



## **THE FIRST STATE MODEL RAILROAD CLUB, INC. NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2015**

### **NEXT MEETING:**

The next meeting of The First State Model Railroad Club, Inc. will be held on Tuesday, August 11, 2015, at 7:30 P.M. at Jarrell Station at 1282 McKee Road, in Dover, DE.

### **PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS:**

The month of July did not pass by uneventfully. In fact, we were confronted with a rather nasty surprise! The City of Dover did a tax re-assessment on Dr. Jarrell's property at 1282 McKee Road and raised the market value from \$208,200.00 to a whopping \$435,000.00. This raised our city taxes from \$703.30 to \$1,761.75, a \$ 1,058.45 increase that we were not counting on when we drew up our budget for this year. Upon investigation I found that we, as a tenant, have no standing to challenge or appeal this increase. That has to come through Jarrell Properties, Inc. the entity that owns the property. If they can be persuaded to appeal that will have to be done in March, 2016 through the City Assessor's office which would make a decision in April. For now we have paid out the increase for 2015 because we didn't receive notice in time to make any other arrangement this year. This means we have approximately \$2,304.00 on hand to meet a county tax levy of \$1,279.00 leaving us with \$1,025.00 to cover expenses until the end of our fiscal year in October. I'm afraid we are in for another long discussion about finances at our next meeting.

On the brighter side, we do have some activities to look forward to. Upon examining Steamtown's excursion schedule we note that in mid-September the 765 and the Park Services' F units will take part in the 100th anniversary of the Tuckahannock Viaduct, once the largest cast concrete structure in the World. Since it seemed to make more sense to do our annual trip to English's Hobby Supply in conjunction with this activity, we will be changing the date for the excursion to conform to this schedule. Also in September, Fredericksburg, Virginia will be hosting the second annual Mid-Atlantic Prototype Modeler's Association meet. The dates are now Sept. 11-13 for English's and Sept. 25-27 for the Prototype Modelers. What with our regular meeting and running nights, this crowds September while leaving the remaining weeks of August without any additional activity. Therefore, I am suggesting that we look at holding the club picnic during mid to late August. We can discuss the details at our next regular meeting on the 11th.

Well, that about wraps up our big news for July. We meet as usual on Thursday nights and will be undertaking projects as the weather permits. We have a surplus heavyweight eight-foot module currently resting in the carpenter's shop. I was thinking we might take it in hand and make it into a diorama that we can use to pose member's engines, rolling stock and structures for photographic purposes with the ultimate aim of submitting images to the various MRR publications. It would be an excuse to attempt some fine scale modeling and we could use it for both indoor and outdoor photography. Anyhow, give this proposal some thought and let me know what you think.

Meanwhile enjoy your summer and stay cool on those really hot days.

**Jim Valle, President**

## **OUR GERMANY TRIP**

For the past year Club Member Pete Nickerson has been planning a trip to Hamburg, Germany to the World's largest HO train layout. Richard Stockslager, at numerous meetings for the past year, has invited all to commit. Only four members committed: Pete Nickerson, Richard Stockslager, Paul Buckley and Jim Thompson were part of the planning and made the trip.

It all started on July 11, Saturday, with Richard, Pete and Jim departing from Richard's to pick up Paul. Mike, Richard's son, was kind enough to drive us up to the airport. This was leg one of a twelve-leg trip. Departure from Philadelphia Airport to Paris, France and then on to Hamburg, Germany with about a nine-hour flight and a six-hour time difference. First stop was in Paris with an hour layover, but it takes about forty-five minutes to get from one part of the airport to the other. All went smoothly. Landing in Hamburg was great with cab driver standing there with a poster with our name on it. To make it easy we all used carry-on luggage only. Most cabs in Germany are Mercedes. So away we go to the Hotel.

Leg two starts with room reservations at the American Hotel Speicherstadt Hamburg. The hotel is only a year-old renovation on the waterway. It is the first and only hotel in the warehouse district. From our room window we could see tour boats running all day. We were to stay there Sunday, Monday and Thursday. The rooms were not as big or as comfortable as our American hotel rooms. The bathrooms had square toilets with double flushes, one small and one large. The beds were on frames with a boxspring on top. Dinner that night was down the street and I had German meatloaf on bread and lettuce with potatoes and iced tea. They also have smaller portions than we normally see in the U.S.

Breakfast at the cantinetta was outstanding with a breakfast bar with all the standard foods: eggs, bacon, sausage, ham, cheeses, etc. Drinks were fruit juices and super, super strong

coffee. The breakfast room was across the canal and you had to take an enclosed bridge to it each morning.

The Miniatur Modell Eisenbahn Wunderland Model Railway HO (1-87) scale layout is the world's largest layout. It is three stories tall with every imaginable scene designed. When you first enter, you start with a circus with thousands of detailed figures. You could spend an hour just there, but there is three floors of trains to see. In one of the control rooms there are four or five operators controlling over 1,000 trains and nine sections. Pete got us a tour guide, so we could see the layout from behind the scenes. Did I mention, the layout changes from night to day every twenty minutes. There were over a thousand scenes to see. From parks to towns to cities, to mountains and rivers, with real water and operators with remote controls operating twenty-some boats up and down the rivers and canals, with water locks for boats to raise and lower as needed. Behind the scenes we got to see the operators and charging stations. The charging stations are constantly charging vehicles that are programmed. When low, they take off and get charged by themselves. The vehicles also have programs in them while traveling on the roads to use left and right blinkers and when the lights go dim for the night, the vehicle lights automatically come on. Oh, by the way, did I say, they are moving on the roads by wires under the road that you cannot see. From some points to another, the trains are under the floor under plexiglass, so you can see them. There are theaters that open and close and music is being played so you can see inside them with thousands of spectators watching. At one point we saw one of the maintenance facilities where they repair the car, train or component motors. There was a bin 3 feet by 3 feet by 4 feet tall full of burned out motors. The electrical wiring was endless. There were 10-tier helixes for trains to get from one point to another. From behind the scenes, you can see numerous risqué acts going on. One scene has a couple embracing with a funeral across the road. This scene was called "Coming and Going". The trains also had numerous track cleaning cars, usually in three-car consists coupled together. There were summer scenes and winter scenes. There were cemetery scenes with an arm or leg sticking up. There were plenty of vehicles under the layout with tons of vehicles ready for duty. Some scenes had ships and boats staged with real water, being filtered, so no impurities or floating debris or dirty water was seen. There was lighting and smoke detectors everywhere for security. We saw racks and racks of train engines for replacement and at one point there were over twenty-some charging stations. From behind the scenes, we got to see the airplanes coming through the walls during take-off and planes going through the walls for landings. It was very impressive seeing the planes being staged for the next run or being routed to a charging station for charging. On the outside of the layout, with the other thousand or so visitors you could spend hours and hours just checking out the details. One concert had 30,000 people in attendance. Even an underground view with people robbing a bank could be seen. The airport is endless with over twenty aircraft staging, loading, departing, taking off or landing. They are controlled by wires under the table to take-off point, the two rod wires come up from take-off pad to launch aircraft in the air and through the clouds. Landings are in reverse with aircraft coming out of the clouds landing with realistic sounds. The planes taxied to terminal with

a tug hooked up. Tugs also move aircraft to staging area and planes move on their own for take-off. By the way, when lights dim, the runway lights illuminate and the plane's windows are all lit. It is super impressive at night. The airport with thousands of people and vehicles moving around is amazing. Imagine the night setting at the airport with lights everywhere. There was a display case with over 1,000 firetrucks on display. Thinking of John Gray, to whom I sent a postcard. On the bottom floor, were more repair stations and building construction materials. Also, there was a wall of years of progress starting with 2000 and a year by year progress. We finally finished our tour in the sales shop, where we all purchased something. By the way, they had Faller and Vollmer model kits. Most were buildings on the layout that model companies made for the layout and then sold. What a win-win situation. If you were to take a plane to Hamburg, spend the night in the hotel we stayed in, walking distance to the layout, spend the night and catch a plane back to Philadelphia, a three-day trip and WOW what a trip. It would be well worth it and memorable for the rest of your life. I plan on going back in five years. Let me know if you are interested.

Our next escapade was the Hamburg Harbor Cruise. We caught the boat within walking distance of the hotel and took a two-hour cruise. We got a spectacular view of one of the world's largest ports from a vantage point of the water with Hamburg's skyline providing the backdrop. While cruising, we heard engaging stories about the sea trade as we glided by the historic Specicherstadt Warehouse Complex, luxury yachts and container terminals. I have tons of photos of container boats, subs, maintenance floats, locks and battleships.

Pete had a two and a half hour Mindways Segway city tour scheduled through Hamburg. We walked about two blocks and all was set up for our training class on a segway. It took about thirty minutes for about six of us to get the feel of standing on two wheels, hold on to the handle bars, turn left and you go left, lean forward and you go forward. To stop, make like you are going to sit down and you stop. We had to do an obstacle course ride over 2 x 4's and do a cone course and then away we go on our tour. We rode through most of Hamburg with our guide leading. He was on an intercom with a speaker on each unit so he could tell us where we were and the specific sites to see. The tour was about two hours long on the sidewalks of Hamburg. I have pictures but no idea where we were. I also have movies while on the segway. Most of our trip was along the rivers.

Our Tuesday evening trip to Berlin was scheduled by cab to the train station, check our tickets and board the ICE train to Berlin. The train had twelve cars and Paul Buckley can tell you all about it. You can walk from car to car while traveling at 216 km/m. The ride was smooth and quiet. The scenery was great and looked like we were home except the houses all had tile roofs. They had wind turbines that looked like ours. The trains are completely different than ours and then we arrived at the Hauptbahnhof Train Station.

We took a cab to our Hotel, The Ibis City Potsdamer Platz Hotel in downtown Berlin. I will tell you the exciting thing about the hotel later. We found a place to eat and ready for

a good night's sleep. Remember, we are six hours different from home. Midnight here is 6:00 A.M. in Germany.

Wednesday morning we had breakfast at the hotel, got a cab and had an appointment at the Remise Berlin Classic Auto Museum or the Old Berlin Transit Train Depot. The depot is a refurbished and rededicated former tram depot from the year 1900 with active workshops and dealers. The classic Remise Berlin attracts many enthusiasts of vintage cars and motorcycles. The unique part of the museum is there are eighty-eight glass boxes offering owners the opportunity to store their classic cars under conditions that provide a good standard of safety and protection from the weather. Most of the open cars are for sale as you walk around.

After the museum tour we took a cab to Bebelplatz where we were to start our three-hour tour on another segway. We had our training course which is mandatory, and of course we were all experts by now. The only difference was in Hamburg we were on the sidewalks in low gear and now we were to be in high gear on the roads with everyday traffic. Our leader was Walid, who had humor in all he said and did. We started at Bebelplatz and proceeded to Checkpoint Charlie where we explored the Cold War Landmark and border crossing through the wall. Next was the Berlin Wall, which is one of the last remaining sections still standing. Next, to the former Luftwaffe Ministry which is an intact Nazi architecture. Then on to Deathstrip, so we could see how East and West Berlin were divided. We then went to the site of Hitler's Bunker where Walid discussed the end of WWII in Europe and the Nazi's final days. Then on to the Holocaust Memorial and Brandenburg Gate, Germany's most famous monument. We also stopped at the Cold War Watchtower, which is one of the last remaining fortifications of the former Deathstrip. There were numerous more stops, each one just as interesting as the last. I didn't want the tour to stop. We took a cab back to the hotel and during the ride I realized our hotel was only one block from the Berlin Wall. I was looking at it from my room window. So that night I would take a walk down the street to see the other side of the wall that I did not see while on the segway tour. Dinner that night was in another great little German restaurant and all was good. Smaller portions than in the U.S., water is not free and you pay for refills.

Next morning breakfast was at the hotel, with the usual, eggs, bacon, cheeses and meats. Plenty of fruit juices. We got a cab to the Loxx Train Display. The display is on the third floor of a shopping mall. This layout is also super impressive with the most impeccable fine detail. It was in one great size room with different sections to view different eras and detail of Berlin. You get the thrill at the Loxx Miniature World, which is one of the World's largest digital model railways in the 1:87 (HO) scale. You get to discover the sea of houses of Berlin with its' well-known sites, such as the Government District and Alexanderplatz, lively scenes and fantasy areas. Every twenty minutes it turns into a miniature world at night and thousands of spotlights create a unique ambiance. Computer-controlled motor traffic and diversified trains on a gigantic route network will amaze you.

Loxx has a huge airport at which airplanes are taking off and landing. With over three miles (15,840 feet) of track, 40 computers and more than 400 trains, 10,000 cars, 45,000 trees, 50,000 figures and 120,000 lights. The best part was a stadium with about 10,000 people listening to Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, with his Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall speech, along with six other famous people.

We decided to go back to the hotel and revisit the Berlin Wall. We went back and saw it from the other side, our hotel side. It had all of the information about the entire time frame. I have plenty of chunks of the wall that I purchased. Pete, Richard and Paul wouldn't let me take a few out myself. On the way back to the hotel, hundreds of police were appearing. I asked and they said there was a demonstration, so we thought we had better not be part of the festivities.

On Thursday we decided to check out of the hotel and head back to Hamburg, so we caught a cab and got the next ICE train back to Hamburg. It is about a one- to two-hour trip. It was the 890, with about 14 cars and engines. We traveled at 228 km/m. I didn't realize we were in a quiet zone coach, so we were to avoid causing noise or disturbance. You weren't to even use your phone.

We got off the train, caught a cab back to our hotel, which we had kept for the week. It was cheaper to keep it for the week than two days and then one day. We all wanted steaks so the person at the check-in desk said the best steaks in town were in walking distance from the hotel and so away we went. The restaurant was great, but we all found out if you order steak it is usually one step more rare than you want. I wanted medium and got it medium rare. It was great, as we all agreed. By the way, when you order a meal you pay per item. The steak was one price, the potato a price and the greens a price. It adds up fast, but it was still outstanding.

Back to the hotel to pack and get ready for tomorrow. I took more photos out of my window of the river run. It was great.

First thing in the morning, we caught a cab and went to the airport with passports and tickets in hand. By the way, did I mention all the cabs are Mercedes. At the airport things went fine for our two-leg trip home. First leg Hamburg to Paris and second leg Paris to Philadelphia. All was fine except for the second leg at the Paris airport, where we had a one-hour layover, but it took at least 45 minutes to get from one wing of the airport to the other where we were to board for Philadelphia. Well, it was tough with us running and getting on board the aircraft with about ten minutes to take off. They said they would have waited for us. All of our aircraft were Delta and they were fabulous accommodating everyone considering most of the planes were full.

All was fine until we hit Philadelphia. That is when TSA separated us. I tried to explain to the "Jerk" (Yes, I said "JERK") that we were together. He didn't care and sent me in a

different line than Richard, Pete and Paul. The line I was in took over 25 minutes to process in while the other guys went right through and had to wait for me. It is terrible how power goes to some people's heads when you give them a little authority. All in all, everything was great. Richard had his brother-in-law and sister pick us up at the airport and away we went back to Dover after dropping Paul off in Smyrna. We got home at about 7:00 P.M. Just think, it was 1:00 A.M. in Germany. I wonder how long it will take us to readjust. I can't thank everyone enough, especially Pete Nickerson for an excellent job of planning such an extensive schedule for our trip. Everything went well with no glitches. Again thanks, Pete, Richard and Paul. We will have memories and photos for life. I have over 400 photos and Paul's last count was over 525.

**Jim Thompson**

### **UPCOMING TRAIN SHOWS:**

**August 8-9, 2015 – Greenberg's Toy and Train Show**, New Jersey Expo Center, 97 Sunfield Avenue, Edison, NJ, Saturday: 10am–4pm, Sunday: 10am–4pm, Admission: Saturday: \$7.00 (\$9.00 at door) kids under 12 FREE, good for both days, Sunday: \$7.00 (\$9.00 at door) kids under 12 FREE.

**August 22-23, 2015 – Historic Spencer Shops Train Show**, NC Transportation Museum, 411 South Salisbury Avenue, Spencer, NC, Saturday: 9am–5pm, Sunday: 10am–5pm. Admission: Adult: \$11.00 (\$5.00 Train Show admission, \$6.00 museum entry), kids: \$4.00 (FREE Train Show admission, \$4.00 museum entry). Train and roundtable rides require additional fee. (Saturday: 11am, 1pm, 2pm 3pm; Sunday: 11:30am, 1:30pm, 2:30pm, 3:30pm.)

**August 23-29, 2015 – NMRA National Convention**, Portland Expo Center, 2060 North Marine Drive, Portland, Oregon.

**August ???? – FSMRRC Picnic (date to be discussed at 8/11 meeting).**

**September 11-13, 2015 - FSMRRC to Montoursville and Steamtown, PA, English's Hobby Supply and 100th anniversary of the Tuckahannock Viaduct. (FSMRRC Excursion dates and times to be discussed at 8/11 meeting).**

**September 12, 2015 - The Great Lehigh Valley Train Meet**, Merchants Square Mall, 1901 South 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Allentown PA, 10am–3pm, Admission: \$5.00, kids under 12 FREE.

**September 19-20, 2015 - 26th Annual Tidewater Regional NMRA Train Show**, Virginia Beach Convention Center, 1000 19th Street, Virginia Beach, VA, 10am–4pm (both days). Admission: TBD for adults, (\$1.00 from every paid admission goes to Toys for Tots), kids under 12 FREE, scouts in uniform (with scoutmaster, troop leaders, den

mothers, or Brownie leader) FREE.

**September 25-26, 2015 – East Coast Train Show**, York Expo Center, 334 Carlisle Avenue, York, PA, Friday: 9am–6pm. Saturday: 9am–4pm. Admission: Two-day ticket: Adult: \$18.00, kids under 12 FREE, One-Day ticket: Adult: \$10.00, kids under 12 FREE, Two-Day Group (Club) Rates: \$15.00 for 25 or more tickets when purchased in advance.

**September 25-27, 2015 - Second Annual Mid-Atlantic Prototype Modeler's Association Meet**, Fredericksburg, Virginia (FSMRRC to discuss possible excursion dates and times at 8/11 meeting).

**September 27, 2015 – Trains Collectors Association Atlantic Division Autumn Train Meet**, Plumbers Union Hall, 2791 Southampton Road, Philadelphia, PA, 8am–12:30pm. (TCA members only before 9am). Admission: \$5.00.

**October 10, 2015 – Boy Scouts of America Railroad Merit Badge Day**, sponsored by **The First State Model Railroad Club**, 1282 McKee Road, Dover, DE, 9am–3pm. Open to 30 scouts. Admission FREE. Contact via e-mail: cubbie109@yahoo.com.

**October 22-25, 2015 – NMRA Mid-East Region Convention**, The Hotel ML, 915 Route 73, Mount Laurel, NJ.

**October 24, 2015 – Delaware Train Show**, Nur Shrine Center, 198 South DuPont Highway (Route 13), New Castle, DE, 9am–2pm. Admission: \$5.00, children under the age of 12 are free, \$10.00 Early Buyers 8:00am admission.

**October 24-25, 2015 – Great Scale Model Train Show**, Maryland State Fairgrounds. 2200 York Road, Timonium, MD, Saturday: 9am–4pm, Sunday: 10am–4pm. Admission: Saturday \$9.00, good for both days, kids under 15 FREE, Sunday: \$8.00, kids under 15 FREE.

**November 2015 – Model Railroad Open House Month. Are you going to be open to the public this month????**

**November 14, 2015 – FSMRRC set-up at Magnolia, NJ.**

**NOTE: New phone number for Jeff Shockley – 302-257-9111**

**Do you have something you would like to share with the members of FSMRRC? If so, please submit them to [stockslager@gmail.com](mailto:stockslager@gmail.com) by the end of each month.**

