

Bricktown Model Railroaders NMRA Open House

We've added a new event to this year's Susquehanna Division calendar. Mark your calendars on Saturday, May 5th for the Bricktown Model Railroaders NMRA Open House.

The event takes place in Mount Union, PA. Mount Union is on the main line of Norfolk Southern, about 80 highway miles west of Harrisburg. In the last century, it was the largest shipping point on the Pennsy's Middle Division, because it was the site of three huge brick plants, also served by the East Broad Top narrow gauge. Hence the town's nickname: Bricktown.

Mount Union – still Bricktown to its citizens – is today the home of a vibrant model railroad community. Last fall the Bricktown Model Railroaders Association finalized the purchase of a 50-foot by 100-foot former warehouse – complete with railroad siding – as their new club headquarters. They've invited our division to come and learn more about their plans and to sample model and prototype railroading in Mount Union.



The new home of the Bricktown Model Railroaders Association

For several years, the Bricktown club rented space in a former Mount Union school building. Then, about four years ago, like many model railroad clubs housed in rented buildings, they were given short notice to vacate. Thus began the long and difficult process of finding another home. During that search, they completed the legal task of organizing themselves as a non-profit organization and established the challenging goal of purchasing their own facility. Like most clubs, they were well short of funds for an outright purchase, so they conducted a lengthy but successful contribution campaign which resulted in the purchase of the new home. They are now focused on refurbishing the building while also developing their layout plan.

We will visit their under-renovation facility, receive a presentation about their extensive modeling plans, learn about the substantial railroad operations centered in Mount Union many years ago, and explore a former large industrial site served by the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) and East Broad Top (EBT) Railroad.

The meet will be headquartered at the Bricktown Model Railroad Club and Museum, 300 West Small Street, Mt. Union. Doors will open at 9:00 am and the program starts at 10 am. Here's what you'll enjoy at the club headquarters (in addition to donuts and coffee):

10:00-10:30 Welcome and walking tour of club building and layout plans.

10:30-11:15 Profusely illustrated slide presentation by noted author and historian Bryan Donaldson on Mount Union and its railroad past.

Then we break and let you tailor your own afternoon from the following menu of activities around the Mount Union community.

9:00-4:00 On30 modular layout of George Sarra, in club building.

11:15-12:30 Walking tour of remains of Harbison Walker brick plant (once the largest of its kind in the world), adjacent to the club building

11:30-4:00 Outdoor large-scale layout of Doug Renninger (weather permitting).

11:30-4:00 Outdoor large-scale layout of Bud Parks (weather permitting).

1:00-4:00 Outdoor large-scale layout of Jon Clark (weather permitting).

1:00-4:00 Wade Woodcock's HO/HOn3 layout.

1:00-4:00 Jon Clark's On30 layout.

1:00-4:00 Mount Union Area Historical Society Industrial Museum

1:00-4:00 And rarest of all, a chance to tour the East Broad Top engine house in Mount Union, home to EBT 0-6-0 #3, a 1923 Baldwin steam locomotive.



East Broad Top standard-gauge 0-6-0 #3 will be on display



The former Pennsylvania Railroad freight station, now the Bricktown Senior Center

Lunch will be served in the former PRR Freight Station, now Mount Union's Senior Center. It will be available from 11:00 to 3:00 pm. The format will be cafeteria-style, featuring hot dogs with kraut, sloppy Joes, baked beans, potato salad, macaroni salad, ice tea, soda, coffee, and baked goods

And of course, expect lots of action on the Norfolk Southern main through the heart of town.

Several other great prototype and historic railroad attractions are also close by. Your May 5 visit could be a great starting point for a weekend or three-day getaway to several excellent and fun railroading opportunities.

For example, Horseshoe Curve, the Altoona Railroaders Museum, and Allegheny Portage Railroad National Park are just a little over a two-hour drive to the northwest. Cumberland MD, with the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad and extensive CSX traffic through town, is slightly over two hours to the southwest, and Harrisburg's Rockville Bridge and several large NS yards are just under two hours to the east.

So seriously consider making it a full, dedicated, railroad-focused getaway weekend by exploring the many railroading opportunities nearby.

We hope to see you in Bricktown!