



MRHS MAINLINE

*The Official Newsletter of the
Muskegon Railroad Historical Society
Our 25th Year!
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The Xtreme Railfan

This issue of the MRHS Mainline dedicated to the "Extreme Railfan." Information from several sources has been compiled to highlight the efforts and actions of the "Extreme Railfan" or their "Extreme Railfanning" activities.

The Extreme Railfan... From www.michiganrailroads.com

Being a railfan comes in many shapes and sizes. The typical railfan likes to watch trains, take pictures and perhaps model on a layout in their basement. But other people take the hobby much farther - to the extreme, making some people an "Extreme Railfan."

Garden Model Railroad fans run through the bushes. Garden model railroaders actually set up miniature railroads in their gardens at home and run trains between the bushes. Click here to see an out-of-state example. MichiganRailroads.com is looking for examples of working garden railroads in Michigan.

Operate Your Own Steam Locomotive. The volunteers of Project 1225, based on Owosso, maintain and operate their own steam locomotive, one of the largest ever built in the United States. It is sometimes dirty, grimy work, but the rewards are enormous. For more information, see www.mstrp.com.

Own your Own Railroad Passenger Car. Several hundred people in the U.S. own their own private railroad cars, many of which were sold at reasonable prices as Amtrak and VIA Rail replaced equipment in the 1980's and 1990's. The best local example of this can be found in Saginaw, where the Blue Water Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society has its shops. www.BluewaterNRHS.com.

Quarter-Gauge Railroads in Your Back "40". Some people construct 1-2' gauge (between the rails) railroads on their property. Many of these are quietly operated to avoid zoning restrictions and to keep the neighbors happy. Perhaps the two best known operations are near Fairview, the AuSable Valley Railroad which is operated by the Shrader family, and the Junction Valley Railroad, near Frankenmuth. Kevin and Peg Lawrence vote for the Junction Valley line: "The AuSable has better trestles, but Junction Valley is best for locomotives, rolling stock, and amount of trackage and structures, including a fully functional roundhouse and turntable." But both routes make for an excellent day trip of fun for the entire family.

General Membership Meeting

**Tuesday, June 3, 2008
7:00 PM**

Meeting Program:

Railroading Around Chicago!

By Jamey Morrison

Don't Miss It!

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The "Extreme Railfan" by www.michiganrailroads.com ... continued

Riding the rails by Speeder. About 1,300 people nationwide own former railroad track inspection/maintenance cars which are called "Speeders". Through their national organization, NARCOA, they sponsor trips on railroads throughout the country, including several each year in Michigan. For more information, click on www.narcoa.org.

Work on your own Railroad, Your Own Tracks. If you join the Southern Michigan Railroad Society, you can work on (and own as a member) your own railroad. Operating on an old Conrail branch line from Clinton south to Lenawee Junction, the SMRS operates excursions and other events.

Watch trains and signals on your home computer. Digital Railscanning is taking off. With a bit of tinkering, an 800 Mhz scanner can be modified to output digital signaling from railroad trackside control points to your computer. Then, through a downloaded conversion program, you can map these signals to a track diagram in your own home.

What is "EXTREME RAILFANNING?"

by Jerry Sundin, from the website <http://members.aol.com/jsundin357/x/intro.html>

It's a matter of attitude. Of all the unnatural lusts that can rule one's own entity, the unchecked railfan urge will soon be consuming all available energies. The growl of the diesels approach and the singing, humming, hissing parade of rolling stock are an art form that is both constant and ever-changing.

It is a thing of beauty incomprehensible to the normal, well person.

At the grade crossing the average John Doe may panic when the signal starts. The last thing he wants to do is get stopped by a train, and he many times risks his life to avoid it. A railfan will see the crossing signals activate and try to get a front row seat at the gates, relax and enjoy the train without being too obvious about it.

The extreme railfan has most likely heard the train leave the yard, plotted a meet at the grade crossing, and left the car parked somewhere else as creature comforts are not allowed to interfere with a train watching experience.

Railfans can, by almost all appearances, be the average person. Maybe he got a scanner for father's day. He sits in the easy chair watching TV, and on a good day will be free of other distractions and hear the Local Defect Detector go off in time to go down to see a train (I met this guy). Many lurk at hobby shops, in their basements with the model train set, show up at Train shows, or attend NRHS sponsored events. They can be somewhat shy about their avocation.

The X fan cannot be bothered with concealment when the prime mover is TRAIN LUST. He may own multiple scanners, usually has a superior antenna arrangement, and may not even own a television unless he has a VCR and a collection of rail videos next to it. The scanner provides the link to the outside world, being the primary source of news, sports, weather and entertainment. A proper scanner setup in the Detroit area outputs less dead air than the Rush Limbaugh show, monitoring trains calling locations 40 miles out, Defect Detectors 30 miles, and a dispatcher about 60 miles on a good day. An X fan may even sleep with the scanner on (I know this guy), though I only do this in hotels.

The photo gallery is another differentiator of the Extremist. Much of the outstanding rail photography is unfortunately of limp locomotives posed as standing equipment in a station or yard. TRAIN pictures seem to be few and far between. Pictures of trains are usually taken out west during the kids summer vacation in the mountains where there is plenty of light and the trains don't move too fast.



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What is "EXTREME RAILFANNING?" ... continued

Extreme Railfanning in Michigan is much more fun than that.

Level roadbed weaving around lakes and rivers allows fast freight when the company puts enough power at the head end. The quality of light is unpredictable, which makes a well developed list of good photo locations essential. This requires almost continual exploration of the area. If you hit the right junction at the right time, radio chatter and train movements occur in mind numbing quantities, and you can more safely move about to catch all the fun on a mountain bike than in an automobile.

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN is a gateway to Canada for Norfolk Southern and CSX. It is a gateway to the USA for the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National, the only true transcontinental Class 1 railways of North America. They contribute about 12 million tons of traffic to the local scene. Remnants of the once Mighty NYC/Pennsylvania RR are also scattered about the region, now waiting to be divided up between Pere Marquette and Wabash heirs CSX and NS. Outside of Chicago or St Paul, where else can you find 4 Class 1 railroads in operation?

Extreme implies limits, and they do exist. TRAIN HOPPING IS OUT, MAN. Scraping your sorry butt off of RR equipment won't be any fun for anyone. If you feel the irresistible urge to hop a train, buy an Amtrak/Via Rail ticket and enjoy the ride.

TRESSPASS should also be avoided as it is illegal and can easily become dangerous. Train watching should be fun, even if it is a somewhat deranged activity.



**Bill paves way for privatizing Amtrak
May 23, 2008 04:30 AM from <http://www.thestar.com>**

A U.S. congressional panel approved a measure that would invite proposals to privatize Amtrak's Northeast Corridor and boost spending on the passenger railroad.

The House transportation committee's backing of the bill, which would call for more than doubling Amtrak funding to \$14.3 billion (U.S.) over five years, paves the way for a vote in the full House. The move follows Senate's passage of another Amtrak measure last year.

Supporters said channeling more money to passenger rail and inviting private-sector investment would help travelers cope with higher gasoline prices and airfares.

The legislation would solicit proposals for running service that would make the trip in 2 hours or less. That compares with the current 2 hours, 28 minutes for Washington-based Amtrak's fastest train on the route.

The railroad moved a record 26 million passengers in 2007.

Calendar of Events

MRHS General Membership Meeting
June 3, 2008 7:00 pm
Jamey Morrison present Railroad in Chicago

MRHS Board Meeting
June 17, 2008 7:00 pm

MRHS General Membership Meeting
July 8, 2008 7:00 pm
NOTE DATE CHANGE
Date change due to Summer Celebration Program TBD

MRHS Board Meeting
July 15, 2008 7:00 pm
Meeting Program:



THE END OF THE LINE

MRHS Activities and News...

Are You Interested in a Board Position...?

Jamey Morrison has recently announced a move to the central hub of railroading in America, Chicago. Jamey will be leaving us in mid July for a work transfer, and as such, a general board member position will be open. Please speak with a aboard member TODAY to show your interest. An election will be held at the July General Membership Meeting.

Annual MRHS Membership Outing... August 5, 2008

Back by popular demand will be the MRHS outing on the Coopersville and Marne Railroad. Tom Anderson is still working out the details, but the price will be similar to years past. Save the date and come enjoy the ride.

MRHS Outings... Are You Interested?

The Board was recently discussing that the MRHS used to take side trips relating to railroading, like going to Durand or to take railroad day trips. Are you interested or do you have ideas? Bring them to the General Membership meeting, and let's enjoy together all the railroading that Michigan has to offer.

25th Anniversary Model Railroad Boxcars

The committee is getting very close to wrapping the details of the cars, and the logo decals and artwork is being finalized. Stay tuned to find out how you can order your cars, in O, HO, and N scale.

Train Shows and Open Houses

The MRHS Train Shows are the main income producer for the club, and help us exist. Would you be willing to lend a hand as we plan and prepare for the fall show? Contact Andy or Jim to help out!

Have you renewed your membership?

If you have a check mark by your name on the envelope, your dues have not been paid for 2008!

Log on to our web site at www.mrhs-online.org and navigate to the "Join the MRHS" page, or go to http://mrhs-online.org/about/mrhs_membership_application.pdf to download a membership form and send in your renewal! Don't let your benefits of being a MRHS Member expire!

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