



The Winnebagoland Whistle

The Official Publication of the Winnebagoland Division
Midwest Region- National Model Railroad association

VOLUME 58, ISSUE No. 2

WINTER 2025

Photo

*Photo courtesy:
Dennis Eggert*



An SD45 and a leased Penn Central U25B handle a grain extra over the twin stone arch bridge crossing Garvin Brook and County Road 120, west of Stockton, Minnesota. The locomotives are custom painted and weathered. The stone arch bridge was made using PVC ceiling tile and 4-inch PVC pipe.

Superintendent's Report

Paul (Tree) Hillmer



I can report we sure had a busy fall in the WLD. Dave Rickaby set up a wonderful Fall Meet held on October 4th at the Holy Family Parish Church in Marinette, WI. We had a total of 45 people attending. On Friday night, Dave and Joe Siedl hosted operating sessions for 12 members (including me). On Saturday morning, the meet began with 3 clinics, photo and model contests, and a modeler's roundtable sponsored by the Railroad Prototype Modelers group and organized by Justin Henderickson.

After lunch and awards, we had 6 neat home layouts on tour. What an enjoyable day and weekend. See photos of the Fall Meet in this issue.

Many Fall Meet attendees liked the idea of annually holding a joint WLD meet/RPM roundtable. Hence, I would like to propose that the WLD and the RPM annually hold a joint meeting at our Fall Meet, and maybe at the same location? Appleton or Green Bay comes to mind. And, then the Spring Meet would be held round-robin covering our entire division. Let me know your thoughts on this idea. Email, text, call or best of all, come on over and run some trains and chat.



Our WLD Spring Meet will be held at the Waupaca Depot on Saturday May 2, 2026. Mike Kirk of the Waupaca Depot and Brandon Reidl of the Waupaca Area Model Railroad club are organizing what should be a great day. Mark your calendars. And, for those of you working on earning NMRA Achievement Program certificates please enter the photo and model contest. We need to keep those judges busy!

We kicked off WLD Workshop Wednesday on 10/22/25 via Zoom. What a chatty bunch. Really fun too! Consult the WinnebagoLand Division's Facebook upcoming events page for the next meeting.

On 11/8/25, we held our 29th Annual WLD Operating Day here in Appleton. We had 20 people attend operating on 4 layouts. Joel Weeks' GN layout and my Badger Mid-Western held both morning and afternoon sessions. Bill Moede hosted the morning session and Paul Alliet hosted in the afternoon. What a blast. We do need a location for next year. Reach out to me if you like to help and host.

And finally, a huge shout out to our newest Master Model Railroader Rich Hanke! John Leow informed me that Rich will be MMR #810. We will be doing a presentation for Rich soon. Rich worked hard to reach this pinnacle of achievement, and it is well deserved.

Hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season. See you at the Arctic Run Train Show on 1/26/26?

In This Issue

Gerry Ring, Whistle Editor

You will notice in this issue the “*Off the Bench*” column has a different author, Roger Wurtzel. It is my goal to make *The WinnebagoLand Whistle* both a publication for and by the members of the WinnebagoLand Division of the NMRA. Since *The Whistle* is an NMRA Division publication, “*Off the Bench*” authors can earn 1 point per page toward earning the AP author certificate. Therefore, I encourage WLD NMRA members working toward this certificate to submit brief articles that are about 1 page in length. Consider *The Whistle* as a training ground before publishing in one of the national publications or the NMRA national and regional publications. Just send me your text and photos to gjfring@gmail.com. Before your article's publication, I will send you back a proof copy showing you how it will appear in the newsletter so you can provide your final approval.

In The Hopper

By Paul Hillmer

This issue of “*In the Hopper*”, we visit what is perhaps the largest home layout in our division, Arpad Eiler's Great Freedom Railroad. Over the years Arpad has built and rebuilt his huge double-deck HO-scale layout in a large outbuilding located on his and his wife's hobby farm outside of Waupaca.



Main layout room showing Marshall yard on right.

Many of you have seen his layout over the years and know how well constructed it is. Arpad is a master carpenter, and it shows. Plus, the guys in Waupaca have pitched in and helped him build an empire. Arpad opens his layout frequently and is a great ambassador for the hobby.

I have had the pleasure of operating his layout many times over the years. If you get a chance to operate it, please do! Arpad loves having people over and seeing the trains roll.

His layout will be featured in the upcoming July issue of Model Railroader

Layout Name

Great Freedom Railroad

Owner

Arpad Eiler

Description

HO scale, Digitrax DCC, 42' x 46' multi deck, 900 feet of mainline.

Theme

Based on US History, many areas are named after the Presidents or great leaders. When Arpad was young, his family fled Hungary in 1944 as the WW2 raged. After a long journey involved wagons and ships and then trains, they ended up in Waukesha WI. They loved their new home and all the freedoms of a new country. His love for history and the new-found freedom, he decided to name his model railroad, The Great Freedom Railroad.



Side room showing the Eisenhower Military complex.

Type of Car Forwarding Used

Arpad created a 9-cycle homemade switch list on an Excel spread sheet. He had been working on this and tweaking it over 20 years as the layout grew and expanded. He said it took a long time to set up but now it is easy to change things and is working well. So, after one operating “cycle” is finished, he moves on to the next cycle and prints the spread sheet for that. Then he walks thru the layout to double check that cars are where they should be prior to running.

Do some cars end up in the wrong spots? Yes, but easily fixed or it gets caught by the operators during the next cycle. Just like the real thing. After many years of working this, the bugs are mostly gone, and it flows smoothly.

One cycle involves 12 separate switching locations from the main yard (Marshall Yard) and back. There are also local switch jobs such as the huge steel mill complex (2 crews needed working each end of the mill) and the Eisenhower Military complex (I did that in September). Plus, he can run up to 12 “unit” trains, depending on how many are operating. Arpad estimates he has hosted around 50 operating sessions and cycles over the years.

Arpad's Thoughts on Operating

Arpad writes “I designed my layout knowing some people like to do a lot of switching. Some people like to switch but not so much that they get a headache. While others like just to watch trains go thru the scenery. I would like to think I have accomplished that goal.”



Arpad surveying his realm.

He sure has!

2025 Fall Meet Marinette, WI

RPM Modeler's Roundtable



A selection of models featured at the roundtable.

Photo Contest Winners

Joe Lallensack Photo Contest Chair



Best of show winner, Paul Hillmer

- Best of Show: Blades, of Rotary Plow at North Freedom - Paul Hillmer, Prototype Color Print
- First Place, Prototype Color Print: Paul Hillmer- Lantern, Soo #758
- Second Place, Prototype Color Print: Emory Luebke- Sweet Soo at North Freedom
- First Place, Model Color Print: Paul Hillmer- David J. Vaill in Narrows Canyon

Contest requirements: photos at least 5x7 but no larger than 11x14 and mounted to allow handling during judging.

I want to thank Phil Herman and Dave Nitsch for assisting me in the judging.

Model Contest Winners

Richard Cooke, Model Contest Chair



Tom Davis receiving merit award for his HO scale engine house.



Tom Davis's engine house with complete interior.

The Clinics

Phil Herman, Clinic Chair

Phil Ogren—Railroading in the Paper Industry



Gregg Condon—A Layout in Five Months



John Leow and Pat Thoney—The Quincy and Torch Lake RR (history and modeling)



the railroad interchanges with the standard-gauge Chicago & North Western Railway, while at the eastern end the railroad trainloads with Great Lakes shipping, as Cedar River is a port town on the bay of Green Bay. The waterborne traffic is the “eastern” part of the railroad. North Lake Junction and Palestine have interesting traffic. The railroad interchanges with the narrow-gauge Westman Dam Lumber Co railroad at North Lake Junction. This railroad brings cut logs down from Camp Teotawwki near Gourley, MI and switches the log dump and interchange track at the sawmill. Their main engine facility is here as well. This line sees three trains daily. The WDLCO railroad traverses a 2-1/2 turn helix before reaching the upper deck above Stephenson. The SCR&E Rwy. serves the sawmill, interchange track, a freight house, and the Valley Growers warehouse at North Lake Junction. At Palestine, besides the cheese factory and team track, the main traffic is pulpwood in and charcoal out from the Phillips Kilns and sugar beets are loaded here in October, hence, the fall scenery. The passenger service between the two terminus's is provided by the Cedar River Rambler twice daily. A sugar beet train in both directions, along with two freight trains, and possible extras ply the line daily.

Layout Tours

Dave Rickaby, Cedar River, & Eastern Railway—On30 scale.



Dave started building his On30 Stephenson, Cedar River, & Eastern Railway in 2016. His layout is 61' x 14' long, with a 16' extension to the Westman Dam Lumber Co. sawmill at North Lake Junction. Representing the 1910-1915 era, his 15-mile shortline runs from Stephenson to Cedar River in Menominee County, MI, with engine facilities at both ends. The route passes through the towns of North Lake Junction and Palestine. At Stephenson,

Dan Chinnery, BN and BNSF—HO and G-scale



Dan models the Burlington Northern and BNSF in HO and G-scale. The HO scale layout is a representation of modern operations around Superior, WI, with a “what if” the line to Ashland, WI, still existed and a “what if” the BNSF had acquired the Missabe ore dock in Duluth, MN. Dan also models his own private-road NorthernChem (NOX) fleet of tank cars, covered hoppers, and

mechanical reefers to support the company's chemical manufacturing facility.

Scott Anderson, CNW–HO scale.



Scott models the Chicago and North Western in HO scale. His layout is era 1960's, modeling iron ore traffic from Iron River to Escanaba MI. The full basement is used. Scenery entails hand painted fall settings, country landscapes to industrial yards. The layout is 40% complete so you will see the process in the making.

Andre Pichette, CNW–HO scale.



Andre models the Chicago and North Western Peninsula Division in 1963 from Escanaba to Iron River, MI. The layout operations are simple, load iron ore at the six modeled iron mines and unload them at the scratch built wooden ore dock. All the structures on the layout are scratch built or 3D-printed and are as close to the actual buildings as possible. The C&NW #6 ore dock was built from plans drawn by Donald Steffen from original blueprints and has over 2500 linear feet of balsa

and basswood. Motive power is provided by a fleet of custom-built Fairbanks Morse H-16-66's "Baby Trainmasters" and other locomotives from the period. Andre's ore car fleet consists primarily of modified MDC Roundhouse 70-ton cars but also includes a few Walthers cars. He recently started producing five different styles of 50 and 70-ton ore cars that he did the CAD design for and 3D printed. The layout is currently going through a track replacement project. The old code 70 track is being replaced with code 83.

Joe Seidl, Thunder Lake–HO scale.



Joe models the Thunder Lake, which represents a modern Canadian ore-hauling railroad. His HO scale layout features two large yards, an operating ABS trackside signal system, a CTC Control Panel, and a 120-car ore dock. A 5-track holding yard is located under the layout and is monitored by a closed-circuit TV system.

Off the Bench

By Roger Wurtzel

Have you ever been kit bashing a structure and found yourself needing four or five hands to hold everything in place and then another hand to apply the solvent cement to the joint? Well, if you have, I have found a simple, versatile and powerful solution. Your kids or you may already have them in your house. "LEGOS" to the rescue. They can go together in infinite configurations, stay together but easily taken apart, and are perfect ninety-degree angles.



The photo above shows a set up I used while building my shipping dock and warehouse for my Yellow Creek Paper Company. I had one wall section about thirty inches long that I needed to attach to another wall about twelve inches long. The shorter wall fitted into a slot in the middle of the longer wall that was perpendicular to it. I made five Lego towers that went over the wall sections. The towers were lined up on Lego square baseplates to keep everything in alignment. They have standoff bricks at two elevations. It is important to minimize the contact area between the building sections and the Lego bricks. You do not want to have a brick touch anywhere along a glue joint, otherwise you will have a Lego brick as part of your building. Don't ask me why I know this.

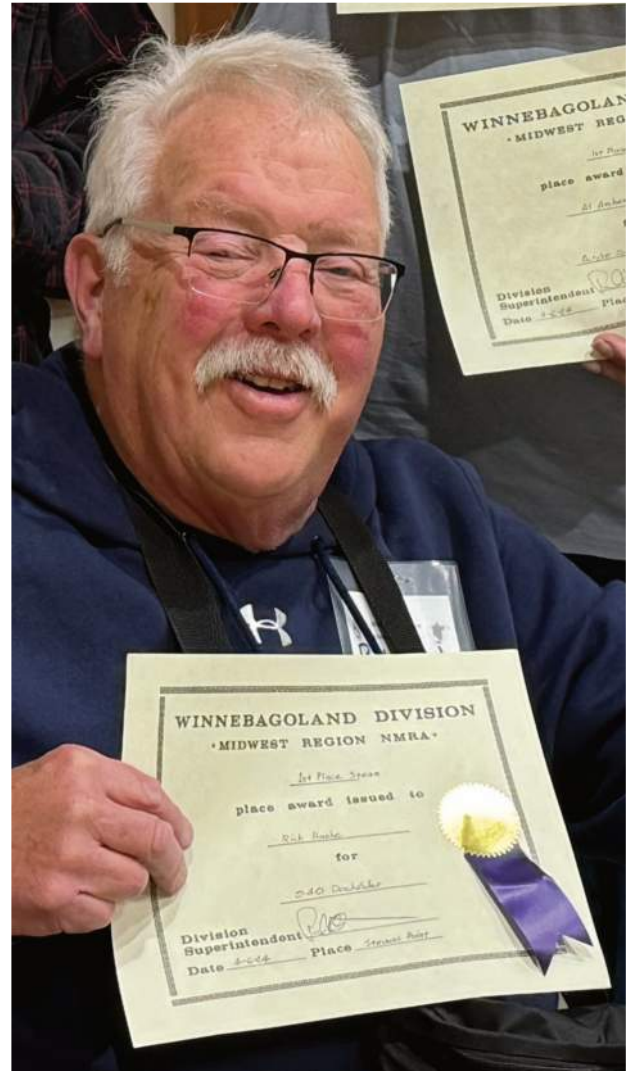
The Lego bricks measure 5/16 inch (8mm) per each round top lug in both directions (my measurement, not a known Lego specification.) The chances that the walls that you want to clamp are an even multiple of 5/16 inch are slim. I build my fixtures to be the closest even multiple of 5/16 inch. I then use small wooden wedges to fill the remaining gap. I use 1/4 inch wide by approximately 3-inch-long pieces of tapered door shims for these wedges.

You will need a couple of square base plates and a good selection of bricks in the 2x2, 2x3, 2x4, 2x6 and 2x8 configurations. You may want additional brick sizes. Buying a Lego set at your local big box store doesn't work well because of all the extra special bricks that will be of little to no use in your fixtures. If you can get to a Lego store, they sell bricks in bulk quantities. The closest Lego Stores are in Milwaukee, Bloomington MN or Gurnee IL. You can also check at bricklink.com. Click on "Parts" and then "brick".

Give Legos a try. I think you will find them very useful and fun to use.

Midwest Region Achievement Program News

By Jim Landwehy—MWR AP Manager



Richard Hanke, MMR #810

I am happy to report that there has been a lot of activity from our members. They continue to take part in the Achievement Program all over the Midwest Region. Richard Hanke received the following awards:

- Motive Power, 0-4-0 docksider.
- Master Model Railroader #810

Officers and Volunteers

<http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=personnel>

Division Officers

Paul Hillmer	Superintendent
Phil Herman	Asst. Superintendent
Paul Mastalir	Paymaster
Vern Ehlke	Chief Clerk
Paul Hillmer	Division Director

Board of Directors

(terms thru 06/2026)

Division Officers (above) PLUS:

Al Archer	Fred Firkus
Dave Nitsch	Mike Eiden
Gerry Ring	Joe Lallensack
John Leow	Mary Eiden

Committee Chairs

Gerry Ring	Whistle Editor
Gerry Ring	Membership Chair
John Leow	AP Chair
Phil Herman	Clinic Chair
Paul Hillmer	Operating Session Chair
Paul Mastalir	Company Store Chair
Richard Cooke	Model Contest Chair
Joe Lallensack	Photo Contest Chair
Michael Eiden	Webmaster
Paul Mastalir	Scout Coordinator
Paul Hillmer	Social Media Chair

Event Calendar

<http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=onTheReadyTrack>

January 24, 2026:

BOD Meeting is at the Arctic Run Train Show - Holiday Inn - Stevens Point, WI; and on Zoom at 10:30 AM.

January 24-25, 2026:

Arctic Run Train Show - Holiday Inn Convention Center - Stevens Point, WI.

February 18, 2026:

Workshop Wednesday - 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

February 21-22, 2026:

Mad City Train Show - Alliant Energy Center - Madison, WI.

March 14-15, 2026:

La Crosse Train Show - Omni Center - Onalaska, WI.

May 2, 2026:

WLD Spring Meet - Waupaca, WI. - More information to follow.

Company Store

Make sure to check out the WLD Merch store for WLD boxcars, shirts and caps: http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=co_store

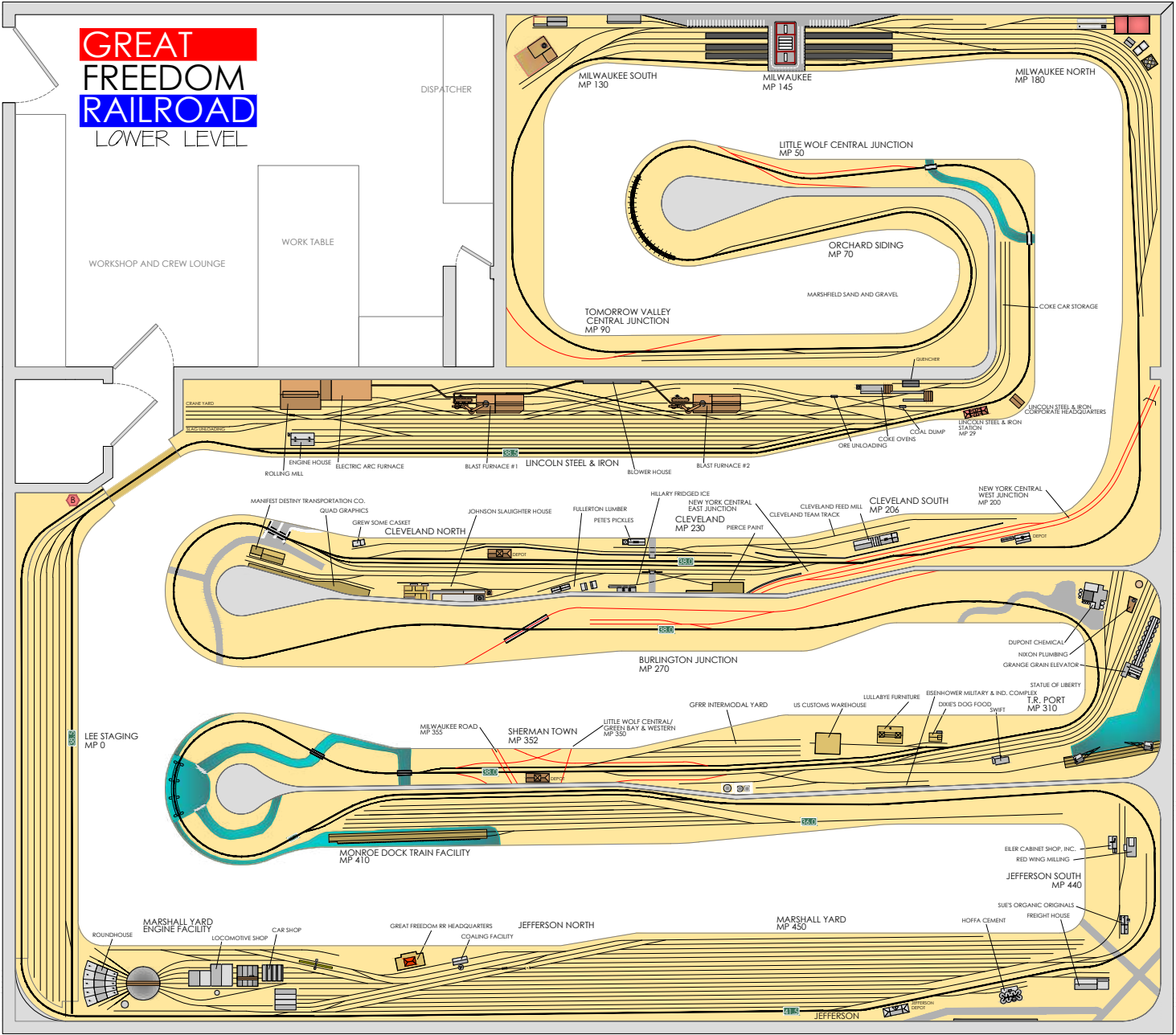


Just a few of the HO-scale Winnebagoland boxcars are left; let Paul Mastalir know how many and he will work out getting them to you. His phone is (715) 853-7274, or email him at:

mastalir54166@yahoo.com or
wldpaymaster@gmail.com

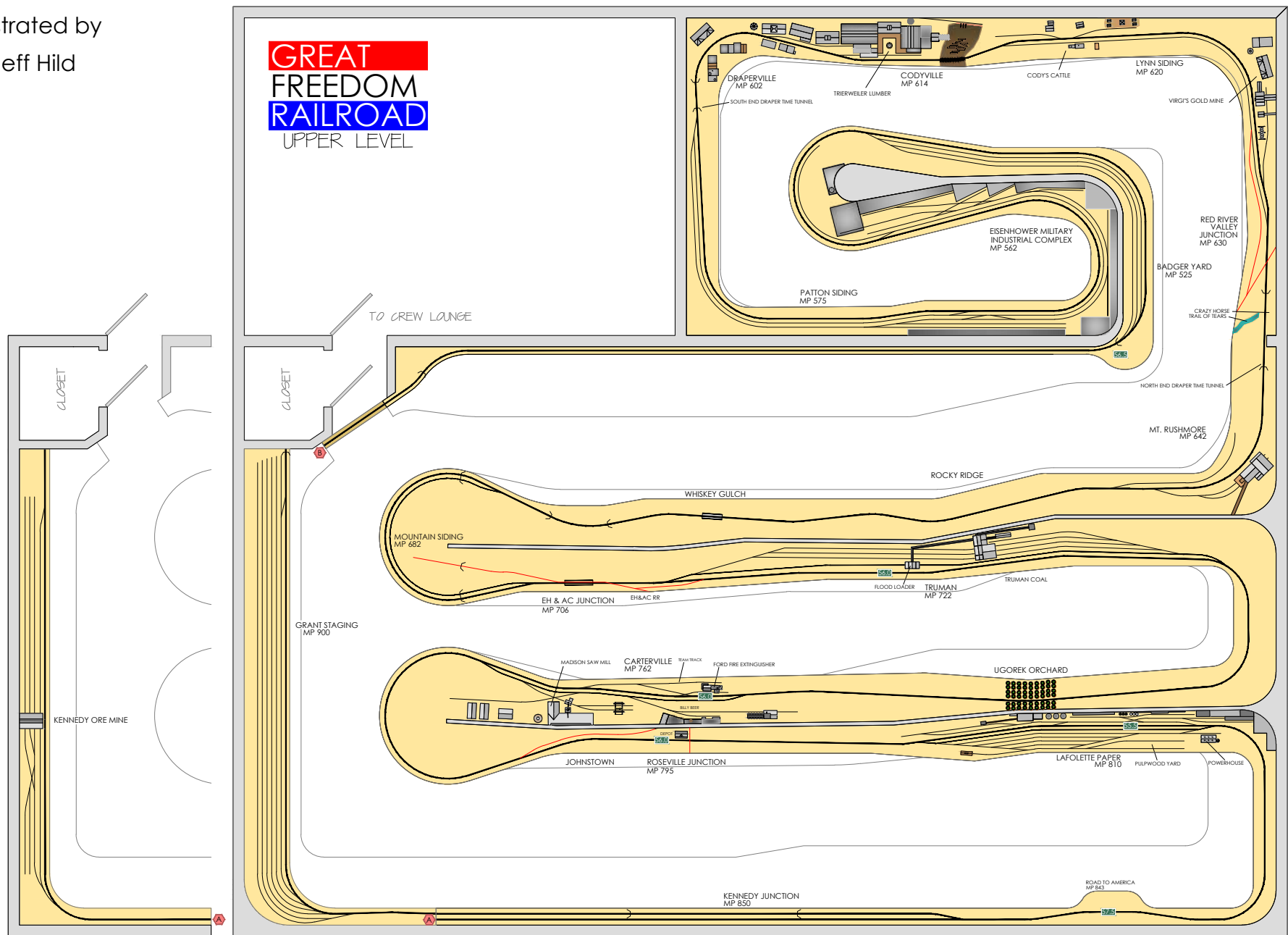


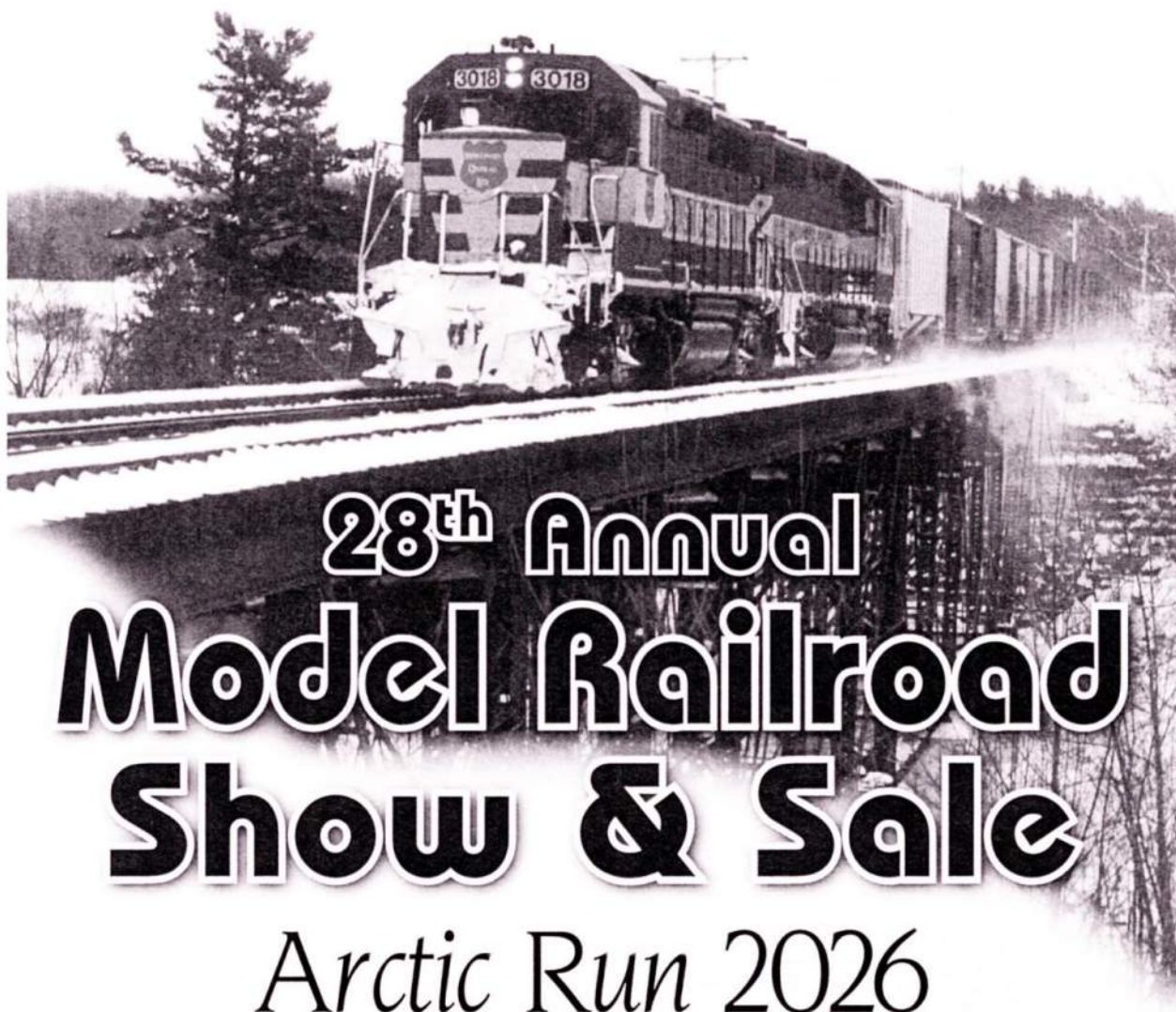
Illustrated by
Jeff Hild



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Jeff Hild

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28th Annual Model Railroad Show & Sale

Arctic Run 2026

January 24-25

Stevens Point

Holiday Inn - Convention Center Hotel

More...
Space, Layouts
and Vendors!

1001 Amber Avenue
Stevens Point, WI 54482

Saturday	9am-5pm
Sunday	10am-3pm

Admission: \$5.00 Adults \$2.00 Ages 12-17

Sponsored by: Central Wisconsin Model Railroaders, Ltd., a non-profit educational organization. For information contact Don Anderson or Jim Miller.

Jim Miller: 715-340-0265 or jimbro67@gmail.com

Don Anderson: 715-340-8105 or cwmr_mnw@yahoo.com

Our proceeds, after expenses, are given to support other non-profit organizations.



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Holiday Inn



Photo courtesy of Mike Weber.