

# LA COUPLER



<http://www.ladiv-nmra.org>

Summer 2020



***Inside this issue:***  
***Pandemic projects, brass locomotive painting and more!***



## Publication Information

### The L. A. Coupler

The official publication of the Los Angeles Division, Pacific Southwest Region (PSR). National Model Railroad Association (NMRA).

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Thank you for supporting the Coupler !

### Publication Team:

**Editor:** Tim Johnson  
 3423 1/2 Madera Ave.  
 Los Angeles, CA. 90039  
[airplanedad@yahoo.com](mailto:airplanedad@yahoo.com)

**Photographers:**  
 Tim Johnson                      Pat Raymer  
 James Keena                      Kevin Spady

**Electronic PDF Distribution;**  
 Pat & Mona Raymer

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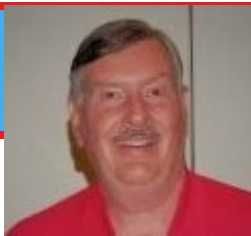
### LA Coupler Deadlines:

Winter Issue - December  
 Spring Issue - March  
 Summer Issue - June  
 Fall Issue - September

The LA Coupler is also looking for submissions, articles, or photos. Please forward them to the Editor at;  
***airplanedad@yahoo.com***

### *On the Cover...*

**Nick Lisica's beautiful N scale wind mill and "dry goods" van models are featured in an article on page 9.**



# Superintendent Report

## Be Careful, Use Common Sense, Stay Healthy.

What a difference just a couple of months can make. Back at the end of February I was asking you, our Los Angeles Division membership, what you wanted from your local organization. Among the options I posed were more social gatherings. Now, in the mist of the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), as individuals, we focus on practicing safer-at-home, wearing masks and gloves in public; maintaining recommended social distancing.

Lost from this year's model railroading calendar have been numerous conventions, meets, and get-togethers. There will be no annual NMRA National or Pacific Southwest Regional convention in 2020. Local events, such as our LA Division's Spring Rail or Cajon's CIM3, have also had to be cancelled too. Other high profile events, for example: other NMRA Regions' annual conventions, the National Narrow Gauge Convention, or O Scale West/S Scale West/Narrow Gauge West meet, have also fell victim to COVID-19.

So, where does that leave us? I prefer to take an optimistic point of view and answer "With (hopefully) more free time on our hands."

Time that can be spent researching, or reading about, a favorite prototype railroad, locomotive, piece of equipment or structure. Maybe, finally completely a partially started kit or model that has been sitting around for so long? Or, simply starting a new scratch built or kit-built model you've always wanted to get to. Of course, let us not forget the never finished layout, module(s), or diorama – there's always some that needs doing/re-doing here, isn't there? I could go on, but you get the point.

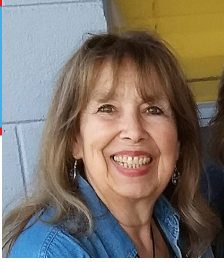
Hence, my challenge. Share what you have been up to with your fellow members! Starting with this issue, a new series, "What's On Your Workbench?" appears (hopefully, regularly). To kick things off, LA Division member Nick Lisica presents several N scale etched brass kits he's recently completed (or in the process of assembling). If you, like Nick, have been busy on some new or restarted project, why not take a few minutes and share it with your fellow modelers too! (Don't forget to include a photo or two.)

In closing, regarding the forced cancellation of this year's PSR convention, Van Nuys Local 2020, I want to express heartfelt thanks and admiration to Convention Chairman Pat Raymer, and his crew of dedicated volunteers, whom for more than a year and a half worked so hard to prepare what would undoubtedly been an outstanding and immensely popular event!

Until our next issue, be safe, stay healthy, and Happy Model Railroading,

- Vic Cavalli

Superintendent, LA Division



# Directors Report

Hello Los Angeles Division Members,

I hope this finds you and yours safe and well.

Can you believe that we are already in July and we are in the second half of the year?! This year is speeding by and it hasn't been like any other year – nor is it at all what we had planned or expected.

What have you been doing to fill your time while you have been at home? How many weathering projects have you completed? How much scenery has now been filled in on your layout? Have you started to complete all of the kits you have collected over the years? Or have you finally had the time to actually start building your layout?

Do you miss being able to get together with other modelers at meets for the fellowship? Do you miss contest rooms, swap meets, hobo auctions, layout tours and clinics? I do!

But, guess what?! Even though we cannot get together in person, we can still get together and do some of these interesting and fun activities! And I have been doing just that. I have attended several virtual meetings via ZOOM. These meets are available to you from the safety of your own home.

I have “attended” part of an NMRA-X and a meet that another Division sponsored. Recently, there was a multi-divisional meet that the L.A. Division was invited to, held on June 20th. I had a Mail Chimp notification sent out to everyone in the L.A. Division. I received 14 RSVP's from those that wanted to attend. I was very happy, because a number of the RSVP's that I received to “attend” from our Division were members that have not been able to attend in person meets, for one reason or another.

There were multiple Regions and Divisions from across the nation represented, and even one member, Gordy, from the U.K.! “Meeting” these attendees is like going to a national convention, just a bit of a smaller scale. Once everyone was logged in, there were discussions, a layout tour, and several clinics.

How about you? Have you attended any of the NMRA-X meets or any other virtual meets?

The L.A. Division Advisory Board is having discussions about facilitating virtual meets. If we can bring this about, would you be interested in attending? Would you be interested in showing your layout? Would you be interested in presenting a clinic? Please send me an email at [director@ladiv-nmra.org](mailto:director@ladiv-nmra.org) to let me know and I will pass the information along during our discussions.

At this time, please “Save the Date” for the following 2020 Los Angeles Division event. We will advise you if things change and we are not able to move forward with this event.

Dec 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>: Frosty Freight (formerly Freight Fright held in October)

South Coast Botanic Gardens, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

Until next time...Happy Modeling! And, above all else, stay safe!

Mona Raymer

Director, Los Angeles Division, PSR, NMRA

# From the Website Guy



## Anatomy of a Paint Job

As the hobby changes and moves away from “craftsman” type skills one of the aspects that has changed most notably to me is painting. When I got into the hobby, many years ago, if you wanted well detailed (for the time, of course) locomotives, brass was the way to go. They were much more expensive than the Athearn and Atlas diesels and forget about steam. If you wanted a decent steam locomotive you would have to build and detail a Bowser or Model Die Casting product. Don’t get me wrong, they were nice and the availability of detail castings was excellent, so you could end up with a really good model. The problem with them was the same as with the brass, they needed to be painted. However, that wasn’t really an issue then. Many of the members of my model railroad club painted their models and did excellent work. Back in the 90’s I started getting paint work from some of the club members who didn’t paint and liked my work. Since I enjoyed it so much I thought perhaps it would be a way to support myself. What I found was that I had quite a bit of competition and people didn’t really want to pay what I would consider to be a fair price. I went to quite a few swap meets with samples of my paint work and price lists. If you ever want to experience the feeling of dejection I suggest you do what I did. Of all the shows I got one paint job. People did like my work but thought that \$100.00 was way too much money.

So, I gave up the idea. However, as time went by I built a very small but loyal group of customers. At first they were fellow club members but through referrals it has grown. Now my paint shop provides just enough income while I build my financial business. I love the work and am really good at it, so my customers and I are mutually happy. Since price has always been tough for me to gauge I know I charge a lot less than most others that paint for customers but I have never been one to worry about that. So that you have an idea of what it takes to paint a locomotive I thought I would walk you through the process.

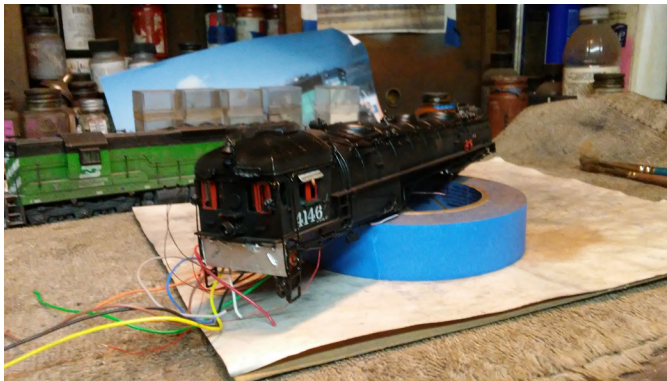
I recently painted a Sunset Models Southern Pacific AC-6 cab forward, so that is what I will talk about. The first thing is disassembly. For this I take 2 small ziplock bags to put screws and wheels in, one for the tender and the other for the locomotive. Since I have been at this for a while I don’t need to keep the screws separate by size, but if you are a first timer it may be a good idea to bag the screws separately and label them according to where they belong. The tender is pretty straight forward, remove the trucks then remove the wheel sets and put them in the appropriate bag. Sometimes the floor of the tender can be removed, if it can then do so and if not don’t worry about it. The locomotive is a bit trickier. Remove the leading and trailing trucks (if the locomotive has them) then remove the wheel sets and place them in the appropriate bag. To remove the boiler and cab there are normally 2 screws at the lower back part of the cab, where it attaches to the frame, then a screw going through the center of the cylinder block and up into the smoke box. Once you separate the boiler and cab from the frame you can take the motor, gear box and running gear apart. This gets pretty tricky be very careful. Removing the motor and gear box is straight forward, just locate to correct screws and remove them. The drivers and drive rods are the most challenging. For the rods, when you remove the screws be very careful to check for shims between the rod and driver. For the rods I definitely recommend using separate bags for each one. Once you have the locomotive and tender dissembled it is time to clean. If you have an ultrasonic cleaner you can use that, just

# From the Website Guy

be ready re solder any parts that come loose. I simply soak the parts in white vinegar for about a half hour then rinse thoroughly with water.

After the parts are dry it is time for paint. I always primer first. I used to use Floquil but since that is no longer available you can use any of the excellent primers that are available for the military models. When I primer and paint my brass models I bake the parts in a toaster oven for about 20 minutes with the temperature set to about 175 degrees. For paint I use Scale Coat because it has a nice gloss finish, which is essential when it comes to decaling. After all of the parts are painted I do the lettering, this is so I can apply the finish coat before reassembling. After the finish coat (gloss, semi-gloss or flat, depending on your preference) I clean all of the surfaces where electrical contact is necessary. This includes the slots in the frame where the driver bearings go, top of the tender trucks and the tender bolsters. When reassembling the running gear be especially careful with the crossheads and crosshead guides. It is very easy to break the crosshead guides loose from the cylinders, which will then need to be re soldered. The final steps are reassembly and test running. When you put the gear box back on, be sure to lubricate it. I use grease rather than oil so that the gearbox will stay lubricated for a long time.

So that's it, sounds easy doesn't it? I kept a rough estimate of the time it took to complete my AC-6 and I figure I have about 10 hours into the project. So, at \$100.00 I made \$10 an hour, which doesn't go a long way anymore. Fortunately, I have customers that bring me decoder installation projects as well and I have learned to keep the work-flow sufficient to cover my basic living expenses. Anyways, this isn't about the money, it is about what is becoming a lost art and a reflection of a changing hobby. I know there will always be people like me who paint, or build wood structure kits, or scratch build what ever they want to model. I also know things go in cycles and I think it will just be a matter of time before another generation of modelers want to do more than take stuff out of boxes and go straight to the layout



The locomotive superstructure painted and waiting to be placed back on it's drivers.



The completed model. All of the time and effort was well worth it.



# Membership

## Membership Committee Report

Bob DeMoss and Vic Cavalli, Chairpersons

By and large, model railroaders tend to be some of the friendliest, most outgoing, helpful, and optimistic people around. It's, therefore, sad so many social events have had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 health restrictions. Yet all is far from lost. The internet has been abuzz with all types of alternatives!

Have you tried NMRA-X yet? As promoted "NMRA-X is bringing live clinics, layout tours, and more to your home computer." And should you have missed any of the multi-hour events held thus far, all sessions are save as videos for later viewing on the NMRA YouTube channel <http://www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGMModelRailroading>.

If that isn't enough, there are the many more on-line clinics available in the Members Only section of the NMRA National website (<https://www.nmra.org/members>). A recent check showed 147 different videos capturing clinics presented at previous National NMRA conventions; plus a "video" library of 88 more informative presentations taped for various purposes.

Want something more than just a viewing experience? Somewhere where you can ask a question, provide an answer, or simply leave comments? Then check out the approximately one dozen Forums within the Members Only section of the NMRA website. A sampling of topics include: the Achievement Program (AP), Prototype Railroads, Operations (Ops), Layout Design, and General Modeling.

Of course there are other non-NMRA based Internet resources one could use to socialize during this "safer-at-home" period of time. You could start an e-mail "Reply All" letter or round robin stream where text and photos could be shared with a select group of friends. Or, create a new chat group using apps such as Zoom Video Communication's Zoom, Log-MeIn's GoToMeeting, Apple iPhone's FaceTime, or Google's Hangouts. The tools available on-line today is limited only by ones' interests and needs.

L.A. Division's Membership Gauge: As of April 30, 2020, our membership count is 205. Please welcome our newest members:

### March

|                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| James Burch           | La Canada Flintridge |
| Robert Hedge          | Thousand Oaks        |
| Douglas "Mac" McComos | Burbank              |
| Trent Munsen          | Claremont            |
| Eddie Rubio           | Burbank              |

### April

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| Jose Pallares | Chatsworth |
|---------------|------------|

Should you have questions regarding your membership, please contact either Vic or Bob. Our contact information may be found towards the back of every The LA Coupler issue.



# Financial Report

## LADivPSRNMRA Balance Sheet As of May 29, 2020

|  | May 29, 20       |
|--|------------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                            |                  |
| <b>Current Assets</b>                    |                  |
| <b>Checking/Savings</b>                  |                  |
| <b>Checking</b>                          |                  |
| Advisory Board Expenses                  | 1,050.01         |
| <b>Total Advisory Board</b>              | 1,050.01         |
| Bank Fees                                | 1,990.74         |
| Banquet Expenses                         | 3,398.09         |
| Income                                   | -2,385.00        |
| <b>Total Banquet</b>                     | 1,013.09         |
| Build a Memory Income                    | -1,200.89        |
| <b>Total Build a Memory</b>              | -1,200.89        |
| Childrens Coloring Boxcar Expenses       | 506.37           |
| <b>Total Childrens Coloring Boxcar</b>   | 506.37           |
| Coupler Elections Expenses               | 1,042.49         |
| <b>Total Elections</b>                   | 1,042.49         |
| Freight Fright Modular Meet Expenses     | 1,224.12         |
| Income                                   | -851.43          |
| <b>Total Freight Fright Modular Meet</b> | 372.69           |
| NMRA Promotional Events Expenses         | 2,354.43         |
| Income                                   | -1,621.15        |
| <b>Total NMRA Promotional Events</b>     | 733.28           |
| Regional Convention Expenses             | 35,699.12        |
| Income                                   | -42,359.59       |
| <b>Total Regional Convention</b>         | -6,660.47        |
| SpringRail Expenses                      | 6,625.13         |
| Income                                   | -9,400.40        |
| <b>Total SpringRail</b>                  | -2,775.27        |
| Checking - Other                         | 11,521.33        |
| <b>Total Checking</b>                    | 7,705.01         |
| <b>Savings</b>                           |                  |
| Intrest                                  | -6.92            |
| Savings - Other                          | 5,107.56         |
| <b>Total Savings</b>                     | 5,100.64         |
| <b>Total Checking/Savings</b>            | 12,805.65        |
| <b>Total Current Assets</b>              | 12,805.65        |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                      | <b>12,805.65</b> |

James L. Keena  
*Chief Clerk/Paymaster*  
*LA Div. PSR NMRA*

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# What's on Your Workbench?

## What's On Your Workbench?

Edited by Vic Cavalli, Photos by Nick Lisica

In this initial “What’s On Your Workbench?”, what (hopefully) will become a regular feature within The L.A. Coupler, Nick Lisica shares what he has been up to for the past couple of months. He’s what he had to say:

“I’ve been keeping busy with some N scale etched brass kits from The N Scale Architect ([www.thenarch.com](http://www.thenarch.com)) and can be ordered through most hobby shops or direct from the company. They are nicely detailed, go together pretty simply, don’t require any special tools or advanced modeling skills and, when finished, look great.

“Each kit assembles quickly with only tweezers and super glue. I’ve found a photo etch bending tool, such as “The Bug” from The Small Shop ([www.thesmallshop.com](http://www.thesmallshop.com)), is really helpful when assembling these kits. I also would suggest painting each kit before assembly as the finer details are hard to reach once everything is built.”

As Nick’s photos will attest, the finished models really do look great!



Overview of the projects.



Their “Windmill Water Pump” and their “IHC Farm Wagon”

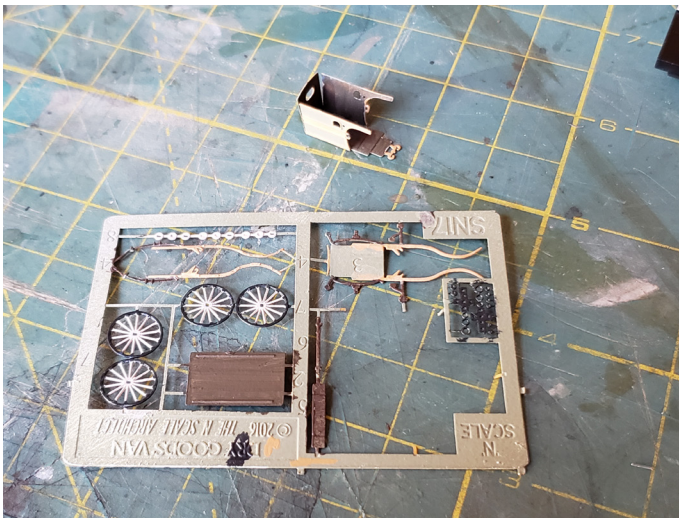
# What's on Your Workbench?



Close up of the "IHC Farm Wagon"



Farm Wagon and Windmill



"Dry Goods Van" in progress



"Dry Goods Van" in progress with a photo etch metal bending tool

# What Are You Doing During the Pandemic?

## What are you doing during the pandemic?

### By Kevin Spady

In this time of introspection and social distancing I thought I would offer up some thoughts on my activities over the past few months. Although my firm is enforcing a work at home strategy in response to State and Federal mandates, I am one of those lucky ones who can work at home almost as easily as I can work in DTLA. In addition, most of my clients are healthcare clients and are seeking advice on how to cope with this pandemic..... keeping me very busy!

However, I do find, now that I have much more time at home than I had previously, that I am filling time with modeling fun. As well as doing some locomotive kit-bashing, and finishing a trestle module, I tasked myself with several model related activities. This keeps my spirits up and energy high.

### Maintaining the Fleet

I have gone through all my locomotive and rolling stock and looked at repairs or adjustments that needed attention. I even made a spreadsheet to help me keep track of when and how my locomotives have been serviced. Things like coupler heights (remember that pesky coupler that is just “Not quite right?”), lubrication of all moving parts, damage repair, replacing of burnt out lights, proper car weighting, test running the loco’s to ensure proper operation, adjusting CV’s etc., were all part of the maintenance regimen....all minor things that I have put off for a long time. Now I can pull out any locomotive and string of cars and run them with confidence.

### Identification

In addition to all the maintenance items I also went through all my locomotives and labeled the bottom of each locomotive with its correct long address for easy reference, and also placed a special identifying mark on each locomotive and piece of rolling stock. I started using these identifying marks as some years ago a friend of mine had his roster stolen and his identifying marks on the underside made identification by authorities and recovery of his property much easier.

### Photography

I have also been taking the time to document my locomotives and some special rolling stock photographically. Since I do a certain amount of publication and want my Facebook page to be as professional as possible, I value high quality images of my roster. I also think these would be valuable in the event of theft, although that was not my reason for doing it. The following is a picture of the simple photo setup I use for photographing models and an image of the results. YMMV depending upon your level of equipment and photographic knowledge.

# What Are You Doing During the Pandemic



I hope everyone stays safe and healthy and, maybe just as importantly, keeps a positive mental attitude by focusing your energies on this hobby. No matter what happens over the next weeks, months, or year, we will get through this and come out on the other side better and stronger. Be Safe!

Kevin

# Making Plastic Flat Car Decks Look Like Wood

## Making Plastic Flat Car Decks Look like Wood

This is a step by step procedure for making plastic flat car decks look more like wood. This was originally a make and take clinic that was presented at the PSR 2019 Regional Convention in Mesa, Arizona by James Keena.

**Tools and Supplies:** Model Knife, Sanding Stick, Light Color Acrylic Paint, Alcohol and India Ink Wash and Weathering Powders.

Deck preparation involves using a model knife to cut the end of the deck boards on the side of the castings to better simulate individual boards. If you want to further distress the some of the deck board by creating splits or damage from dunnage attachment with the knife. Wood grain can be further emphasize by sanding in the direction of the board with a sanding stick. Next paint the deck a light color of white, tan, buff or light brown. Individual board can now be randomly painted different colors to vary the tone of the deck.

Next step is to apply a wash of India ink and alcohol to accentuate the individual boards. The wash will flow in between each of the boards to provide added depth as well as to blend and soften the color of the boards together. Once dry, the application of a mixture of brown, gray and black weathering powders to provide a weathered well used looking wood flat car deck.

Examples of actual flat car decks that are weathered from use and exposure to the elements.



# Making Plastic Flat Car Decks Look Like Wood



# Blast From th Past

Some photos from the not too distant past from the archives of Tim Johnson.



U.P. helpers being added at Victorville, CA.



S.P. 4449 races along with the 1984 Worlds Fair Daylight just outside Fresno, CA.



The 1984 Worlds Fair Daylight leaves Mojave behind her.



On a crisp December morning a Santa Fe freight drops down into the Tehachapi Loop.



A pair of Santa Fe "Geeps" add dynamics as it heads through Devor, towards San Bernardino, CA.



A heavy S.P. freight blasts it's way through Dike (Devor) on its way up into Cajon Pass.

# How to print the “Coupler”:

## 1) *From the Webpage:*

Open the “Coupler” issue which should come up as a PDF file. Right-click, or hover cursor over top of document - and choose “Print File.”

## 2) *From the PDF:*

Once you have download the PDF, or able to open the “Coupler” in a PDF reader, you should be able to select “Print File” and choose options like Color/B&W - and print quality.



L.A. Division Board meetings  
are held electronically the  
second Thursday of each month.  
Contact Vic Cavalli, Division  
Superintendent, for details.

## *Train Toons* *By Ron Westlund*



# LA Division Facebook Page



## **Do you want to know more about what's going on in the Los Angeles Division of the NMRA?**

Are you searching for more connection with the NMRA? Do you want to hear and learn from others about the Model Railroading Hobby?

***Become a part of model railroading in the Los Angeles area and join the NMRA Los Angeles Division Facebook page! Give it a try!***

It is open to all NMRA members and provides a valuable tool for learning about local events, activities of your NMRA Division Board, and just general modeling information.

Go to the link and ask to join! No obligation and one of the few things that are free! Be an active part of your local Model Railroading community!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1960134804039677/members/>



# Los Angeles Division Directory

***Division Superintendent - Vic Cavalli***

3426 Fela Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90808  
(805) 680-5826 VicCavalli@comcast.net

***Division Director - Mona Raymer***

2655 El Caminito La Crescenta, CA 91214  
(818) 957-7351 director@ladiv-nmra.org

***Chief Clerk/Paymaster - James Keena***

12341 Heritage Springs Drive  
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670  
Cell: (562) 325-3846 pjkeenawhittier@msn.com

***Membership Recruitment Chair - Robert 'Bob' DeMoss***  
***membership@ladiv-nmra.org BOB.SFSCRR@yahoo.com***

***Membership Retention Chair - Vic Cavalli***  
***VicCavalli@comcast.net***

***Members Aid Chair - open***

***L.A. Coupler Editor - Tim Johnson***

3423 1/2 Madera Ave. Los Angeles CA 90039  
(818) 679-3623 airplanedad@yahoo.com

***L. A. Division Webmaster - Tim Johnson***

3423 1/2 Madera Ave. Los Angeles CA 90039  
(818) 679-3623 airplanedad@yahoo.com

***Achievement Chair - James Keena***

12341 Heritage Springs Drive  
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670  
Cell: (562) 325-3846 pjkeenawhittier@msn.com

***Non-Rail Coordinator - Edna Keena***

12341 Heritage Springs Drive  
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670  
Cell: (562) 303-6585

# MODEL TRAIN & RAILROAD EVENTS:

Special Thanks to Bob Chapparo for compiling the Calendar of Events.

**Due to current CDC recommendations, as well as State, County or City safety restrictions related to the COVID-19 outbreak, it is advisable to check with each event's organizers and verify it will still be held before attending.**

August 22 - Train Collectors Association/Western Division Meet, Arcadia  
September 9 - 13 - Annual Pacific Southwest Region/NMRA Convention, Van Nuys  
September 26 - Train Collectors Association/Western Division Meet, Arcadia  
October 2, 3 & 4 - Central Coast Railroad Festival, San Luis Obispo Area  
October 3 - L.A. Area Prototype Modelers Meet, Bellflower  
Oct 3 & 4 - Los Angeles Model Railroad Society Open House, Hawthorne  
October 10 - North County Model Railroad Society Open House & Swap Meet, Oceanside  
October 10 - San Diego Division Layout Tour, Oceanside  
October 10-12 - Travel Town Depot Days, Los Angeles  
October 17 - - Roundhouse Gang Swap Meet, San Bernardino  
October 31 - Train Collectors Association/Western Division Meet, Arcadia  
December 5 - Los Angeles Model Railroad Society Open House, Hawthorne

*Special Thanks to Jeff Smith, RailMaster Hobbies  
for printing of this issue of the "Coupler"*



LA Coupler  
Los Angeles Division  
Pacific Southwest Region  
National Model Railroad Association, Inc.  
12341 Heritage Springs Drive  
Santa Fe Springs, CA 9670

Summer Edition 2020