



# The WinnebagoLand Whistle

The Official Publication of the WinnebagoLand Division  
Midwest Region - National Model Railroad Association

VOLUME 56, ISSUE No. 1

FALL 2023

## COVER PHOTO:

*Friday morning, Pine Gap starts it's day.*

*Photo courtesy Jim Daniels*



## In This Issue:

Superintendent's Report	1
View From the Cab	3
History of The Milwaukee & Northern Railway Historical Society Inc.	3
Team Track	5
On the Ready Track	5
Company Store	5

## Superintendent's Report



For those who have not meet me yet, let me introduce myself as the new WLD Superintendent.

I am Paul Hillmer (AKA "Tree") from Appleton WI. I have been in the NMRA since 1990 and been on and off the WLD board over the years, developing lots of friendships in our division by attending meets and getting involved. I have learned a ton about model trains from this involvement and seen many layouts at the meets. One of the reasons I enjoy the hobby, is the endless chance to learn to do things and learn about railroads and modeling. Always been an interest of mine since I was a little kid.

Over the last 21 years I have cobbled together a large N scale layout, the Badger Mid Western RR. This is my third version (and third house) of the "Badger." It covers large part of my 1300 ft<sup>2</sup> basement and is a wandering shelf maze. My wife refers to it as the firetrap in the basement.

It is a freelance line from Lake Superior to Lake Michigan with GN on the west end and CNW on the east. In a future "Tree's Train World" I will go in depth how this all developed and the crazy waybill operating cycle I do. I did build it in sections over the years and it works decently and fully operational. Operating,



whether solo, or with friends, is my favorite part of the hobby due entirely to my involvement with the NMRA.

On a personal level, I was born in Appleton but our family moved to Thiensville, WI, a suburb of Milwaukee in 1963, when I was three. My dad was in advertising as a creative director in advertising and amazing artist and painter. So I grew up in a very creative household. In Thiensville, The Milwaukee Road Superior Sub ran, and I was ALWAYS chasing trains and gawking at them. In Mequon, which surrounds Thiensville, the CNW Lakeshore ran on the east side. I also remember the Beer Line on the north side, and Granville etc.

I had both HO trains HO Aurora slot cars as a kid. I built an L-shaped over-and-under train layout in high school based on the Atlas Blueprint book. During my senior year in high school, I donated much of my trains and race cars at a rummage sale.

I went to UW LA Crosse 1978-1982. The slot car bug went away, but the train bug did not. I would read Model Railroader at the college library and dreamed of someday going to get back into model trains and would doddle train layouts. I was a geography major and loved maps and history so that was one of my attractions to model railroading, and track plans. Being a son of an artist, I also loved to draw and paint.

I also had a large 2000 plus Beer Can collection that I began in high school. By senior year in college in 1982, I began selling them off. I never spent much money of them. But thru family friends I ended up with 100's of mint awesome cone tops and flats from the 1950s. I did several trips to beer can conventions with couple hundred cans at a time and sell away. I made enough money to pay for part of senior year tuition, buy beer, take a trip to Texas, AND buy a \$40 used N scale set in 1983. So back into the hobby I went. Living at home again and working in Milwaukee, I built a 4x8-ft N scale Atlas track plan layout. And being single and living at home for free, I bought a ton of N-scale items.

I met Lisa in 1983 and we married in 1986. So, she always knew me as a model train nut. So, she has zero excuses. One time she told me I had enough train stuff. I told her then she had enough

shoes. Since then, she is good with my train buys or at least goes along with it, and vice versa. We do make a good team

In fact, she came up with the Badger Mid Western name for my various layouts.

Also in early 1986, I was hired as manager trainee for Household Finance. Had no idea this would lead into a 36 plus-year career in lending and mortgages. Hey, I was a Geographer that needed some sort of career and it was the 80's. Jobs were hard to come by.

HFC moved us to Sheboygan in fall of 1987. I began building another layout there in our duplex and visited and briefly joined a Sheboygan Club. But it's March of 1988, HFC moved me to a bigger office in Appleton. And dismantled that 4x16-ft, part-built benchwork layout and began another one.

We bought our first house in Appleton in 1989, and I began my first Badger Mid Western large layout in a 14x25-ft room in the basement. I also joined the Paper Valley Model RR Club in early 1990 and with it, NMRA. So now the train obsession expanded tenfold.

We had our girls then too. Tessa in November 1989 and Jenna in January 1993. We sold our Harriman Street home in 1994 and moved Badger "1" to our new house on Glendale Ave. and added more to "1" for Badger "2" in a 15x40-ft basement area.

In 2002, we sold that house and built a brand-new house in Appleton. I gutted the old layout, and began the current version of the Badger "3." Went right away with DCC on the new layout and gave Paul Pasowicz of EngineHouse Services the challenge of installing Digitrax decoders into N-scale engines. What a gem of a shop to have nearby! And huge help teaching me how to use it.

Despite my model train mania, Lisa and I are still married.

Daughter Tessa married to Jordon in 2018. I have step grandson Kaysin who is 12. He likes Big Paul's trains but like the N-scale trucks and cranes and Micro Machines army stuff (I made him a military train) on my layout. And 2-year-old granddaughter Blair who has recently discovered

my trains and now is always standing by the basement door asking to see “Grandpas trains”.

Jenna married Peter in 2020 and live in Sun Prairie. They have just sold their townhouse there and about to close on a bigger house this week and then begin the family deal ..

So hoping more grandkids on the way in the next few years??

That is my story and I am sticking to it.

As far as my NMRA Superintendent gig, I was railroaded into the job. I was asked a couple times over the years and would answer, “wait till I retire and will consider.”

I retired from Associated Bank and mortgage lending in June of 2022 so guess I need to suck it up. I got that look at a board meeting and was ok, put me on the ballot. I helped Phil last year and he is helping me this year.

My plan for our division is simple. Let us have fun and let us learn from each other and enjoy our great hobby. And let us all be involved. Attend a meet. Join us on zoom for workshop Wednesday, and enter a contest.

After all, model railroading is FUN.

And if you have any issue or concerns, I am here to listen. Call me, text me, email me, or best of all, come on over and run some of my little bitty crazy N scale trains!

Paul (Tree) Hillmer

## View From the Cab

This issue of The WLD Whistle is a reboot of our division’s publication. The last issue was volume 55, number 1 from the Spring of 2022. I have chosen to make this issue volume 56, number 1 for the Fall of 2023. As a retired academic, it seems natural to begin the year in September rather than January. This is especially true since summer is vacation time for many of us.

I would like to thank Todd Bushmaker for his editorship over the last 7 years. He developed a distinctive appearance for The Whistle that I intend use as a guide during my tenure as editor. However, this issue will have a simplified style

because I have chosen to delay dealing with the advanced features of my publishing program, Affinity Publisher 2 for the Mac. This will also entail keeping The Whistle “printer friendly” to help black and white printers produce readable copy.

My philosophy about newsletters is simple, it is about members and what they do. This includes models, layouts, club involvement and train shows. Featured in this issue is an excellent article about The Milwaukee & Northern Railway Historical Society by Wally Rogers, who accepted my assignment to write a history of their club and the reason why they have recently changed their name from the Neenah-Menasha Model Railroad Club. Well done, Wally!

You will notice a new version of “Tooty” the logo for The Whistle. It was time to update the logo to modern image standards. The old logo was a bit-mapped image, scanned from the original artwork. The new logo is a high-resolution RGB PNG image rendered in three-dimensions and Pantone brass color. However, at the time of publication, creating a credible jet of steam from Tooty’s mouth proved impossible. I would like to hear your opinions about the new logo.

Gerry Ring  
wldwhistleeditor@gmail.com

## History of The Milwaukee & Northern Railway Historical Society Inc.

In 1964 a small group of model railroaders in Neenah, Wisconsin were interested in forming a club. The Milwaukee Road had a small depot on Doty Island that had been closed several years earlier, and the group tried contacting the railroad with intentions of renting the depot for a club house. These attempts were ignored, but one of the group, George Arndt, had a contact, George Banta Jr., that agreed to write to the railroad on behalf of the club. That shook the railroad loose and the lease was written and executed.

There was much work to do to adapt the 1882 building, that had served mostly as a freight house for LCL shipments, to use as a model railroad club. The baggage room had unfinished walls and

no insulation. There was a hardwood strip ceiling which was carefully removed and reused to cover the rough plank floor. Then drywall was applied to the walls and ceiling. The Neenah-Menasha Model Railroad Club had its start.



*Attendees of the WLD 2021 Fall Meet view the four main towns in the baggage room (left to right) Hilbert Junction, Chilton, Sherwood, and St. John..*

Fast forward to 1968, I was a member of The Boys' Brigade Model Railroad Club. One of the junior leaders, Emory Luebke, who was also a member of the Neenah-Menasha Model Railroad Club, noticed that I had a keen interest in the hobby and invited me to the N-M MRC for a visit. There I met two other founding members, Stanley Bye and Larry Easton.

The O scale railroad that was (and still is) being built (and much of it rebuilt, sometimes more than once) is based on the Milwaukee Road line from Milwaukee to Green Bay, and the branch from Hilbert Junction to Neenah. Included in the O standard gauge layout is a section of On3 that has lain dormant for several years, but currently is being resurrected with plans to extend its reach.

There were also a few different iterations of HO scale railroading. The first was built above a loop of the O scale branch line in the former baggage room. Later a loft was finished in the attic above the lower-level former waiting room/agents office area and the second HO scale layout was constructed there. The HO interest waned and after the loft was neglected for a few years, some of the members with a bent for 3-rail Lionel-style modeling took the area over and now a hi-rail multi-track setup has young and old alike amazed when five or six trains are coursing around in a dizzying

cacophony of smoke and sound during our open houses.

In about 2003, the Club was officially reorganized and renamed the Milwaukee and Northern Railway Historical Society. This was done as we realized that if we want the Club to exist into the future, with the building that is itself a true railroad antique that we believe should be preserved, we need help from the surrounding communities at a level that would require us to be a true legal non-profit organization. The depot was built by the Milwaukee and Northern Railway, and still rests on most of the original wood pile foundation. My goal is to have the structure lifted and the existing underpinnings replaced with a concrete foundation, hopefully with a full basement. Costs of these improvements gathered pre-covid totaled about \$200,000, or about two hundred times our annual budget! Plus, currently we heat our building only on meeting nights and only if the daytime temperature is at least +15° F. With a basement we would have to maintain a minimum of 40° down there to keep things from freezing.

Over the years many folks were involved in the evolution of the Neenah-Menasha Model Railroad Club. Early on, besides those I have mentioned, Wes Foshay, John Franzen, Don Manlick, John Sternitzke, Reid Simonsen, Roger Hildebrandt, Bill Becker, Cully Kowal, and Jerry Nichols come to mind. Later on Mike Steinmetz, Fred Lassen, Bob Hackl, Brian Jacobs, Gerry Ring, Linda Krueger, Brad Kowal, Don Degner, Bradd Buettner, and Pat Morrissey, among many others have contributed to our legacy.

The Club has work nights through most of the year on Wednesdays and Thursdays, as long as the temperatures are not at extreme ends of the usual range. We have a public open house on the first weekend of December and strive to have new things for our return guests to view. Years ago, we used to operate the railroad with a fast clock, timetable, and waybills, and now are getting close to doing so again. I would like to incorporate stage-style lighting and sounds effects synchronized to the fast clock to kick the realism level up a notch, but it's not there yet.

We plan to keep this thing going!

Wally Rogers

# Team Track

## Division Officers

Paul Hillmer	Superintendent
Phil Herman	Asst. Superintendent
Paul Mastalir	Paymaster
Vern Ehlke	Chief Clerk
Paul Hillmer	Division Director

## Board of Directors (terms thru 06/2024)

Al Archer	Dave Nitsch
Fred Firkus	Gerry Ring
Joe Lallensack	John Leow
Mary Eiden	Mike Eiden
Phil Herman	Paul Hillmer

## Committee Chairs

Gerry Ring	Whistle Editor
Gerry Ring	Membership Chairman
Marv Preussler	AP Chairman
Phil Herman	Clinic Chairman
Paul Hillmer	Operating Session Chairman
Paul Hillmer	Social Media
Paul Mastalir	Company Store Chairman
Paul Mastalir	Scout Coordinator
Richard Cooke	Model Contest Chairman
John Leow	Assistant Model Contest Chairman
Joe Lallensack	Photo Contest Chairman
Michael Eiden	Webmaster
Vacant	Convention Co-Chairman
Vacant	Convention Co-Chairman



Website: <http://www.wld-nmra.com>

Facebook: Winnebagoland Division, NMRA

# On the Ready Track

(<http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=onTheReadyTrack>)

## October 6-7, 2023

WLD 2023 Fall Meet - Appleton, WI.

## October 21-22, 2023

Marshfield Train Show.

## November 4, 2023

WLD Operating Session - Manitowoc/Two Rivers, Wisconsin

## November 15, 2023

Workshop Wednesday

## January 6, 2024

WLD Board Meeting - Soo Line Historical Society Building - 10 am.

## January 20-21, 2024

Arctic Run Train Show - Stevens Point, WI.

# Company Store



Make sure to check out the WLD Merch store for WLD boxcars, shirts and caps: [http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=co\\_store](http://www.wld-nmra.com/?action=co_store).

Just a few of the HO-scale Winnebagoland boxcars are left; let Paul Mastalir know how many and he will work out getting them to you. His phone is (715) 853-7274, or email him at [mastalir54166@yahoo.com](mailto:mastalir54166@yahoo.com).