The Crossbuck

THE OSWEGO VALLEY RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

Newsletter, October 2024, Volume 2, #4, Kent Dristle editor

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OVRRA goes to the Thousand Islands Train Fair

This past month, OVRRA members packed their bags (and trains, of course) and headed of the Clayton, NY for the annual Thousand Islands Train Fair. This year, north country folks got to see Shawn Connelly's "Carnival" module for the first time. The rotating ferris wheel, jostling bumper cars, and dancing lights, delighted both children and adults alike. The children were in awe. The adults wanted to know how Shawn got the rides to move. It even attracted the attention of a television news photographer. Right next to the carnival was the ever popular Parkway Bridge module which immortalizes the collision of a tractor trailer with the low clearance bridge. One youngster made it a point to revisit the bridge display at least three or more times during the show. Another young man, while being held high in his mother's arms, suggested the display needed a few improvements, such as making the "low bridge" warning sign flash. Nevertheless, he was clearly delighted with the exiting light show from the police cars. Kids as well as adults wanted to know how we built it, especially how we "crashed" the truck.

Figure 1: Parkway bridge & carnival modules

Club members also got to enjoy for the first time a much requested feature which was a crossover track between the inside and outside mainline tracks. Now trains could exit the inside "blue" yard, move on to a short section of transition track on the inside mainline, and then cross over to the outside main. (See article on page 3 for more details on use of the crossover and the new rotary electrical switch.) Club members also helped a certain young man named Zachary get off to a good start in the hobby of model railroading. Zach now has several engines and pieces of rolling stock in his possession as well as some knowledge of how to maintain and operate them on the club layout. Even his mom Kayla got into the act by assembling and painting a Design Preservations Model structure kit. Even as a beginner, she did a great job!

Figure 2: Zachary and his new train

OVRRA also set up a table of items to sell, primarily books, to help us raise more money. Club secretary Charlie Hewlett reported sales totals from that table for the two days amounted to $142. Although we had to bring our layout out of storage units for the show, we were still able to account for all needed items and get the layout operational. We have many hard working and resourceful club members to thank for this success. Kudos to all!■

Update on our Grange Renovations Work

OVRRA members continue to work hard renovating the Grange building that will become our new home. The walls are insulated, with a combination of fiberglass above the wainscot and perlite behind it. Thanks to the efforts of Bob Thorpe, the sheetrock panels were cut to size and hung. OVRRA members assisted Bob in the installation of many drywall screws. Outside help was hired to tape and mud the drywall joints.

Figure 3: Fiberglass insulation is installed in the walls above the wainscot.

Figure 4: Drywall goes up

Recently, OVRRA members painted the newly restored walls, first with a primer coat and then with the topcoat color from Sherwin Williams called "White Flour". Currently we are working on preparing the moldings for reinstallation—a combination of new moldings and refurbished pieces. Bob Thorpe and his electrician friends Dave been hard at work on installing all new electrical wiring in the first floor rooms. The scaffolding Bob loaned us has been invaluable in making the really high work of installing insulation and painting doable for us.

Figure 5: Todd Spencer working on "cutting in" with the primer paint

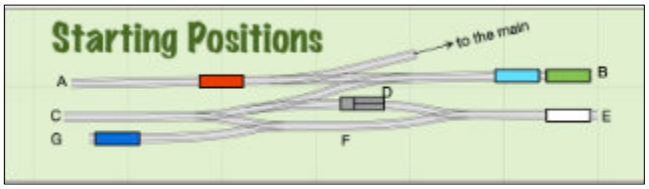
Figure 6: Shawn Connelly rolls on the primer coat of paint

Items that are either in progress or have yet to be completed include the drop ceilings, new heating (and possibly cooling) systems and the access ramp to the front door. Pam also wants to have the floors sanded and refinished, (that work will be hired out,) and all of that will have to be completed before we can move in. Although there is still much to be done, we have already come a long way along the road to preparing our club's new meeting place. Many thanks to all who have assisted us in this big project.■

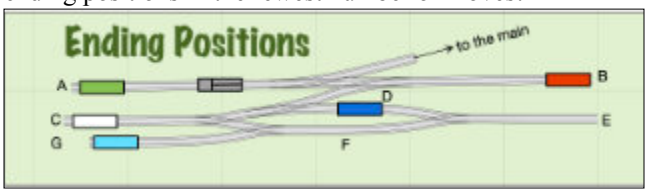
Switching Puzzle #6
John Allen's Timesaver

Model Railroader John Allen (1913-1973) is probably best known for his inspirational model railroad the *Gorre & Daphetid* with its floor to ceiling scenery and exquisitely weathered models, but he's almost as famous for igniting the interest of model railroaders with his switching puzzles he called the *Timesaver*, the trackplan for which was lifted straight from his G&D layout. During operating sessions, John loved to challenge his fellow model railroaders to switch the cars from their starting positions to their final positions in the least amount of time. Interest in his *Timesaver* puzzle has far outlived him with his trackplan being reproduced in a variety of scales in different locations. In its original form, the ending positions of the cars was always the same, but John would come up with a variety of different starting positions for the cars for fresh challenges. In later incarnations, the rules were modified so that the challenge was to get the cars to their destination in the fewest number of moves without the pressure of time. Another modification of the rules challenged participants to switch the cars to randomly assigned locations.

John's original trackplan is shown below. The maximum capacity of the tracks are as follows: Track A-3 cars, Track B-3 cars, Track C-2 cars, Track D-1 car, Track E-2 cars, Track F-2 cars, and Track G-2 cars.



Why don't you take the challenge. See if you can figure out how to move all the cars from their starting to ending positions in the fewest number of moves! ■



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Crossover Track Operations, Part 1

Finally! We have a new crossover track between the outside mainline and the inside mainline. The crossover has been installed on the new "waterfront corner" module which has already appeared in our traveling layout (and was in use at the recent Clayton show) and will also appear in our stationary layout for the Grange building, once we have the opportunity to get that one set up. In order to use the crossover correctly, we not only need to know enough to throw the turnouts at the right time (and remember to set them back to the mainline tracks when we're done) but also how to set the electrical switches to correctly route power from the throttle packs. The procedure for doing this is slightly different for the stationary layout (in the Grange) as it is for the traveling layout. This article will focus on the new rotary switch's use in the traveling layout.

Figure 7: New Rotary Switch next to the blue yard throttle pack.

Using the Crossover With the Rotary Switch on the Traveling Layout

Having the crossover on the traveling layout now makes it possible to move trains out of the "blue" interior yard onto the outside mainline track without having to do complex backup maneuvers. Let's say you have a train made up in the **blue interior yard and wish to pull it forward, out onto the outside main**. Here's how it works:

- First, let's stop any traffic currently moving on the inside main, because you're going to have to use a short section of the inside main (called the transition block) to get from the wye to the crossover.
- Next, using the new four-pole rotary (electrical) switch, move the lever to "local power" (position **2**). This will put local power (from the blue yard

throttle) on the leg of the wye coming out of the yard.
- Using the blue yard (local) throttle, move your engine & train forward out of the blue yard and onto the wye leg, shown in red on the diagram. STOP just before the turnout at the inside mainline track.
- Check the outside mainline throttle to be sure it's turned all the way down to zero. Now move the lever of the rotary switch to "outside main" (position **1**), but don't move your train yet.
- Now let's set the turnouts: There are three of them to set. Set the wye leg turnout for the leg of the wye. Go to the crossover and set both turnouts to the crossover track position.
- Now you can move the train forward out on to the main, using the outside main throttle pack. Coming off the wye leg, your train will enter a short section of inside main, shown in gray on the diagram, (temporarily powered of the outside mainline throttle) and then move through the crossover onto the actual outside mainline track.
- You're not done yet! When the last car of your train clears the crossover, you will need to reset the three turnouts back to the mainline positions AND reset power on that short transition section of inside mainline track back to inside main throttle power. You should do that by setting the rotary switch to "OFF" (position **3**). Actually, setting the rotary switch to *any position other than "outside main"* will restore inside main power to the inside main track. The word "off" means that power is turned off on the wye leg coming out of the blue yard.

If you want to **move your blue yard train out on to the inside mainline track**, then you don't need the crossover. You'll just use the procedure you're already used to, just set the rotary switch to "inside main" (position **4**) when you are ready to move the train out of the leg of the wye. Don't forget to set the wye turnout back to the main when done.

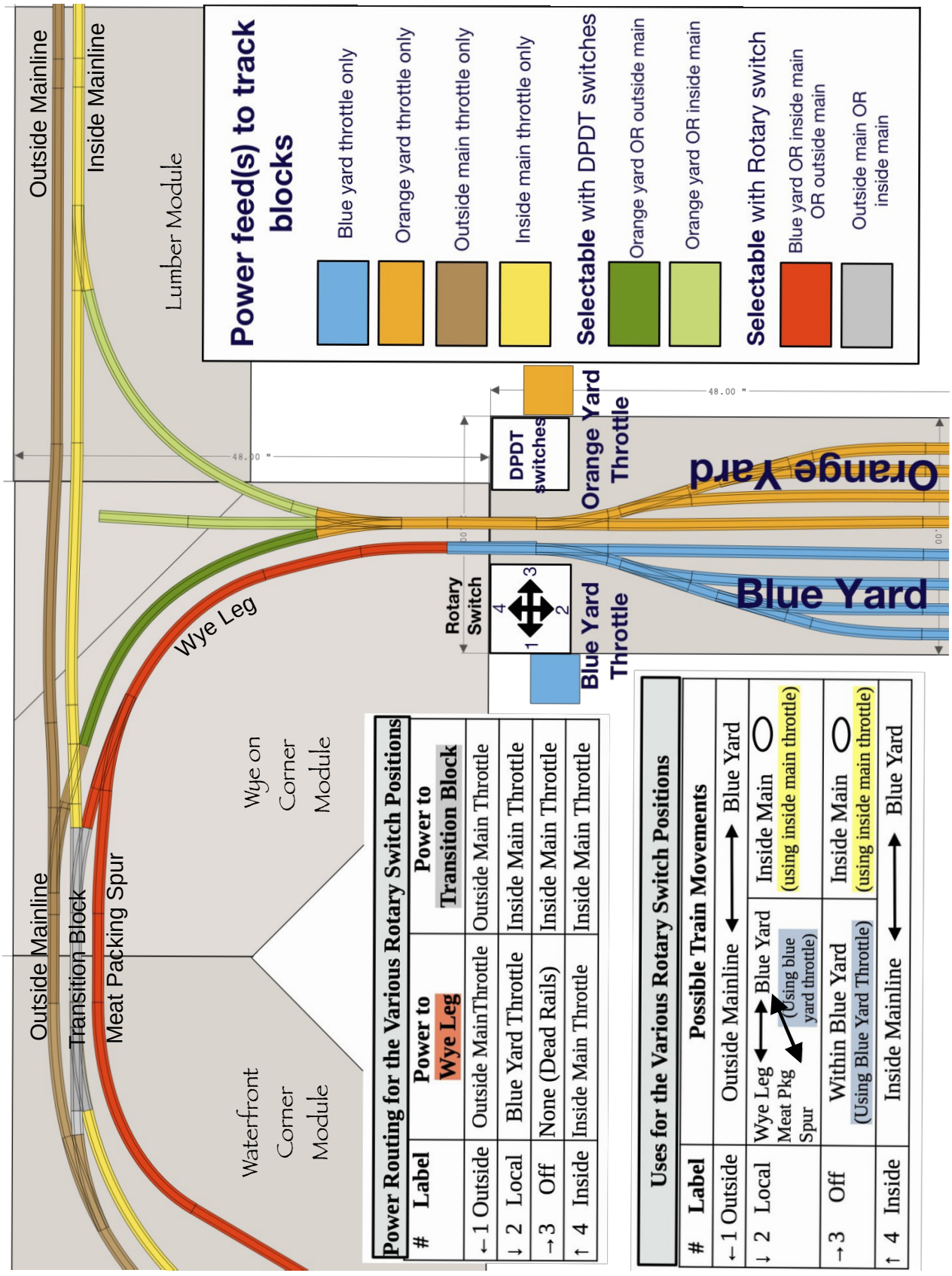
Suppose you just want to use the crossover to move your train from the **inside main to the outside main** but don't want to enter the interior yard. (This works best when going in the counter-clockwise direction.)
- First, be sure the outside main is clear. Anyone who had previously been using the outside main should have moved their train off on to a siding or removed it from the layout altogether. Make sure the outside mainline throttle is set to zero.
- Slowly move your train into the transition block of the inside main, *stopping* when your engine is about to enter the crossover.
- Set the rotary switch to "outside main" (position **1**). You need to do this, even though you are not entering the interior yard. What this does is to switch control of the transition track block from inside main throttle to outside main throttle.
- Next, set the crossover turnouts to the crossover position.
- Now, using the outside mainline throttle, you may proceed through the crossover. When the last car of your train has cleared the crossover, you may reset the crossover turnouts to the mainline position.
- Reset the rotary switch to "off" or any position other than "outside main". This restores inside main throttle control to the transition track block.

Moving a train from the **outside main to inside main** is essentially the reverse procedure. (This works best when moving in the clockwise direction.) Always remember to stop your engine in the transition block of the inside main to transfer throttle control with the rotary switch. The only difference here is that you do this *after* going through the crossover instead of before.

Figure 8: Steve Roger's train moving through the crossover from the inside to the outside main. (The track in the foreground is the siding to the meat packing facility).

Using the Crossover on the Grange Layout

The crossover will also become a part of the stationary layout we wish to eventually set up in the Grange building, although the way in which you switch the power while using the crossover will be a bit different within the Grange layout as compared to the traveling layout. Instead of using an electrical rotary switch, you will be using a combination of DPDT switches. This will be all be explained in a future issue of *The Crossbuck*. Stay tuned!■



Power Routing for the Various Rotary Switch Positions

#	Label	Power to Wye Leg	Power to Transition Block
← 1	Outside	Outside MainThrottle	Outside Main Throttle
↓ 2	Local	Blue Yard Throttle	Inside Main Throttle
→ 3	Off	None (Dead Rails)	Inside Main Throttle
↑ 4	Inside	Inside Main Throttle	Inside Main Throttle

Uses for the Various Rotary Switch Positions

#	Label	Possible Train Movements
← 1	Outside	Outside Mainline ⟷ Blue Yard
↓ 2	Local	Wye Leg / Meat Pkg Spur ⟷ Blue Yard (Using blue yard throttle); Inside Main ⟷ Inside Main (using inside main throttle)
→ 3	Off	Within Blue Yard (Using Blue Yard Throttle); Inside Main ⟷ Inside Main (using inside main throttle)
↑ 4	Inside	Inside Mainline ⟷ Blue Yard

OVRRA Member Profile Vann Dristle

Recently, Crossbuck *editor Kent Dristle sat down with his brother Vann to learn more about Vann's career as a railroad fireman and engineer and to share their recollections of how Vann and Kent got started in the hobby of model railroading.*

I began our visit by asking Vann when he first starting working for what was then the New York Central Railroad. Vann's reply, "May 28, 1965". I was a bit surprised he remembered the exact date. Vann explained that everything you got to do was based on seniority. Therefore, everyone knew exactly when they started. Vann's first job was that of a hostler. A hostler, he said was a person who moved engines between the engine house and fueling station or onto the ready track. Engines were moved individually, no consists for a hostler. Vann particularly recalled the difficulty moving a B unit by itself. He had to stick his head out one of the side ports to be able to see where he was going.

Later, he moved on to yard jobs, first working out of the Dewitt yard between East Syracuse and Minoa or the Geddes Street yard. Sometimes there was yard work to be done in Oswego or in Lyons. If you wanted a particular job, the best you could do was to have your name on the call list and hope for the best. A person who ranked low in seniority could be "bumped" from the job by someone with more seniority. You could also bump someone who had less seniority than you. Even at low yard speeds, switching cars in the yard required some skill. The cars had no air brakes in the yard, so the only brakes you had were those on the engine itself.

Eventually, Vann got to be a road fireman, and then later an engineer. I asked him about the process of becoming an engineer. He explained that a good engineer would teach the fireman how to operate the locomotive. In later years, there was more in the way of schools, special classes, and test taking involved but in Vann's opinion, the best way to learn how to operate an engine was was the way he learned it: on the job training. Then you had to be ready to prove you could do the job when the opportunity presented itself. That's exactly what happened on one particular occasion when Vann was working as fireman on a job from Buffalo. The engineer on that job had spent too much time in a local tavern and was quite hung over by the he had to bring the train out from the yard. Apparently he ran the engine through a couple of switches. As he faced the prospect of being relieved of duty (for at least 3 weeks) he asked if he could be allowed to stay with his train so long as he let his fireman (Vann) run the engine for him for the rest of the trip. It worked and as a result, Vann acquired the reputation of someone who could come through for them in a difficult situation. Vann started to get a lot more road jobs after that. After working for eight years as a fireman, Vann took the required class and became an engineer. He continued as an engineer for the next 27 years up to his retirement at age 63 in the year 2000.

Vann got to be the engineer on both freight and passenger runs. The best run, he said, was from Syracuse to Cleveland. After Conrail came into existence in 1974, a number of former Erie-Lackawanna and Lehigh Valley personnel came into the mix. Because of the seniority of these men, Vann no longer got to do runs in the Buffalo Division. Amtrak got its start in 1972. By the 1980s, Amtrak started hiring their own people. Most Amtrak jobs came out of Albany and not too many railroad employees from Central New York wanted to travel that far to get to the job.

I asked Vann what was the hardest part of the job. He said that you had to live by the telephone. In later years, it became the beeper, and then the cell phone. You never could know for sure when you would get the call offering you a job. You couldn't have a social life. Your schedule was irregular, that is to say you didn't really have a schedule or routine to your life. Vann said it was hard to miss out on some of the milestones for his kids. He just couldn't promise that he would be there for them for a given event.

What was the best part for him? He said that he loved railroading. It came naturally to him. Whereas some of the others would become really nervous about taking a heavy train down a hill, that was something Vann could confidently handle. Yes, you had to anticipate your actions a mile or two in advance, but Vann had a good feel for it.

We moved on to the next topic which was model railroading. I asked him when he first became interested in model railroading. You may be thinking that since I'm his brother, I would already know the answer to that question. It's a fact that I'm thirteen years younger than Vann. I had not yet been born when Vann was a youngster. It turns out that our dad had an O gauge Marx train set that he got out at Christmas time and set up on a wooden surface in the living room. Apparently, he did this for several years when Vann was a very young boy, and Vann loved it. I can only recall it being set up once when I was perhaps about 3 or 4 years old. Then it disappeared into the attic, never to come out again for many

decades. By the time I was thirteen years old, Vann had acquired some HO scale equipment and we set it up on a plywood board in my bedroom. This is how Vann introduced me to the hobby. I learned much from him such as how to maintain engines, build rolling stock from kits, glue up and paint models, apply decals, and keep the track clean. A subscription to *Model Railroader* magazine and frequent trips to local hobby shops opened my eyes to the wider world of the hobby. From Vann's perspective, he was quite happy to finally have someone to teach and share his enthusiasm for trains with, and I was happy to have model trains out to play around with, since our dad's O gauge trains had been packed away in the attic and had been inaccessible to us for at least 10 years. It was at this time that Vann and I conceived of the Middle Atlantic & Northern railroad and began to use model paint and decals to decorate our engines and rolling stock with our chosen road name and colors.

In the early 1960s, both Vann and I had started a collection of HO scale engines and rolling stock, some of which both of us still have to this day and run not only on our own layouts but on the OVRRA layout as well. Vann's first permanent model railroad became a reality when he and his wife Marsha bought their home on Button Road in 1967. Vann's layout grew over the years to encompass a large part of the basement, as shown in the photos below.

After retiring from his railroad job, Vann had more time to devote to the hobby. George Ahart approached him and asked him to become a member of OVRRA. Some of his best OVRRA memories include racing New York Central passenger trains on the parallel tracks of the main with Jack Kaple. Vann and Izzy shared an interest in collecting model fire trucks and often displayed their collections at the train shows. I especially recall how Vann would bring a large collection of his rolling stock to train shows in the effort to fill the tracks of the OVRRA layout's large yard. He wanted the yard to look "busy". My own inspiration for model railroading came directly from him. I'll aways be grateful to him for that. ■

Figures 9-13: Scenes from Vann Dristle's home layout

Solution to Switching Puzzle 5

(puzzle 5 appeared in the July issue of *The Crossbuck*)

To begin, the switcher backs into siding C and couples on to the purple car, which is uncoupled from the green car. Next, the switcher pulls the purple car out on to the headshunt track. Then it backs into siding B and couples to the yellow car. The dark blue car is uncoupled from the orange car. The switcher pulls forward onto the headshunt track with the purple, yellow, and dark blue cars in tow. Next, the switcher backs into siding D and drops off the dark blue car at the far end of the siding. The switcher moves forward with the purple and yellow cars back onto the headshunt track. Now it backs up to the orange car and couples on. The switcher moves forward with the purple, yellow, and orange cars as far as it can go then stops. It now backs the orange car into siding C, leaving the orange car in the slot originally occupied by the purple car. The switcher pulls forward again with the purple and yellow cars back on to the headshunt track. Then it backs up on siding B and couples on to the light blue car. The light blue car is uncoupled from the red car. The switcher moves forward onto the headshunt track with the purple, yellow, and light blue cars. The switcher reverses and moves back onto siding D. It drops off the light blue car on siding D (but does not couple the light blue car onto the dark blue car dropped off there earlier.) The switcher moves forward with the purple and yellow cars back onto the headshunt track. Next, it backs into siding B and couples onto the only car left there, which is the red car. The switcher now pulls forward with the purple, yellow, and red cars back onto the headshunt track. It now backs into siding D and picks up the light blue car left off there earlier. Now it moves forward just far enough to clear the switch between siding D and siding C. It backs the purple, yellow, red, and light blue cars into siding C and picks up the orange car. The consist is now complete. ■

If you are enjoying this newsletter, please let us know. Thank you.

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