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The Order Board-Supplemental

Volume 53 No. 5.2 November, 2025

Western Pennsylvania Model Railroad Museum

This is a Special Edition of The Order Board highlighting the Western PA Model Railroad Museum, Dennis Coglianesi's Pacific Central HO Scale Layout and the Monroeville, PA Greenberg Train Show.





The Editor's Column

Kurt Matthews, Publications Chair



This is a supplemental edition of The Order Board focused on my recent trip to Western Pennsylvania. I visited three events I felt would be of interest to the readership. All photos were taken myself.

Western Pennsylvania Model Railroad Museum (WPMRR)

The Western Pennsylvania Model Railroad Museum is located 35 miles north of Pittsburgh in Gibsonia, PA. Its only open to the public in November, December and early January of each year on Friday evenings and Saturday/Sunday afternoons. The layout is HO scale and depicts the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie/Western Maryland and B&O routes from Pittsburgh east to Cumberland, MD in the summer of 1952. Both steam and early diesel is represented along with freight and passenger operations. The layout is 40' x 100' and is a very accurate scale representation of both the P&LE/WM and B&O lines that paralleled each other. Famous locations such as downtown Pittsburgh, Sand Patch, Deal and Helmsetter's Curve are accurately depicted. Many of the structures are scratch built representations of actual buildings along the lines. The B&O line is represented by itself, while the P&LE/WM line is represented by the club's fictional Mon Valley System RR. The railroad is controlled by a central dispatch computer that is visible to visitors. Ambient lighting is dimmed to represent evening and night time.

The club has approximately 100 members, 50 of which are active. During the remainder of the year, the layout is operated by the membership with various eras of trains. The day I visited, Dennis Coglianesse and Matt Johnson were in charge of operations. David Takus was kind enough to give me a personal tour with specifics of the operation and answered my many questions.

<https://wpmrm.org/>

Today, the prototype B&O line is still in operation and part of CSX. The P&LE/WM line no longer exists and is part of the Great Allegheny Passage bike trail that stretches from Pittsburgh to Washington, DC. I biked the portion from Boston to West Newton, PA along the old P&LE right of way years ago. Since the bike trail is on the old rail line, grades are gentle.

<https://gaptrail.org/>

The Western Maryland was at a time a competitor to the B&O, along with being part of the famed "Alphabet Route" from Chicago/St. Louis to Philadelphia/Baltimore/New York City in competition with the Erie, PRR and NYC. In 1975, the WM route was embargoed when WM united with B&O/C&O to form the Chessie System. The WM line was superfluous to the parallel B&O line.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alphabet_Route

If you are visiting the Pittsburgh area, the Kamin (ex-Carnegie) Science Center has a year round O-scale model railroad. It is fictional, but has many scenes inspired by Western PA.

<https://kaminsciencecenter.org/exhibits/miniature-railroad/>



WPMRR Museum



Pittsburgh P&LE Station South Shore, Pittsburgh Railways Trolley line on Smithfield St. Bridge



Downtown Pittsburgh-Wabash Terminal RR Bridge (only piers remain today)



WPMRR Museum

(Continued)



J&L Steel South Shore (in work)



B&O Glenwood Yard, Hazelwood, PA



WPMRR Museum

(Continued)



McKeesport, PA



P&LE McKeesport Wye, left to Connellsville PA, right to Brownsville, PA



WPMRR Museum

(Continued)



P&LE Demmler Yard, north of Connellsville



BOWEST Jct., B&O main in background, WM main on truss, WM branch on deck bridge, B&O branch to Fairmont, WV lowest level track, West Penn Railways trolley line on trestle



WPMRR Museum

(Continued)



Both: Ohiopyle, PA





WPMRR Museum

(Continued)



WM Salisbury viaduct over B&O



WM Helmsetter's Curve, MD



WPMRR Museum

(Continued)



Cumberland Narrows, MD



WM Cumberland Depot, MD, current home of WM Scenic Railroad



WPMRR Museum

(Continued)



WPMRR Dispatchers, Dennis Coglianese (right), Matt Johnson (left)

Entire layout is run from here



Museum Building, Gibsonia, PA



Pacific Central

Dennis Coglianesi's Pacific Central Operating Session

I had the opportunity to visit and operate Dennis Coglianesi's HO scale Pacific Central RR. It is a freelance railroad with no specific prototype, however it is highly influenced by the Southern Pacific with stations such as S. San Francisco, Stockton, Sacramento, Lathrop, Elk Grove (home of a cement plant), San Jose, Niles, Oakland and additional 'self-named' towns. The layout is a folded figure eight with a crossover in the middle that allows trains to go between the upper and lower levels in multiple passes. The era modeled is the steam to diesel transition period.

The layout is Digitrax DCC utilizing JMRI software for dispatching, switch alignments and signal control. Full installation of signals is still in progress. Switches are thrown via Tortoise machines with some manual throws. The layout is also equipped with radios, both headset and handheld to communicate with the dispatcher who is located in the same room, but out of view of the layout itself.

Tracks have a minimum radius of 30 inches and 2.25 inch spacing. There are four yards on the layout. One staging yard is off the main layout with open access. Two yards in the lower level with limited access and the main operational yard on the upper level. This yard is 'manned' by a switcher engineer and Yardmaster during operating sessions.

The vertical distance between levels is small due to the layout overall size versus the available space to transit between levels without utilizing a helix. Dennis came up with a unique idea of using metal wall shelf brackets 'stuffed' with a wood block to allow the upper deck to be attached. The metal provides enough rigid support for the upper deck while taking up minimal space.

Operating sessions run from 10AM—4PM on Saturdays for a total time of five hours with a one hour lunch break. A full operating session consists of 11 operators. The session I attended, included only 8, Trainmaster, Dispatcher, Yardmaster, two tower operators controlling switches at both ends of the main yard, a yard engineer and two mainline engineers. I was able to operate one of the towers and also pilot a few main line freights. Dennis was Trainmaster, with Mark, Joe, Greg, Bob, Keith, Rick and Gary filling out the rest. It took me a bit of watching to learn the flow and especially the station locations and names. The session was very relaxed and everyone was patient and welcoming.

Dennis is the Superintendent of NMRA's Keystone Division (Mid-Central Region). We made contact after I attended their Division meet last spring and sent him a copy of the Supplemental Order Board I published on the event. I will say Dennis is a first rate ambassador of the hobby and NMRA. Not only did he invite me over to his house by myself to view the layout and treated me to lunch, but he invited me back later in the week to his OP session. Dennis also is a member of the WPMRR Museum and arranged for Dave Takus to give me an overview of that layout. Dennis was the dispatcher of the Mon-Valley Lines that day.

<https://keystonedivision.org/layouts.html#Coglianesi>

<https://keystonedivision.org/>



Pacific Central

(Continued)



Dennis Coglianesi, Trainmaster



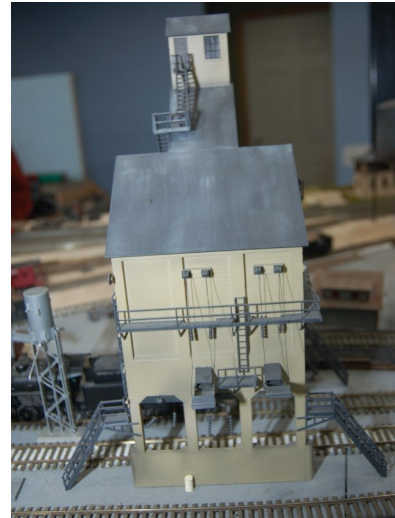
Operations





Pacific Central

(Continued)





Pacific Central

(Continued)



Metal Shelf Support Brackets



Filled with wood block to allow attaching upper deck



Pacific Central

(Continued)



Ex-B&M Steamer

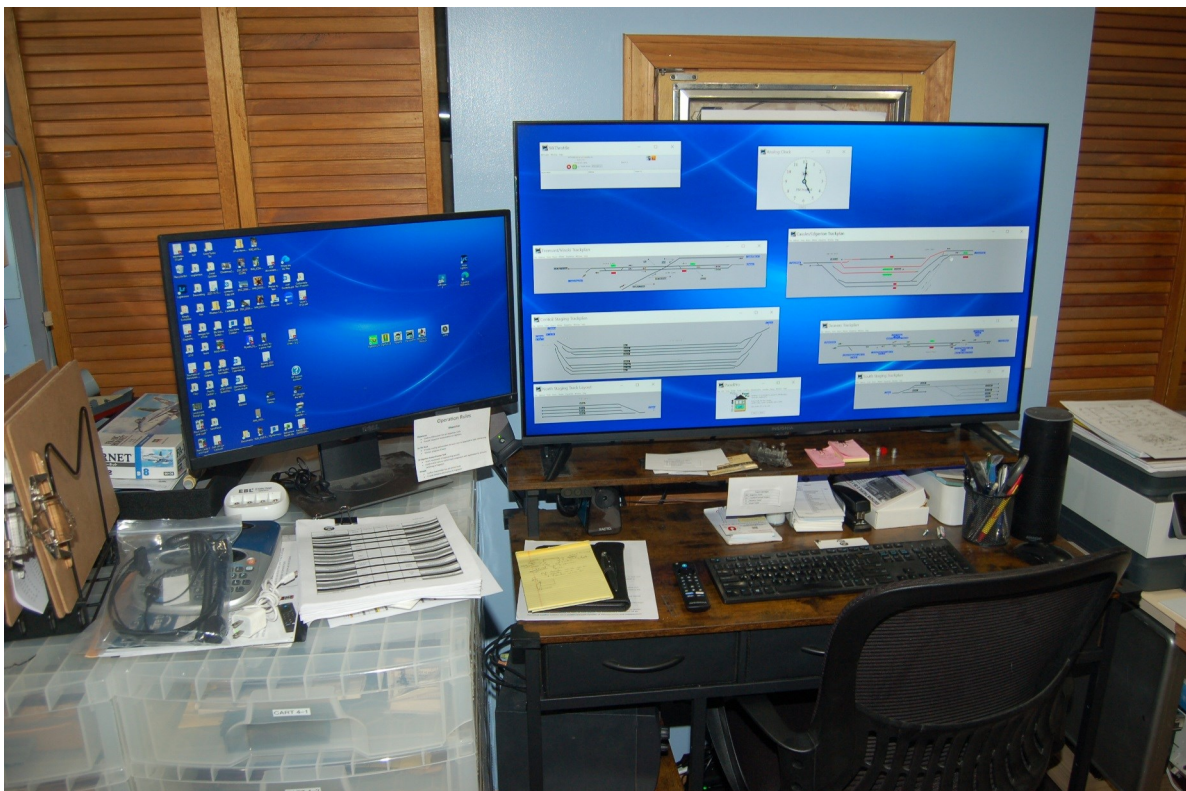


Storage & Staging



Pacific Central

(Continued)





Greenberg Show

Greenberg's Train Show

Greenberg's Train Show is the northeast's version of the Great American Train Show that appears locally. Attendance was high. Admission fee was \$12 for both days. I will provide my own thoughts and opinions of the show's strengths and weaknesses.

The show is roughly the size of one building at the Orange County Fairgrounds with mostly vendors of used items. I saw very little of vendors selling new items. O-Scale was represented about equally with HO, and to a lesser extent N-Scale. There were a good many non-model railroad items such as Hot Wheels and other toy items, which were of little interest to hobbyists. Most of the railroad items were used, many toy-like brands such as Tyco, Life-Like, etc. Most used blue-box Athearn freight cars were priced around \$10, which I found high. I returned to the show late Sunday, hoping to see a lot of discounts, but was disappointed. I did find the two following vendors worth further attention.

Lerro Productions: Peter Lerro produces original and reprint railroad art. I have two of his pieces already, a print of the Delaware & Hudson Sharks at Sayre, PA and a print of the Union RR Shops at Hall, PA. The Union RR print was of personal interest to me as it was drawn from the same vantage point I used in my youth to take photographs of the same shops. <https://www.lerroproductions.com/>

B&B Hobby Supplies: A spectacular inventory of modeling tools. It was a very popular booth, and I made a number of purchases of hobby tools I had never seen before. Prices were extremely reasonable. B&B is run out of Bridgeville, PA a suburb of Pittsburgh, but they have an online store. <https://hobbytools.com/>

The following local model railroad clubs were represented with modular layouts. I have included some photos.

Pittsburgh Independent Hi-Railers (O-Scale):
<https://www.facebook.com/PittsburghIndependentHiRailers/>

Keystone Division Free-Mo Modular Group (HO-Scale):
<https://www.keystonedivision.org/freemo.html>

Allegheny Northern Model Railroad Club (HO-Scale)

Three Rivers Association of N-Trak (N-Scale)

Iron City N-Scale Modelers (N-Scale):
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ironcitynscale/>



Greenberg Show

(Continued)



Overall View of Greenberg Show Venue



Pittsburgh Independent Hi-Railers (O-Scale)



American Freedom Train Rolling Stock





Greenberg Show

(Continued)



NMRA Keystone Division Free-MO (HO-Scale)



Union Railroad 'Buffalo'...see:

<https://appalachianrailroadmodeling.com/railroads/current-day-appalachian-railroads/urr-union-railroad/>

<https://www.cmrproducts.com/ho-scale-urr-drs-6-6-1500m-buffalo-as16m/>

Allegheny Northern Model
Railroad Club (HO-Scale)





Greenberg Show

(Continued)



Three Rivers Association of N-Trak



Iron City N-Scale Modelers



Dura-bond Tube Coating Plant
McKeesport, PA



Duquesne Incline
Pittsburgh, PA