

A Publication of the Northeast Region, National Model Railroad Association

Getting There, Getting Around "Wooster"

Finding Worcester, Massachusetts in the center of the State isn't hard to do. It's not far from the Mass Turnpike (Interstate 90), and system connector I 290. Getting around the City can be something else if you aren't really familiar with its street pattern and the latter day superimposition of high-speed roads on a community which has grown in response to local needs over a long period of time.

Worcester was incorporated in 1848 and has grown into the second largest city in the state. It has a well-deserved reputation for its cultural riches such as famous colleges and universities, museums, festivals, and the unrivaled American Antiquarian Society.

Understandably, a heritage like this is responsible for a physical development reflecting its origins. Study the maps in this issue - in fact, memorize them. Welcome!

Central Mass Limited

HUB Division Hosts the 1994
NER Spring Convention in
Worcester, Massachusetts, 27-29 May

Convention headquarters is the Worcester Marriott Hotel at 10 Lincoln Square. It is conveniently located just off Interstate 290 which bisects the city. The hotel is within easy walking distance of the Worcester Centrum, the Galleria shopping complex and a variety of better-than-average restaurants.

In addition, aside from its well-appointed rooms and banquet facilities, the hotel features a heated indoor swimming pool, a health club, saunas, free parking for registered guests. One restaurant and two lounges allow the conventioneer to dine and relax without leaving the premises. Within walking distance are some of the City's most famous attractions, the Art Museum, Science Center, Historical Museum, and the Higgins Armory Museum. East of Worcester on Route 20 is Sturbridge Village, New England's premiere museum village. It is also the destination of the non-rail tour on Saturday, the 28th.



The Spring Train Show, featuring dealers, displays, and operating layouts will be located at the convention hotel. **Clinic** Chairman, Pete Watson has assembled an outstanding array of clinic presenters, headlined by Dave Frary and Tony Koester. *Look for a complete list of Clinics in the pre-convention issue.* Dave Frary, famous for his pioneering scenery techniques, has recently finished a Pennsylvania Railroad layout which tours the Greenberg shows. He is currently working on refurbishing the

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#176, March 1994

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS
should be sent to the Business Manager (see under Working Crew in left column)

CONTRIBUTIONS
from NER and NMRA members are most welcome. The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject and edit copy as received. Articles accepted for publication will be included in *The NER Coupler* in a timely fashion.

The newsletter is composed on a Macintosh Performa using Claris Works. Since copy must be edited and adapted to issue format, copy is welcome in any readable form including computer diskette.

Photographs intended for individual publication or as part of an article are invited. If you wish us to return your photos, please include a sufficiently large envelope and adequate postage. Color photos of good color balance and contrast are acceptable.

Letters to the Editor of a constructive and professional nature will also be considered for publication.

Deadline for next issue is 15 April 1994

NER Membership is open to any NMRA member at \$6 per year. Look for the application blank in each issue.

1→ Convention Program

excellent N Scale Clinchfield Model Railroad, a *Model Railroad* magazine project which was raffled off. After a couple of owners, the Clinchfield is again under the MR wing and Dave has been commissioned to spruce it up. Tony Koester, a former editor of *Railroad Model Craftsman*, is currently a widely-read columnist for *Model Railroader* magazine. His column, "Trains of Thought", explores a variety of philosophical views about our hobby, with a special emphasis on model railroad operation.

Saturday Railfan Trip

On Saturday afternoon, 28th May, conventioners who choose this option can board a bus at the hotel and be whisked off to the Massachusetts Central Railroad for the 25 mile trip on this short line. An Alaska Railroad F7A, still in AKRR livery, is on the property and should keep cameras clicking by its mere presence. There will be one or more photo runbys. Riders will board a selection of Mass Central's available coaches for the trip. Included is MCER #100, a fully restored ex-B&A round roof coach; #101-102 are ex-RI Harriman roof coaches that saw commuter service in Chicago. These fully-restored cars were most recently used on the Logansport & Eel River Railroad. Also available is the MCER #334, the "Spirit of America", a full-length, smooth-side lightweight Buffet/Lounge car. In addition, the Mass Central stables two other coaches, #338, another ex-RI that will be modified into a Club-Lounge, and #345, an AC&F coach built for the Texas & Pacific in 1948.

The loco roster on the Mass Central includes the aforementioned

Alaska RR F7A, a GP-7m, an NW-5, a Santa Fe rebuilt CF-7, as well as a 45-ton Whitcomb and an Alco RS-1, which is fully restored and is used on the Mass Central's fall foliage tours and "Santa Trains". You will also have the opportunity to examine and photograph the Mass Central's container loading facilities. Containerized freight is a major source of revenue for this railroad.

Layout Tour Chairman Larry Madson reports that many fine layouts will be available for viewing. Look for a complete list in the pre-convention issue of the *NER Coupler*.

Convention Schedule

FRIDAY, May 27

Afternoon:

- Registration, 3-5 PM
- Hospitality Room
- Video Theater

Evening:

- Registration, 7-9 PM
- Hospitality Room
- Video Theater
- Rail Clinics
- Non-rail Clinics
- Layout visits

SATURDAY, May 28

Morning:

- Registration, 8 AM-Noon
- Hospitality Room
- Video Theater
- Model Contest Room open
- Rail Clinics
- Photo Contest Room open
- Craft Contest Room open
- Non-rail trip bus departs hotel for Old Sturbridge Village, 9:30 AM
- Trade Show opens 10 AM

Afternoon:

- Railfan trip bus leaves ho-

3-> Convention Program

tel at 1 PM for Mass Central fan trip.
Trade show continues
Rail Clinics
Video Theater
Contest rooms open

Evening:

Happy Hour
Banquet
Speakers- George Howard and Robert Morrell, Principals of the Flying Yankee Restoration Group, Owners and Restorers of the *Flying Yankee*.

SUNDAY, MAY 29

Morning:

NER Directors meeting
Checkout.

Afternoon:

Layout visits, Noon - 5 PM

For Convention Information contact:

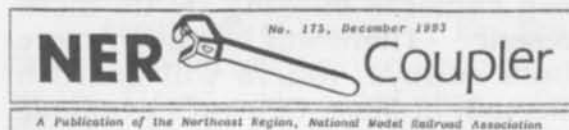
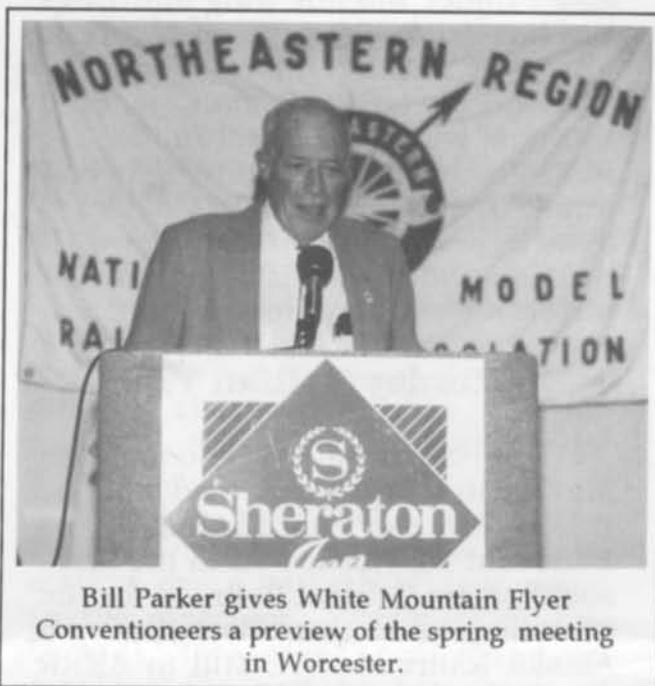
Bill Parker, Chairman
65 Coweaset Drive
Brockton, MA 02401
508-586-0271

There will be more convention information in the next issue of the *NER Coupler*, but **don't wait to make your reservations. The form is on page 11.** Make a photocopy if you don't want to mutilate this collector's item!

Parker sez!

Be sure to set aside three days of the Memorial Day weekend for some serious model railroad fun and fellowship. This year's NER Spring Convention, hosted by the HUB Division, NMRA, promises to be jam-packed with a great array of events

for modelers, railfans and their friends and families. Clinics, trips, contests geared to both "rail" and "non-rail" interests, plus a trade show, highlight the spring weekend. Hope to see you there.



Make a Masthead

When I edited and published my first issue of the *NER Coupler* a couple of years ago, I didn't have any of the artwork from previous issues, so I found it necessary to do a new masthead on short notice. Which of these two do you prefer? If, like I, you don't really like either one, let me know. Better yet, design

4 > Masthead

a new one and send it to me. At the moment, I have no idea what I can offer as a prize for the winner, but let's make a contest of it.

JTP

I can't believe I did that

In an effort to get the last issue of the *Coupler* to the printer before the end of 1993, I omitted the second party proofreading of the text. That proved the old axiom I learned from the Pennsylvania Deutsche, "The hurrier I am, the behinder I get."

I apologize to our New Hampshire members for the run-on headings for the article, "White Mountain Flyer Was a Crowd Pleaser." Somehow, my inattentive self took over and the continued headings switched to "Green Mountain Flyer." A Freudian slip?

My second gaff was more personally embarrassing. As the secretary of the Northwestern Vermont Model Railroading Society, how could I have managed (in the caption under Glenn Glasstetter's picture) to refer to our club as the "Northeastern Vermont Model Railroading Society?" My fellow Club members won't let me forget that one.

Getting to Worcester

When you are going home, refer to the map on page 2. If you are heading west, head back up Worcester Center Blvd to Belmont St, where you will see a sign to I-290 WEST. Stay in the right lane. Turn right onto Belmont St and a short distance ahead you will see another I-290 WEST sign. Turn right at the on-ramp and you will come out onto I-290 WEST.

If you are heading east, go back up Worcester Center Blvd and go on up Lincoln St. On the way, you will see a sign to I-290 EAST. Just before you go under I-290, you will also see an overhead sign to I-290 EAST. Stay to the right, under the sign, and go on up the ramp curving around to the right and onto I-290 EAST.

Exit 10 on the Mass Pike is a complicated interchange, as you can see below. You will see signs for routes 12, 20, I-90, I-290 and I-395. Carefully and alertly follow all the I-290 signs in order to get onto I-290 EAST.

If you are coming from communities on or somewhat near the coast, head north or south on I-495 to Marlborough, MA. Turn off at Exit 25B onto I-290 WEST. Go west about 13 miles and turn off I-290 at Exit 18 (route 9). Now follow the detailed map on page 2. At the traffic light at the bottom of the exit ramp, turn right. You are now on Lincoln St. About a block more and you will come to another traffic light. Concord St bears off to the right. You curve around to the left to stay on Lincoln St. About 2 more blocks ahead at a traffic light, you will come to Belmont St on the left and Highland St on the right. Go straight across and you will now be on the divided Worcester Center Blvd. A short distance ahead, you will come to the Marriott Hotel entrance on your right - it is between 2 red brick posts each topped by a cluster of globe lamps.

If you are coming from the west, use the Mass Turnpike I-90 EAST. Get off in Auburn, MA at exit 10. Read the note about exit 10 over on the left of this page. Go east from there on I-290 about 6 1/2 miles and turn off at Exit 17 (route 9). Now follow the detailed map on page 2. When you reach the traffic light at the top of the ramp, you will be on Belmont St. Turn left and go down about 2 or 3 blocks until you come to Lincoln St. The street sign will be on your right - see the note on page 2 about the sign. Turn left here and you will be on the divided Worcester Center Blvd. A short distance ahead, you will come to the Marriott Hotel entrance on your right - it is between 2 red brick posts each topped by a cluster of globe lamps.

MAP IS NOT TO SCALE

G.E.O. 2-20-94

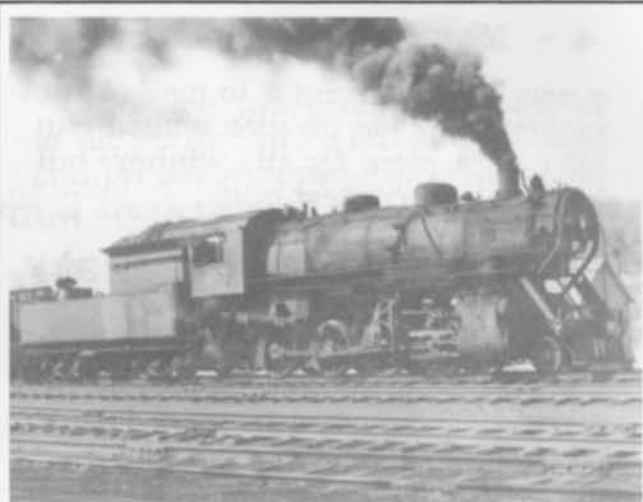
Soot & Cinders

Dick Hanschka is a long-time collector of railroad memorabilia and photographs. As a former railroad man, he comes by his interest honestly. The NER Spring Convention is scheduled for Worcester, Massachusetts, and Dick suggests that we prepare for a visit to the heartland of northeast railroading in its steam and early Diesel hey-days.

He says, "On our train trips we really enjoy the rides, but seldom do we recognize the railroad even though we rode it years ago. But rail history is not just for reminiscence, as he goes on to say, "If we regret the passing of time, we can push it back with models. The old operating guides and timetables tell us how it was. We preserve in models what is history long gone. The old buildings can come back for people to remember. Often a visitor will bring a son or grandchild to look at old photos, maps, schedules and the HO model railroad, and explain how it was."

Dick has lent us more photos and memorabilia than we could possibly include in a year of issues, but we can sample some as we prepare for our next regional meeting. Hopefully, Dick will bring to Worcester a collection of things to stir our imagination.

Palmer, Massachusetts was, and still is, a switching center. I can remember waking in the wee, small hours, waiting for my train to make a connection in the forties and early fifties. I was always irritated that the action always took place in the dead of night.



A Boston & Albany 2-8-0 "Pusher" ready for service in Palmer, Massachusetts.

Of this Junction Dick says, "the Central Vermont main line still crosses the old B&A (Boston & Albany), but it is now only a single track. CV freights used to stand here and wait, making it a great place to take photos. CV enginemen would often spot the loco and whistle for a photo stop. The 2-8-0 was the usual freight engine, but occasionally a pusher or double header was used. Sometimes a pusher like No. 453 (see photo) would be dropped off here. Its strange tender permitted an easy view to the rear. The coffin-feed water heater was unusual for a Consolidation, but was rather common on the CV.

"Diesel No. 9458 (see photo) was the last of the Palmer switchers. There was also an ALCO RS3 road engine which ran trains up the Ware River line. We seldom see the transfer caboose behind No. 9458. The Railroad used to have extra boards and there was always a job somewhere for a guy down on his luck. When I was out of work, the yard engine presented such an opportunity and I also had a chance

6 > Soot & Cinders

to run the RS3. Only a single engine was ever on the line and it operated somewhat like a Lionel train set. The engineer operated the loco; the fireman cared for the equipment; the conductor gave the signals and two brakemen cut and coupled cars. It ran like an orchestra and every move was well planned.

"When the day was over, the single stall engine house waited for us. It was actually large enough for the two locos to spend the night.



Diesel #9548 was the last of the switchers in the Palmer yards. An Alco RS3 road engine also worked out of this facility.

Today is a Different Scene

The engines and building are gone now, Central Massachusetts operates what remains of the Ware River Line, CV still has freight interchange service, and Conrail runs freight. The Amtrak Montrealer uses the CV line, and other New England states passenger trains run through this junction. The single track operation causes delays, but it does give

the engineman an opportunity to stop and wave.

"Rail excursions used equipment which were prototypes for models still available today from dealers. On Decoration Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day, there would be specials run out to a picnic grounds on some branch, and the train would be run by for photos.

"The engine would have American flags in place of the Extra Flags and the equipment looked like it just came out of the box. On Fall Foliage trips, The CN would borrow Canadian cars since it did not run passenger trains in this area.

Old railroad maps are useful in tracing railroad history. The timetables gave importance to small towns and villages, some of which don't appear on modern maps.



Even in Depression times, station architecture was grand. This one in Worcester served the Boston & Albany, New York, New Haven & Hartford, and the Boston and Maine Lines.

In 1938, the country was still recovering from the Great Depression, but it was not unusual to raise up monumental buildings such as the Worcester Railroad Station (see

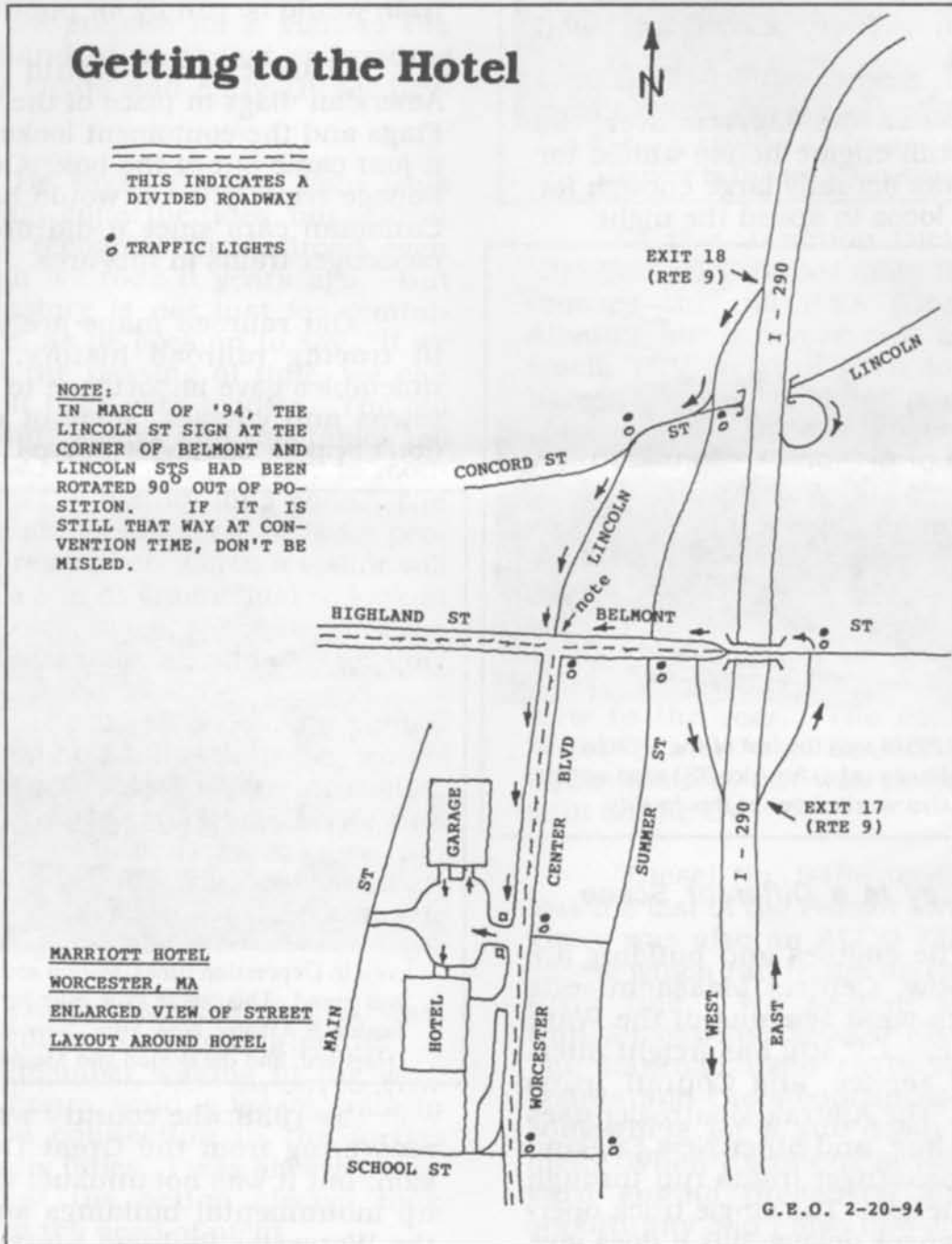
7 > Soot & Cinders

photograph) which was built in a park-like setting. The B&A (Burlington & Albany) was the principal user of this facility and it was maintained in first class shape. Other regular carriers were the New York, New Haven & Hartford, and

the Boston & Maine railroads.

When you come to Worcester in the spring, you'll have more fun if you do some homework relating to the area's railroad history.

JTP



Diamonds Aren't So Clever!

By Brian Whiton

When I was doing my clinic on diamond construction at the recent Burlington convention, I had several requests to summarize it in the form of an article. So here you are.

For the uninitiated, a diamond is where two tracks cross at grade; a crossing is a track traversed by a road; and, a cross-over is where switches of opposed direction allow the train to transition between two adjacent tracks.

Now that we have our nomenclature straight, why build a diamond when they are available commercially? There are two principal reasons. First, the angles of the manufactured items never suit your application perfectly, and there are no curved diamonds. Second, the commercial variety have insulation at the points where the rails meet, causing a discontinuity in the power to the engine. This is a special problem for short wheelbase engines like Shays. The diamond shown in my plan can be made to fit any configuration of approach track, down to about a 10 degree angle. The method of electrical supply in this kind of construction eliminates the insulated corner joints, although it does require a dpdt switch.

Let's build the diamond, and then consider wiring it. First, a word about soldering. Use a solder with a 60% or more tin content in a well-ventilated environment, and use a high heat, small tip iron. The latter is needed so you can melt solder rapidly

near the joint on which you're operating, but not elsewhere by heat migration. The low heat irons heat the joint so slowly that the entire crossing comes to the melt-point almost simultaneously, whereupon the spikes you forgot to install fail to hold the rail and the entire mass disassembles. Because soldering irons are downright difficult to use, only a fool uses poor tools.

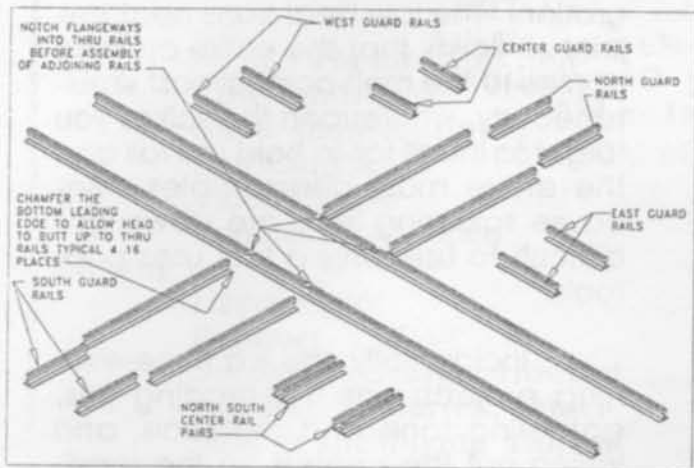
Incidentally, this is a three-evening project: one for reading this, gathering tools and materials, and laying out the centers on the roadbed; another for construction; and, a third for wiring. Any more time and you are engaging in analysis paralysis or quaffing too many beers.

I prefer to lay one track right through the area of the diamond, only altering the ties to the pattern shown as I pass by. If a curve is to be used in one side of the diamond, make that track the first and through track. Don't spike within 1.5 inches either side of the diamond. I suggest you pre-bend that portion of the curve affected by the crossing to reduce stress - not your stress, but that in the rail, which might come alive when soldering is in progress.

Next, lay the tracks approaching from the other two directions, taking care to file a slight leading bevel on the rail ends where they must pass over the foot of the through rails. Butt the rails to form a tight joint and solder them in four places. Don't spike the inside or gauge side within about an inch of the transverse rails either way, or you will have an interference with the guard rails next to be installed.

When the diamond incorpo-

9 > Diamonds



rates two curves, I pre-bend my rail in the immediate area of the diamond on all approaches, so as to have no stress on the joints when soldering. I do this by manipulating the rail between thumb and first and second fingers until a uniform curve is achieved.

At this time you should use a Mototool with a cut-off disk, or a file, to make a groove in the through rails where the flanges of the transverse rail traffic will pass. Use the center tit of the NMRA gauge to determine depth and width.

Diamonds, Part II, next issue

Area Model Railroad Shows Do Well in a Tight Economy

After some barely break-even years, the Hub Division Fall Show was a success by any measure. The show planners had to meet or exceed the records of such as the Amhearst Show in Springfield and the Bedford Boomers in Manchester. It became a matter of pride more than money.

The secret of this year's big turnaround seems to be twofold: moving the show date to a Sunday, and spending more money on equipping the show site, the Royal Trade Center in Marlborough. Result: 2400 people through the gate and a tidy profit of about \$5,000. That's about how much it cost them to hire the hall!

Up in Vermont where the snow-banks yielded a bit to the 40 degree weather, the Northwestern Vermont Model Railroading Society held its seventh annual extravaganza on March 5th at the South Burlington Middle School. Attendance was down about 10% from the usual 1700+ gate due to some unavoidable circumstances. The South Burlington High School next door, which shares a parking lot, scheduled a professional meeting of 300 people in the morning and a basketball tournament in the afternoon. Hundreds of potential show-goers got tired of circling the parking lot, gave up and headed for the malls.

About two miles away, the Sheraton Convention Center hosted a spring flower and garden show. One of its popular exhibits was a garden railroad 35 x 15 feet. NWVMRS show planners are wondering what the gate would have been like under normal circumstances.

Attention Two Foot Fans

The Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad Company and Museum in Portland, Maine has managed to secure the assets of the Edaville Railroad in two-foot gauge, which had originally come from Maine. The group will hold its second annual Railfair in June. For more information, contact Ron Palmquist, the new editor of the *Two Foot Flyer* at 58 Fore Street, Portland, ME 04101 (207-828-0814).

Registration Form

CENTRAL MASS. LIMITED Northeastern Region, NMRA 1994 Spring Convention Worcester, MA

Hosted By Hub Division

May 27 - 29, 1994

Name: _____ NER Number: _____

Address: _____

City, State/Prov: _____ Zip/PC: _____

Please
Enter
Names
Here →

Event	Price prereg'd	/	/	/	/	/	Total	Price at Door
Registration (Member)	\$15.00							\$17.00
Registration (Non-Member)	17.00							19.00
Registration (Youth)	7.50							9.50
Banquet	25.00							27.00
Fan Trip (Adults)	25.00							27.00
Non-Rail Tour	25.00							27.00
Child (4-12) Either Trip	12.50							14.50
Total								

Banquet entree choices. Check One, _____ Roast Prime Rib Of Beef _____ Chicken Kiev

Please make checks payable to "NER CONVENTIONS" and mail with this form to:

Pat & Charlie Bettinger
NER Convention Registration
29 Foster Drive
Vernon, CT 06066

(For Office Use Only)
P Preregistered W Walk-in
Paid by C Check or M Cash
Amount Enclosed: _____

NER HOTEL RESERVATION FORM

Worcester Marriot Hotel - (508) 791-1600

Rates: \$65.00 Single \$65 Double

Arrival Date & Time: _____ Departure Date: _____ # Beds Per Room _____

Number Of Rooms: _____ Number Of Persons: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Today's Date: _____

Check Enclosed: _____ Credit Card: AE MC VI Card #: _____

(1 Night) Exp. Date: _____

Registration Cutoff Date: May 6, 1994

**Please Complete
And Mail To:**

**Worcester Marriott Hotel
10 Lincoln Square
Worcester, MA 01608
Attn: Reservation Manager**



Is there anything to compare with the wonder in a child's eyes as he follows a long string of cars winding their way through a country-side of 1/87" scale? This young man was checking out the modular layout of the Northwestern Vermont Model Railroading Society at the South Burlington Show.



Show-goers who managed to take in the annual garden show at the Burlington-Sheraton got a look at one of the few "portable" garden railways in captivity.



NER Membership Application / Renewal

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

Please remit in U.S. FUNDS
Make checks/postal orders payable to NER-NMRA

Mail to: R R Brown
 NER Office Manager
 79 Hemenway Road
 Framingham MA 01701

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