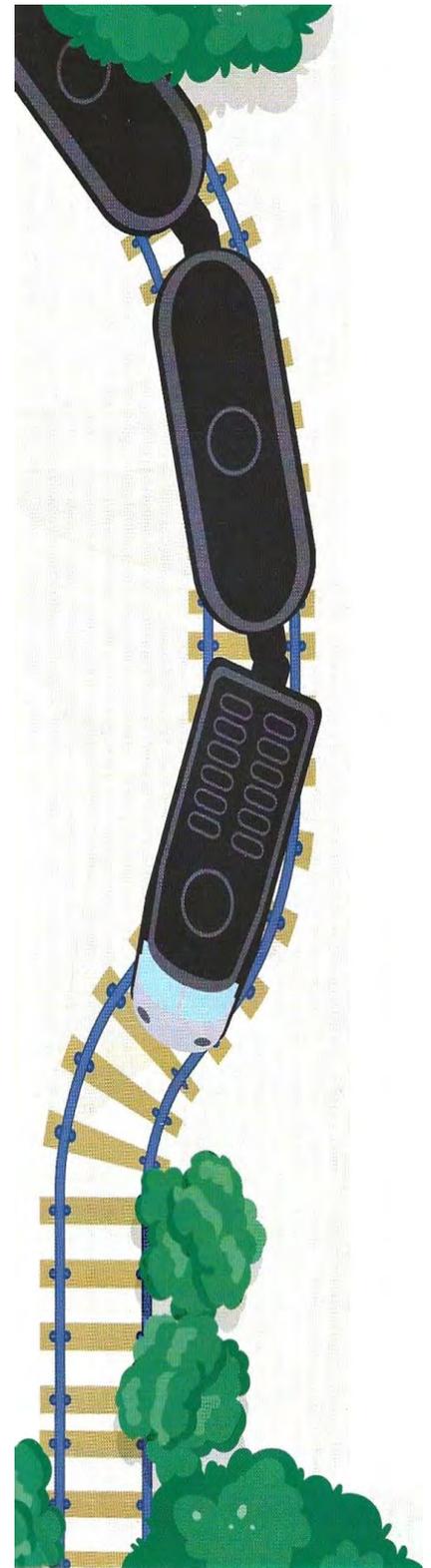
Alas, my local train is limited to freight. Passenger rail in my neck of the Maine woods exited the scene in 1961, the same year Bangor's train station, with its iconic clock tower, was leveled in the then-fashionable fever of "urban renewal." (The Romanesque revival station was replaced by the architectural mortal sin of a strip mall.)

Even so, hope springs eternal. There has been no end of proposals to return passenger rail to northern Maine. But such attempts tend to get pooh-poohed by those who (1) view car-dependency as a virtue, and (2) may have never ridden a train. The objections usually revolve around money. This strikes me as odd, as when one considers purchase price, fuel, insurance, and maintenance, it can be extravagantly expensive to own and operate a personal automobile. But I digress.

We once had a beauty of a passenger train - the Flying Yankee. It was a marvel of the age, debuting in 1935 during the Great Depression, when money wasn't exactly flowing like water. But the Flying Yankee was an investment in social capital, lifting people's spirits, offering a touch of elegance in a world that often felt hopeless and dreary. It was a sleek, diesel-electric, stainless-steel wonder with comfortable upholstered seats, in-seat food service, and a parlor car that closed the distance from Bangor to Boston in about five hours. It was retired in 1957.

I am among those folks who mourn the demise, and the present condition, of passenger rail in America. For some nostalgia certainly plays a role. Concern for the environment is another mark in favor of trains, especially when they are driven by electricity. And then there are those who look at the potential for passenger rail to decongest our highways. These are all valid arguments, but I'd like to suggest a more compelling attribute of passenger trains - geography. Allow me to explore this from several angles.

First, there's the geography of landscape. When one is driving a car, one's eyes are generally *on the road* because driving is, especially on highways, fraught. (Think of the guy cutting in



front of you without signaling.) But on a train, one is leaving the driving to someone else, and if the passenger has a duty, it is to use one's freed-up eyes to look out the windows at the passing scene. When my son was 10, I took him on Amtrak from Chicago to Los Angeles. We crossed the plains of Kansas, the Arizonan desert, and, on the return trip, the Rockies. Through it all, we sat side-by-side in the observation car, watching the movable feast, my heart gently suffering the loss when a mountain peak or sun-drenched mesa passed from view. Charles Kuralt, the late host of the CBS program *On the Road*, once remarked, "Thanks to the Interstate Highway System, it is now possible to travel across the country from coast to coast without seeing anything." I am not aware of a similar criticism about trains.

Then there is the geography of the train itself. On that same cross-country trip I took with my son, the train had sleepers, a sit-down dining car, a gaming car, a movie car, the crown gem - an observation car with a skylit roof and swivel seats. What automobile, bus, or plane could compete with this village on rails? But even in the non-fancified trains, such as the one I frequently take between Boston and New York, I sometimes get up and walk through all the cars, just out of curiosity, to see who's who and whether there are breakfast sandwiches in the cafe car. Then I return to my seat, nestle in with my book, and look out the window as we skirt the shore of Long Island Sound.

Next up is the geography of acquaintanceship. In a bus or a plane, one is wedged into one's seat for the duration. There's no place to go. No place to wander off to. No breakfast sandwiches. And if one is seated next to a less than amiable character, well, if there are no other empty seats available, that is one's fate. But the spaciousness of a train allows the traveler to calibrate geographic distance between oneself and the other fellow. For example, I was once traveling by rail from Warsaw to Kiev when, in the dead of night, I stepped out into the passageway to gaze into the darkness. A young man took up a position next to me, but not too close. At first, we seemed to hit it off; but as our conversation progressed, he revealed himself to be one of the most unrepentant bigots I had ever met. On a bus, I might have had to endure him, but on that train, I inched away, until I was too far removed for him to say anything I was able, or wanted, to hear. And after that night, I avoided him altogether. I contrast this with the charming young Ukrainian woman I met on that same train. We hit it off immediately and wound up sitting together over tea while discussing the virtues and vices of our respective countries. Like that mountain or mesa on my Amtrak trip, I felt the loss when we parted ways.

Lastly, the geography of the wandering mind. Trains have a rhythm no bus, car, or plane can lay claim to. And the clickety-clack of the rails is only part of it. Trains have an unparalleled ability to waft the rider into something resembling a dream state. When I look out the window of a train, I indulge my imagination. What would it be like to live in Old Saybrook, Connecticut? What do people do in that tiny, isolated house in the woods? What was it like to ride this train route 150 years ago in the age of steam, before there were cars and it was the only alternative to the horse?

When I express these thoughts aloud or in writing, I am often accused by detractors of being hopelessly romantic. I once tried defending my position by quoting the late, great essayist E.B. White, who wrote, "A state without rail service is a state that is coming apart at the seams." When I included this fragment in an opinion piece advocating for the return of passenger rail to Bangor, one reader remarked, "He's quoting a dead man!"

We could do worse than have our wisdom survive us.

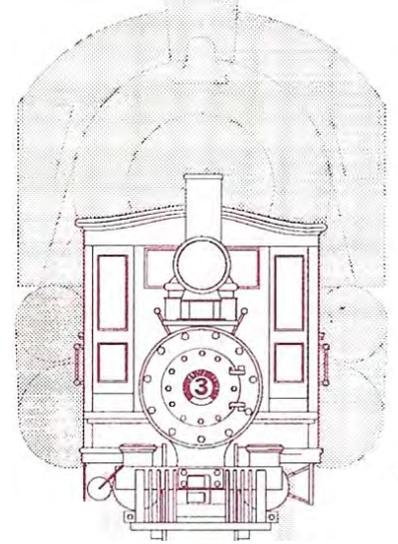
ROBERT KLOSE lives and writes in Maine. His books include *Small Worlds - Adopted Sons, Pet Piranhas, & Other Mortal Concerns* and *The Three-Legged Woman & Other Excursions in Teaching*. His latest novel is *Trigger Warning*

Editor's Note: My neighbor gave me a copy of a 1994 Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. & Museum Brochure he found while cleaning out his garage. Thought you might find the following information from it interesting.

What is a Two Foot Railroad?

The railroads you see every day are referred to as standard gauge railroads. Gauge is the distance between the two rails, which on a standard gauge is four feet eight and one half inches.

In the period between the 1870s and the 1940s, Maine had a unique system of railroads with the rails spaced only two feet apart. The two-foot gauged railroads, known as Two-Footers, became popular because their reduced size made service into remote locations economically feasible. Narrow gauge railroads with names such as Kennebec Central, Monson, Bridgton and Harrison, Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes, and Wiscasset, Waterville, and Farmington formed a three-hundred-mile transportation system throughout central Maine. During its heyday it was the largest two foot gauge system in the world.



The KENNEBEC CENTRAL ran five miles from Randolph, across the Kennebec River from Gardiner to the national Soldiers Home at Togus. The railroad, which existed because of the home, carried visitors in four passenger cars, its freight was primarily coal. It was the shortest of the Maine narrow gauge railroads.

The SANDY RIVER & RANGELEY LAKES was a big railroad on a small scale. There were many engines and hundreds of cars, downscaled in size to ride the two-foot rails. Passengers and freight were carried on fast efficient trains. Originating in Farmington, the railroad ran through Strong and Phillips to Rangeley, and it ran from Strong on the old Franklin and Megantic line to Carabasset and Kingfield.

The BRIDGTON & HARRISON interchanged with the Maine Central at Bridgton Junction and ran by Hancock Pond and Sandy Creek to Bridgton and Harrison. The line carried general freight and passengers.

The MONSON RAILROAD was a slate hauler, from a quarry and mill in Monson interchanging with the Bangor and Aroostook at Monson Junction. The six miles of track were ballasted with waste slate. Engines number three and four of the Atwood collection were originally in use on the Monson.

The WISCASSET, WATERVILLE, & FARMINGTON was originally chartered in 1854 as the Wiscasset & Quebec. The dream was to use the deep-water port harbor of Wiscasset to haul foreign traffic as well as commerce from Boston and New York to the Province of Quebec. Nothing happened for forty years and eventually the line, which carried passengers and freight, was built from Wiscasset to Albion. The right of way had been graded all the way to Farmington to connect with the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes, but the line was never completed.

Editor's Note: My neighbor also found a copy of the Spring 1994 Two Foot Flyer published by the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. & Museum. Thought the following article complimented the above article well.

Two-Footer Roots: Wales, U.K. and a 600 mm Lightweight

by Robert C. MacDonald

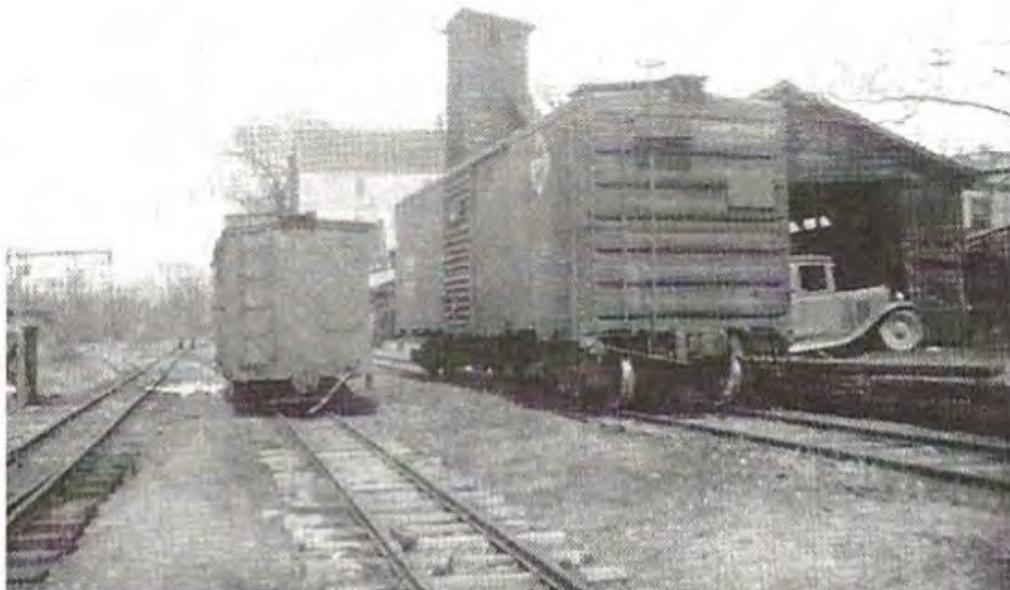
To the question of "What is a Two-Footer?" may be added the additional query, "Why a Two-Footer?" The immediate response which comes to mind is: "Why, it's a narrow gauge, cheaper to

build and operate than standard gauge." But now we find ourselves enmeshed in a myriad of explanations as to what is "standard" to whom, where, and when?

Let us simplify the discussion by restricting ourselves to the good ol' U.S. of A. but take the subject of track gauge - the distance between the rails on which trains run to its roots.

Origins of both may be found in Wales, and each system is tied to mining operations, where the challenge was how much load a horse can pull on a cart on solid earth versus an elevated pathway where metal wheel rims were employed (what we know simply as "rails" also had to evolve through experimentation.)

What was to become the standard gauge in the United Kingdom - four-feet, eight and one-half inches - is said to have resulted from a match of rail alignments with that of existing wagon wheels. Since the transition from horse-drawn roadway wagons and coaches to rails was from the beginning one of adaptation, the choice was simple (in Europe, freight cars are still referred to as "wagons" and we in the Western Hemisphere have our "coaches"). The ever-moving legions of ancient Rome, with their chariots, did much to establish the permanency of ruts - so a "standard" wagon wheel spread more or less was the basis for this rail gauge standard. In time, this became the uniform track width for many countries of the world including the Americas.



*Farmington, Maine, fall 1935 -- "Standard" two-foot gauge box car, Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes No.70, meets a "Standard Gauge" 4' 8-1/2" big brother in Erie 40' boxcar No.76949. No.70 was the last revenue car on the SR&RL.
- Photo by Elliott Steward, Robert L. MacDonald collection*

But, what about narrow-gauge? The first slim-tracker or light railway, as Europeans sometimes called them, was the Festiniog Railway in Wales, incorporated in 1832, and built originally to haul slate between Blaenau-Festiniog and Portmandoo on the coast. This was built to a 600-millimeter gauge, one-foot, eleven and a half inches wide, crudely constructed with iron straps affixed to granite blocks. Wagons were hauled by horses upgrade and moved by gravity on the return.

In 1863, horses were replaced by 0-4-0 tank steam locomotives, with the roadway changed over to crossties and rails. Soon, this ultra-scenic line rising 700 feet in 13-and one-half miles to Blaenau-Festiniog became a popular tourist line. (May we add, it still operates and is a world-class attraction for both rail fans and tourists.) Especially after the Festiniog became a common carrier open to the public from the mid-1860s and thereafter, this little 600 mm narrow gauge became the prototype for literally hundreds of other narrow gauges all over the world.

OK - 600 mm - how does that translate into two feet? After all, even today, Americans are not very metric-minded, and back when railroads (rail roads, they called them) were new, the metric system was shunned.

Just another half inch and you have the two-footer. But remember 600 mm represents little or no problem for adaption. Two feet and 600 mm railroads have been the standard for industrial, military and construction entities from the inception of the narrow gauge in the U.S. during the post-Civil War period. Military 600 mm "trench" trains were used especially during World War I on the Western Front by both Allied and Axis countries. The famous naturalized American industrial designer and artist, Orto Kuhler, ran such a line in Belgium for the Kaiser. The famed trench engines and cars are now strictly museum pieces, having last been used in World War II in such U.S. places at Fort Dix, N.J., and Fort Benning, Ga. Wherever lightness, flexibility, and economy of cost were paramount, the two footer found its place: Peat and cranberry bogs, slate and feldspar mines, lumber and furniture factories. When internal combustion and electric power became universal, two footers became even more common on the industrial scene.

Well, OK - what went wrong in Maine where so many two foot gauge lines were built for a variety of public transport, matching all the services of their standard gauge connections? With scarcity of funds, but need so great for rail service for public transportation involving communities forsaken by the big trunk lines, even with economy in mind - why the two-footer instead of three feet, the standard narrow gauge of the remainder of the country?

Sounds like stubborn pig-headedness, and that it was. But probably just Down East Yankee good sense, with Mainers recognizing a great opportunity when it happens.

- Robert L. MacDonald is a rail historian and a former member of the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Co. & Museum Board executive committee.

-THE END-



Maine 3 Railers Upcoming Schedule of Events

- Feb 14 Annual Maine 3 Railers Model Train and Dollhouse Show ([Public](#)) 10am-2pm. Move in 8am Friday Feb 13, 2026. (Train Show Committee)
- Feb 18 Patten Free Library ([Public](#)), 33 Summer Street, Bath, ME 04520. Set up Wednesday 8-10am, Run Trains from 10am-5pm. (MOT)
- Feb 20 Vacation Week Model Train Display ([Public](#)), Topsham Public Library, 25 Foreside Road, Topsham, ME 04086. Set up Thursday, Feb 19th, 3:30-6pm & Friday, Feb.20th, 8:30-10am. Run Trains from 10am-2pm. (MOT)
- April 25 Great Falls Model Railroad Club Spring Train Show ([Public](#)), Mt. Ararat High School, 68 Eagles Way, Topsham, ME 04086. Set up Friday, April 24th, Run Trains from 10am to 3pm. (MOT)

M3R General Meetings (All meetings start at 7 pm on Zoom):

- Feb 12 Monthly Club Meeting
- Mar 12 Monthly Club Meeting
- Apr 09 Monthly Club Meeting

Maine 3 Railers Group Email:

The Maine 3 Railers have a group email account in which all members are enrolled. This is the primary channel of communication for club meetings, events, and activities. This also enables members to send emails to other club members. Like club forums, this service allows members to ask questions, provide advice, help other members solve model train problems, buy, and sell items, and pass along model and prototype railroading news of interest.

This is a free service for each member. The group “owners” (Dana Lindsey, and Art Shean) will add your name and email address when you join the club. You will then receive an email with a link to accept the invitation. Follow the link to confirm your account. You may not receive emails if this step is not completed. We restrict the use of this service to M3R members. Because the site is not moderated, Dana or Art will review your first two posts to assure you are a member. The URL for our group is: <https://groups.io/g/M3R>.

Once subscribed you can email all other M3R members by addressing your email to m3r@groups.io, email individual members by using the Directory, update your personal profile, change how you receive emails, or unsubscribe. If you have any questions, contact Dana Lindsey, M3R Secretary.

MAINE 3 RAILERS

MODEL RAILROAD & DOLLHOUSE SHOW

Saturday, February 14, 2026

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Doors Open at 10:00am

National Guard Armory

179 Western Avenue | Augusta, Maine

FEATURING

Operating Model Railroads | Dollhouses
Dealer Displays | Dollhouse Displays



Admission \$5.00, Family* \$10, Children under 12 are FREE

**Family includes up to 2 adults + children 17 and under*

For more information and table rentals E-mail: RMRSR@AOL.COM

GREAT FALLS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB'S



APRIL TRAIN SHOW



Saturday - April 25th, 2026
10 am - 3 pm

Mt. Ararat High School - 68 Eagles Way - Topsham

\$5 for Adults (children under 12 free with adult admission)

Free parking and Handicapped accessible

- Dealers selling new & used trains
- Operating layouts
- Model Displays
- Equipment in N, HO, S, O & G scales
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- Scenery supplies
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LEARN MORE AT GREATFALLSMODELRRCLUB.ORG!

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The IRS recognizes the Maine 3-Railers as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Maine3Railers

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