

# The Rusted Rail

Vol. 1 Issue 1

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## Inaugural Issue!

Here is the very first issue of *The Rusted Rail*. I am sure you, the reader are wondering why I chose to start this little project. The answer is twofold. 1. I want to help keep you informed on what is going on within the group, the hobby as a whole, and hopefully provide some tips and tricks to make us all better modelers. 2. Having this project keeps me out of my better half's hair. I am sure you understand.

I am not a trained writer, and my occupation has nothing to do with publications, so I am more than willing to listen to your comments and suggestions regarding this Newsletter. Corner me at the meetings, or e-mail me at [schwarzvw@hotmail.com](mailto:schwarzvw@hotmail.com).

Thanks,  
Rich

## Coming Events

**Feb 26 and 27:** Spring Thaw Trainmeet  
Allentown Fairgrounds, Agricultural Hall  
Sat 9-4, Sun 9-3  
Admission: \$6  
[www.allentowntrainmeet.com](http://www.allentowntrainmeet.com)

**Mar 12:** Railroad show and collector's market  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m. \$4 Admission  
I.W. Abel Union Hall  
200 Gibson Street  
Steelton, PA 17113

**Mar 19 and 20:** Greenberg's World's Largest Train Shows, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium MD.  
[www.greenbergshows.com](http://www.greenbergshows.com)

**April 9 and 10:** East Coast Hobby Show, Fort Washington Expo Center, Fort Washington PA.  
[www.hobbyshow.com](http://www.hobbyshow.com)

**April 16 and 17:** Great Scale Model Train Show, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium MD.  
[www.gsmts.com](http://www.gsmts.com)

## Red Line Ramblings

The February 8 "sanding session" went off without any derailments. To date, it was the largest turnout yet, and we didn't even run any trains!

Most of the evening was spent discussing where we are in terms of modules built, and what we want to accomplish in 2005. The general consensus was to have a module ready for the East Coast Hobby Show in April, and to have the group ready for "prime time" in September at the N scale weekend in Bedford, PA.

The group also agreed to start building 3-foot reversible (inside/outside) corners to expand the layout possibilities and use as back up corners for meet nights. Construction is set to begin on 20 February, during the Sunday session. All materials for the modules will be donated by club members, and so far the benchwork materials have been procured.

The final key point was the creation of this newsletter, and obviously we all agreed it was a good idea. (You are reading this, aren't you?)



### Looking for... A home....

*Know a real estate agent or the fire chief? Aware of an unutilized space in a warehouse, above a store or a church basement?*

*Capital PenNscalers N-Trak is in search of a (preferably free) permanent meeting space of sufficient size (30x30 or larger) that we can use for meetings and occasional open houses.*

*Location should preferably be located centrally to the greater Harrisburg Pa. area.*

*If you find such a place, please contact us at [info@pennscalers.org](mailto:info@pennscalers.org) or by phone at 717-730-9419.*

*Thanks!*

# The PenNscale Legend

A long time ago, in a garage far, far away...

The PenNscalers started meeting in August of 2004. The idea to form an Ntrak group in the greater Harrisburg, PA area was around for several months prior to the first "official" meeting. Official is a word that PenNscalers never use about themselves, as the group tries to keep the formality of most clubs to a minimum, and emphasize on what is most important to them all, building models and running trains. Trying to keep forward momentum without having a long logistics trail and keeping cumbersome infrastructure to a minimum is challenging. Group meetings focus mostly on running sessions and module/ model construction, with "sanding sessions" or goal meetings held every so often to keep the drivers on the rails. Doing business in this way is the group's attempt at keeping every voice heard, and participation high, and growing.

## In your own words

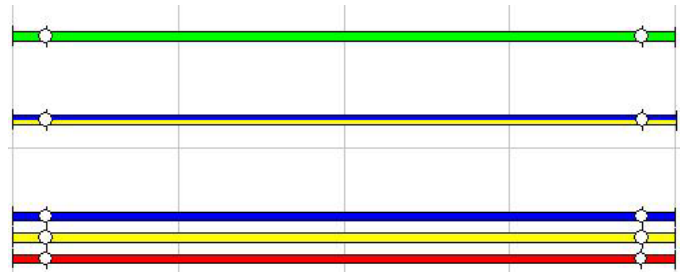
Here is where you, the reader, tell the group a little more about yourself. In future issues, we will be looking at not just the new faces, but all of the members of the group.

This is what the newest member, Ron, had to say:

*I'm Ron Heiser, I'm 35 years old, and I'm an electrician. Currently I live in Ephrata, Lancaster County but am originally from Delaware County (just south of Philadelphia), I moved out here in 1999. I'm married with 3 children (all girls-ages 15, 14 & 5)*

*Now for the good stuff. I'm interested in the Burlington Northern from 1970 on, also the main roads that helped make up the BN. I like the northern pacific terrain, but will probably model a variety of the routes. I got started in model railroading about 10 years ago when I saw a N-Trak display at a Greenberg's show and like how much detail (both trains and scenery) you could get in a smaller area. I grew up with Lionel trains and never liked how fast they ran or how little would fit in our basement. I only have 3 locos and some rolling stock but want to start expanding and make my own home layout. I like the modular way because then I can build it 1 section at a time, put them up, operate the railroad, and then take it down if the family needs the community area of the basement.*

You should have never told us about being an electrician Ron.



## Track planner's Corner

Everyone likes free stuff. Free useful stuff is even better. Atlas offers free track planning software called Right Track Software. I have never used the Cad Rail software or any of the other "not so free" products available to track planners, so I cannot report on them here. I can tell you that Atlas' software is excellent for what you paid for. That being said, it does have some limitations. It provides no items for any other brand of track. (They want you to use their stuff...duh!) Your choices for N are everything in their Code 80 and 55 lines, and their HO and O lines as well. It also includes piece sets for structures by DPM, and Walthers, as well as some from Life Like. It takes some time to get proficient with the software, but it does work.

Enough of that, this wasn't intended to be a review. The image above is a standard 4-foot Ntrak module. (If a bit funny looking) It includes the 3 community lines, a branch line option (blue and yellow) and the mountain line (green). I thought I would include some module track plans to get the creative juices flowing. The actual files from RTS can be printed out at 1:1 ratio, and fastened to your module "box" for assistance in placement of structures / scenery. Each issue I would like to include a different track plan, and yes, I would like some participation in this. So, if you have any RTS Ntrak files to share, send them this way. If you would like to get the free download, visit [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com). If you have any questions about using the software, or would like the RTS track plans featured here, feel free to e-mail me. I will help you the best I can.

## Surf Report

No, this has nothing to do with the weather, or beaches. This is about Surfing the Web for info and sites that have some good stuff for N scale modeling. This issue we will look at the "core" sites that have relevance to Model Railroading and N Scale.

[www.ntrak.org](http://www.ntrak.org) N-Trak's official website. Find N-Trak clubs, and order N-Trak items like the N-Trak

manual, and even get those hard to find Cinch Jones connectors directly from here.

[www.nmra.org](http://www.nmra.org) This is the National Model Railroad Association's official site. Although hard to navigate, there are plenty of links to manufacturers, clubs and even private layout web sites. For the truly hard-core modelers, find out how to become a Master Model Railroader here.

[www.nscale.net](http://www.nscale.net) "by N scalers, for N scalers" is the by line for this one. This site offers plenty of articles on modeling, new product announcements and a discussion forum. Many sites have forums, which are like e-mail message boards, only you don't post topics and receive responses via e-mail, instead you log on to the site forum using a screen name and password, and read, post and reply to topics left on the forum.

*Forums can get very heated, and people tend to be quite opinionated, and sometimes down right rude. So, if you like to argue over the number of rivets the prototype had versus the model, a forum might be a good choice. If you are like me, and think people who argue over that kind of thing are morons, be sure to look around for a "safe" forum.*  
—Ed

[www.internettrains.com](http://www.internettrains.com) A starting point for the internet train shopper, with all major scales represented.

[www.blwnscale.com](http://www.blwnscale.com) All N scale, all the time. As far as I know Brooklyn is the only all N scale internet dealer on the east coast.

[www.pennscalers.org](http://www.pennscalers.org) The OFFICIAL one and only web site of Capital PenNscalers N-trak group. Just check it out. If it isn't on your "favorites" list, shame on you.

## Tips and Tricks

For this issue, we are going to look at "cheap as free" items that model railroaders will find useful. Having an imagination pays off in money saved for the expensive purchases that present themselves just about every month (or every time Atlas or Kato pony up a new release).

- **Scenery shakers:** Woodland Scenics Scenery supplies are great products. If you prefer to mix your own ground cover, don't pay 5 or 6 bucks for an empty plastic shaker bottle. Save your Parmesan cheese containers and they work superb. If you buy spices in bulk, you can also use

the large shaker bottles that your garlic comes in as well. (And garlic keeps the vampires away!)

- **Foam sheet goods:** Whoever discovered using polystyrene foam for landscaping was a genius. Super lightweight (a big plus for N-Trak modules) and ease of use makes foam a lifesaver. While you can buy the stuff at your local Home Labyrinth Super Center, it can be found free at construction sites (ask first) and as close as your freezer. Save your foam trays from meats, (wash them good) and you have perfect sheets to raise your scenery approximately 1/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch.

- **Rock is good:** Convincing layered rock strata can be fashioned from broken ceiling tile, and I have seen people use tree bark as the basis for rock molds made of Play-doh, or heavy aluminum foil.

I am sure there are plenty of other freebies that work perfectly for our hobby, and with a little imagination, all kinds of "junk" can be transformed into gems of models.

## Gruppenführer's Report

One of the items brought up during the February Meetings was liability insurance for the group during public shows. Mark looked into it, and the initial figure was \$350 annually, and another rate was \$250 annually with a \$70 rider per show. With no shows planned for the near future, we have some time to discuss this, and look further into the need for such coverage, and how we intend to pay for it. It is unfortunate that we need to even consider such a purchase, but with Ambulance Chasers around every corner, it is always better safe than sorry.

On Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> of Feb, we made a real mess out of Mark's garage. The scene was right out of the PENNDOT employee's manual, with half the group on the floor with tools, and the other standing around trying to figure out what we had done. The first of two three-foot reversible corners were started, and as long as the second is made the same as the first, they SHOULD work. (Keep your finger's crossed)

We settled on a legless "bridge" design, with 1x4 lumber framing the outside of the module, and 2" pink foam between the lumber to provide a top, and structural rigidity. The bonus with using foam insulation is the weight savings, which has got me thinking of all kinds of ways to build a better mouse trap, er....module.