

THE
NER

No. 194, September 1998

coupler



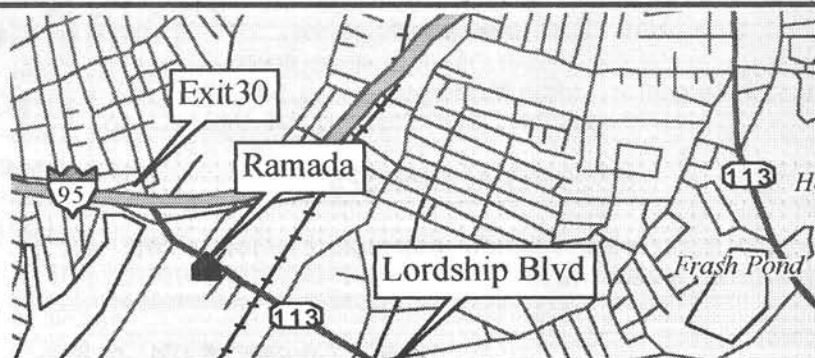
A Publication of the Northeastern Region, National Model Railroad Association



Conrail engine #6731 leads a southbound consist under the old New Haven Railroad Bridge at Highland, New York, April 1998. Third place winner, Color Photo class at the Spring Convention, Hyannis. Photo by Pat Lecaroz.

Merchant's Limited

If you haven't registered for the Convention in Stratford Connecticut, 16-18 October, do it now. Reservation forms are on pages 6-7 along with more information on the program. There'll be clinics, fan trips, layout tours, an auction & souvenirs!



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(English): in development

#194, September 1998

This newsletter is the official publication of the Northeastern Region, National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Inc. and is published four times a year.

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CHANGES OF ADDRESS

should be sent to the Office 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 or 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, it 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 November 1998
POST-CONVENTION ISSUE**

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

Mes sages from Tower A



I'm east-bound on the *Empire Builder* as I write this. I've just come from a visit to Minneapolis where there was a great deal of inspiring railroading to be seen. I was struck by the modeling aspects of the local switching railroad, Minneapolis Commercial. Of course, you could have any name you wished if you were to model a switching railroad in a mythical large city. In this application, I would recommend free lance modeling. The signature elements of most any railroad are too spread out to be acceptable without major compression. Furthermore, you might want to throw in a few elements that are found on other prototypes. The more spice the more the fun.

One thing that impressed me in Minneapolis was the number of wye tracks which were necessary to link all the railroad routes that formerly served the city. There are still three major railroads that I could discern. Wye tracks have sharp curves and lend themselves to spaghetti bowl track plans. In this case spaghetti is good. These same wye tracks allow multiple interchanges. I recommend having two or more hidden staging tracks for any leg of the wye which leaves the viewable surface of the railroad. We are a terminal railroad, so 10 cars of capacity on each track would be great. You might want to loop a couple of them to allow really long trains for some movements. In St. Paul, next door, the long trains seem to be grain and coal.

Properly supplied with hidden storage tracks, you can have trains that appear to run through the city, as they move from hidden storage track to hidden storage track, perhaps stopping to drop and pick up a cut of cars. Passenger trains too, can do this if mail, express, or a diner is to be added or dropped. For the passenger routes, though, keep the radius of the turns high. I'd recommend nothing under 30 inches radius. Those 85 foot passenger cars look very bad on anything less. Run your stack

packs and TOFC cars on these large radius tracks. On the remaining freight tracks you could drop to 18" radius for spurs with 24" radius for main routes.

One of the features in Minneapolis is the need to cross the Mississippi River for numerous rail routes. Two of these crossings have interesting bridges. One is a lift bridge, and the other is a swing bridge with the pivot off-side a bit. That bridge is counter balanced, adding to the mystique. Both are reached by sharp curves and lots of trestle. Throw in a dam and a lock to spice up the affair. Place bridges and dams effectively in the scene, and the river won't appear to stop at the backdrop.

Don't forget to use elevation to maximum advantage. In the area I've just visited, the tracks along the river are at two and three elevations. They cross each other many times while gaining access to the station, post office, numerous industries, and wharves. A track might turn from the inland side, crossing several adjacent tracks with diamonds to facilitate curvature, then cross under an ornate highway bridge, over the lift bridge, then into a wye serving the main line and an industrial complex on the other side of the river.

So, don't just sit there; make a plan, clean out the spare room or unused portion of the basement!

Minneapolis and St. Paul were loaded with grain elevators. The nice thing about them from a model stand point, is that they are long but shallow in foot print. They take a lot of freight cars, particularly if they are rail on one side and river barge on the other. Then there are power plants that receive large amounts of coal in hoppers. Tank farms too, are a modeler's dream for high traffic and not too much real-estate. How about a pole and transformer yard for the local utility? It would take little space, and could logically accept gons, flats, and box cars. I saw a junk yard that had both rail and direct loading to barges. Another neat site, was a single portable pump mounted on a road trailer, which was top unloading tank cars. The top hatch was open, so it must have been a liquid that was not a hazard when it evaporated through the hatch. The whole affair took up so little space I almost overlooked it. Matlac had a very linear terminal too, with numerous trucks unloading directly from center flow covered hoppers. There was a clam shell crane

p.3 Messages from Tower A

moving large rip-rap stone from gondolas to lighter barges for placement along a river bank or jetty some place.

Then there is the usual number of warehouse type industries, many of which had a small foot print, but were very tall. Some local manufacturing firms had doors for loading or unloading box cars, adjacent to their coal trestle. A modern application for the same scenario, would be a plastics manufacturer. They might receive bulk loads of plastic beads, tank cars of styrene, and ship sheet stock in box cars. Modeled in relief, this industry would take almost no space, and generate gobs of traffic.

No engine houses were remaining, though there could have been several in round house configuration, with a turntable. In the diesel era, you might want to rely on the wye tracks for turning, and have a shed type engine shop. The Como Shops are still standing in St. Paul. They were the back shops for a large engine house and featured a transfer table. They are now a mall, but the tracks and the large doors were preserved. Imagine such a building on your railroad.

A terminal railroad like this would have a lot of neat old engines that could handle the difficult curvature. In addition, there might be a service agreement with the connecting lines, where their engines are fueled and turned by the terminal railroad. In that event you could have almost anything your heart desires for motive power. Don't forget cabooses. Even in modern times, the caboose is still relevant for long back-up moves. You'll need FRED for the through trains.

So, don't just sit there, make a plan, clean out the spare room or unused portion of the basement. Get going. You've been collecting kits for 20 years. Modell

Brian Whiton



Brian Whiton has served in just about every volunteer position offered by the NorthEast Region. Being of sound mind and body, Brian decided not to seek another term as President. Thank you for all you've done for us!

The Ballots Have Been Counted NER Officers, 1998-

Ballot Committee Chairman Charles Bettinger reports the following slate of officers for the Region beginning this fall. Charlie's counters were Linda May and Barbara Zemanek. Only one office listed more than a single candidate, which may be partly responsible for the relatively small number of ballots cast. Two Divisions, Canada and New Jersey did not field a candidate for the position of Director. There were no write-ins and two ballots were invalidated. The winners are:

President: Glenn Glasstetter (44)

Vice-President: Kenneth May (43)

Directors:

Ludwig Riemenschneider (Long Island & New York City) (8)

Terrence P. King (Northern New England) (7)

Albert Daley (Connecticut & Rhode Island) (7)

Don Howd (Massachusetts) (8)

Robert Hamm (5- winner); Frank Dietz (4) (New York State)



New
Members
NER, NMRA
Welcome Aboard

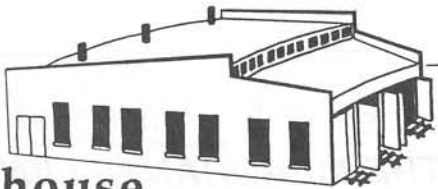
12/08/97-05/01/98

Massachusetts: Gerald Covino (Burlington); Jerome McDonald (Rockland). New Hampshire: Jim Wieszek (Londonderry). Vermont: Hans Raab (Burlington); Georgios Palantios (Vergennes); Jeff Robinson (Waterbury Ctr); Bill Johnson (Barnet); Ronald Smith (Lyndonville). Connecticut: Michael Quinn (West Haven). New Jersey: Robert McQueen (Teaneck). New York: Robert Bowdidge (Katonah); Robert Liubicich (Brooklyn); Anthony Capato (Asharoken); George Mulligan (Sayville); Eugene Turgeon (Delmar); Sy Diamond (Interlaken).



Each one Get One!

Glenn Glasstetter Down at the Roundhouse



LOOKING AHEAD

First, let me thank all those who took the time to vote in our recent regional election. (See election results on page 4.) We had forty-seven ballots received out of seven hundred NER members. Not a great response, but admittedly, there was not a lot of choice. The only contested race was for the New York Director. Would you believe that the winner of that race won by only one vote - 5 to 4! No one ran for either the Canadian or New Jersey Director positions. Furthermore, there was not one write-in ballot for either of these positions. Instead of being elected by the membership in those areas, these positions will have to be filled by appointment of the NER Board of Directors.

In the last year, several of my recent columns have addressed the issues of declining membership and inactive divisions. We are having difficulty filling our two-convention per year schedule. We received some, but not an overwhelming, response to our President Brian Whiston's request to fill several key appointed positions. It would seem that the strength of the NER is eroding. We should all be concerned about this and decide what each of us is willing to do about it. With a combined effort, I know we can turn these negative trends into positive ones that will make the NER and its divisions stronger and provide more fun for all our members.

As I mentioned in my election statement in the last issue of the *Coupler*, my three main goals are to increase membership, enhance member services, and improve communication within the Region. I would like to elaborate on these goals.

First, we need to turn around declining membership. I have a twofold plan to accomplish this. Last month in this column, I explained the Single Membership Program and how it increased membership in the Pacific Northwest Region. I am committed to implementing this program in the NER as soon as possible. It has the ability to bring approximately 1500 current NMRA members into the NER.

The second part of this plan is to help our inactive divisions become active again and to provide a program at the local level to introduce potential members to the benefits of our organization. I am targeting the Hudson Valley, Garden State, and Little Rhody Divisions to reorganize and once again become active divisions in the NER. By the time you read this, we will have already had the reorganization meeting of the Hudson Valley Division on September 19th, at the Hyde Park Railroad Station. You may

have seen the announcement in the hobby press. A direct mailing of 85 letters and follow-up reminders were sent to NMRA members living in the Hudson Valley. Thanks to John Bortle and Fred Gemmil for their help with this, as well as Carl Sardaro for arranging with the Hudson Valley Railroad Society for the use of the Hyde Park Railroad Station for our meeting. I hope to report in the next issue that the Hudson Valley Division is again active.

I would also like to call upon anyone interested in reactivating the Garden State and Little Rhody Divisions to contact me so that we can start planning to get these divisions active again.

PROGRAMS ARE KEY TO SUCCESS

In order to attract and retain members, we need active programs in both the Region and the divisions. Many of our divisions currently do have active programs. I would like the current and past officers of these divisions to provide guidance to other divisions which are just getting started, or are looking for ways to improve their programs.

I will be compiling a survey for you, our membership, to respond to, to ascertain how you feel about our organization and how we can improve it. I know, we all get surveyed to death and I dislike answering them too, but I don't know of any easier way to get you to help us provide the benefits and information you would like to see that will increase your enjoyment as a member of our organization. To this end, I would like to offer you the opportunity to provide questions that you would like to see in this survey. Please give them in writing by e-mail, snail mail, or hand them to me when you see me.

Communication is the key to providing you the information about what is happening in the NER and the divisions within the Region. This needs to be a two-way street. I will try to keep you informed about regional issues and I would like to see more information in the *Coupler* about what activities are taking place in our divisions. I look to our Area Directors and division officers to provide more information about what is happening to our *Coupler* Editor, Joe Popecki. I would also encourage our divisions to hold inter-divisional activities with adjoining divisions. Very soon, you will see the names of our division officials on the Brass page of the *Coupler*, as well as Area Directors and regional officials. This will provide all our members with the contacts they need when they have questions regarding the organization. Communication is a two-way street. Your officers need to hear your suggestions as to how we all can make this a better, stronger organization that will benefit us all. No one person can implement the initiatives outlined above. We all have a stake in working to improve our organization and I hope I have your support. I also hope to see you all at the Merchants Limited Convention in Stratford, CT, this October 16-18. It promises to be a fun-filled, action-packed three days. See you there!



THE MERCHANTS LIMITED

FALL 1998 NER - NMRA CONVENTION

OCTOBER 16 TO OCTOBER 18
1998

Ramada Inn Stratford,
Connecticut

Location

The Metro North Division is proud to sponsor the 1998 Fall Convention for the NER, *The Merchants Limited* (TML'98). It will be held from Friday October 16 to Sunday October 18, 1998, in the Ramada Inn in Stratford, CT. Room rates are \$69 per night. The Hotel offers free shuttle service from the nearby train station, airport or Port Jeff Ferry

Clinics

TML '98 will feature clinics, Friday afternoon and evening as well as Saturday and Sunday mornings, covering a wide spectrum of modeling railroading and prototype interests. There will also be a "make & take" building clinic for an extra fare on Saturday afternoon. Several historical societies have been invited to give presentations on their respective railroad which operated in the NER territory.

Fan Trips

There will be two different trips on Saturday afternoon: one via Metro-North train to the newly restored Grand Central Terminal and the other via motor coach to the Danbury Railway Museum for their Fall Open House and an excursion trip along the Maybrook line.

Off-Line (Non-rail) Activities

There will be a trip on Saturday afternoon to the nationally acclaimed Maritime Aquarium and IMAX Theater in historic South Norwalk (SONO), CT via school buses.

Contests

Judged contests in all the normal classes will be held at TML '98. (NMRA contest rules have been modified.)

Home Layout Tours

Registrants will be given a tour book of assorted home and club layouts which will be open on Friday evening and Sunday afternoon with the latest in computer

generated maps, but must provide their own transportation. There will be a buddy board for those arriving via public transportation. There will also be a Saturday afternoon: an operating session at one of our layouts. For a \$2 extra fare, the layout maps can be mailed to you on approx. October. 1.

Souvenirs

Limited edition hats and the usual buttons.

Train Show

Attendees will receive discounted admission to the show at Danbury Railway Museum on Sunday October 18th.

Food/Banquet

The Saturday night banquet will feature John Babina of the Monroe Historical Society speaking on the original Housatonic Railroad that ran from Bridgeport CT to Pittsfield MA. An express breakfast buffet will be available for Saturday and Sunday morning.

Live Auction

There will be a live auction hosted by the Metro North Division after the Banquet on Saturday evening. You can bring as many items as you wish to sell, but it is generally best to group similar or like items. Bring your checkbook, travelers check or lots of cash (not recommended) as no credit cards are accepted. The Division will retain 10% of the selling price of all items sold in the auction.

Please see the next page for the
Convention and Hotel registration



The Merchant's Limited '98 Reservation Forms

Stratford, CT

October 16-18, 1998

Convention Registration Form

Name 1: _____ Name 2: _____
 Address: _____ Address: _____
 City, State, ZIP _____ City, State, ZIP _____
 Phone number _____ Phone number _____
 NMRA # _____ NER # _____ NMRA # _____ NER # _____

Name 3: _____ Name 4: _____
 Address: _____ Address: _____
 City, State, ZIP _____ City, State, ZIP _____
 Phone number _____ Phone number _____
 NMRA # _____ NER # _____ NMRA # _____ NER # _____

	Cost	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3	Name 4
Registration for NMRA & NER member	\$16.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Registration for NMRA member (includes NER membership)	\$22.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Registration for non member (includes NMRA* & NER)	\$38.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Spouse Registration (with primary registrant)	\$12.00	NA	_____	_____	_____
Youth (under 16) Registration (with primary registrant)	\$ 8.00	NA	_____	_____	_____
Banquet (How many chicken _____ or beef _____)	\$25.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Express breakfast buffet	\$ 8.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Convention Hat	\$ 5.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Advance mailing of layout booklet (with primary registrant)	\$ 2.00	_____	NA	NA	NA
Commuter Club**	\$20.00	_____	NA	NA	NA
Make & Take Building Clinic (Saturday afternoon)	\$15.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grand Central Terminal Tour	\$20.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grand Central Terminal Tour (Sr Citizen 65 years & older)	\$15.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Danbury Railway Museum Tour	\$22.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Norwalk Maritime Center Tour Adult	\$19.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Norwalk Maritime Center Tour Child (12 & UNDER)	\$17.00	_____	_____	_____	_____
Totals		_____	_____	_____	_____

* Includes associate membership (meaning no *Bulletin*), can be upgraded to full membership for an additional \$16.

**Save \$3! Available thru June 30th only! Includes registration, hat and advance mailing of layout booklet for NMRA & NER member. Add \$6 for NER membership or \$22 for NMRA & NER membership.

Make your check payable for the total registration fees to NER CONVENTIONS and mail to:

John Campbell
 63 Alexander Dr
 East Hartford, CT 06118

Direct all *TML* questions to
 or for updated information
 please visit our web site @

Brian Sullivan
 209 Brookdale Drive
 Stamford, CT 06906
 203.329.8088

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/WayneKarns>

Hotel Reservation for The Merchants Limited

Stratford Ramada
 225 Lordship Blvd
 Stratford, CT 06497
 203.375.8866

October 16-18, 1998

US\$69 Rate for Single _____ or Double Occupancy (one bed _____ two _____)

Arrival Date: _____ Arrival Time: _____ # of nights _____

Names _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Prov _____ ZIP _____

Phone () _____

Mastercard _____ VISA _____ AMEX _____ Discover _____ Check _____

CARD # _____ Exp. Date _____

You must make your reservation no later than 9/16/98 to get the \$69 rate!

Mail to the Ramada at their above address or fax to 203.375.2482

No smoking room

YOU MAY COPY THESE FORMS

LENSES FOR ULTRA-CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY

(Part 1 - An Overview)
by John E. Bortle

With all the effort that we put into our hobby, nothing is more appreciated than a complimentary remark or two concerning the end results. If you have a home layout, such comments usually come from a handful of associates or local club members. Those of us who do modular railroading reach a much wider, albeit sometimes less critical, circle of enthusiasts who view our work. But model railroaders who dabble in close-up photography and have their efforts published in national magazines can present the culmination of their efforts to tens of thousands simultaneously.

Anyone who carefully read and put into practice the advice I offered in my three-part article on basic model photography (*The NER Coupler*, issues 184-186) should be well prepared to take the next big step - creating ultra close-up images.

There is little question that the most impressive model railroad photographs are those that render a prototype-like view of a scene, as if the shot were truly taken by a scaled-down photographer at trackside. The rewards of being able to create such images are numerous and not the least of these is the pride of placing well at a regional or national NMRA photo contest. From a somewhat more mercenary point of view, most of the hobby magazines pay quite handsomely for photos of this sort - often enough to purchase a quality locomotive or two.

My earlier presentation covered the use of special add-on close-up lenses that attach to your regular camera lens for tight shots, as well as the use of extension tubes for the same purpose. Both of these accessories are capable of bringing the camera in very close to the subject, but they have significant shortcomings. Each results in an image with a minimum depth-of-field (how much of the scene actually appears in sharp focus). Really ultra-close-up imaging, where virtually everything in the scene must remain in focus, requires a highly specialized lens. A common, everyday camera lens just won't cut the mustard when it comes to first class ultra-close-up photography.

So what is the solution? The answer is to choose one of two very sophisticated lens systems that are designed to tackle these problems specifically. The first is available as an over-the-counter item, while the other is usually home-made.

MACRO LENSES

A typical 50mm ("normal") lens will usually not allow you to focus closer than 20-30 inches from your subject - much too far away to produce shots where the approaching scale model locomotive looks like it's about to run you down! Modern macro lenses, on the other hand, are purposely designed to focus in very close to the subject, and many can also stop down the opening to a very small aperture. This latter feature provides great depth of field. I've seen some high quality macro lenses that will focus down to 5 or 6 inches from the subject and

stop down to f/32. Such a combination will produce outstanding model photographs. As a matter of fact, a large percentage of the best reader-submitted photos being published in hobby magazines today (and nearly all those being produced in-house) are made using modern macro lenses.

Before you rush out to the camera shop to make such a purchase, be advised that there can be a few problems regarding these lenses. First, not all macros are created equal. Many lenses labeled as macros will neither focus in closer than 15 inches from the subject, nor stop down below f/16 or f/22. The potential buyer must be very selective regarding the performance of a given lens to insure that it meets his needs and expectations for ultra-close-up photography. If you desire to maximize your results, you should be looking for a minimum focus of not greater than 10 inches and preferably a minimum aperture setting of f/32.

Unquestionably, the biggest drawback concerning high performance macro lenses is their prices. Typically, ones with the desirable characteristics outlined above will be priced at \$300 and up! Admittedly this may seem like a big ticket item, but considering that it will produce just the results you are looking for and requires no effort beyond snapping it on to your camera before you begin shooting, it's a bargain.

PINHOLE LENSES

In a pinhole system, a fixed aperture of minute dimensions - typically in the order of 0.020" in diameter is inserted into an otherwise normal lens near the internal focal plane. This results in a focal ratio (f-stop) of between f/60 and f/100, depending on the focal length of the lens. Such modified lenses will produce remarkable photographs, but are limited to strictly manual operation and require relatively long exposure times, up to several tens of seconds if you're shooting indoors.

Since depth-of-field increases with increasing the focal ratio, a lens system working at f/100 is capable of simultaneously rendering objects just a few inches in front of the lens, and out to a distance of several tens of feet, with equal sharpness. But just as with macro lenses, not all pinhole systems are equal. Because a lens of short focal length (say 28mm) has a naturally greater depth-of-field and close-focusing capability than one of average focal length (i.e., 50mm), the shorter focal length lens will have a broader application in ultra-close-up photography.

The biggest deterrent with regard to employing pinhole lenses is that, with the exception of the rather simplified system offered by Fricko, these lenses are not commercially available. Those truly interested in pursuing pinhole photography must therefore learn how to convert an existing lens to this purpose, a process that seems to have intimidated most model railroaders in the past.

MACRO VS. PINHOLE

These two lens systems are able to produce equally impressive, highly publishable images, and each system has its staunch supporters. There are some subtle differences between the images they produce, however, that need to be discussed.

With a macro lens, the subject is always razor sharp in appearance, providing of course that it is within the focal range of the lens. The extreme foreground in macro shots, say less than 4 or 5 inches from the camera,

p. 8 **LENSES FOR ULTRA-CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY**

will tend to look a bit soft, and objects more than several feet away may also appear somewhat fuzzy. If a real-world background is included in the shot, it may show an even more obvious softness. Interestingly, scenes shot with macro lenses always look like photos of models to me - the illusion of prototype reality being missing. Still, where publication potential is concerned, magazines like MR and RMC prefer shots made using good macro lenses over those taken with pinhole optics.

A pinhole lens will allow you to get closer to your subject than when using a macro lens. It is quite feasible to create a pinhole shot where an approaching HO gauge locomotive appears to loom over the photographer. These lenses also have greater depth-of-field than can be obtained using a macro lens, in some cases to a startling degree. When the pinhole is installed in something like a 28mm wide-angle lens, objects less than 2 inches from the front of the lens will appear quite sharply defined. At the same time, a prototype background 100 feet from the camera will still be reasonably crisp.

One objection the hobby press voices regarding pinhole photos is that they tend to have an overall very subtle softness to them. You should always employ a fine-grain film when shooting with a pinhole "lens" to help minimize this effect. Supporters of pinhole lenses insist, however, that this aspect mimics the effects of atmospheric haze that very slightly softens subjects in prototype photos. The author is among the first to acknowledge that this situation does lend an air of absolute realism to many pinhole photos, a feeling that is always lacking in macro shots.

Which way to go? The answer depends strictly on the individual. If you are short of time but long on cash, macros are certainly a shortcut to outstanding model photographs. On the other hand, tinkerers, scratch builders, and those of us who would prefer to spend our hobby dollars on locomotives and rolling stock will appreciate the challenge of fabricating a pinhole lens system

From the Mail Bag



The HUB Division will host its annual *Great Train Show* on Sunday, November 8, 1998, at the High School Field House in Marlborough, Massachusetts. That's located on Rt. 85, Bolton Street (Rts 495/290, exit 25A). It will run from 10 am to 4 pm. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$3 for seniors, and \$1 for children, 6-12 years. There will be dealers, displays, operating layouts, door prizes, a Youth Build-a-Kit, and food. More info from Bill Goldthwait at 30 Baker St., Lexington, MA 02173 (781-862-8078). The site is handicapped accessible.

From David Camber, NER Club Dispatcher: "I am writing again to ask clubs in the NER to send me information that I need to compile a complete list of model railroad clubs, historical groups, and any other regular meetings of modelers. I have received data from some clubs in our Region, and I have a very old list, but most contact names have changed, and many addresses have changed due to 911 program requirements. Also, let me know if your club sponsors activities such as shows, open houses, youth programs, etc. If there are clubs in your area not affiliated with the NMRA, pass this request along to them. There is a convenient form for responding on page 11 in this issue, and you can attach as much additional information as you wish."

Two letters from Henry Stubing; the first, and more important to someone, lets us know that someone visiting Henry's layout during the Fall Convention left a camera behind. If it's yours, describe it to Henry at 516-427-2928, and you'll get it back.

Henry, who is Vice-President of the Sunrise Trail Division, has undertaken a project for NER. He's attempting to compile an accurate list of representatives of every division in NER. Please send the division name, your name (contact), address and phone number (and Internet address if you have one) to Henry Stubing, 6 North Lane, Huntington, NY 11743. Thanks!

Railroading in Vermont is making a comeback, both as public transportation and as recreation. Bellows Falls, one of several towns famous in the state's 150 year old railroad history, celebrated Transpo-98 July 29th through August 2d. The steam locomotive (see page 12), acquired from China, hauled a consist of five period coaches on round trips to Chester, Vermont. On the three succeeding weekends, the train made round trips from Burlington to Rutland, and from Rutland to Bellows Falls and Ludlow. Within the next year, the state will begin rail transportation along the Burlington to Charlotte corridor on the western side to alleviate traffic congestion while Route 7 undergoes a complete makeover.

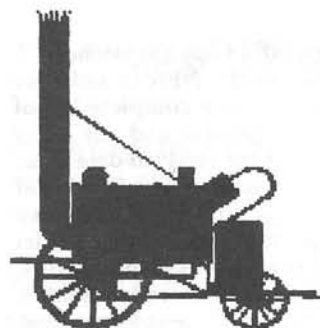
The Central New York Division of NER will host a scale model and prototype railroad Christmas auction on Saturday, December 12, 1998, from noon to 5 pm, at Trinity Episcopal Church Hall. That's located in Fayetteville, on Route 5, just east of Syracuse (off I-481 & I-690). Both buyers and sellers are invited to this sixth annuevent.

The Mid-Eastern Region of NMRA will hold its fall meeting, the Lehigh Valley Ltd., the week before NER. That's October 9-11. The site will be the Days Inn in Allentown, Pennsylvania. For more information, contact the Lehigh Valley Limited, P.O. Box 205, Swedesboro, NJ 08085.

The North Conway Model Railroad Club celebrated the 25th anniversary of its annual train show on May 16. Featured was the Club's re-creation in scale of the Conway Scenic Railroad, including engine house and depot.

In the Australasian Region's publication, Main Line, we read that Californian Bill Everett has donated 100 trolley models in O Gauge, to the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. The donated models are unpowered, but Bill has a duplicate collection of powered models on his home layout. He managed to complete the collection in just three years.

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH MAIL BAG!



Ideas & Plans

STARTING OVER by Herm Botzow

Mention of the Layout Design Special Interest Group (SIG) in the December 1996 *NER Coupler* prompts the thoughts and experiences that follow. First, the idea of a new pike is really exciting if you make a wish list of basic betterments, whatever your choice of era, locale or type of railroad. Here were mine.

1. Longer mainline
2. Larger radii, add superelevation
3. More reliable switches
4. Tetherless walkaround control
5. Reduced grades
6. Larger yards
7. Wider aisles
8. Less hidden trackage
9. Interchange yard
10. Visual separation of tracks
11. Less table noise
12. Better lighting

When your list is in hand, your fantasizing can begin. The first question often is, how much of the old layout can be salvaged? In my case, it was the "modular" tables that did not survive. The seven tables, while large and somewhat cumbersome, were rendered unusable primarily due to their tight curves and turn-outs. The two which survived were cut back to their tangent sections before being dropped into place. Fortunately, large pieces of scenery could be removed from the other tables and transplanted unto the new benchwork.

The wish list seemed increasingly doable when we bought an older home that could be remodeled over several years. That extra time was a blessing because it allowed us to stretch out the budget for some pike-related preparatory costs. When the furnace went, it seemed entirely logical to relocate the new one to a less intrusive spot in the cellar. The same was done to the cellar stairs. Another year, a contractor dug and poured more cellar under a part of the house. The hand-hewn floor beams could be bug-sprayed and sistered and the walls waterproofed. During this time, the cellar kept flooding despite the waterproofing. We subsequently discovered an underground spring on the uphill side of the house. A French drain was dug to divert the water.

Finally, overhead outlets could be placed over aisle locations. These proved to be incredible timesavers during table and scenery construction. To minimize dust, the walls and ceiling were sheetrocked and spackled, and the floor painted.

Perhaps the greatest challenge was planning the track layout, what with space at a premium and a bunch

of wish list items that gobbled up that space. For example, the desire for a longer mainline required adopting a curve radius that was tighter than the wish list, but still more generous than the previous pike. A file of great model railroads came in handy. Allen McClelland put in a loop at Dawson Spring that allowed trains to climb back over themselves. Use of this "gimmick" permitted our trains to loop around the old chimney in the middle of the room and double back into the same area, keeping it an "honest" walkaround pike. In the terminal area, the mainline separated the passenger and freight yards. A vexing problem was getting locomotives from both sides to a single engine facility without fouling the main. A. C. Kalmbach's 1946 edition of *Model Railroad Track and Layout* showed a prototype engine "underpass" that did the trick.

As layout construction began, the philosophy was to take the time and get it right (because it's almost impossible to correct later). Of course too much time spent on any single step and a layout never gets done. One technique is to do construction in three stages: conceptual, rough, and finish. This gives you a chance to adjust individual elements as you go so that the finished whole "works". For example, the table girder was built so that small dips and humps in the tracks could be smoothed out by adjusting the risers. Structures and scenery were done in three steps so placement, bulk and color could be fine-tuned. Ballasting was delayed until the track was thoroughly tested.

Now, a few surprises. I had not thought that the mason had poured a level cellar floor. As it turned out, the floor was almost perfectly level, greatly expediting benchwork construction. Another pleasant surprise was the speed of construction when drywall screws are used. A negative was the thin ends of the Celotex sheets used for deadening roadbed sound. Evidently, the ends are clamped during manufacture. Some six inches of the ends of each sheet had to be discarded.

Recently, we watched the first passenger train back smoothly through the approach grid and into the stub terminal. Was all that planning and preparation worthwhile? You bet!



Club Car of the 1920s RCR

NORTHEASTERN REGION, NMRA * Membership Application/Renewal

Name _____

NEW Renewal

Street _____

\$6.00, 1 year membership

City _____

\$15.00, 3 year membership

State or Province Zip _____

\$110.00, Life Membership*

Country _____ NMRA# _____

(*You must be an NMRA Life Member)

Please remit in U.S. funds, payable to NER-NMRA
Check of Money Order; no cash by mail, please

Send to: Ron Bergeron, NER Office Manager
11 Alpine Drive
Sanford, ME 04073-2446

For Office Use only

Chk/MO #	Amount	Cash
Rec'd	Expires	In person at
NER#	File Updated	Card Issued

You may photocopy this form

NER CLUB REGISTRATION

Name of Club or Organization _____

Mailing Address _____

Location (if different) _____

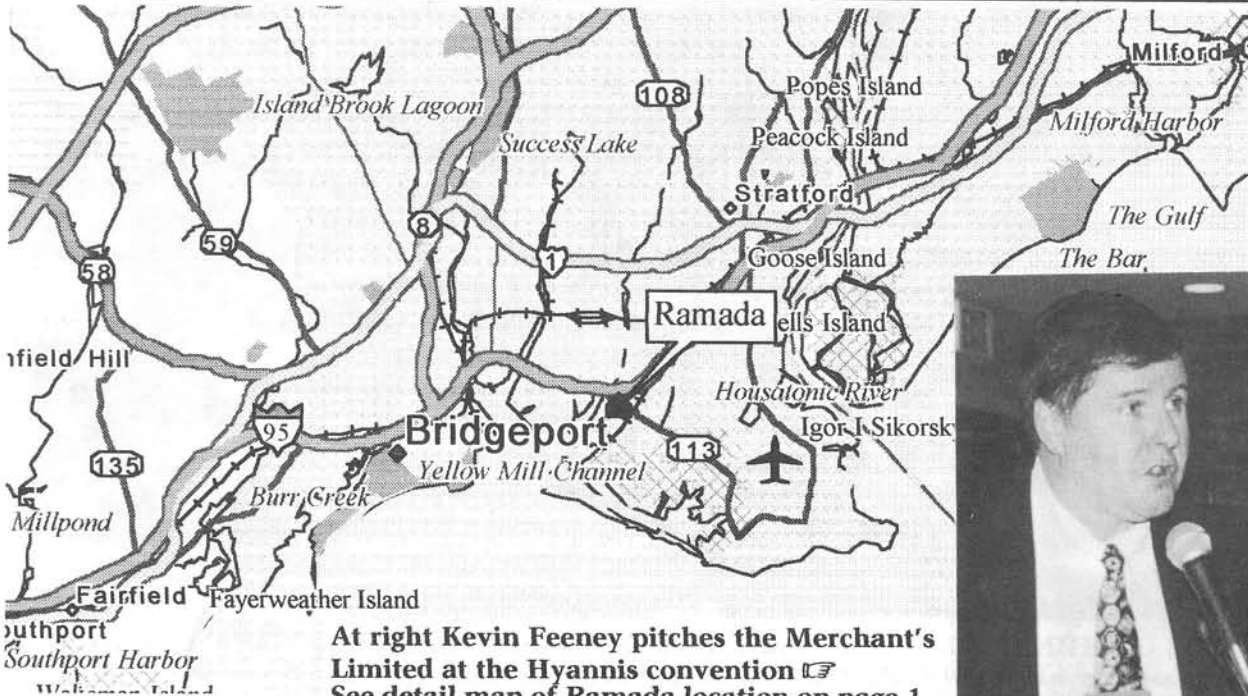
Contact Person _____ Phone _____

Meeting days & times _____

Name, scale, era, etc. _____

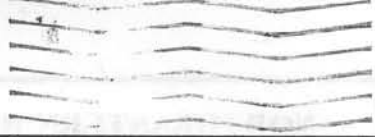
You may put additional details on the back of this form or on an attached sheet, and mail to:
Dave Camber, NER Club Dispatcher, 514 Leroux Rd., South Wheelock, VT 05851

We welcome visits from fellow NMRA members with advance notice.



At right Kevin Feeney pitches the Merchant's Limited at the Hyannis convention
See detail map of Ramada location on page 1,

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MADE IN CHINA. When China ceased production of steam engines eleven years ago, three were purchased for use in the USA. One is at the bottom of the Indian Ocean. Green Mountain Railroad, Bellows Falls, has this one which operates railfan trips in Vermont throughout the summer.

NER Coupler, # 194, p. 12

