

# A Brief History of the Foxwood Village Model Railroad Club by Bill Austin #74

As with many folks, I was interested in “toy” trains as a kid. From very early on, I always had a fascination with trains and loved playing with them as I grew. In my adult life I maintained an interest, but it had to take a back seat to the primary responsibilities of life.

Fast forward to retirement. Once I finally retired in 2014 (about one year after moving into Foxwood Village) I had the time to once again pursue the hobby, but now it was no longer “playing” with “toy” trains but developing a realistic miniature world that included a railroad – model railroading.



*The beginnings of my garage layout*

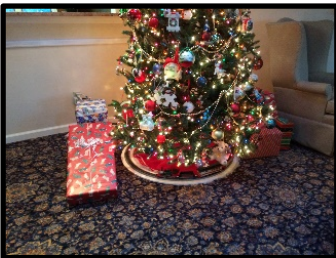
I began to build a layout in a corner of my garage. With limited space, it had to be small, so I selected one of the smaller standard train gauges – N gauge. For those who aren't familiar with the model trains, they are produced in several standard gauges (or sizes) that are usually indicated by letters, such as O, HO, N, etc. N gauge is one of the smallest sizes, so it takes less area to produce a reasonable layout. The scale ratio of N gauge is 1:160. That means that one foot in the real world is represented by 0.075 inches in the N-scale model railroad world. That results in a smaller required area for a layout but building the scenery and structures for that layout often exceeds the focusing ability of old eyes. In any event, I decided the

tradeoff was worth the effort.

As I worked at my hobby, I wondered if anyone else in Foxwood might be interested in model railroading. Sure enough, several people I spoke with were indeed interested and we eventually began the Foxwood Village Model Railroad Club. In the early fall of 2016 I put up a poster at the mailboxes around the community inviting anyone else with interest to contact me. As a result the club coalesced and we began our first project. The early members of the club were: Ron Stanza, Frank Windenauer, Bill Fortunato, Hadley Sloben, Bob Lodding, Joe Graham, Brenda and Bob Merjave and myself.



*Mailbox Poster*



*Our first Christmas display*

Our first project was to set up a train display for the upcoming 2016 Christmas Social in the clubhouse. We selected a comparatively simple yet traditional setup – a train running on a loop under the Christmas tree.

Everyone in the community enjoyed seeing the display and appreciated the addition to the decorations.

One of the first orders of business for our fledgling club was to find a home. We needed space where we could store our materials and work on a reasonable sized layout. As fortune would have it there was a large storage area in the back of the Bingo Hall in the clubhouse that was available. You may have noticed the railroad signs on the doors. After the room was cleaned out and set up we began work on our new display of the upcoming Christmas season of 2017.

As it turned out a former resident of Foxwood recently moved leaving a sizable model train layout in the basement. The new resident, Frank Morrison, offered all the material to our club. So, early in 2017 we stripped the layout of all usable material and had the unusable parts hauled away. Many buildings and structures were gathered but the most important contribution was many scale miles of HO gauge track. Most of the track in our



*The layout in the Morrison basement*

current layout comes from that haul thanks to Frank's generosity. Other residents in our community also donated model train material that they no longer needed. In addition, some of the club members had items to contribute. From this beginning we were able to start work on a larger Christmas display.



*Our first large layout Christmas 2017*

dioramas including the beach / marina scene and the ice skating pond, Brenda and Bob Merjave contributed the big duck that was built by their granddaughter, Hadley's wife, Inga, painted the backdrop, I created the Foxwood Village entrance diorama and everyone contributed to the layout of the town and to the scenic details of the entire display.



*Foxwood Village Entrance*



*Riverhead Town*



*Ice skating pond*



*Beach / Marina, Big Duck, and vineyard*

This display was moved up to the clubhouse during the 2017-2018 Christmas season. Everyone who viewed it was impressed with the quality of work and the detail.

After that season, we decided to add to the layout. The updated version added a 4 ft by 4 ft section to the original 4 ft by 8 ft table resulting in the current L shaped configuration. There were also many "behind the scenes" features added that improved the stability of the setup. The track layout was changed from the figure 8 to a dual loop of tracks to support the operation of two trains at the same time. Other additions included the expansion of the Foxwood Village diorama to include a scale model of the clubhouse, pool and bocce courts (developed by Frank Wildenauer). Frank also built the ski mountain.



*Christmas 2018 layout*

Also added was the "neon" Foxy's Nightclub sign, street and building lighting, sound, and automated crossing lights (developed by Bill Austin). Bill also added the button to allow people to run the trains on demand.

Pictured are the members of the club that contributed to the 2018-2019 version of the display: Artie VanRiper, Frank Wildenauer, Rich Kelton, Bob Lodding, Bill Austin, Ron Stanza and Walt Strubel. Not shown is John Cacciola.

The basic layout didn't visibly change much for the next season (2019-2020) but there were some significant improvements made under the

hood. The track base was improved so that the trains ran more reliably, improvements were made to the electrical wiring and automation, and plexiglass panels were added to protect the layout from being accidentally nudged by onlookers.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from working on the trains and displaying them for the 2020-2021 season. But once things began to loosen up we once again got back to it.

The primary modifications to the layout for the present (2021-2022) setup include a total redesign of the electrical system that controls the layout including the addition of an interactive control panel to allow people to activate several different scenes on the layout. Other significant additions included an operating carousel and the Suffolk Theater. The Grumman Park was also redesigned to better represent the actual park on route 25. Additional audio tracks were added that include music for the carousel and soundtracks for the theater.



*Christmas 2021 Layout  
(photo courtesy of Nick Colavito)*

Everyone in the club thoroughly enjoys creating the miniature world for everyone to enjoy. We particularly enjoy watching the reaction as our neighbors and their guests look at the setup.



*2021 Club Members (photo by Tom Rossi)*

Pictured are the current club members: Bill Austin, John Cacciola, Artie, VanRiper, Bruno Sidor, Ron Stanza, Frank Wildenauer, and Walter Strubel. Not shown are Rich Kelton and Roger Barbaro.

We are always looking for help. Anyone in Foxwood Village who has an interest, even if you don't have experience, is welcome to join us. We meet on Thursday mornings at 10 AM in the train room adjacent to the Bingo Hall. If, by chance, we are not there or if you prefer, contact me (Bill Austin) either by phone (631 669-4508) or email ([dcnbill@optonline.net](mailto:dcnbill@optonline.net)).

We look forward to continuing our efforts to improve the display for coming years. If you have any suggestions regarding the train display, please let us know – we're always open to new ideas.



*Random shots of the 2021-2022 layout courtesy of Nick Colavito*