

RPO

Volume 29, Number 1
Spring 2021
www.gatewaymra.org



RPO

Spring 2021: Volume 29, Number 1

The *RPO* is the official publication
of the Gateway Division
of the National Model Railroad Association

Editor: John Carty

Articles, photos and any other materials for publication are to be sent to the Editor. No payment can be made for publication of any materials. Regular issues are published quarterly: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Subscriptions to the *RPO* are available to members of the NMRA as a service provided by members of the Gateway Division. Send subscription applications and renewals to the Division Treasurer.

Any item may be reproduced by other NMRA publications, unless specifically restricted, as long as author and source credit is included. Advertising of interest to our membership is accepted for publication in the *RPO*. Contact the Editor or Treasurer for current rates and artwork size information. Please send submissions, suggestions, letters, and address corrections to:

Editor, *The RPO*
Gateway Division NMRA
715 W. Cleveland Ave
Belleville, IL 62220

Articles may be submitted as handwritten, typed, plain unformatted text on disk, or plain text via email to johnpcarty@hotmail.com; photo submissions may be made as hi-res digital files, 35mm slides or negatives or as prints.

Submission deadlines:

Spring: April 1
Summer: July 1
Fall: October 1
Winter: January 1

All content is Copyright © 2014 Gateway Division NMRA unless otherwise noted.

Visit our website at
www.gatewaynmra.org

On The Cover

photo by Richard Schumacher

Interior of A railway post taken at Railpark. See article starting on page 5.

In This Issue

Directors Reflections 2
The Railway Post Office and How it all Came Together 4
Division Meeting Minutes 10

Director's Reflections

By David Lowell

“Jack...Tell me a story”

In the 1982 Movie 48 Hours, Eddie Murphy asks Detective Jack Cates to tell him a story to which Jack gives him an off color two word response ending in ...you!. Without skipping a beat Murphy responds back, “Oh, that’s one of my favorites.” My college buddies and I, of course, got great mileage out of this little back and forth.

However, with a slightly different twist this exchange still holds sway today and specifically in our hobby. Who doesn't like a nice story to read, especially when it is model railroad oriented and especially when it might become one of your favorites. After all, telling stories about model railroading is what all the commercial model railroading publication that we enjoy do, right? The NMRA Magazine, the Caboose Kibitzer, and the RPO all rely on good stories from NMRA members to make them relevant so that we want to read them.

Have you ever stopped to think about who writes all those articles? Its people like you and me. And there are two sides to enjoying these articles, or stories. Reading them is obviously one. They magically and regularly appear in

front of us based on the publication's schedule and they are chocked full of topics we may or may not be familiar with. They allow us to imbibe new knowledge or supplement exiting knowledge on a host of topics. They can be educational, historical, instructional, humorous or even any combination of these categories. They keep us current with what's going on in the hobby.

But another, perhaps under realized, enjoyment to these articles is in writing one. That's right. Doing the footwork to put one together and submit it. All of you have knowledge on facets of the hobby, a specific railroad, or a particular railroad related topics that the rest of us may know little or nothing about. I for one would love to be enriched by what you could share, condensed down into an overview or in depth dive. After all, isn't sharing knowledge on the common topic of model or prototype railroading one of the main reasons we all belong to the NMRA?

Here is another good reason to write an article. It may give you an impetus to dig through the plethora of memorabilia and artifacts you have squirreled away and reacquaint yourself with old memorabilia and favorite pieces of swag. In fact the idea for this diatribe came to me as I was finishing up an article for the RPO. I had a general idea in my head of the subject and how I wanted to present it. After a quick session of search and destroy on the keyboard I had banged out a quick outline. Then as I began to flesh out the story I needed to look up and verify some information. Next thing you know I had spent several enjoyable hours combing back through books and documents to find the tidbits I wanted. In the mean time I had refreshed my memory of some forgotten details and reviewed some favorites.

I missed the Jan 1 deadline for the Winter RPO with the article I was

working on, but forwarded it to John Carty anyway at the end of the month knowing John could use it in the future if need be. I was surprised that he responded that my single piece had resuscitated the issue. I thought to myself that this cannot be true; with over two hundred members in the division surely someone else had submitted something. But alas it was the fact.

You don't have to be a prolife author like Winston Churchill who wrote 43 books containing 72 volumes and countless articles a well as a few other things too, JK Rowling, Stephen King or JRR Tolkien. You just have to be willing to share what you know. With 200 members, if each of you wrote one piece every 5 years that would give John 10 possibilities each quarter to choose from. Surely each of you can do that. And Ray Brady, who is now the editor of the Caboose Kibitzer, is facing the same issue of begging for content. He'll take recycled articles that you can dust off and update that you had previously run in the RPO.

So come on guys and gals, **tell me a story!** You have got to be tired of hearing about the C&IM by now!

I will always be available, as well as the great team of officers we have, to receive any comments or suggestions you may have. You can reach me at LowellCoMotive@gmail.com

Happy Rails

David C. Lowell
Director,
Gateway Division, Mid Continent Region
Nation Model Railroad Association

The Railway Post Office and How it All Came Together

by Venita Lake

Recently I was at home without access to my computer and dealing with a land-line telephone that only worked intermittently for more than a week. I felt like I was back in the 1950s. Maybe worse, as I had been paying most of my bills online, emailing friends, doing a bit of shopping, and reading the news via that big screen or the smaller laptop, or the tablet, because of course, my devices were supposed to be talking to one another too. Eventually the technician arrived, replaced some bad connections, and saved the day. Communication is essential to almost all human beings.

As the earliest explorers and then settlers arrived from Europe, they needed to communicate: “Hey, look what we found?” “We finally landed!” We landed, but not where we expected.” “There are other strange people already here!!” “Tell me what is happening back home.” And of course, after the ships left or came back, the new arrivals wanted to make contact over land to find other settlements, traveling on foot, by boat, or horseback, wagon, whatever. Communities—and governments—happened.

Our colonies saw the need to know what was happening elsewhere, so methods of delivering letters and newspapers were developed. Never missing a good chance, postmaster general Benjamin Franklin acknowledged that his Philadelphia newspaper profited from his efforts as he worked to deliver regular postal service via stagecoaches. But there were problems as passengers and their luggage struggled for space with bundles of newspapers. And the roads were really bad.

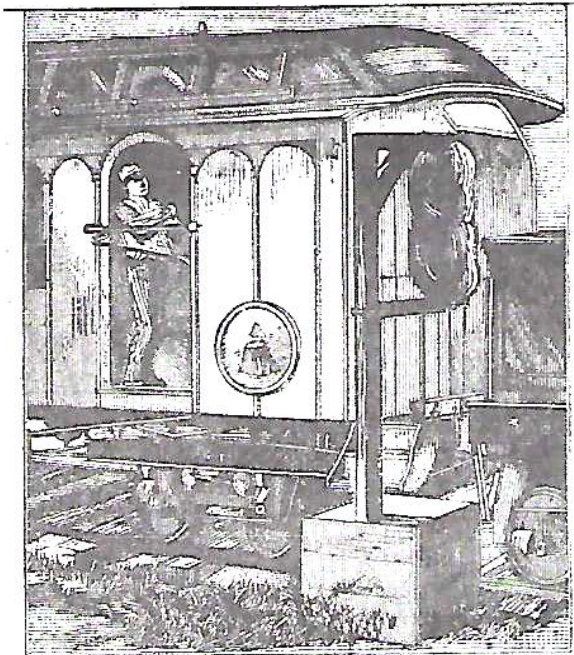
A Slow Start for Railroads

Railroads were begun in the 1830s. The Baltimore and Ohio requested Congress to allow them to import iron for construction of their railroad in 1828 and it was eventually approved in 1832. At the same time the British House of Commons was discussing the importance of “steam carriages on roads,” considering the earlier success of steamboats. England was also developing a more regular postal service as Victoria became queen. In the United States, schedules and routes of stagecoaches, steamboats, canal boats, and railroads (some with different track gauges) evolved slowly. Contracts between private railroads and federal post offices were a problem based on fees per mile, weights, wages, and greed.

One proposal was that a portion of the railroad’s baggage car could be closed off with a strong lock and only the postmasters at Washington and Baltimore, in this case, would have keys. The railroad countered with an offer to furnish a strong fire-proof box or chest that could be easily transferred from one depot to the next. Or the postal service suggested that it could run its own engine and car upon the road to convey mail and guards as often and at such hours it would prescribe, with access to depots, water-stands, etc. This, of course, was rejected by the railroads. By 1838 the postmaster general reported to the post office committee of the House of Representatives, “The mail which leaves New York daily for the South is believed to average nearly *two tons in weight*, more than a ton and half of which is printed matter. At Baltimore it separates, and about half goes West and the other half South. It is now difficult to carry it by other than steam power, or the use of railroads.” The post office was paying \$300 per mile to

the railroads for their service. And depending on train schedules and problems sorting those boxes, “the post” could wait at Baltimore or Philadelphia for seven or eight hours before being forwarded toward its destination.

About this time the postmaster general sent an agent to Europe to inquire about postal methods elsewhere. The agent, George Plitt, reported, “Each railway company provides a separate car, desired to do so by the postmaster general, for the exclusive use of the mails. As with us, these cars are filled up with boxes, to facilitate the distribution and reception of the way-mails. On the London and Liverpool road it requires the constant and active employment of *two clerks* to assort, receive, and hand out the mails, such is the rapidity of travel, and so numerous are the post offices upon this route. No letters or papers are received at the cars and mailed as with us. Everything must come through the post office.



CATCHING POST.

“To all the mail cars there is an ingenious machine attached, intended to catch and drop a mail at the same time, at places where the train would not otherwise be obliged to stop. This I have seen successfully done several times, while traveling at the rate of 30 miles an hour; but it has been frequently known to fail, the mail to be taken in dropping upon the road and the train proceeding without it. Such mail, however, would be picked up and forwarded by the next train, by an officer stationed to receive the mail left.”

The more common speed in the 1830s was twelve to fifteen miles per hour, complicated by broken

sections of single track between neighboring cities. A few railroads were declared by Congress to be post-roads and emphasis seemed to be focused on connections between Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Washington, D.C., and Richmond. Only the B&O hinted at greater possibilities by including Ohio in its name.

The possibility of doing more than simply carrying pouches filled with mail came again in 1847 when a first assistant postmaster general was sent to Europe to report on the systems in France and England where he observed their “traveling post offices.” However, he reported that they would not be easily adapted in the States and the idea was dropped.

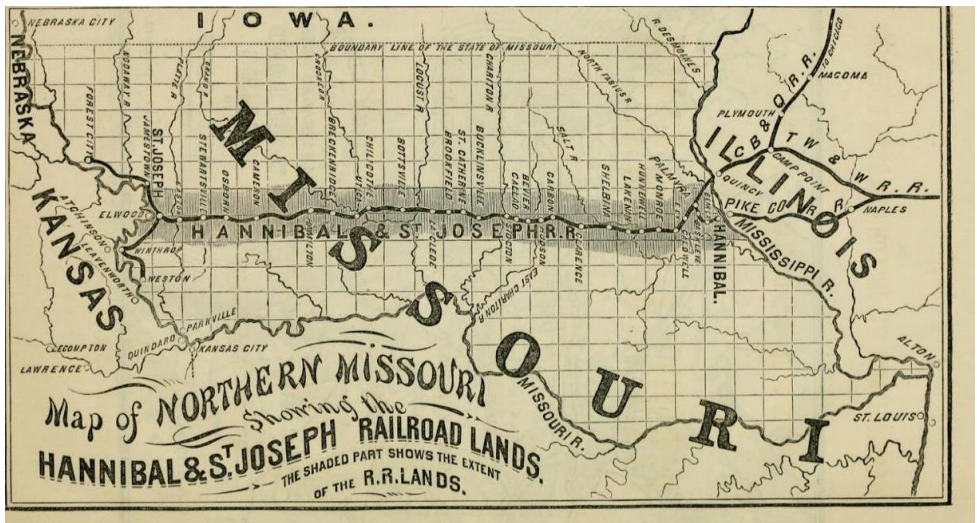
Add the Electric Telegraph

Meanwhile experiments with electricity and electromagnetism led Samuel F. B. Morse, a professor of painting and sculpture (!) in New York, to consider the possibility of electric telegraphy. He devised the system of dots and dashes to represent letters and numbers and in 1837 was granted a patent on the electromagnetic telegraph. Supported by a government grant in 1843 he and his friends built a demonstration telegraph system thirty-five miles long between Washington and Baltimore. Wires were attached by glass insulators to poles alongside the railroad. Completed for the public on May 24, 1844, this invention tied together a system of communication as well as a better functioning network of railroads through the use of timetable and train order. By 1861 the telegraph connected Missouri to California. The Pony Express had served as an interim mail service operated only from April 3, 1860, to October 26, 1861, that delivered messages, newspapers, and mail using relays of horse-mounted riders until the telegraph lines were completed. Once newspapers were delivered, of necessity limited in weight with the Pony Express, the news was printed at its destination and this practice followed with the telegraph.

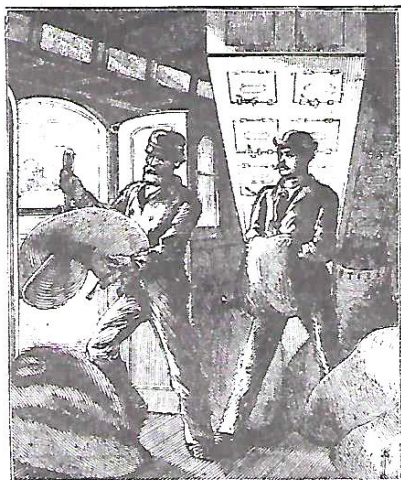
The telegraph and railroads played a major role during the Civil War. Battle plans could be wired, and rail service could deliver troops in large numbers quickly. In February 1864 as Ulysses Grant was promoted to lieutenant general, a rank previously earned only by George Washington. He was able to direct armies from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic from his positions in Virginia and send regular reports to President Lincoln in D.C.

By this time, there were also some "limited" trains, described as a special train "to convey the mails and four passenger cars, tickets limited to two hundred, no other cars to be attached under any circumstances at any point on the line." After complaints from the postal service, one line between Washington and New York was forbidden from putting coffins with dead bodies in mail cars at Philadelphia and packing the mail packets around them.

It All Comes Together with the Railway Post Office



In the early years of using railroads to deliver the mail, local post offices were charged with sending anything not local to a distributing post office, originally thirty-five cities and towns, where it would be properly sorted and sent on its way. By 1857 the number of cities was fifty. While a passenger could go directly to his destination and make connections, when necessary, a letter or business correspondence had to be routed to the distributing post office and a commission tax was paid to the "D. P. O." Sometimes errors or intentional misdirects were made as mail pouches were tossed onto passing cars headed to one or more wrong D. P. Os. Distributing had to be stopped to save money and to speed up delivery of the mails.

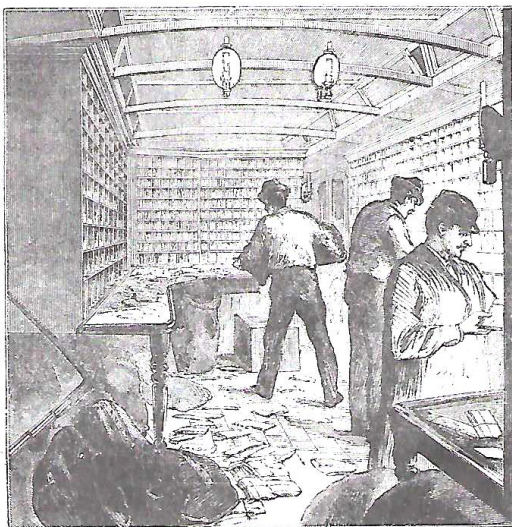


CATCHING MAIL AT WAY-STATIONS.

had not been completed in the first few weeks so a temporary setup was made in Hannibal. The first run was started on a Monday from Palmyra and Mr. Davis reported that he assisted the clerk going as far as Clarence and turned back with another clerk and made the same trip on Tuesday and again on Wednesday when he did the mail distribution himself. By Friday Davis was assured that three cars would be made up properly and would be run from West Quincy, provided that they had competent men to do the work. While other superior officials were involved in approving the test, they all agreed that W. A. Davis should be credited with devising and

Changes did come: Commissions became fixed salaries for postal workers. Postage had to be prepaid. Multiple kinds of paper records for accounts were eliminated when stamps were canceled. Officials had been talking about the possibility of sorting mail in a customized railroad car as it was moving from one town to another, but they had dismissed the idea for years.

The first real effort was successfully made in Missouri by William A. Davis, then assistant postmaster of St. Joseph, in August 1862 on the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad. Mails from St. Joseph headed for the west coast were transferred to stagecoaches. Plans for the interior arrangement were made but



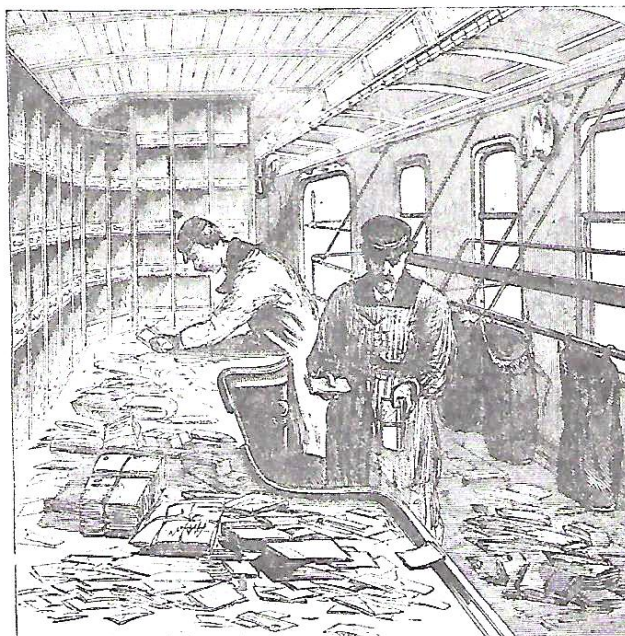
ASSORTING LETTERS.

organizing the first successful Railway Post Office. Numerous improvements were made over the years and William A. Davis worked to put the new system in operation throughout the country.

Before the implementation of RPOs, agents on the rail routes only received locked bags to be delivered to the appropriate station or forwarded through to the next destinations. With an RPO, railway postal clerks (a new title) had keys to open bags and deal with their contents. Well before the civil service law was adopted in 1889, the post office had classified its clerks with set salaries. Appointments were made on merit with a system of

THE TRAIN LEAVING THE GRANT

examinations and a probationary term. Political appointments were no longer made. The number of appointments was distributed in proportion to the mileage of railroad lines in each congressional district. At some point weight requirements of agents were increased from 125 pounds to 135 pounds and minimum height was increased from 5 feet 4 inches to 5 feet 6 inches allowing men to reach the top boxes of letter cases and be heavy and strong enough to do the heavy lifting and strenuous work.



ASSORTING PAPERS.

THE LIGHTNING POSTAL TRAIN FROM NEW YORK TO C

The mail cars were set up with a long table where bags of mail could be dumped and sorted for direction and destinations. They were further sorted into smaller boxes and ultimately loaded into bags that would be dropped or delivered at each depot. Post offices were required to be built close to each depot.

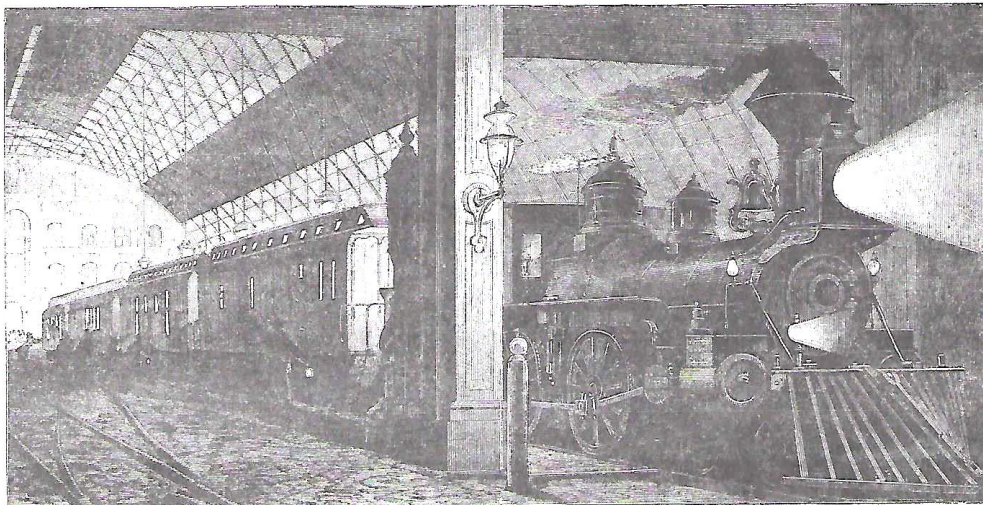
Much of the previous information comes from a 34- page booklet, *A History of the Railway Mail Service, together with a Brief account of the Origin and Growth of the Postoffice [sic] Service and a Sketch showing the Daily Life of a Railway Mail Clerk*, originally published in 1903 by the Columbian Correspondence College in Washington, D. C., then available from the Mobile Post Office Society in Omaha, Nebraska. It was reprinted for the 1977 National Postage Stamp Show, and I purchased it at the National Postal Museum in D. C. several years later.

The sketch of the life of a Railway Mail Clerk goes into great detail telling of enrollment at the Columbian Correspondence College. After achieving the required 97% accuracy grade on the Railway Mail Service examination, the student was appointed as a

substitute railway postal clerk and after six months as a permanent clerk. The job was dangerous. Wood mail cars were generally placed directly behind the steam engines to protect passengers and wrecks were all too frequent and trains traveled faster.



Robberies were also a problem and clerks carried .38 -caliber pistols. In spite of that this post office job was considered the top level. The pay was very good, time off was



THE TRAIN LEAVING THE GRAND CENTRAL DÉPÔT, NEW YORK.

balanced against the long and unpredictable hours, and the camaraderie among the team members was important.

Different modes of mail distribution would begin from 1918 until 1927 when the U. S. Post Office Department created the commercial aviation industry. They trained pilots, tested planes, and developed routes. Charles Lindbergh had a route between St. Louis and Chicago and experienced several crashes. In 1927 this service was handled by private contractors. Automobiles were used for more local deliveries and by 1921, the post office had 4000 trucks with 43 different types of trucks made by 23 manufacturers. Finding parts to make repairs became next to impossible. So, they narrowed it down to three, Ford Motor, Commerce, and White. As railroad traffic declined, a variation of the RPO was used first in 1941 with a Rail Post Office Bus which ran from Washington, D.C., to Harrisburg, Virginia. It interior was designed like the RPO's. The second bus was not built until after WWII and these lasted until 1974. Interstate highways and the growth of business mail required different approaches including zip codes.

Read and see more about this on the website of the Smithsonian Postal Museum <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibits/current/moving-the-mail-by-rail/index.html> which is located in Washington, D.C. across from Union Station.

Division Minutes

by Thomas Ose

Meeting Minutes for January 18, 2021

Superintendent: Willie Richter

Assistant Superintendent: Dan Knipp

Paymaster: Bill Levine

Clerk: Thomas Ose

McoR Director: David Lowell

Activity Coordinator: Ron Gawedzinski

Publicity Chairman: Jim Ables

Membership Chairman Bill Linson

AP Chairman: John Carty

Contest Chairman: Chris Oestreich

Business Meeting:

At 7:04pm superintendent Willie Richter called the Zoom meeting to order. Reminder was given that meeting may be recorded. Also mentioned to state name when speaking.

Membership Chair Report

Dave Lowell reviewed membership standing and details are attached.

Minutes

Previous months minutes were approved

Financial

Report was approved and attached is latest report

Old Business

1. no Old business

New Business

1. 2021 Budget

1. was deferred since Bill Levine was not present

General Announcements

1. Regional meet will be on June 17 in Tulsa.

2. RPO and Caboose Kibitzer are looking for articles

3. 2022 Convention

1. Train Show will be in Collinsville.

2. Conference at Marriott in St. Louis

Clinic:

Dave Ackmann - 3D Printing

Ever wonder what 3D printing can do for your model railroad layout?

Dave describes what he learned in the first few months of using his.

February Zoom Meeting

Connie Coy – Guest presenter providing a virtual tour of their Glacier Line.

Business Meeting adjourned at 7:13pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas Ose

Clerk, Gateway Division

February 15, 2021

Superintendent: Willie Richter

Assistant Superintendent: Dan Knipp

Paymaster: Bill Levine

Clerk: Thomas Ose

McoR Director: David Lowell

Activity Coordinator: Ron Gawedzinski

Publicity Chairman: Jim Ables

Membership Chairman Bill Linson

AP Chairman: John Carty

Contest Chairman: Chris Oestreich

Business Meeting:

At 7:01pm superintendent Willie Richter called the Zoom meeting to order. Reminder was given that meeting may be recorded. Also mentioned to state name when speaking.

Membership Chair Report

Dave Lowell reviewed membership standing and details are attached.

Minutes

Previous months minutes were approved. Motioned to accept by Thomas Ose and second by Jim Ables.

Financial

Report was approved and attached is latest report. Motioned to accept by Jim Ables and second by Thomas Ose.

Old Business

1. Election of Officers
 1. Results were presented
 2. All current officers will remain
 3. The motion to accept and destroy was submitted by Dale Witt and second by David Ackmann

New Business

1. no New business

General Announcements

1. 2021 Tulsa Union joint convention moved to Oct 7-9
2. National Rails by the Bay convention canceled

Clinic:

Connie Coy - Central Indiana Division of the Midwest Region

Connie will be giving us a layout tour of her and husband John's Glacier Line. The Glacier Line is an "O" Scale (1/48) model railroad that is set in Marias Pass/Glacier National Park, Montana. This layout has been featured in OGR Magazine and on video by OGR

Publishing: Great Layout Adventures Volume #13. It is also featured on the cover of Classic Toy Trains magazine, the November 2018 issue.

March Zoom meeting Clinic/Presentation Pete Weiglin - Cincinnati Division of the Mid Central region

The Pullman Company – a look at its history, mythology, and the evolution of its standard practices and equipment. And, the real secret of Pullman's success operating the largest rolling hotel chain in America.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas Ose

Clerk, Gateway Division

NMRA MCoR Region & Gateway Division

The National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) is a world-wide organization dedicated to all aspects of model railroading. In order to bring the most benefit to its members, the association is subdivided into Regions, and each Region has a number of local Divisions. National dues are \$72 per year, and all members of the NMRA are automatically members of the Region and Division in which they live. The Gateway Division is part of the Mid-Continent Region, which represents Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and parts of Iowa and Illinois.

The Mid-Continent Region publishes a quarterly bulletin, *The Caboose Kibitzer*, and holds an annual convention meeting that usually includes modeling clinics, local tours of layouts or prototype facilities, and model contests. Annual subscription to the Mid-Continent Region *Caboose Kibitzer* is included with membership at the National level and runs concurrently.

The Gateway Division is well represented on the regional and national levels of the NMRA. Its members actively promote the modeling hobby through local monthly meetings, this quarterly newsletter, an annual train meet in the fall, participation in area train shows and other events, and a comprehensive website. Annual subscription to the Gateway Division *RPO* is \$10, running from July 1 through June 30. Members who subscribe mid-year are given extended memberships. The division's official mailing address is on the "Contact Us" page on the website: <http://www.gatewaynmra.org/gateway-nmra-contact-us/>. Checks may be sent to Gateway Division NMRA, PO Box 7742, Chesterfield, Missouri 63006-7742. Membership is open to anyone

from the beginner to the most advanced modeler, of all ages, so that everyone can share questions and knowledge of the hobby. Visitors are welcome at the monthly Division meetings listed on our website, www.gatewaynmra.org

Division Officers

Superintendent

Willie Richter

Assistant Superintendent

Dan Knipp

Clerk (Secretary)

Tom Ose

Paymaster (Treasurer)

Position open pending election

Division Director

David Lowell



GATEWAY **NMRA**
ST. LOUIS **MCoR**