



Setup for the Tracker's 28th consecutive appearance at the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum's Holiday Train Show (**Photo 1**) started on a partly cloudy and coolish (~45°F) Friday afternoon shortly after 4pm and was completed with "test" trains running 7:40 pm except for some final accessories and scenery being complete on Saturday morning before opening to the public @ 10am. Since the space for the O gauge layout is limited to ~ 17' L x 9' W (**Photo 2**) with the sharing of the main exhibit area with a HO scale and a Lionel pre-war Standard gauge model train layouts, two standalone MTH Z-4000® transformers were used in place of the tracker's power cabinet and set on top of the skirt and clamp storage boxes for additional inside space. This show's configuration features all three tracks running trains in conventional mode of operation directly controlled by the output voltages of the Z-4000s. Setup went smoothly with everyone pitching in.



Photo 1 - Fairfax Station Railroad Museum



Photo 2 - Tracker's Layout

Members participating in this year's show with modules were: Don R's with a single straight, Frank H's with his streamlined straight "bridge", Jim H with his two constructed straights with a snow scape background, John M two straights, Dave B's single straight, two of the club's half-straights were combined into a 4' straight section adjacent to wall right near the transformers, and Thom's compact corners to round out the layout. Addition scenery was provided by Don on the corners. The show had visitors on Saturday morning as soon as the show opened at 10am. Saturday operations continued until 5pm with near continuous spectators throughout the day. Sunday operations ran from 12pm to 4pm on a partly cloudy brisk (~45°F) very late fall day with a good crowd at the opening. There was lots of running time on both days which allowed club members and the public to enjoy a variety of trains.

Frank ran an 18 car prewar tinplate freight set on both days. Not a duplicate car in the rig pulled by a 1939 2-6-4 226E steamer modified for sound. The steamer had no problems pulling the long train. Jim ran a Lionel 1664 2-4-2 engine with passenger cars and a Lionel 249 2-4-2 engine with freight cars. Jim ran his runaway tender train on occasion with some spectators not knowing what was happening. Don ran his Lionel Polar Express passenger train on several times on both days to the recognition and enjoyment of the crowd. One or twice, Santa on the Polar Express went missing only to be found later laying on the side of the track and thankfully un-injured. Also, Don ran his Lionel Hogwarts passenger train on both days which some spectators readily identified. The corners (**Photo 9**) were decorated courtesy of Don. A GE 44-ton diesel southern freight train was run by Don. Jim ran a street car on occasion. Of course, Thomas the Tank engine along with Annie and Claribel also made several appearances during the weekend thanks to Frank. Dave ran a long freight train on both days with a piggyback trailer going missing on several occasions, only to reappear under mysterious circumstances. Dave also ran a 1979 Fundimensions Blue Comet passenger train that included the sound of steam.



The Train Doctor, Clem, drop by several times to run trains that were repaired on the spot or were the Train Doctor's own unique items. John ran his Amtrak four car passenger train and Lionel post-war 4-8-4 Norfolk & Western steam engine #746 and matching N&W superliner passengers car train on Sunday. John's modern Lionel Maintenance of Way (MOW) speeder made appearance on both days.

Don's (Photo 4) and Jim's (Photo 3) modules were adjacent and located on the HO lay side with a 8" slanted back-drop covered with white felt that simulated a realistic snow slope scene. Don's module was decorated with Department 56 buildings from the "Christmas Story" movie which spectators recognized.



Photo 4 – Don's Christmas Story Scene



Photo 3 – Jim's Snow Scape

John M (Photo 5) and (Photo 6) decorated both of his modules with ceramic buildings that were hand painted and fired by John's late mother-in-law that aligned with a winter setting of the layout and included a number of "snow covered" pine trees of various sizes.



Photo 5 - John's Module (left Side)



Photo 6 - John's Module (Right Side)

Members Jim W and Ralf F drop by on Sunday to view the venue with Ralf taking pictures of the train layouts both inside and outside. Ralph also was spotted outside with the garden railroaders.



There was one train wreck occurring in the corners with the Hogwart's train colliding with the John's Amtrak passenger train running on the middle track.

Club member "Clem" provided "the train doctor service" for event attendees on both days (**Photo 8**). Dave's module is shown in (**Photo 7**) complete with a Milwaukee Road Engine house.



Photo 8 - The Train Doctor's 'Module'



Photo 7 – Dave's Module

Take down of the layout started around 3:45pm on Sunday afternoon with scenery going first prior to show's closing @ 4pm and was completed by 5:40pm including trailer loading as a cool night settled in.

A special note is that this year marked the 30 year anniversary of the museum, a great milestone!!

The Fairfax Station Railroad Museum staff was very happy with NCT's involvement at the holiday show event that resulted in lots of both young and old smiling and happy faces. The museum staff invited the Trackers back to the museum's 29th annual Christmas train show on the 1st & 2nd of December in 2018.



Photo 9 – Decorated Corner Module by Don

Visit the Fairfax Station Railroad Museum web site at <http://www.fairfax-station.org/index.html> and the event page for the train show at <http://www.fairfax-station.org/trainshow.html>

Happy Holidays!

Respectively submitted,
John M, Fairfax Station Trackmaster

23 December 2017