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# THE SWITCHER

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE SOCIETY OF MODEL ENGINEERS

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Summer - Fall 2002

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## In this issue:

The "Great BSME 70th Anniversary Freight Car Project - Part Deux" – our esteemed president reports on the status of the BSME 70th anniversary freight cars.

Fall excursion to STEAMTOWN – our *esteamed* president has arranged a day of noise, smoke, cinders, and nostalgia – September 28.

More progress on urban renewal – the HO Division continues to rebuild Baltimore, but needs help! – see *View from the Cupola*

Ben McKnew's Tidewater Rail Odyssey – words and pictures of the nearby but far away.

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## Calendar

Sept. 6, Business Meeting - more freight cars and fan trips

Sept. 28, BSME goes to STEAM TOWN

Oct. 12-13, Timonium Show

Nov. 23, BSME hosts the BSA

Club Open every Friday at 7:30pm

Club Open Sunday Sept. 15, 29 1 - 5:00pm

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## Tidewater Odyssey

[*This past June, Ben McKnew enjoyed some rail fanning in Pennsylvania,*

*Maryland, and Virginia, exploring the right of way of the old North Central, visiting the Chesapeake Beach railway Museum, and other interesting spots along the way. Below are some excerpts from Ben's letters to a friend describing his rail wanderings twixt the Appellations and the Chesapeake Bay.]*

Hi Roy. Today I checked out the old North Central at New Freedom (PA). A very interesting place. Especially interesting was the interchange with the Stewartstown Railroad. The community of New



Freedom has fixed up the exterior of the station and it looks good. They even restored a Pennsy caboose and parked it next to the station. Unfortunately, the interior of the station has a long way to go.

Down the track about a 100 yards is the junction where the Stewartstown once connected to the North Central. Although it appears that it had been sprayed not too long ago, the Stewartstown track is fighting a losing battle with the weeds. Also at this location is another caboose.

Want to guess what it is? How about Lehigh and Hudson River #17! The roof, the floor, and one whole side are gone, and the stove is sitting on



the ground next to it. What I saw of the caboose's steel looks rusted, but not corroded – the end sills look almost new. Oh yea, leaf springs on the trucks!

Beyond the caboose, there is a Ma&Pa flatcar. It's in pretty bad shape – deck is gone, corrosion all over. Two Ma&Pa hopper cars being used for ballast service are also spotted here. They look ok. Oddly, they are braced with vertical steel channel. Could these be former WM hoppers?



Last in line is a Faremont Track Speeder. Now this little puppy is interesting. Distributor cap is missing, upper radiator hose is gone, lower hose is shot, radiator is busted,



lots of rust and crud, and carburetor looks like it could use a rebuild kit. There is one battery in the cab, and three more on the ground. The whole thing would have to be rewired. But I think some TLC from someone who knows what they are doing, and it just might run. Speaking of running, it's late. I'll finish this tomorrow. Ben.



Hi Roy. Back to the Speeder. There was a cylinder head on the floor of the cab, nearly identical to the one on the motor. I took pictures of every thing that I could.

Leaving the Speeder, I followed the North Central track as best I could on the road. The next stop was Glen Rock. Just another railroad town, but the station, WOW! The North

Central had built a three story stone building, which at one time housed a store, a post office, the station, and the community center. Today there is only a big antique store.

I continued following the track into York as far as I could on the road. I said it before and I'll say again: I am amazed that freight and passenger trains used to run up and down this track every day, Baltimore to Buffalo.

Tuesday I drove down to the Chesapeake and Western station in Chesapeake Beach. MONEY,



MONEY, MONEY. Otto Mears would be so happy to see his creation has blossomed into a Mecca for money. It looks like a little bit of New England has move into the Chesapeake Bay. Anyway the station looks great inside and out.

Outside, around the station, there are numerous railroad signs, a few



baggage carts, and half of one of the original parlor cars of the railroad, as well as two steam locomotive cabs sitting on the ground. Inside pictures and artifacts all over

including a FORD 7 passenger station hack, an original bell from the #8 steam locomotive, and plenty of souvenirs (junk) for the tourist to spend their money on. They have just recently installed a sprinkler system. Since about 30% of the system is outdoors under the shed it is a dry pipe type system. They made no effort to conceal it and looks just awful. Now I am all for fire protection for historic buildings, but they should find a more tasteful way to do it.

I am off to visit some Northern Virginia hobby shops tomorrow, and maybe the streetcar museum north of DC. Ben.

Hi Roy. The National Capital Trolley Museum is very nice. Imagine the Baltimore streetcar Museum, and the CCNG all rolled



into one. Standing around the car barn, I heard what sounded like a screech owl, but I couldn't see it. When I asked about it I was told it is a very rare bird known as a Snobe



Warbler. Well, I was hooked right off. I asked if the Audubon Society been advised of what I thought would be a major event. They said no, because in reality it is a electronic squawk box to keep the other birds away! Got me – hook, line, and sinker.

The Arlington Hobby Crafters in Falls Church (VA) is mostly a junk shop for the hobbyist. The floor is dirty, but they do have some rare kits. On the other hand, Granddad's hobby shop in Springfield is one of the best I've seen. Tons of small parts hung up on the walls so you can get up close and personal, a matching set of black WM F7s A-B-B-A, every thing nice and clean, off street parking, and what looks like an actual nose from an F7, repleat with headlight. I tired to get down to Newington, but man-oh-man, the construction on the I 495 – I 95 interchange looks like it could rival the big dig in Boston. I saw at least one new bridge pier that must be 150 foot straight up, and now the Woodrow Wilson is well under way that place will be a mess for a long time to come.

Today (Friday) I am off to Mount Airy, and the new train station in Frederick. Nice hobby shop in Mount Airy – people sitting around talking trains. The shop seems to lean toward Lionel, but also present were N , HO, LGB. There were a few rare HO kits, and a 4x8 test track upstairs. Next was lunch, at the Old Town Inn about 5 doors down from the hobby shop, and the high point of the day – red raspberry pie, DELICIOUS! (I would have had Blackberry Pie but they were out.)

On to Frederick and the Frederick Junction Hobby Shop. Nice small

store. There was lots of Lionel, but very little else.

Moving right along, I took in the new station for Metro. Very nice all brick building. Classic small station design – no seats yet save for folding chairs. The dog (Greyhound) was on all four walls.

Last but not least was the Hobbytown USA at Frederick Shopping Center. Large store but all run of the mill stuff. Well, that's it for now. Ben

*[If you are interested in learning more about Ben's travels, including his recent jaunt to the wilds of New Jersey, and see more photos than we can fit into the SWITCHER, please join us on Friday nights! – ed.]*

## View from the Cupola

Ah, the doldrums of a hot and steamy Baltimore summer. What could be better? Well, lots actually, but this is not the time nor place. Anyway, I'm feeling good about the club. This being high summer, there is usually not much going on, but 2002 is different. The club's anniversary freight car project is finally moving forward!

Arrangements are being made for a grand excursion to STEAMTOWN on September 28th. Notices have gone out to the local council of the Boy Scouts of America about out November open house event. Work proceeds apace on the rebuilding of Baltimore on the HO layout under the able direction of Kevin Hunter. There is now hot running water in the restroom courtesy of Ben

McKnew. Well done, that man! Hmmm.....Howsabout a shower?

Now for the bad news. If you noticed, only one of the five projects mentioned above is actually finished. Much work remains to be done. If I had to prioritize things, I would say that the most important thing to get done is the rebuilding of Baltimore on the HO pike. I urge you to ask Kevin how you can help. Constructing new buildings, refurbishing the old ones, scenery, and work on the HO trolley are things that come to mind. As I mentioned before, it would be nice if some members could donate some up-to-date building kits (and build them as well) for this effort. [*O scalers. If you arn't bashful, we won't be coy – the HO'ers 'ill use all the help then can get! – ed.*] Kevin Hunter and Jeff Springer of Custom Model Railroads have donated the Baltimore Penn Station and Bromo Seltzer Tower kits by CMR, respectively. If we can get this done by December, we should be able to get folks from the local print and electronic media down here to record it for publication, in time for the Holiday Open House events. Perhaps we can organize a sort or grand dedication event for it. Maybe even get Mr.O'Mayor to come since he's not running for governor! The freight car project, excursion, and Boy Scout event will each be taken care of in turn.

On a personal note, some discussion was held at the July business meeting about having the club be open for members again every Friday night and then to continue to open the club on 2 Sundays each month as well. I am in favor of this. Having the club open just two Fridays each

month has really cut down my own attendance and I'm sure it has affected others as well.

Trouble Ahead.....

In the "If there is a light at the end of the BSME's tunnel, it might be an oncoming train." department, club treasurer, Doug Albrecht, has received notice from Trigen Energy (the source of our steam heat) that effective in October of 2003, our minimum monthly bill from Trigen, through March, will be \$500.00 per month. If memory serves, for the past year our steam bill was less than \$200 per month. This means that under our current usage, our bill for a heating season will be at least \$3,000.00. I can say without reservation that this will kill us. This will take every penny we take in during our open-house season and then some.

At the most recent board meetings and at the July business meeting, several options for dealing with this impending crisis were discussed:

1. Doug Albrecht and I will try to meet with the folks at Trigen and explain to them what we're about. Ideally, we can perhaps get the various Trigen folks to come to the club and see just what it is we do. Hopefully, they can be reasoned with. This would be the most ideal solution.

2. Install alternate heating systems.

A. One possibility would be running gas up to the third floor and using space heaters suspended from the ceiling for heat. This would be rather expensive as it would require getting licensed professionals to do the work, not to mention the cost of the space heaters.

B. An alternative would be to increase the capacity of our electrical

system by upping the amperage to our floor, adding another breaker box and wiring in electric space heaters. This would be cheaper as some of our members have indicated knowledge in this area and could do most of the work. I am assuming that we would have the completed work inspected by a professional to make sure that everything is up to code. If you or someone you know might have some expertise in this area, please let us know. In addition, with the added electrical capacity, we'd be able perhaps to install some overhead ceiling fans to help circulate the warm air in the winter and to cool things off in the summer.

3. Just forget it and move out of the Saratoga Street location, hoping to find a new home.

At any rate, we have less than 15 months to find a solution. More news as this develops.

Ted Leach, President

## Odd Sitings!

I saw a curious freight consist on the siding at Gettysburg, in front of the big cement plant on Route 30 east of town. There were about 40 yellow Railbox cars, empties, in various grades of disrepair and graffiti. They sat there for over 2 weeks, up to July 6 when I left town. I took a couple of snapshots, but they will not do the sight justice. I would like to have taken some quality distance shots to emphasize the strange look of these cars - like the old reefer blocks out west, or the older juice train. But then I would like to have taken a picture of each car - every one of them that I examined had its own unique character. I wonder if they

were going to be scrapped? I will get my crumbly snapshots developed one of these days and see if one or two pictures are good enough to show around.

Rich Randall

## Freight Car Project Update

The contract to produce our 70th Anniversary fund-raising freight car was signed on July 8th. InterMountain has now officially "slotted" our cars for production. (I should tell you that I sent InterMountain the drawing and photo of the car back in February and gave them a verbal go-ahead in April. I did not receive the contract to sign until the end of June.)

As of July 26th, the folks at InterMountain told me that the art-work for the cars is now in preparation. In addition, the various plastic parts are now being cast. I was told that once the contract was signed, the O Scale car kits would be here in 60 days and the built-up HO and O Scale cars would follow 90 days after that.

The HO scale cars have now been produced and are waiting to go to China for assembly. O Scale kits will be produced the week of the Labor Day. Fifty kits will then be sent to me for sale and the remaining 100 kits will also go to China for assembly. Delivery, hopefully, will be by the beginning of December. A built-up example of the HO car will be on display at the September 6th business meeting. For those of you who want to lend money to the club for this project, now is the time to

contact Doug Albrecht (410-665-9031) and arrange to get your money to him.  
Stay tuned.....

Ted Leach

## A Grand Day Out!

As part of our 70th Anniversary Celebration, The Baltimore Society of Model Engineers is hosting an all-day excursion to the STEAMTOWN National Historic Site in Scranton, PA.

We will depart from the Wal-Mart parking lot in Catonsville, MD (Baltimore National Pike and Rolling Road, west of the City) at 7:30am on Saturday, September 28th, 2002. (You are urged to carpool to this site.) A non-stop trip to Scranton should put us there about 11:30am. You can bring your own lunch or purchase food in the adjacent Mall at Steamtown. The food court is right at the Mall's entrance ramp to the park. The only steam-powered trip of the day leaves at 2:00pm. The nearby Electric City Trolley Museum will be running a number of trips throughout the day. The Steamtown Shops will be open for tours to see a PRR K-4, a B&M Pacific, and a Baldwin 0-6-0 plant switcher under restoration. In addition, there is the Steamtown Museum itself inside the roundhouse complex. There are also two hobby shops within a 15 minute walk of the Mall. The Steamtown Site closes at 5pm. En route home we'll stop to allow time for a proper sit-down dinner. We should be back in Baltimore by 10pm or so.

Our bus will be provided by

Executive Charter Service of Jessup, MD. We'll be riding in a modern 49 passenger tour bus, with reclining seats, footrests a/c, large windows, a restroom and a 3-screen video system so we can watch (what else?) train videos on the way.

The cost for the trip is \$23.00 per person. This covers the bus ride only. For admission to Steamtown and the train ride (adults \$14.00, kids 6-12 \$6.00, and kids under 6 \$4.00) and the trolley museum and rides (\$4.50), you can purchase tickets on your own. Meals (lunch, snacks, and supper) are on your own as well. Food is allowed on the bus.

A limited number of seats are still available. Please return the reservation form with payment for your bus seats by August 27th, 2002. Tell your friends about this trip. A good time should be had by all. Trip runs rain or shine!

Questions? Call Ted Leach  
Phone: 410-788-8899  
E-mail: [t-r-c-leach@msn.com](mailto:t-r-c-leach@msn.com).

*[For your convenience, a reservation form is printed on the last page of this issue - ed.]*

## Shov'lin' Coal

### Anybody There?

Often in this column I have urged club members to become more involved, to come down and participate, and to join in on the fun and fellowship of model railroading at the BSME. To say that the results have been at least mixed would be enough to embarrass a used car salesman.

This newsletter is mailed to about forty "members" each issue, with about half that number receiving it electronically via e-mail. That's about sixty folks.

I have been told that the BSME once was a thriving club, with more members than I have met showing up and to run trains and participate in club activities every week. So where are you? I know, it's summer. Cookouts, ball games, goin' dan'e ocean, eatin' crabs. Sure, but it's not summer 12 months of the year, and fall has announced itself with the onset of the Maryland Monsoons. There is a lot going on, and decisions will be made over the next few months that will determine the future of the club - your club.

### Leadership

One of the qualities of leadership in any organization is to challenge the membership. Not with affronts or ultimatums, but with opportunities. That is what Ted Leach has done for us, the BSME. First, there is the freight car project. Certainly an opportunity for the club to raise some funds, but also an opportunity for those who wish to contribute by helping sell and ship the cars, as well as financially backing the venture. Next is the STEAMTOWN excursion. This is surely the most ambitious club outing in some time, and a real opportunity to have some railroad fun a bit different from the usual Friday nights or Sunday afternoons.

So what is the next opportunity? Raising dues, what else?

At the board meeting last month, the subject was brought to the table. Now, in truth, dues amounts to less

than 50% of the annual revenue that the club needs to keep the doors open. So to make the club viable on dues alone, dues would need to be more than doubled. Would paying \$12 each month be enough to end the club's financial worries. Probably not, although not having to rely on donations from the open houses to pay the rent and utilities is not altogether a bad thing. Perhaps a more relevant question is whether the membership would be willing to

tolerate any increase in dues, and if so, how much? Now, there are alternatives to a doubling of dues. Perhaps a modest increase could be used to provide some benefit above and beyond the usual. Ben McKnew has been valiantly trying to interest the members in an "entertainment" night one Friday each month. Perhaps a small increase in dues could finance a couple of pizzas, adding to the "entertainment". If

there are "crusts" leftover, the club could subsidize other "entertainments". For example, the treasury could help with the bus fair to other STEAMTOWN-like trips. In any case, it is up to you, the members. As I have said before, this is your club. It is what you make it. It is or can be whatever you want. You only have to do one thing - be there!

Nick Costanzi, editor

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Reserve \_\_\_\_\_ Seat(s) for the Steamtown Trip on 9/28/02 @\$23.00 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make your check payable to: Baltimore Society of Model Engineers.

Mail this form to: Ted Leach  
14 Union Hall Court  
Catonsville, MD, 21228-2502