

## **CONRAIL BULLETIN – 090802**

I imagine that most everyone has forgotten that I used to send out these CR Bulletins about every 2 weeks informing everyone of the upcoming OPs session on Thursdays nights. It has been over 13 months since I sent out the last one.

There are also a few new operators receiving this CR Bulletin for the first time.

What is NEW!

Other than the fact that I added 256 sq ft (16' x 16' room) to the layout area - quite a bit!

Each level has added about 32 feet in length of track (YAH ! – 3 x 16ft walls = 48 ft – but remember that I took out 16 ft when I opened up the wall for the new room).

I will go through each level and highlight the changes.

### **Top Level – Driftwood/Emporium**

- Driftwood Staging – I moved this area down onto the left wall of the new room. This added 16 ft of open area above NUBE. Driftwood yard now has 4 tracks instead of 3 like it had before.
- Emporium Staging/Yard was moved down on the Right side wall of the new room. This area was directly affected when the wall was removed. I added 3 extra tracks to this yard/staging (giving a total of 7). It also has an industry to the rear of the yard for some additional switching which the Falls Creek RR will handle.
- Connector tracks – The one between Driftwood & Emporium is now about 12 feet long and will allow switching off the ends with trains and should not interfere with the other yard. Also the Ridgway connector track is also about 8 ft long and will provide some spacing before the trains enter Emporium when leaving Ridgway.
- The JF&C track also comes up from ROSE still, but the grade has increased quite a bit. Helpers **WILL** be needed to move any trains in this area (both up & down)!

### **Level 2 – Sutton Interchange**

- This is all **NEW** and includes the Sutton Interchange with the LEF in the new room. It takes off the JF&C branch part way up the hill after leaving ROSE. The track is fairly flat and will not require helpers. There is a passing siding/run around track at the LEF interchange. CR engines are **NOT** allowed down the interchange track or onto the LEF. LEF engines **ARE** allowed up on the CR Sutton interchange/passing tracks and allowed to use the run around tracks without Dispatcher permission!

### **Level 3 – LEF&C**

- The LEF is all new in the room – added is Stahlman Tipple – the Wye and Sutton Interchange. Several industries have been added. Mainly the Stahlman Tipple complex – which had a tipple

(yet to be built) and 4 sidings (2 tipple & 2 flood loader). This will allow additional coal trains to be run out of LEF.

- Dolby Blasting – which is located at the one end of the Wye
- The Wye is located at the back left of the room. It has most of the coal tracks interconnected within parts of the Wey legs, complicating the switching.

#### **Level 4 – Lowgrade Line**

- Everything from NUBE down to Summerville is all new.
- Hawthorn is all different and was flipped from front to back compared to the old one.
- Crawford Furniture has 2 actual sidings that must be switched and the building complex is a 48” x 18” area with several different sized buildings (in the process of being built).
- The grade into Summerville was changed and is hopefully flat enough so that all trains will be able to make the grade.

#### **Level 5 – Kiski Line**

- This area from Ford City south probably was the most changed other than the additional area for the LEF.
- The Scrap/Pulpwood track was moved down on the right side wall of the new room. This gave some additional running room south of Ford City.
- Just north of Kiski Jct. is Schenley which has a branch track towards Leechburg (Bagdad) and will have some resemblance to a steel mill. There is also a Passing/Runaround track for trains arriving from the north needing access to the steel mill.
- A new longer Kiski Bridge is in place (2 spans) – Bridges to be built.
- The Staging Tracks (Kiski Jct.) is all new. The staging is now made up of Passing Sidings instead of Sequential Staging. This will allow taking any train in staging out without having to move any other train up. This will make pulling through trains in/out of staging simple and it is hoped that the operators will find running a through train easier and faster.

View blocks have been opened up where possible with the addition of Thin-Edge benchwork. The benchwork is only 1 inch thick at the front giving much better viewing of the lower level tracks and structures without having to step back from the layout. This was done on the NUBE deck and all new benchwork in the new room except the center peninsula and any run through tracks on the lower levels at the rear of the new room.

The only areas that are less than desirable are the outside corners as they take up way more space sticking out into the aisles but are required to keep the radiuses proper.

The new Pooper Room is working great (after a minor adjustment to the float assembly) and although I do not have the Urinal installed it is on the premises!

### **CONRAIL BULLETIN – 090820**

This is the first invite to the NEW Conrail Lowgrade Line.

Thursday night August 20, 2009 at 6:00pm our first formal OPs session will be held in over a year!

Come join the fun and help get the Lowgrade back to work.

Things that have been done since the last Bulletin.

- I have most all of the fascia put around the edges of the layout. This includes the old parts as well as the new section. The only area is over at Brady Siding and this area is still under evaluation!
- The new fascia has been painted.
- 99% of the ground throws are in.
- Some work has begun on the Kiski Jct. staging tracks – getting the Turtle Machines installed and wired. Once this is done a control panel will be installed to set the switches for the proper Passing/Storage tracks. This will allow an Operator to select their train and have all of the turnouts set proper to exit the staging area.
- Several structures are being built for the Crawford Furniture area.
- A new area on the Kiski Line (Schenley) is in place and is the line to Bagdad (future steel mill).
- Most of the sidings are back in working order (Smuckers-Nube – Scrap/Pulpwood-Ford City – MOW-Schenley.
- 90% if the new track has been run on and the turnouts checked out for proper operation.

See you there on Thursday night!

BOB H

### **CONRAIL BULLETIN – 090903**

Thursday night Sept 3, 2009 at 6:00pm will be the next OPs session.

Some additional things that have been done since the last OPs.

The Kiski Staging is operational (Remote Control of the turnouts)!

New Signage – Now that most of the Fascia is up I am remaking a number of NEW signs

You will see a mini-sign indicating OUTLET – This is for my info only – as the skirting is completed it is getting harder to quickly find the outlets and this is a way to speed things up for me working on the layout!

SIDINGS that are leading off the Mainline – have arrows trying to show a direction.

1. If the ARROW is at a 45 degree angle then the **NAMED** Siding leads directly off the mainline!
2. IF the ARROW is at a 90 Degree angle then it indicates the **NAMED** Siding is at the rear of the benchwork!

Some of you may have seen the Donation can in the Fridge – If you care to donate that is fine if not that is OK too – Also if you would like to donate different brands of Soda/Pop feel free to do so – I will take care of placing it in the Fridge!

I have been chastised in the past for not having a set plan for running trains. If you think about my layout vs. most of the other layouts we have operated on (Harrisburg, Johnstown, Pittsburgh & Jamestown, NY) they all run/model ONE main railroad. Jeff Warners had 2 but still is way less than what I have (7) plus the Lowgrade!

This has presented a problem in scheduling what trains to run (on a schedule – which all of those that I have operated on do). I have spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to make my layout work with a schedule and without a FULL Crew – it isn't gonna work. Having a set number of trains run each OPs session (as the others do) is going to be a real work out for my group as I don't seem to be able to have the same number of operators each time and everyone only wants to switch (there a 2 exceptions). Not only that but everyone comes in at odd times (which may help the situation). But I have now updated my Scenario Cards. I have also laminated them so there will be less wear and tear to them and placed them around the layout in their proper locations.

At major yards and most of the Shortlines - I have also included a WORK SCHEDULE card. This outlines what is supposed to be done during the session. Now everyone, don't get panicked – you (the regulars) have been doing these JOBS all along. Falls Creek Yard operator knows that he has to make up trains to run West and to set out cars for the Interchanges and to switch the local industries. But last week I had a totally new Operator (and he did a great job too!) but I know that I missed a lot of info when I began waving my arms as to what needed to be done. The card will cover most of the info. And as time goes on I will make changes/additions to the cards as we change the way the layout runs.

The cards will help greatly during an OPTUD when we have so many new operators. In the boxes there are a number of RUN cards and they are for trains that will need to be run during the OPs session. Now there is no set schedule as to how they are to be run (as other layout owners do). This is where I am being quite a bit different from them as after about the 5<sup>th</sup> time of running a layout everyone can/will know that a certain train will be run at this time (each and every time no matter what). The real railroads did it that way so why shouldn't we. Well that gets a little boring after a

while. I found this out on Jim Brown's N Scale layout and I only ran there rarely but I ended up running exactly the same train again and again – no variation.

The Lowgrade was all extras and ran on the Coal companies loading schedule (they would load around the clock to get the trains filled) but they still did not have a set time that a train of empties arrived each week!

I will be working with Tom Schwartz and Scott C in working on the system and trying to refine it. The crews MAY have to run trains other than LOCALS from now on as I have limited the number of local switching jobs. This is a transition in progress so things may not run smoothly for a few sessions.

One last thing – I have POP can receptacles around the layout and would appreciate the POP cans being placed in those containers (and not set on my layout – SCOTT C)!

See you there on Thursday night!

BOB H

### **CONRAIL BULLETIN – 090917**

Well it's on again for Thursday night Sept 17, 2009 at 6:00pm, the next OPs session.

New things that have been done since the last OPs.

The Kiski Staging is operational (Remote Control of the turnouts) and it works well!

I had some tense moments with one of the new Atlas turnouts as the points seemed a little low (which would cause almost any coal hopper to derail – if backing through it – found the problem being the outside rail popped up out of place from the plastic tabs – a little pressure on it and it snapped back into place and the cars now run through it fine!

I have added some lights under the layout to light up the Staging area.

Metal polished all of the track in the new room as well as the staging tracks.

We found several turnouts that would either not throw completely or had broke (the new c83 double curved Walthers turnouts!) and these have been fixed. I am beginning to wonder about this c83 track. I have had more problems with the c83 turnouts than I have had with the other 350 turnouts on the layout combined!

### **As of Sept 03, 2009**

ALL new cars being added to the layout will be equipped with Metal Wheels.

ALL cars needing rework will have their Plastic wheels replaced with Metal Wheels before being returned to the layout.

I finally have the NEW float switch for the Pooper Room – I do not know if I will have time to get it installed before Thursday night (if not please practice your holding techniques)!

See you there on Thursday night!

BOB H

### **CONRAIL BULLETIN – 091015**

**Crew Call time is 18:00 hrs.** (6:00pm – for the civilians).

Well it's on again, the next OPs session, for Thursday night Oct 15, 2009 at 6:00pm!

I want to thank everyone that made the last OPs session – We had 25 operators and that made for a very busy layout! We had ZERO problems (as far as I could tell) with recovering from track shorts (with the sound engines) so that problem is corrected.

The lights for the Kiski staging area are now on a timer so they will shut off automatically. All that has to be done is press the start button on the timer located at AJ tower (Kiski Jct.) on the layout and the lights will stay on for about 45 seconds.

I have also added additional signage around the layout again. It seems that I still do not have everything named. New signs include – Summit – Sabula – Bostonia Tipples #1 & 2 – Leatherwood & Climax tunnels Shannon & Rimersburg Tipples. Unfortunately I also had to install some more pieces of fascia so I had a place to properly mount the signs.

Plans are being made to extend several sidings by about a car length or two. They are - ROSE - Brook - Schenley. This is in anticipation of future changes that have not been finalized at this time.

I roughed in some more basic scenery at various spots around the layout (some because I had the fascia in and other places where I had extended a tunnel and now had the proper portal for it).

I continue to add cars to the layout and I finally reached the 900 car count!

#### **The following OPERATIONAL changes that will be going into effect this date:**

**Sligo Branch** will now be run using the engines assigned to those Unit Coal Trains. The trains will be picked up in Pittsburgh (Kiski staging) and will run through to Lawsonham and proceed up the Sligo branch – switch out the empties for the loads and then return to Pittsburgh via (Kiski Staging).

This will eliminate the need to switch out engine power in Phillipston Yard and help eliminate excessive congestion in Phillipston. The train WILL STILL have to do a run around move at Brady Siding to get the power on the proper end of the train to run up the hill to Lawsonham

**The switch engine** assigned to Rimersburg will continue to do the local freight switching (both Rimersburg & Sligo) and drop the cars at Lawsonham as has been done in the past.

**The turnout on the back track** in Phillipston Yard to the Pittsburgh Main is now active (it had been spiked closed previously). This will ease the congestion with the KC-1 & KC-2 through freights stopping in Phillipston yard to drop blocks of cars destined for the Lowgrade.

KC-1 train ran last session and had to back out of Phillipston yard to Brady Tower and then take the East Brady track through the tunnel and on into Oil City. Reactivating the Back Track to Pittsburgh main line connection will allow the KC-1 & KC-2 trains to enter/exit Phillipston yard directly (eliminating any backup moves).

See you there on Thursday night!

BOB H

### **CONRAIL BULLETIN – 091029**

**Crew Call time is 18:00 hrs.** (6:00pm – for the civilians).

Well it's on again, the next OPs session, for Thursday night Oct 29, 2009 at 6:00pm!

More signs have been added around the layout. This time I have been working on the Industries. The signs for them are much smaller and have a **YELLOW** background. I have not done all of the industries on the layout only those that seem less conspicuous. And NO I don't expect the regular operators to read these new signs but if you ever find yourself having a temporary memory loss (TML) then they are there for reference.

### **TRACKWORK:**

I have begun constructing the last (I hope) staging area. This is under Summerville and goes back towards the Office. I am planning on having 10 tracks. I figured that at a minimum I needed 6 but added all I could get in the area. As Tony K says (the number of staging tracks needed) x2 plus 1!

I have also cleaned all 400 turnouts on the layout – It took a little over 2 hours – that should be good for another 10 years.

### **SWING BRIDGE:**

The swing bridge has been rebuilt! I made the frame out of angle iron and by doing this reduced the thickness of the bridge (which in effect gave another 3" in vertical clearance under the bridge). I also cut down the width by another 2" minimum so that will help in ducking under it when closed.

### **POOPER ROOM:**

Well, in theory, the Pooper is operational. I replaced the float switch and at this time it seems to work. BUT there is still a NO DUMPING ALLOWED until testing is complete – which may take a number of years! It had a good workout during the Div 11 meeting.

### **THRU TRAINS:**

There was some confusion on the operation of Phillipston thru trains (trains from Kiski Jct. to Valley Yard & visa versa) during the last OPs session. Only trains needing to make a **Pickup** or **Drop Off** of cars will

need to enter the Yard. All other thru trains are to use East Brady Tunnel cut-off. This will eliminate cluttering up the yard with a thru train. The Phillipston Yard operator will have enough to do without having to make room/time for just a THRU Train.

**SPOTTING CARS:**

Another thing I am seeing is that when there is only one spot for a car (Anderson Whse @ Nube), I sometimes find another car (for that same industry) sitting behind Redbank Mills – **WHY?**

**Would the real road do this?**

If we have too many cars for a industry then just spot the car at the TEAM TRACK (this will give the next OPs session operator more work to do) or (if a TEAM Track is not available in town) take the car on to the destination yard (Phillipston or Falls Creek) Let them deal with the car – This is what the REAL Railroads do. We are trying to simulate the REAL Railroad Operations (I know at times it doesn't seem that way but we are getting a little closer each time we Operate)!

Thanks for your cooperation and understanding.

See you there on Thursday night!

BOB H

## **BULLETIN - EXTRA**

Now with this new method of sending out info I can add mini-clinics to the CR Bulletin. In this issue I am going to refresh everyone on the proper methods of spotting cars on my layout.

Remembering that I use the Pins and Flags and I have found 6 colors that are way too close to each other and I have found too many operators switching the wrong cars into the wrong industries due to this color confusion.

There colors are as follows:

**Red – Orange**

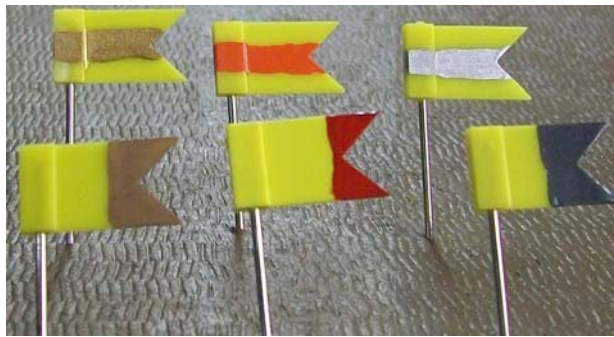
**Gray – Silver**

**Tan – Gold**

What I have done to help identify these colors is to make 3 (and only three) into stripes.

**Gold – Orange – Silver**

This is what the standard Flags look like –



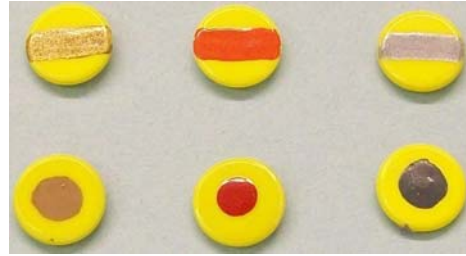
As you can see there are definitely differences in the way the flags look. GOLD - ORANGE - SILVER are the stripes and only these three colors will be used as stripes

As can be seen the GOLD & TAN are fairly hard to tell apart – ORANGE & RED are not as bad – SILVER & GRAY in this picture should never be mistaken. But yet they are!

Using these Dot/Strip colors on the other Flag Base colors will alter the shade of the Dot/Stripe color but the overall effect is the same.

In the next picture are the pins that are on the cars – GOLD, ORANGE and SILVER are all stripes and they match up with the stripe on the FLAG!

I really have tried to make this as simple as possible – I hope the side by side pictures will show the clear differences.



Now this same pattern is common across the board with the base colors we use:

Black	Red	Yellow	White	Plum
Tan	Blue	Green	Olive	
Orange	Teal	Pink	Purple	