



## A Railroad “O” Gauge Model Train Layout in Frostburg, Maryland for All Ages

Do you remember when toy train layouts were displayed under Christmas trees and in department store showrooms? Plenty of people do, and they enjoy reminiscing about the iconic images from their childhood. Those images need not remain in the past because local toy train enthusiasts are eager to share the joy of their hobby with visitors at Christmas or any other time. The Community Model Railroad Club, a nonprofit “O” gauge group located in Frostburg, Maryland, is dedicated to sharing its knowledge of trains while operating the largest public layout in the region.

In 2010, the club located in Frostburg when a city owned building became available. Through the efforts of city officials, a formal agreement on a vacant store was reached which enabled members to begin work on the building and layout. According to Joe Brumage, club president, community partners contributed resources to renovate the property. “Barb Armstrong, from Armstrong Insurance

Scenic layouts have always been an attraction of model railroad displays. Varying from a simple figure eight to an extensive layout, as seen above, brings enjoyment to all.

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**  
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

Agency, and Hunter Douglas, a local manufacturer of window blinds and shades, provided assistance in preparing the building for use. After the improvements were completed, members began work on planning and building the layout.”

The club’s new headquarters allowed for construction of a 10 x 20 foot layout that features up to five trains operating independently. A key partner in the planning and operating phase was MTH Trains, a major train designer and manufacturer based in Columbia, Maryland. Brumage recalled, “We met with Mike Wolf, President of MTH and Rich Foster, Vice President. Our layout plans were accepted, and MTH supplied us with track and product sample engines over the years. The club has helped to promote



MTH Trains at local events, and it has proved to be a great partnership.”

The Frostburg layout captures the ambiance of classic toy train layouts by featuring a variety of buildings and other accessories that are typical of the region. A family owned coal mine, stores, houses, and operating accessories are part of the scenery.

The club takes a particular interest in hosting youngsters who become captivated by the smoking engines, whistling tenders, and animated characters associated with the trains. To further engage visitors, accessories may be operated by pushing buttons mounted on the edge of the layout. John Ternent, charter club member stated, “The kids really enjoy working the accessories, and sometimes they cry when it’s time to leave.”

As expected, the busiest time of year for hosting guests is during the holiday season when the club partners with Frostburg State University’s Story Book Holiday program. More than 1,000 guests arrive for that event and open houses attract others during the holidays. Members also offer operating opportunities on a regular basis throughout the summer months when Frostburg’s Farmers Market is

**The “Spirit of Cumberland” is a composite image of the MTH “O” gauge CSX 700 locomotive and background photograph of the historic city and Narrows. This location is both busy and scenic, as CSX trains frequently pass through the area.**

*The photo above is not a part of the Frostburg Community Model Railroad Club layout but produced by AAD-INC. to demonstrate the life-like detail of the models.*

open. One notable visitor and enthusiast who operated the trains in 2016 was Maryland Governor Larry Hogan.

While the layout stirs memories, a closer look reveals that state-of-the-art digital technology is incorporated into many of the locomotives—this is not your grandfather’s train layout. The Digital Command System, or DCS developed by MTH, enables the operator to control multiple locomotives and accessories from a hand-held device—walking with the moving trains while controlling their features is a benefit of the new technology.

Club members typically bring their own locomotives, such as the Shay engine, to run and welcome visitors to do the same. “Sometimes we learn that guests have an old Lionel train stored at home, and we encourage them to bring it in. If the engine requires basic maintenance, we can take care of it. It is really fun to watch the old trains

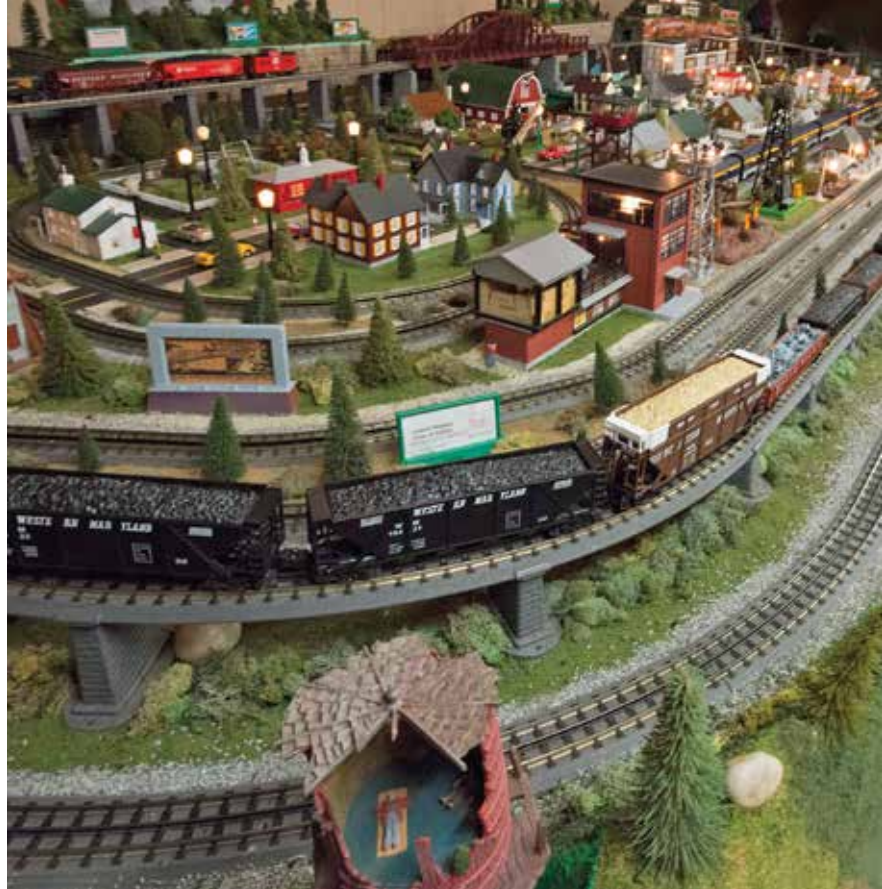
running on our layout. Sometimes they haven't been run for decades," stated Brumage.

The comradery associated with operating trains is a primary reason members join the club, John Ternent notes, "I really like getting together with the guys and having a good time. Sometimes I bring an older Lionel engine and other times I run my favorite, a Western Maryland steam engine. Other members may bring in a modern era train; it just depends on what a person likes to run."

All members enjoy operating the trains, but some also describe themselves as collectors. "We really have a mixture of operators and collectors in the club," noted Brumage. The one commonality among members is their preference for "O" gauge, meaning the trains run on three rail tracks and use AC electricity. Most "O" gauge trains are scaled to a proportion of 1:48 with the prototypes, which is another way of saying a real train is 48 times larger than the model. Another popular scale for model railroaders is "HO," an abbreviation for "half of O" or 1:87.

The club's community outreach extends to the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, a heritage railroad that operates on former Western Maryland Railway trackage between Cumberland and Frostburg. The two groups have collaborated in designing and offering for sale limited edition "O" gauge freight cars for several years.

If you fondly recall toy steam engines running under a Christmas tree, the Community Model Railroad is sure to impress, or if you wish to watch a demonstration of what the latest digital technology offers the hobby, be sure to stop by and visit with club members.



**Williams Electric Trains, ALCO FA-1 AA diesel locomotives, are frequent guests at the Community Model Railroad Club.**



The MTH West Virginia Pulp & Paper Shay locomotive is well suited for serving the coal mining operators and residents of the community layout. The hard working Shays frequently served regional logging and coal mining businesses.

Also shown are various scenes at the Community Model Railroad Club in Frostburg, including special trains named for the area. And of course, no train layout would be complete without Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus (facing page) and the Depot (left inset).

The Community Model Railroad Club is located at 10 West Mechanic Street, Frostburg, Maryland 21532. Guests are always welcome during advertised hours and events.

One regularly scheduled event is the Storybook Holiday event directed by Dr. Barbara Ornstein; it is held the first Saturday of December.

Contact Joe Brumage for further information about events and visits. Home: 301-689-6124, Cell: 240-580-0174.

### Christmas 2017 Open Houses

- Sunday, November 26 ..... 2-7 pm
- Thursday, November 30 ..... 7-9 pm
- Saturday, December 2 ..... 9am-5 pm
- Sunday, December 3 ..... 2-7 pm
- Wednesday, December 6 ..... 7-9 pm
- Thursday, December 7 ..... 7-9 pm
- Sunday, December 10 ..... 2-7 pm
- Wednesday, December 13 ..... 7-9 pm
- Thursday, December 14 ..... 7-9 pm
- Sunday, December 17 ..... 2-7 pm
- Wednesday, December 20 ..... 7-9 pm
- Thursday, December 21 ..... 7-9 pm
- Thursday, December 28 ..... 7-9 pm
- Thursday, January 4 ..... 7-9 pm



A nearly century old Lionel prewar #150 locomotive passes by the New York Central passenger station. The small electric locomotives were commonly used in New York City and proved to be popular models for Lionel Manufacturing Company who produced them for decades.