



CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD

A PENN FAMILY LINE

HISTORY & DESCRIPTION OF THE CPRR

Welcome to Bob Martins' Central Pennsylvania Railroad (CPRR), an HO scale model railroad. Unlike some model railroads that are modeled after a real railroad, the CPRR is a fictional railroad. The CPRR was born in 1972 in a garage in York, PA. The name was derived from three different factors: I like the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR), I lived on Pennsylvania Avenue at the time, and York is located in Central Pennsylvania. The concept of the CPRR is that it is a privately owned railroad located in Central Pennsylvania with very close ties with the PRR. So close that the CPRR logo is the PRR keystone and the CPRR uses PRR locomotives and other equipment and the PRR has unreimbursable track rights on the CPRR. The CPRR has entered into an operating agreement with the Western Maryland Railway and uses several WM locomotives. This concept allows me to do or create anything I want without having to follow or worry about any prototypical practice. In other words, the CPRR is the prototype! The time period modeled is early-mid 60's which allow me to run first generation and early second generation diesel locomotives. Although the CPRR runs mostly diesel locomotives, it does have a few steam engines that are used for fan trips/excursions. The CPRR generates and receives a considerable amount of freight traffic, operates local passenger train service, and is a bridge route for freight and passenger and freight traffic.

Construction on the original, 20' x 20', CPRR layout started in 1973 on the second floor of my garage in York, PA. During the summer of 1976 the first CPRR was dismantled in preparation for the move to our new home with the huge 32' x 45' train room in the basement (boy was I wrong). We moved in mid February 1977. The movers said it was the first time they had moved a railroad. After several months of settling in and negotiating for space with my better half, the serious business of designing the new CPRR and creating the room for its new 16' x 40' home began.

Many friends helped build and operate the second CPRR. The layout was used hard and enjoyed by many old and new friends every month from 1978 until May 1995 when it was torn down to make room for the third (and final) CPRR.

After a summer of dismantling the old layout and then painting the train room walls and floors and installing a suspended ceiling, construction on the third edition of the CPRR was started in October 1995. With the help of a lot of friends, enough benchwork and roadbed was installed to allow a train to run in January 1996. From that point on, progress was steady and by the time the 1996 holidays arrived Carole and I were again able to hold the traditional annual CPRR Open House started in 1989.

During the Spring of 2009, the railroad was expanded again, this time into another room. The expansion added about 50 feet to the length of the main line plus five double end staging tracks, a small stub yard and several industries. The new layout room is accessed on a 6" x 8' shelf through a hallway. The layout is now approximately 675 square feet and roughly 57' long x 16' at the widest.

Trains are controlled by the Digitrax, Inc, Digital Command and Control system (DCC) which was installed in January and February 2002. Radio control was added in January 2005 and system was upgraded to a "Chief" in September 2006. With the upgrade to Chief, theoretically more than 100 trains can be operated simultaneously and individually in any direction without regard to any other locomotive on the track. Realistically, we're limited to the number of throttles in use and track space on the railroad. Operators can control their train from 14

different locations with tethered throttles or from anywhere in the room with radio throttles. There are about 170 turnouts (track switches) on the railroad. About 50% of the switch machines are Tortoise slow motion. The remaining turnouts (track switches) are powered by hand throws (about 35%) and twin coil electric machines (about 15%). Although I never measured, I estimate that there is around four miles of wire under the layout. There is over 1,000 feet of track on the railroad: 250' mainline; 117' mainline reverse loops; 65' passing sidings; 180' staging; 225' classification yards; 239' industrial track. Automatic train detection is in the future of the CPRR. Trackside signals have been installed in some locations with more to come.

Most of the track on the CPRR is code 100 brass flex track. Yes, brass, so I'm a dinosaur! A small section of hand laid track from the original CPRR can be found on the third edition of the layout. About 95% of the turnouts are also brass and most of them are Atlas brass frog of 50's & 60's vintage. And, no, I do not have corrosion problems!

Maximum capacity for the railroad is about 550 cars but, typically, there are about 500 cars on the railroad at any one time. There is a 125 car freight car classification yard located in Yorktowne along with a full service engine terminal with turntable, round house, diesel house and storage for more than 20 locomotives. Another freight car classification yard will hold about 85 cars and is called KNAT Yard. KNAT Yard also has a turntable and an engine terminal with storage for 12 engines. York Yard handles cars for destinations on the East Division and KNAT Yard handles cars for destinations on the West Division. Both yards dispatch and receive off line trains. There are two hidden staging yards capable of holding approximately ten, 16 car trains and five 14 car trains or approximately 230 cars. These hidden staging yards are located under Furnace Mountain (FM Staging Yard) and under East St. Joe (Hall Yard). Another staging yard is located in another room and is called SHOP. SHOP has five double end staging tracks that will hold 8 to 10 trains and approximately 150 cars. The main line also travels through SHOP. In addition, there is a small yard with several stub tracks at SHOP plus some industry. The staging yards represent connecting railroad interchange points and allow for "off layout" storage of trains between operating sessions. A branch line serves the Furnace Mountain Coal and Lumber Co which consists of a saw mill and siding for four cars and a three track colliery and yard with a capacity of up to 24 hoppers. A small yard at the end of the branch line at the base of the mountain will handle about 20 cars. Three automatic reverse sections lend a great deal of operational capability to the railroad. There is also an electrically isolated analog (traditional DC) logging line that runs around Furnace Mountain and is serviced by geared locomotives. Although the railroad is built for continuous running, during operating sessions, the third Saturday night every month, the railroad is operated as a point to railroad.

There are more than 80 locomotives on the CPRR and, except for the FMCL Co. logging locomotives, and several "leased" Western Maryland diesels, all are either CPRR or PRR. Several of the locomotives are equipped with digital sound systems. The rolling stock inventory consists of close to 600 freight cars of which about 550 are on the layout. There are also 21 passenger cars and a 28 car carnival train.

All freight and passenger equipment has been upgraded to CPRR standards with the most common modification being installation of KD automatic couplers and the addition of weight to every freight and passenger car. All cars weigh about one ounce for every scale ten feet of length. Most new freight cars also receive P2K metal wheel sets and older cars are being converted when maintenance requires the car to be removed from the layout. Locomotives are from various manufacturers including Walthers/Proto 2000 (P2K), Bachman Spectrum, Atlas, IHC, Athearn Genesis, Hobbytown, Model Die Cast, Broadway Limited, Stewart, and Precision Craft Models (PMC).

The scenery is about 99% complete on the main part of the layout but is constantly being upgraded so, occasionally, there may be area's on the layout without scenery. Scenery is made using the hard shell plaster and rosin paper techniques. Rock castings, such as those seen in the quarry, are plaster castings from rubber molds, many of which are homemade using rocks found near our home. Trees are made from a variety of methods ranging from commercial tree kits to natural weeds to furnace filters. Ground cover is commercial, coffee grounds, and natural dirt and sand.

There are more than 125 structures on the layout with many more to come. Structures are styrene, resin, wood and metal kits and some scratch built (wood and styrene) structures. The people population is over 400 and growing and is comprised of about 50% each of pre-painted and 50% self painted figures. The more than 150 vehicles are plastic or plaster "ready to run" and metal and wood kits. Some of the vehicles on the layout are scratchbuilt from homemade rubber molds and plaster castings. There are fourteen towns or other railroad interchange points on the CPRR. More than 50 industries or other types of locations for railroad cars can be found in those 14 destinations. Freight cars are dispatched to those locations by using a white waybill attached to a yellow car card. The car card identifies the freight car and the waybill directs the car to a specific town and industry or siding. Many places are named after the friends who helped build the CPRR. Other's are whimsical or represent actual locations in the train room.

A Dispatcher, who sits at the dispatcher board in another room and tracks every train, controls the railroad. The Dispatcher gives permission to each engineer to move his train, tells the engineer how far he can go (track warrant), provides information about other trains, and whether or not a switching train can occupy a main line track. Engineers and the Dispatcher communicate by using radio transceivers.

Between 7 and 15 people usually attend an operating session and either sign up for a particular "job" or are assigned a "job" which can be a local or road train, a small industrial yard or one of the large classification yards to operate. There are 14 different jobs, some of which can be

combined depending on the number of operators available. Operators waiting for their "job" to be called wait in the crew lounge (also called the family room by the rest of the family) next door to the train room. While they are waiting, operators can review CPRR operating procedures, socialize with each other, enjoy the snack bar, and watch railroad videos. They may also watch the action from either end of the train room.

The slogan "A Penn Family Line" can be found on most CPRR rolling stock and locomotives. Any regular CPRR operator who has a model railroad with Penn or Pennsylvania in its name (with exception of Penn Central) may become part of the "Penn Family Line" and will be entitled to a complimentary supply of "A Penn Family Line" decals. Currently, there are three "Family" railroads: the Central Pennsylvania Railroad (CPRR), the South Penn Railroad (SPRR), and the West Penn Railroad (WPRR).

As mentioned earlier, in the late 80's, Carole and I started the annual CPRR Open House on the Sunday afternoon between Christmas and New Years Day. The Open House has become a tradition and has continued every year since except 1995. We average 75 visitors during the open house but have had as many as 125. Beverages and snacks are offered and visitors are welcome to stay as long as they want.

During the more than 35 year CPRR history, Bob has earned the NMRA Golden Spike Award and the NMRA Civil Engineer, Scenery, Dispatcher, Electrical, and Association Volunteer Certificates of Achievement. The CPRR has also been featured during a NMRA National Convention, four NMRA/MER Regional Conventions, many NMRA Division level meets, a Train Collectors Association (TCA) National Convention, several PRRT&HS National Conventions, a 20 minute local TV program, and several newspaper articles. Several thousand old and new friends have visited the three editions of the CPRR during its more than 35 year history.

Bob is a member of the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA); Mid Eastern Region (MER)/NMRA; Susquehanna Division/MER/NMRA; Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society (PRRT&HS); Friends of the East Broad Top; Friends of the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania; and former member of the Train Collectors Association.

CPRR operating sessions are held the third Saturday night each month and serve two purposes: 1) the fun operation of a model railroad in a reasonably semi-prototypical manner; 2) a monthly social gathering for people with like interests, i.e. model railroading and railroads in general. Operators start arriving around 6:00 p.m. with the actual operating session starting around 7:15. A typical operating session usually lasts about 3 hours with an additional hour or two of socializing. Visitors are welcome at operating sessions and are encouraged to arrive early in order to get a good look at the layout before the operating session starts. Experienced model railroader visitors are usually given a "job" to run. Novices will be assigned to an experienced operator if they would like to see what it's like to operate a model railroad.

Visitors, including groups, are always welcome at the Central Pennsylvania Railroad but please call or email first: 717-848-3640 or email: cprrboss@comcast.net. The train room is handicap accessible however the “zero” level of layout is about 52”. Access to the train room is down a grass hill next to the house. We are retired so we can accommodate visitors almost anytime.

BOB MARTIN, President & General Manager

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45 W. Locust Lane, York, PA 17406-3036

cprrboss@comcast.net 717-848-3640