



Club members accurately modeled Helmstetter's Curve, one of the most photographed locations on the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad. The curve was originally built as part of the Connellsville Subdivision of the Western Maryland Railway.



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

The Maryland/West Virginia Model Railroad Association invites you to journey through time by enjoying its model train display at the Allegany County Fairgrounds near Cumberland, Maryland. The layout features rail operations and authentically designed landmarks that bring back memories begging to be shared with others.

“Look, there’s Helmstetter’s Curve,” and, “It’s the Western Maryland train station,” are comments frequently made by visitors who quickly become engaged with the train action and scenery.

The HO scale layout depicts a time period that loosely spans the transition from steam locomotives to recent diesel power, thereby providing visitors with the unique experience of observing a time when several railroads operated locally. The Baltimore & Ohio, Western Maryland, Chessie, and CSX railroads are typically running on what is undoubtedly the largest train layout in the Tri-State area.

Located in the former jockey club building adjacent to the old horse racing circuit, the 1,400 linear feet of track covers a 40 x 80 foot area. Mountains tower to the ceiling, bridges span local streams, and roads are busy with automobile traffic. The layout leaves no doubt that Allegany County was an important rail and commercial center! The Maryland/West Virginia Model Railroad Association has been meeting in the jockey club building for the past 30 years, and will remain there through a mutually beneficial

arrangement with Allegany County officials. More than 40 members are dedicated to HO scale, the most popular scale of model railroading in the world and one that lends itself to building elaborate track plans in a reasonable amount of space. The term “scale” means it is scaled down from the real train called a prototype. HO is 1/8 inch scale or 1:87. In other words, an HO train is 87 times smaller than a real train. Another popular scale is “O” which is about twice as large as HO and often represented by Lionel electric trains.

The rail layout was designed by two club members and presents a condensed representation of the B&O mainline from Cumberland to Ohiopele and the Western Maryland Railway subdivision from Cumberland to Connellesville. The scenery remains a work in progress but major features are nearly complete.

Downtown Cumberland is represented by a variety of time period buildings that includes the main thoroughfare of Baltimore Street, once the retailing hub of western Maryland. A short distance away is the old B&O South End shop complex, currently the regional center for CSX maintenance and repairs. Traveling out of Cumberland, one notices the B&O Viaduct that was built in the nineteenth century to carry trains over busy city streets and Will’s Creek. Following the Western Maryland line spectators will quickly recognize one of the most famous railroad



landmarks on the East Coast, Helmstetter's Curve. According to Richard Arnold, club member and layout craftsman, "We spent over 100 hours researching primary sources of information and building Helmstetter's Curve. We also spent a lot of time on the Connellsville Subdivision at Deal and Sand Patch." Scenes are labeled, so the journey is informative and busy as up to eight model trains may be operating simultaneously.



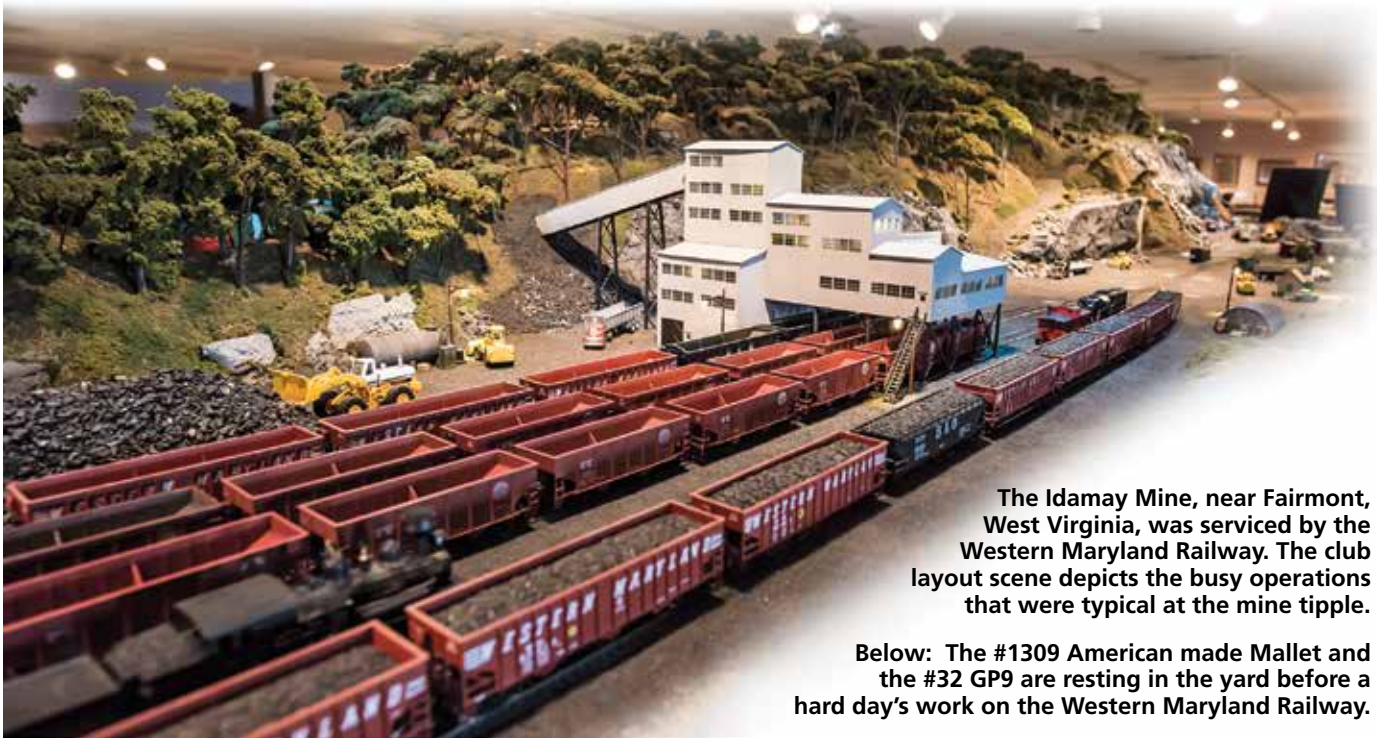
Richard Arnold, club member, combined three Walthers' freight kits to create an accurate model of the Baltimore and Ohio freight depot that was located near the mainline at Baltimore Street in downtown Cumberland, MD.

Tim Kane, club member who is concentrating on building the downtown Cumberland district notes that, "Downtown Cumberland and Baltimore Street are large areas that would take us beyond our layout if we kept to scale, but we have the main streets and buildings represented. One of our downtown highlights is the B&O freight shed that stood near the Baltimore Street crossing. It was built by Richard Arnold and is a scale model of the building that stood on the site into the 1960s. We are now in the process of building and arranging other businesses along the main streets in Cumberland."

Members may bring their own trains to operate because not all time is devoted to construction. And the excitement of running your personal trains on such an impressive layout is one reason members enjoy the club. Another reason

is the comradery of sharing experiences. According to Kim Bradley, president, "Our mission is to preserve local railroad history and promote model railroading as a hobby, and we do that through sharing our experiences and the layout. We have visitors from all over the country that stop to watch the trains and visit with us. The largest crowds happen during the Allegany County Fair, DelFest, and the Western Maryland Street Rod Roundup, although the Christmas holiday season also attracts a lot of repeat visitors. Kids really like to watch the trains, and we hope it will inspire them to join the hobby—it is a great learning experience."

There is an added attraction to the layout that has carved a niche of its own—the carnival display owned and operated by Kevin Kamauf, fairgrounds general manager. The



The Idamay Mine, near Fairmont, West Virginia, was serviced by the Western Maryland Railway. The club layout scene depicts the busy operations that were typical at the mine tipple.

Below: The #1309 American made Mallet and the #32 GP9 are resting in the yard before a hard day's work on the Western Maryland Railway.



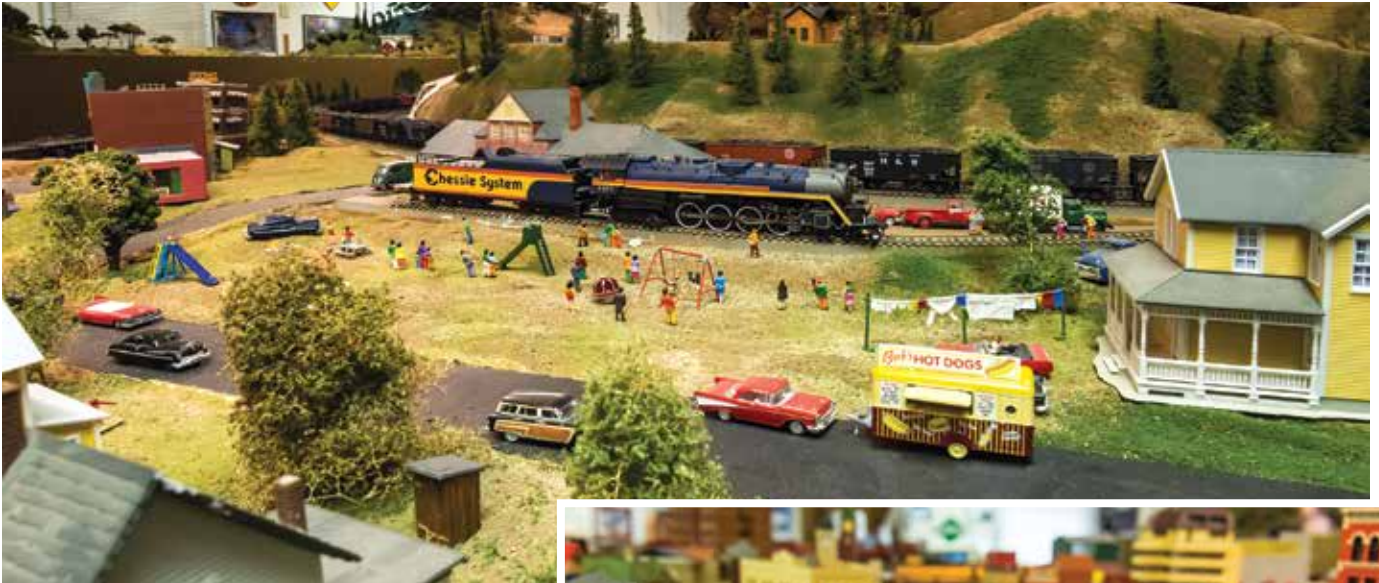
detailed models of carnival rides are appropriately scaled and complement the surrounding railroad scenery. The number and variety of tents, rides, and accessory buildings is impressive and easily the most extensive in the region. Mr. Kamauf notes, "Many of the metal models came from Cummins Scale Amusements in Bay City, Michigan, and one of every available model is represented in the display. They are all detailed cast metal replicas of rides from the 1970s and 1980s and remind us of the Reithoffer shows from days past." Kamauf first met Don Cummins in 1988 at a Florida fair event and the two have maintained a friendly relationship ever since.

In addition to the metal models, Kamauf purchased an extensive hand-built circus display from a local hobbyist.

"The detail in the hand-built set is amazing and was a labor of love. I felt honored to be offered the display. Now it is available for the public to view whenever there is an open house."

Club plans for the immediate future call for completion of several sections of scenery and, of course, having fun running trains with friends!

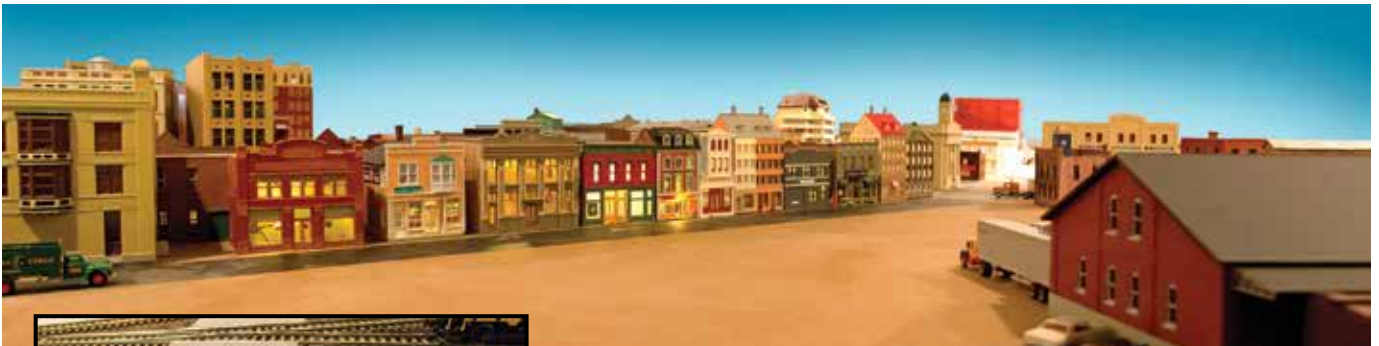
The Allegany County Fairgrounds is located approximately 3 miles south of downtown Cumberland on US Route 220. The train display is open to visitors during major events at the fairgrounds and during weekends of the holiday season.



Above: The crew of the Chessie Steam Special locomotive is taking a well-deserved break while stopped in front of the Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, train station in this summer scene reminiscent of the 1970s.

Right: The fire department is responding to a 3rd story fire in downtown Cumberland, MD.

Below: City scenes, including a 1950s police stop-and-frisk of a speeding motorist (inset), are highlights of the displays.



Right: Kevin Kamauf's display of carnival rides depicts the Reithoffer era at the fairgrounds during the 1970s and 1980s.