

THE COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION



No. 248 • JANUARY-MARCH, 2013

Next Stop: Laconia, NH 5

Preview of the NER's 2013 Convention

Lessons Learned 7

Looking back on Syracuse Convention

Open Loads 8

Add interest to freights right out in the open



In this issue:

Heading for New Hampshire

NER Brass Page 2 President's Letter 3
Made in the NER 13 New Members 14

NER News and Events 4
Workin' On the Railroad 14

Empire Builder 10
AP Roundup 15



www.nernmra.org

THE COUPLER

The official publication of
The Northeastern Region of
the National Model Railroad
Association

Issue No. 248

EDITOR

JOHN DOEHRING
P.O. Box 87
Pepperell, MA 01463
978-877-9148
john@jdoehring.com

GRAPHICS & LAYOUT EDITOR
JEFF PASTON
Syracuse, NY

© 2013 Northeastern Region NMRA.

The editorial policy of *The Coupler*, the official publication of the Northeastern Region, shall be to contribute, wherever and whenever possible, to the promotion, growth, and understanding of the hobby of model railroading. *The Coupler* is published four times a year by and for the members of the Northeastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association. Subscription rate is \$7.00 per year. Any items related to the activities of the Northeastern Region and its member divisions are gladly accepted. Please address all correspondence, news, photos, and drawings to the Editor. Any submissions sent by mail will be gladly returned if the sender provides a self-addressed stamped envelope.



NORTHEASTERN REGION NMRA

PRESIDENT
GEORGE "SCOOTER" YOST
104 Bent Tree Lane
Baldwinsville, NY 13027
315-303-0100
gyoust@me.com

VICE PRESIDENT
HENRY PIERCE
75 Shady Hill Drive
West Warwick, RI 02893
401-821-4256
jhp341@cox.net

SECRETARY
CHARLES "CHIP" STEVENS
1 Fletcher Reach
Plymouth, MA 02360-8240
508 209 0574
cjvettelover@yahoo.com

TREASURER
LARRY CANNON, MMR
516 Pond Road
Lewiston, ME 04240
207-786-3929
larrycannon@roadrunner.com

OFFICE MANAGER
MARK HARLOW
280 S. Main Street
Hopedale, MA 01747
508-528-8587
nerofficemanager@verizon.net

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM CHAIR
BILL BROWN, MMR
6002 Singletree Lane
Jamesville, NY 13078
315-454-2516
larcproducts@yahoo.com

MODEL CONTEST CHAIR
BOB HAMM, MMR
460 Grand Avenue
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518-587-0743
rhamm1@nycap.rr.com

PHOTO CONTEST CHAIR
ROGER OLIVER
61 Franklin Road
Denville, NJ 07834-1558
ner.photocontest@gmail.com

CONVENTION CHAIR
KENNETH MAY
71 Buff Cap Road
Tolland, CT 06084
860-872-3441
kenneth.may@comcast.net

HISTORIAN
JOSEPH LECAROSZ
PO Box 7150
Newburgh, NY 12550
914-564-4626
jlchoochoo@aol.com

OP-SIG COORDINATOR
AL ONETO
327 Springer Road
Fairfield, CT 06430
203-255-1331
aloneto@optonline.net

WEBMASTER
GEORGE "SCOOTER" YOST
gyoust@me.com

NER REGIONAL DIRECTORS

CANADA
STEVE MCMULLIN
12 Bayview Drive
Saint John, NB E2M 4E1
506-672-6960
mcmulls@nb.sympatico.ca

LONG ISLAND & NYC
KEVIN KATTA
725 Burruda Road
West Babylon, NY 11704
631-539-8671
boxcarny@yahoo.com

NEW JERSEY
ROGER OLIVER
61 Franklin Road
Denville, NJ 07834-1558
973-625-3414
oliverr2@verizon.net

NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
RICH BRETON
9 Riverside Drive
Rochester, NH 03867
603-332-8257
rbreton@worldpath.net

CONNECTICUT & RHODE ISLAND
JUSTIN MAGUIRE JR.
233 Naragansett Avenue
Barrington, RI 02806
401-246-0381
penneywhistle@fullchannel.net

MASSACHUSETTS
WILLIAM BARRY
35 Blaiswood Avenue
Marlborough, MA 01752-3910
508-251-1252
wbarry@dmberg.com

NEW YORK STATE
BILL BROWN, MMR
6002 Singletree Lane
Jamesville, NY 13078
315-454-2516
larcproducts@yahoo.com

NMRA EASTERN DIRECTOR
JOHN E. ROBERTS, HLM, MMR
104 Heritage Pointe
Williamsburg, VA 23188-7894
H: 757-345-3797
O: 757-345-3118
eastdir@hq.nmra.org

NER DIVISION SUPERINTENDENTS

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION
PRESIDENT
ED NEALE
42 Indian Head Dr.
Sayville, NY 11782
631-589-3940
vermontrailroad@optonline.net

HUB DIVISION
PRESIDENT
MANNY ESCOBAR
204 Ridgewood Dr.
Norwood, MA 02062
781-762-9858
president@hubdiv.org

GARDEN STATE DIVISION
PRESIDENT
NORMAN E. FROWLEY
36 Jessica Way
South Orange, NJ 07079
973-763-9518
normanfrow@aol.com

NUTMEG DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
JAMES M. MAYO
21 Pine Ridge Dr.
Madison CT 06443-2005
203-245-7480
jmayo_railfan@yahoo.com

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
BRIAN OSBERG
1350 Main St.
Coventry, RI 02816
401-822-0956
bkosberg@verizon.net

HUDSON-BERKSHIRE DIVISION
YARDMASTER
PAUL HOFFMAN
128 Woodfield Blvd
Mechanicville, NY 12118
518-899-5707
phpcinc@gmail.com

SEACOAST DIVISION
PRESIDENT
BRUCE ROBINSON
19 Hunt Pond Road
Sandown, NH 03873
603-887-592 2
brobinson85@comcast.net

HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION
PRESIDENT
BOB ROBBINS
11 Stella Ct.
Stony Point, NY 10980
845-942-1470
marrob17@optonline.net

CENTRAL NEW YORK DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
BRIAN CURRY, MMR
3594 Chamberlain Road
Weedsport, NY 13 166
315-689-13 03
banddcurry@peoplepc.com

GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
STEPHEN LOWE
150 Green St.
Vergennes VT 05491
Phone: 802-877-3783
stllowe@gmail.com

METRO NORTH DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
FRANKLIN LANG
112 Westover Lane
Stamford, CT 06902

INACTIVE DIVISIONS
PIONEER DIVISION
MARITIMES DIVISION
DIVISION ALOUETTE

COVER PHOTO

The *Flying Yankee* passes through downtown Bristol as freight led by GP9 1724 waits for clearance on Tom Oxnard's New England-themed HO layout. The layout will be one of many on tour during the 2013 NER convention, *Tracks to Lakeport*.

(Photo by Tom Oxnard)

Next submission deadline is Feb. 5.
Contact Editor John Doebling
at [<john@jdoehring.com>](mailto:john@jdoehring.com)

FROM THE EDITOR

Ask Not in the NMRA?

By JOHN DOEHRING
Coupler Editor

Sometimes it seems that nearly everyone wants a piece of me – and my time, effort, or money. How about you? The NMRA is no different.

So, why volunteer in a hobby organization? After all, aren't you the customer? You pay your annual dues each year (right?). And you attend some monthly meetings, quarterly train meets, and other events – when they're interesting and convenient. Yes, you're the customer, and the NMRA exists to deliver value for and to you.

It's true. Still, if I can, let me share an important lesson I've learned along the way about volunteering. Indeed you (and I) may be the customer, *but we receive the greatest value personally through giving – not taking.*

This wasn't always obvious to me. I've long belonged to professional, trade, and hobby associations – but didn't participate or volunteer much. Similarly, my family has attended church regularly for years, but only in the last few have we involved ourselves more with the nitty-gritty of participating – and even leading.

But as others have learned before, I found that as I began to get more involved, to participate, and eventually to lead, the value I received grew as well. I realized that volunteer organizations are not only about consumption, but (even more importantly) about *creation*. In fact the very survival of most volunteer groups depend fundamentally on members making regular *deposits* into the organization accounts, not only *withdrawals*. All too commonly just 10-20% of members do the bulk of this input work, while 80-90% reap the rewards of that effort.

So let me be blunt. *If you're not participating regularly in the NMRA today, then the problem with the organization isn't them – it's you.*

If you want things fixed, work to fix them. If you want to see change, then be a change agent. If you'd like to see the NMRA grow, evolve, and accomplish – then stand up yourself and lead. Lead (and move) us all.

In his presidential inaugural address John Kennedy famously said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Kennedy was calling for participation, service, and leadership not only because the country needed it, but also because that's how citizens best enjoy the



Scooter's Junction

By GEORGE "SCOOTER" YOUST, NER President



I would like to start my column by letting all NER members affected by Hurricane Sandy know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and prayers during this tough time in your life. I suspect that right now, worrying about your model railroad is probably at the bottom of your list of problems. But, I have also found that it is at times like these when you find out that some of your best friends are your model railroading friends. I have personally seen on several occasions here in my own division the great generosity and tremendous help provided by fellow model railroaders in a time of need.

We had a member here in the Central New York Division, Bill Brown MMR, who lost his house and contents to a fire. Some of the first people there to help him sift through the ashes to try and find anything salvageable were fellow model railroaders. He had a long haul to go to rebuild everything, and to deal with the insurance company. He reached out, and many fellow modelers stepped up to help. Bill had a tough time convincing the insurance company to cover his extensive layout, including motive power and rolling stock. Since he had lost everything in the fire, many fellow modelers provided him with photos of his layout and work area to show the insurance company proof that it all really existed. He was further aided by another modeler who owns a business building layouts for others. That fellow spent a day with Bill, and went over the layout plan foot by foot, providing a cost analysis to replace the layout. Bill was able to use this to help with reimbursement from the insurance company for what was lost in the fire.

When all was finally done and settled, Bill and his family were able to rebuild a great new house on the same lot. He has also built a great new layout; one that is still expanding through weekly work sessions with many of those same model railroading friends that were there to help when his tragedy struck. Also, through this experience Bill has become somewhat of an expert on dealing with insurance companies and model railroads.

Since his fire, Bill has helped another modeler whose layout was destroyed by a roof that caved in after a heavy snow. He has offered his help to anyone that needs it in dealing with insurance companies in the aftereffects of Hurricane Sandy. If you need this sort of assistance, please get in touch with Bill. His contact information is listed here in *The Coupler* – and on the NER Web site. Bill is our NER AP chair. ☒

blessings of democracy. And so it is with the NMRA.

Three ideas for how you might become more involved in the association:

- 1) **Author.** Sharing ideas is central to the NMRA mission, and you've got stuff to say. So draft up a short (500-750 words) article for *The Coupler* (e-mail or call me first if you'd like), gather up and publish some of those great photos you've snapped over the years, or create a short clinic for an upcoming Division meeting;
- 2) **Membership.** Join your Division's membership committee, and spend some time at upcoming train shows recruiting new members. Divisions want to grow (!), and there's always a need for help in this area. Also, working in recruiting will help you to better understand, appreciate, and use the full range of NMRA resources yourself;

- 3) **Convention.** Since you're already thinking about next year's regional convention in Laconia, NH (right?), might there be a volunteer role for you there? Contact Seacoast Division Convention Chair Erich Whitney <ecwhitney@me.com> to explore ways to help. A successful convention requires lots of effort, and roles both large and small.

There are, of course, many other ways to volunteer and get more involved in the NMRA, and it's important to pick a path that works for you. But let me again encourage you to go for it, to plug in, and to participate more fully – not only because the organization really needs you (it does) – but also because it's through your involvement that you'll receive so much more value from the association.

So, "ask not what your hobby can do for you ..." ☒

GARDEN STATE DIVISION

<<http://www.nergsgd.com>>

Feb 9 (Saturday), Winter Meet, 9:00 AM, Marine Corps League, 46 Ontario Ave., Staten Island, NY, judging, door prizes, clinics, bring and brag, white elephant, coffee and donuts, four layout visits in the works.

The GSD celebrates its 50th Anniversary next year! Keep an eye open for information on the upcoming celebration!

HUB DIVISION

<<http://www.hubdiv.org>>

Jan 18 (Friday), HUB Railfun Meeting, 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, MA. : "Hands-on Clinic: Weathering Freight Cars," Ray Barry.

Jan 26-27 (Saturday-Sunday), Big-E Fairgrounds, West Springfield, MA - HUB Modular Railroad Display at the Amherst Railway Society's Big Railroad Hobby Show. More information on the show at <<http://www.railroadhobbyshow.com>>.

Feb 15 (Friday): HUB Railfun Meeting, 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA. : "Presentation: NMRA's Achievement Program", presented by HUB Division Achievement Program Chairman Don Howd, MMR.

Mar 9 (Saturday): The HUB-sponsored Spring TRAINing Show at the Holiday Inn, Peabody, MA. After the show, the HUB Division Annual Meeting and Election will be held. See the "Spring TRAINing" page at <<http://www.hubdiv.org>> for details.

Mar 15 (Friday): HUB Railfun Meeting, 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA. : "Hands-on Clinic: Installing DCC Decoders", presenter to be determined.

Apr 19 (Friday): HUB Railfun Meeting, 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA. : "Modules 101: Selecting a Theme & Design", presenter TBD. This is the first of three Railfun meetings on modules.

May 17 (Friday): HUB Railfun Meeting, 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA. : "Modules 201: Hands-on Clinic: Build a HUB Division Module Kit", presenter by TBD. This is the second of three Railfun meetings on modules.

HUDSON BERKSHIRE DIVISION

<<http://www.hudson-berkshire.org>>

January 18 (Friday), Division Meeting and layout visit of John McBride's Crown Point & Hammondville.

January 26 (Saturday), Division Bus Trip to the Amherst Railway Society train show in West Springfield, MA.

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION

<<http://www.trainweb.org/lrdivision>>

Division meetings are held monthly on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, at 7:30PM at the German American Cultural Society, 78 Carter St. in Pawtucket RI.

Jan 9 (Wednesday), Monthly Meeting, 7:30pm, Speaker: Dave Dekonski, Topic: *Second Clinic on DCC*.

Feb. 13 (Wednesday), Meeting, 7:30pm, Speaker: Justin Maquire, Topic: *Modeling Scenery of Southwest New England*.

March 17 (Sunday), Little Rhody Division Train Show, Knights of Columbus Hall, 1675 Douglas Ave, North Providence, RI. Dealer tables, modular layouts, white elephant table, local historic exhibits.

METRO NORTH DIVISION

<<http://www.metronorthnmra.org>>

Upcoming Meetings: January 12, March 16, May 18.

SEACOAST DIVISION

<<http://www.seacoastnmra.org>>

Jan 11 (Friday), Derry Fun Night, 7-9 PM, at the Marion Garish Community Center, 39 West Broadway, Derry, NH.

Jan 12 (Saturday), Seacoast Division Annual Meeting, the First Congregational Church, South Portland, Maine. There will be clinics, a guest speaker and Freemo modular group demonstrations. Election of officers will highlight the business meeting.

Feb 8 (Friday), Derry Fun Night, 7-9 PM, at the Marion Garish Community Center, 39 West Broadway, Derry, NH.

March 8 Derry Fun Night, 7-9 PM, at the Marion Garish Community Center, 39 West Broadway, Derry, NH.

HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION

At the November 17, 2012 meeting, held in the restored Milton, NY, train station, the Division elected Bob Robbins as Superintendent, and Bob Earle, Dave Toll, and Carl Sardaro as directors. Eighteen members were present for a day of fun, which included a show-and-tell table, craftsman structure clinic led by Robert Seckler, lunch, and two nearby layout tours hosted by Elliot Janofsky and Joe Lecaroz. ☒

Poughkeepsie Hosts NYCSHS

By NOEL WIDDIFIELD

The New York Central System Historical Society (NYCSHS) will hold its annual convention and meeting in Poughkeepsie, NY, April 26-28. This year's event will occur simultaneously with the 100th anniversary of Grand Central Terminal in New York City.

The NYCSHS was organized in 1970 as a non-profit corporation to perpetuate the legacy of the New York Central System. The society publishes the quarterly *Central Headlight*, the quarterly online *NY Central Modeler*, and a yearly calendar.

The association holds its convention in a different city each year that was once important to the NYC. This year will feature NYC Hudson and Electric Division rides to (and tour of) Grand Central Terminal, and a tour of the Metro-North Diesel-Electric Shops at Harmon, NY.

Randall Fleischer, senior director of Metro-North Railroad, will present "Grand Central Terminal: Then and Now" as the convention banquet keynote address.

While at the convention, attendees will have an opportunity to tour several area historic sites on self-guided tours. These include the Walkway Over the Hudson State Park, the NYC Station and Vanderbilt Family Mansion at Hyde Park, NYC Station at Poughkeepsie, Hopewell Junction Railroad Station, FDR Presidential Library and Museum, Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Home, Culinary Institute of America, Danbury Railroad Museum, Yorktown Museum, Catskill Mountain Railroad, Empire State Railroad Museum, Kingston Model Railroad Club, and other model railroads.

The three-day event requires pre-registration. Cost per person is \$189 until March 27, and \$229 afterwards. The convention is based at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel, and rooms are available at a special convention rate of \$129 plus tax per night. Participants may book directly with the hotel by calling (800)216-1034, and requesting the convention rate. Deadline for the special room rate is March 27.

Additional information is available at the NYCSHS Web site <<http://www.NYCSHS.org>> by clicking the "Convention" button. ☒

First Call for the Northlands!

Next Stop...

👉 **Laconia, N.H.**

👉 **Tracks to Lakeport**



By ERICH WHITNEY

Seacoast Division Convention Chair

The Northeast Region and Seacoast Division are excited to invite all NER members (and all model railroaders) to Laconia, New Hampshire, for *Tracks to Lakeport*, the NER's annual convention to be held October 17-20 at the Margate Hotel on beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee. The convention team is hard at work planning for four fun-filled days of model railroading in the heart of New Hampshire's famous Lakes Region – and at the height of the fall foliage season! There will be plenty of things to see, do, and enjoy. So, bring the whole family this year!



The *Tracks to Lakeport* convention Web site is now live at <<http://www.seacoastnmra.org/Convention/Lakeport2013/Welcome.html>>. We suggest you bookmark this site now, and check back often for progress updates and new information as the year unfolds.

New Hampshire's Lakes Region

The Lakes Region of New Hampshire encompasses the mid-state area

surrounding Lake Winnepesaukee, Winnisquam Lake, Squam Lake, and Newfound Lake. There are 273 lakes and ponds in the region, but one dominates them all - Lake Winnepesaukee, the largest in the state. The area includes all of Belknap County, the southern portion of Carroll County, and the eastern portion of Grafton County. The largest municipality is the city of Laconia, famous today for its annual summer time Motorcycle Week gathering, and races at the nearby Loudon Motor Speedway. The 1981 classic film *On Golden Pond* was filmed on nearby Squam Lake in the town of Holderness. More information on the area is at <<http://visitnh.gov/welcome-to-nh/about-the-regions/lakes-region.aspx>>.

Clinics

Clinics are a highlight of the NER convention, and this year will be no different. In fact, the activities team is planning to offer something for everyone, from the beginner to master. A special series of clinics with the theme of "you too can do it" is in the works, as are clinics by exceptional women modelers.

The Seacoast Division is planning to bring back the *mini-clinics* and *show-and-tell tables* program that was popular at the previous Seacoast convention in Nashua, NH (2005). This will be a great opportunity for those with shorter presentations or modeling demonstrations. Try your new ideas out before expanding them into a full-blown clinic! Or bring your project in the works and share it with your peers. Those interested in participating – in mini-clinics, demonstrations, or with full

clinics as well – should contact Inside Activities Coordinator Larry Cannon <larrycannon@roadrunner.com>. There will also be a chance to sign up at the convention, for space and time available slots for mini-clinics.

Layout Tours, Displays, and Op-SIG

The Seacoast team is also preparing for a full timetable of home layout visits - including two exceptional Boston & Maine-themed pikes (one by Dave Sias and the other by Bruce Reynolds) located within just minutes of the convention hotel. Additionally, the team hopes to have one or more modular layout groups displaying and running in the convention hotel.

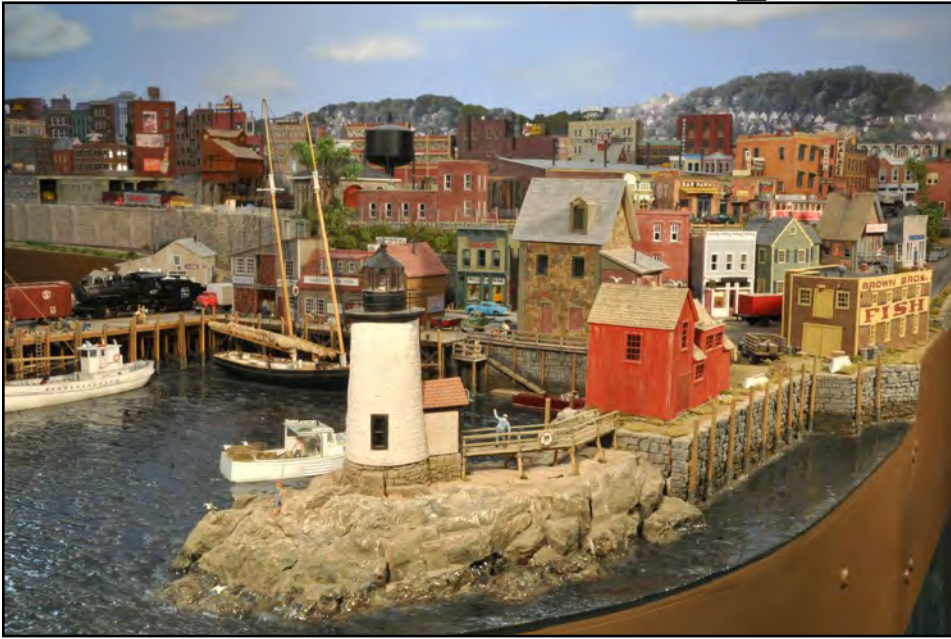


B&M RS3 1539 hauls a freight through the White Mountains by Madison Machine Company and Myrick Mills on Tom Oxnard's HO layout, one of many layouts that will be featured during *Tracks to Lakeport*. (Photo by Tom Oxnard)

Tracks to Lakeport will also offer several opportunities for layout operating sessions in this ever-popular activity. The Seacoast Division includes a number of well-seasoned operators and operations-oriented pikes. The schedule may also include additional layout tour and/or operating session possibilities in Maine, New Hampshire, and/or Massachusetts – on the way for convention attendees to enjoy a travel break.

(Continued on Page 6)

☞ Tracks to Lakeport



In the distance, B&M 0-6-0 switcher 437 idles as workers load the catch of the day on a Portsmouth, NH, dock on Tom Oxnard's layout. (Photo by Tom Oxnard)

(Continued from Page 5)

Prototype and Non Rail Tours

Prototype tours are currently being investigated. At the top of the list is an excursion on the nearby Winnepesaukee Railroad. Plans are in progress, and there is a possibility of offering two railfan trips - an approximately two hour trip on Friday, and a four hour trip on Saturday. See more at <<http://www.hoborr.com/winni.html>>.

The Seacoast planning team is also looking into a possible trip for convention attendees on full size (1:1) speeders to be organized by the Sandown Historical Society. (Now that's an OP SIG Session you won't want to miss)! Check back for additional information.

For non-rail, there is a tour of Lake Winnepesaukee on the classic old ship M/S Mount Washington—sure to be a hit for many! More information on this trip is at <<http://www.cruisenh.com/>>.

With Laconia, NH and the Lakes Region a popular year round tourist destination, there will be many options for things to see and do – and often just minutes from the hotel.

Contests

As with previous regional conventions, this year's program will offer contests for both models and photographs. So get involved,

and take advantage of the chance to show off your efforts – either at the workbench or behind the shutter. For ideas and support, reach out to your Division AP leaders, to NER AP Chair Bill Brown, and/or to NER Contest Chair Bob Hamm. These guys are the cream of the crop – and each will be happy to help you get involved with photography, model building, and contest competition. And remember, there's always the model showcase – just for show and not for judging.

Saturday Banquet

It just wouldn't be an NER convention without the official Saturday evening banquet extravaganza. And this year, after the great food, socializing, and awards for member accomplishments and achievements, the NER is proud to welcome noted author and lifelong railroader George Melvin as the evening's guest speaker. Melvin is the author of several railroad books, including *Boston and Maine Memories* and *Tehachapi Today*. He will share from his vast photograph collection and his own experience as a lifelong railroader.

Mark your calendars now for October 17-20, and join the Seacoast Division and the NER in Laconia, NH for *Tracks to Lakeport*, this year's regional convention. Fall foliage, the Lakes Region, and trains, trains! Great fun is expected in the Northlands! ☒

Convention Hotel

This year's convention hotel and headquarters is the Margate Resort at 76 Lake Street in Laconia. The hotel is located right on Lake Winnepesaukee, and both lake view and courtyard rooms are available. For reservations, call the hotel directly at (603) 524-5210, (800) MARGATE, or on the Web at <<http://www.themargate.com>>. Don't forget to let them know you're with the NMRA-NER *Tracks to Lakeport* convention for special, discounted convention rates.

A Note from the NER:

Stay at the Convention Hotel!

As you may or may not know, when groups book conventions at hotel and conference centers, negotiations usually center on the group's guaranteed "room block" - the number of rooms the group promises to fill each night. This amount affects both the room rate discounts offered, as well as other convention parameters (such as the amount of space offered for clinic rooms, meeting rooms, and the banquet hall). The booking group



(in this case the NER) must agree to pay this guaranteed fee for rooms (and food) – even if fewer people actually stay at the hotel. Please keep this in mind as you plan your trip: your hobby association will be much better off when you (alone, with your family, or rooming with buddies) stay in the convention hotel. Also, if you're planning on staying longer (either before or after the convention), make sure to let the hotel know this when booking. That way your extra nights will count for the NER as well. ☒

Empire Junction '12

Convention Lessons Learned

By JIM HEIDT
General Chairman
Local Convention Committee

With the 2012 NER convention in Syracuse – *Empire Junction '12* – now behind us, and with *Tracks to Lakeport* in Laconia, NH, gaining steam, I thought I'd share with you some thoughts on our experience, and lessons learned.

Our Local Convention Committee

After the Central New York Division's great experience hosting the 2008 NER convention, local interest to host once again in 2012 began to bubble up from the "grass roots" membership (rather than from the Division's officers or board). With that level of enthusiasm, we all agreed to proceed. Organization and planning began two years before the event. At first there were meetings every three or four months – getting the sub-committees together, touring potential hotel sites, setting deadlines, dividing up bulk e-mail "e-blast" responsibilities. With about a year to go we began meeting monthly. By the last couple of months, we came together every two weeks.

Our biggest success was recruiting and building an adequate convention committee – one big enough to share the load. This was my sixth convention and, in earlier (younger and more insane) years, the convention was a more of a solo project. Not this time. This trip we had a great team – a full committee. Nevertheless, by convention time we still had it seems a perfect storm of serious health issues, unexpected event cancellations, and being overwhelmed with 'real work' obligations.

Yes, running a convention is challenging, and can test friendships. Mutual accountability within the committee team is necessary. The EJ '12 team really came through and deserve all of the credit: Ed Olszewski, prototype rail tours and hotel liaison; Bill Brown MMR, rail clinics; Charlie Albee, layout tours; Dave Martini, Op Sig sessions; Bill Brown and Brian Curry, MMRs, *Modeling with the Masters*; Jeff Paston, publicity; Len Amrhein, contests; Bernard Watkins and Ed O'Rourke, non rail events and clinics; "Scooter" Youst, Web meister; and Aric Penfield and Tom Kehoskie, CNY Division raffle.

Hosting a NER Convention - For Fun and Profit!!

The CNY Division's focus for *Empire Junction '12* was always on seeking both the 'fun' of us sharing with you, and the 'profit' in a plus/plus for the NER (a great time for you, and coin for the treasury). These goals influenced our planning a great deal, and led to some specific priorities and strategies:

1) **Pack the Program:** First and foremost, our prime directive was to plan a *full, complete program for both non-rail and rail attendees, and give attendees too much to do*. Yes, we did have some mixed results in some areas, but a full program was always our goal.

The CNY Division is on the western fringe of the NER, and the committee felt we must offer a compelling program to entice NER members to make the long trip. Also, we're aware that our NER group is aging, and that

many of our senior members would be traveling as couples. We thought it critical that we plan the program considering both perspectives. We imagined a conversation over the kitchen table at home, upon receiving the *NER Coupler* announcing *Empire Junction '12*:

Member: "The next regional NMRA convention is in Syracuse." (Code for "This looks pretty good to me, with lots to do, and I'd like to go, so what do you think?")

(Non-Rail): "Syracuse. That's quite a distance from here, so we'll see." (Code, loosely meaning "Another one of those train things? What would they have for me to do?")

2) **Scheduling the Program:** Old timers will remember that for much of its history, the NER held two conventions each year – one in the Spring and another in the Fall. With just one NER convention a year now, the idea is to have a longer event spanning Thursday to Sunday. We scheduled the program on the heavy side for Thursday afternoon and Friday morning to encourage an early arrival for attendees (and to help with the hotel contract requirements tied to booked room nights). Thursday evening and Friday morning activities included *Modeling with the Masters*, Op-Sig sessions, layout tours, and both rail and non-rail tour activities on Friday. Unfortunately, most of our outside tour events were cancelled at the last minute. These changes were outside of our control, and conventioners were very patient and understanding. Still, we believe that strong scheduling for a full, four-day weekend is necessary to promote and sell a regional convention to NER membership.

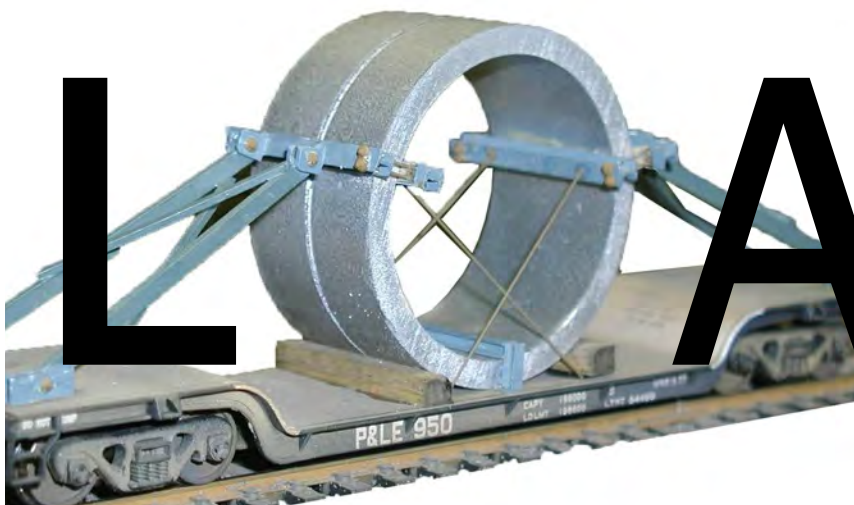
3) **Out Here All Layouts Welcome:** Of course, sharing local skills, talents, and knowledge in the clinics, contest rooms, and layout tours are a key focus of the convention. For some conventions (like the 2011 Roger Williams gathering), home layouts are concentrated in higher traffic areas of the NER, and are visited relatively more often. In contrast, most CNY-area layouts haven't enjoyed that kind of NER member visitation. So, we elected to solicit as many (and as varied) home layouts as possible. We ended up with more than 40 layouts participating on tours.

With this amount and variability, it was key that each owner be completely honest in writing the layout's description, so that convention attendees could make informed decisions about how and when to use their limited layout tour visiting time to best advantage (depending on what they wanted to learn, see, and experience). Out here, we thought that approach was a win/win. All of our CNY layout owners felt welcome to participate (which obviously helps us promote the NMRA locally) and convention attendees had a full set of choices to visit and view throughout the weekend.

Despite a few glitches, *Empire Junction 2012* came off largely as planned, and the Central New York Division got to share quite a lot – models, layouts, sites, and (most of all) its members. We had a great time, and hope you all did too. And now it's time for us to relax a bit, and spend some time thinking about our next trip – to Laconia next Fall.

Member: "Honey, the next regional NMRA convention is in New Hampshire" ☒





OPEN LOADS

The depressed center flat car, *at left*, conveys the feeling of extreme weight with its “50-ton” steel ring load. This kind of load requires unique bracing.

By MIKE SHANAHAN

With an interest in trains since I was an infant, I grew up watching New York Central Hudsons and E7s pulling name passenger trains through our local station in Syracuse, N.Y. But it wasn't just passenger trains that caught my attention over the years.

Railroads have long carried varieties of cargo which required a need to develop various types of cars to handle specific commodities. A flat car has the ability to carry just about anything that can be tied down, especially huge loads that won't fit inside of boxcars or gondolas.

You can easily list such flat car loads as steel rods, I-beams, H-beams, box beams and many other steel products; containers of all sizes; steel, iron, concrete and corrugated pipe. We've seen flats carrying water, fuel, military vehicles, covered machinery, auto frames, industrial ventilation systems, wrapped and unwrapped lumber, and many more commodities not listed here.

An article in the November 1981 *NMRA Bulletin* on modeling a depressed center flat car with a 50 ton forged steel ring caught my interest. I was impressed and really wanted to model this. A friend made several of the steel rings out of PCV pipe. Thirty-one years later, after misplacing and re-finding these rings many times, I finally finished modeling the cars early last year.

You don't have to wait as long as I did to complete such a project. There are several manufacturers that produce loads, including Chooch Enterprises, Jaeger HO Products, JWD Premium Products, American Model Builders, Life-Like, Walthers, and many more. In my visits to model railroads, I snapped photos of how open loads are modeled by others. In a hobby in which we share a lot of information, such photos have provided a lot of neat ideas, a few of which I'm sharing on these pages.

Additional information can be obtained from “Modeling Open Loads,” an NMRA Publication, and “Pennsylvania Railroad Flat Cars,” a publication of the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society. ☒



Open loads always add interest to prototype and model freight trains. Depending on how much detail is shown, they also make great conversation pieces. *Above left*, this heavy I-beam could be headed to a bridge or

building construction site. Note the wood bracing detail. *At right*, three large pipes are securely loaded. There is a lot of detail here — the wood supports, chains, the rusted pipes, and the manufacturer/shipper's data



“stenciled” on the pipes. *Below left*, a load of farm tractors is braced in place by lumber nailed to the car's wood deck. *At right*, a narrow gauge flat carries a water tank.

(Photos by Mike Shanahan)





Why hide the most interesting cargo a model railroad can carry when you can show it out in the open? That's what makes an open load the talk of any layout! Above, American

Model Builders offers this kit for a flanged pipe load and blocking that sit on flatcar load bolsters. Let your imagination guide you as to what a railroad can carry on a flat.



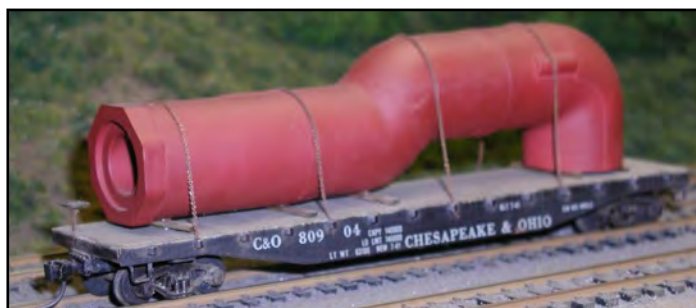
You don't have to buy a kit or ready-made load. It is easy to cut some scale lumber and bracing as the author did above. Lumber loads are quick and easy to make. The rusty pipes in the *opposite page* photo, and in the one above, are



products of JWD Premium Products. Mike made the bracing from scale lumber, then attached scale chains to the flat car tie-downs to create convincing shipments.



While these models are HO, modelers can create interesting open load projects in any scale. Mike purchased the Walthers prime movers, above, but then painted them glossy gray to simulate the look of "fresh off" the assembly



line. The huge "industrial ventilation system" part, at right, was made from plastic pipe purchased at a home repair store's plumbing department. It is an idea Mike found in the NMRA book, "Modeling Open Loads."



Mike built block and rod supports for automobile chassis parts available from American Model Builders and JJM Railroad Enterprises on the flatcar in left photo. The bulkhead flat, at right, is stocked with "steel" beams, actually



plastic structural parts cut to size, painted and weathered. Mike used Chartpak tape to simulate steel bands holding the load to the car.



EMPIRE BUILDER

The Valley Junction:



Built for Operations

By BRUCE ROBINSON

The Valley Junction Railroad (VJRR) was begun in 1988, when the first “wants and desires” list was written. The primary goal was to build an *operations* oriented model railroad with multiple train operations, including yard work, local and overhead freight and passenger trains, interchanges with other railroads, and control by a central dispatcher. A card waybill system

would be used to route all freight cars to their destinations at either industries or interchange points.

The railroad’s operating scheme was the driving force in track design, and in all of the features planned in its construction. All necessary terminals, passing sidings, interchanges and industrial tracks were laid out to give each planned train a purpose, and its specific place in the

schedule. When the final track plan was drawn, the railroad now committed to paper was a point-to-point system — with yards at both ends, interchanges with three other railroads, and enough operating scheme to keep a seven person crew busy in each session. Then, five years of construction yielded enough physical plant to begin formal operations. Regularly scheduled operating nights have been held since 1995.



The “regulars,” *from left*, Steve Belforti, Jamie Robinson, Dave Sias, and Dick Lord, keep things moving on the VJRR. *In top photo*, VJ #30 does the switching work in Essex Yard at Valley Junction. (Photos by Bruce Robinson)

The freelanced Valley Junction Railroad lies in New Hampshire, beginning on its east end in Portsmouth, and running westward through the towns of Tiverton, Franklin, South Royalton, Canterbury, and Northfield, and terminating in Valley Junction on the west end. The VJRR interchanges freight and passenger traffic at Tiverton (with the Boston & Maine RR), Franklin (Valley Branch Lines) and Valley Junction (Central Vermont Railway).

The time frame the VJRR occupies is the decade 1955-1965. All of the locomotives and rolling stock are representative of the New England region during this period. With a point-to-point track plan, all trains terminate in a yard where locomotives are turned on turntables for their return trip. The layout does not offer continuous running capability.

(Continued on Page 11)

The Valley Junction: Built for Operations



Bruce Robinson goes over the assignments with his crew before an evening operating session gets underway on the VJRR.

from the string line (train) chart on his (or her) desk-top. The layout is controlled with a North Coast Engineering (NCE) DCC system.

All of the V J R R 's track work is hand laid

work, GP-30's and FA-1's for mainline duty, PA-1 and FP-7 for through passenger trains, and RDC's for local customers. Both EMD and Alco switchers are assigned to yard duty. Locomotives lettered for Boston & Maine, Central Vermont, Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific, and Canadian National are often seen on run-through trains.

For more than 20 years, the Valley Junction Railroad has provided many regular and visiting operators with an evening of enjoyment running trains, and given many Boy Scouts the opportunity to earn their Railroading Merit Badge. And, it has led to many life-long friends, and lots of very happy hours working on our life-long hobby. ☒

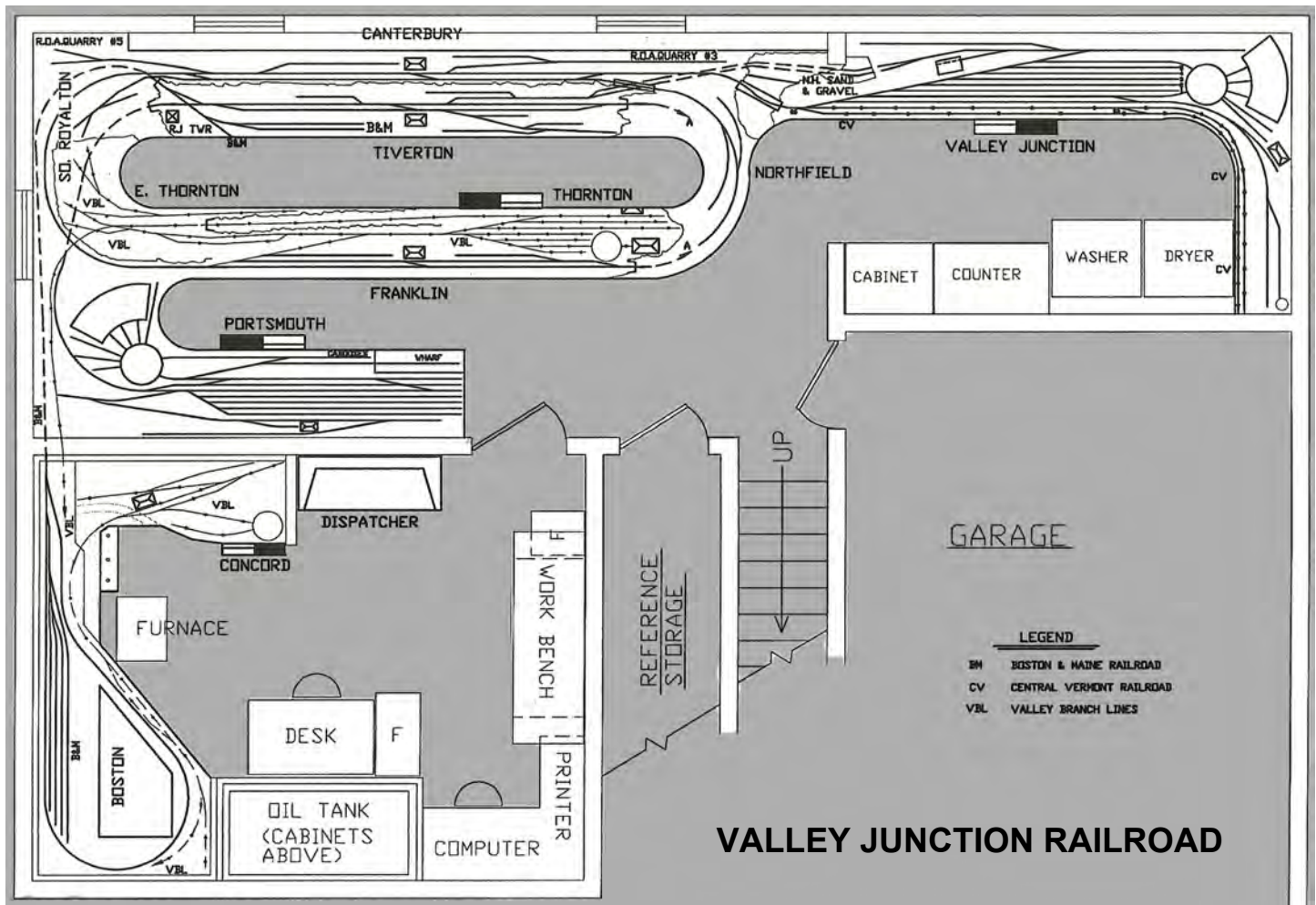
(Continued from Page 10)

The VJRR runs with a crew of eight operators: a yardmaster each at Portsmouth, Valley Junction, and Thornton; four mainline train conductors; and a dispatcher. All trains are run via a defined schedule and employee timetable, and governed by a 6:1 fast clock. The dispatcher can see at a glance what's happening in the schedule

code 83, using pre-weathered rail that was given an additional coat of Floquil Rail Brown. Mainline turnouts are controlled from the dispatcher's panel using slow motion switch motors, while all yard and industry turnouts are hand thrown by local train crews.

Motive power is a mix of RS-11's for local

Editors Note: Bruce Robinson lives (with his Valley Junction Railroad) in Sandown, New Hampshire. Bruce is president of the NER's Seacoast Division, and the new president of the Sandown Historical Society. You can visit his Valley Junction Railroad during this year's NER Regional Convention - Tracks to Lakeport - in Laconia, New Hampshire.



VALLEY JUNCTION RAILROAD

If You Can Imagine It, It Has Probably Happened

BY JOHN DOEHRING
Coupler Editor

This summer I was in Indianapolis, Indiana for a professional convention, and happened by chance to see a rather unique prototype train.

I was attending the annual convention of NSA – the National Speakers Association. NSA exists for those of us who make (all or a part of) our living through professional speaking. The annual convention is always amazing, with some of the nation's very best speakers on the stage from day to night. It's easily my favorite professional development event of the year.

Engrossed in this convention and its implications for my own business, I didn't have trains and railfanning at the top of mind. As a result, while out for a late

afternoon walk near the hotel I found myself without either camera or phone. And sure enough, almost as soon as I passed under mainline tracks I hadn't suspected, I heard the distant horn of an approaching freight.

After a short while the train arrived and passed, and I sat there until it was gone, amazed - and grinning like a child. I'd just seen, led by a trio of newest generation giants, more than one hundred brand new coalporter gondolas in CSX colors. These cars - many of them also in near perfect numerical road number order - looked literally *brand new*. Empty, clean, and shiny. Not a word of graffiti, a smudge of grease, or even a hint of rust anywhere! Perhaps this was their first trip out from under the previous year's Christmas tree?

I suspect that indeed this was the railroad taking delivery of some new rolling stock.

Most likely a day or two later these cars would be dispatched to coal areas around the CSX system, beginning their own careers with the railroad. And soon they will all most assuredly be well broken in - dented, dirty, greasy, rusty, and (most importantly) often full - moving black mountains for U.S. power and industry.

Seeing this train left me with a smile all evening, and it lasted into the next day as well. Even now I chuckle at the memory. I've heard it said before about our hobby that "if you can dream it up, it probably happened somewhere in the prototype." So now when fellow modelers see my long, transition-era coal train snaking around the N-TRAK layout at shows, and gently suggest that I should, perhaps, weather a few of the cars for improved realism, I'll be ready.

"Did I ever tell you about my trip to Indy ...?" ☒



The view, *at left*, from my room in the hotel high rise downtown with a CSX tank train rumbling by the power plant, and Lucas Stadium (Colts) in the background. *At right*, Indy's restored Union Station was one of the nation's first union stations in 1853. Today, it is home to a hotel and shops and still an iconic location in the city. (Photos by John Doebling)

News and Events

After considerable effort by NMRA Secretary John Stevens, all U.S. region boundaries are now defined by state and county boundaries, rather than zip codes. This will help keep boundaries stable as the U.S. Post Office continues to redefine its zip code areas.

Michiana Division co-founder Jim Six, a college professor and experienced education expert, has agreed to lead a team charged with developing a standardized clinic format to help ensure consistency for clinics made available to Divisions and

Regions. The format will be based upon the one currently in use in the Michiana Division of the Midwest Region.

Following the recommendation of Standards & Conformance Department head Didrik Voss MMR, the Board has directed that all eight DCC-related Recommended Practices now become NMRA Standards. Further, in the future the issuance of a Conformance Warrant is not to be influenced by Recommended Practices, but will be based solely on adherence to applicable NMRA Standards.

The newly formed NMRA Marketing Department is working with Amtrak stations in major cities to get modular layouts placed there in an effort to raise awareness of our hobby. ☒

By JOHN DOEHRING
Coupler Editor

When Jim Cesare, Paul Hoffman, and Vic Roman created CH&R Structures Unlimited during the summer of 2008, they had a vision to produce quality craftsman model railroad kits for the discriminating modeler – but with a twist. These three long-time fiends wanted to manufacture interesting structures for their own layouts, and then share them with the model railroad community.

The company's first two kits were the Albany (New York) Tower A and Tower B. These kits were made with mixed media, comprised of several types of materials including laser cut tops, resin cast brick walls, metal castings, and solid pine roofs.

This was also the team's first attempt at writing detailed kit instructions. Hoffman says the whole process was "quite a learning experience!"

Today before any engineering or drafting begins, each CH&R structure is extensively researched using historic and prototype documents. As Hoffman says, "As a kid I built hundreds of models, from plastic cars and planes to model railroad buildings,

and everything in between. One of my favorite parts was the instruction sheets that gave a little history on the model." With this in mind, the company always tries to include a page or two of the history of the building, and interviews with people who worked there.



CHR's Mechanicville XO Tower kit

But the write up for a CHR kit is more than just history, and more than just a sheet of "Tab A to Slot B" instructions. Each of the major kits comes with a bound instruction book (anywhere from 50 to 70 pages) in full color, with more than 100 pictures of the construction process, the prototype building, and finished structures for painting and detailing purposes.

Today all new kits follow an established process. The three partners consult with one another on possible structures, and then conduct preliminary research and CAD drawings. Next they cut the parts on the firm's laser, and assemble several test kits to ensure that pieces fit together properly. With all in order, the team then works to optimize the production process and start producing the kits. Finally, they convert the first pass and draft instructions into their final, detailed form.

CHR's Mechanicville XO Tower has proven to be the most popular kit to date. They've recently added a new Company House and Santa Fe bunk house, both Hoffman favorites. And the firm soon plans to begin shipping its new San Bernardino 5th Street Tower, the tower that controlled access to Santa Fe's San Bernardino (California) A yard. As a Santa Fe modeler himself (his partners both model the New York Central), Hoffman is excited to offer this new museum quality kit to fellow ATSF

fans. The San Bernardino tower is also CHR's first foray into etched brass modeling, and a partnership with Model Memories, <<http://www.modelmemories.com>>, has been instrumental in developing the tower's attached signal bridge and etched brass landings.

These three friends have complementary skills that contribute to the company's success. Jim Cesare is an architect by trade, and he does the CAD work. Hoffman is a business guy, with a background in technology. And Vic Roman is a highly accomplished and noted modeler (featured on the cover of the March 2012 *Model Railroader*). Together, they've achieved success with CHR Structures, helping the business to become self-sustaining within its first two years (and even providing a little income for the three to support their own hobby interests). Today CHR is developing ideas for new kits (and it seems that there is always a great new model just waiting to be done).



The Company House kit

Hoffman says that the company's goal is to provide each kit with all of the essential details needed to make the building come alive. "It's a real pleasure for us when our customers submit pictures of their build-ups of CHR kits. They're always coming up with fresh new ways to interpret and use the parts in the box!" The CHR team welcomes feedback and suggestions from fellow modelers (you can find them on the web at <www.chrstructures.com>) and they're always on the lookout for new kit ideas, all of which are made right here in the NER. ☒



Paul Hoffman mans the CHR company booth at last year's show in Timonium, MD.

MADE IN THE NER

CH&R Structures Unlimited
128 Woodfield Blvd
Mechanicville, NY 12118
518-374-4628 <info@chrstructures.com>
<chrstructures.com>



WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD

By GLENN
GLASSTETTER



Building Contest Models to Achieve the Highest Score

This issue's column is the result of a conversation I had with one of the 2012 NER Syracuse convention model contestants after the banquet when everyone was invited to view the models and talk to the modelers. I have enjoyed assessing our model contests for well over 10 years. If you have viewed our contest models, I'm sure you have seen some that have stopped you in your tracks to really study. You may have also assessed these models yourself for the popular vote contest. Evaluating models to the NMRA Achievement Program Judging Guidelines requires the assessors take time to evaluate all aspects of the model against the guidelines.

Why Enter?

Everyone has their own reason for entering the contest. You may just want to see how your model fares. You may enter to attain a score of at least 87½ points for an Achievement Award, or you may aspire to win the Baldwin Trophy for the highest point score in that particular contest. Whatever your reason, I'm sure that you entered your model because you felt that it was one of your best efforts.

I have the impression that many new entrants do not know how their models are being assessed. Unlike a popular vote, models in an NMRA model contest are evaluated to a standard, the Achievement Program Judging Guidelines. These guidelines were created and refined by the NMRA over many years to provide a calibrated playing field for conferring an Achievement Award for any model. If you are entering the contest, or are building a model for an Achievement Award, it only makes sense that you know how your model is going to be judged. If you build your model and document it based on how it will be scored, you will most assuredly score higher than if you did not.

Scoring Your Model

The highest number of points achievable is 125. That is broken down into the following five judging factors: Construction-40; Details-20; Conformity-25; Finish & Lettering-25; and Scratchbuilding-15.

Each factor is provided with a defined scoring matrix to help accurately judge all models to the same criteria. Five teams of judges each score all of the models, but each team scores only one factor. This allows the judges to stay focused on the criteria for that factor alone and not have to try to remember all the criteria for all the factors. As each team has its own scoring sheet listing all the models in the contest, the teams are not influenced by how the other teams are scoring their factors.

It's No Secret

This is complicated stuff, all to accurately score your model compared to all other models. If you knew the criteria that the judges use to score your model, don't you think you could build your model to achieve a higher score? Of course you would! This information is not a secret and is available to anyone who chooses to access and use it. You can download the Guidelines at <http://www.nmra.org> by clicking on *Achievement Program*; then click *Forms*; and click on the PDF at the end of "AP Judging Guidelines for Motive Power, Cars and Structures." This will provide you with the latest version (May 2006). The Achievement Program Web page also provides hints for meeting the requirements for each of its categories.

Helping the Assessors Help You

OK, now you know how your model is going to be judged. Remember I said, "This is complicated stuff..."? When the judges have more than 40 models to judge in approximately four hours, as there were in

Syracuse, they have to move quickly. Anything that you can do to help the judges score your model will help your score - and that means providing the proper documentation.

Model Contest Rules and *Model Description Forms* required to enter your model are located on the NER Web site under *Contests*. A *Model Description Form* is required to enter your model. There are five sections - one for each factor - to fill out. The best way to approach this is to know the Judging Guidelines, take notes as you are building your model, and write all the pertinent information as briefly as possible for each factor.

My advice is to check off all the applicable boxes on the form and type or legibly print the information for each factor on a separate piece of paper and write "See Attached" under each factor on the form. Only write what is applicable to that factor, but be aware that the same feature can sometimes be applicable to more than one factor. As an example, if you built a detail part, that should be identified under *Details* and *Scratch-Built*. Please be aware that the comments the judges write on your forms are not criticisms, but ways you could achieve a higher point score than you did.

More Resources

This is but a short discussion on how to achieve higher model scoring. If you have any questions for which you cannot find an answer, you can contact your Division AP Chair Bill Brown; the NER Achievement Program Chair; or Bob Hamm, the NER and NMRA National contest chair. I'm sure any one of them would be happy to answer your questions.

OK, break's over, back to work. ☒



NEW MEMBERS

COMPILED BY MARK HARLOW, NER Office Manager

As of 11/15/12

CONNECTICUT

John L. Ahrens
Francine M. Ahrens
Daniel Ticson

MASSACHUSETTS

Don C. Brebner
John Flanders
Chris Hall
Drew Hall
Peter Hennessey
Kubat Family

Ronold Moe
Peter Moore
Christopher Nadeau
Michael Osiensky
John Rooney
Sam Snell
Steven Waldron
Terry Weasel

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Andrew Applegate
Richard Ayers
Jonathan Miner
William Poor

NEW JERSEY
Richard Ghilon
Edward D. Lindsay

NEW YORK
Janice Bemis
Peter Chrisman
Dennis Gordon
Robert L. LaBelle
Joe Labetti
Thomas Lynch
Paul Mays
Richard E. Olsen

John A. Reinhardt
Chalres Romanick
Evelyn Schulze
Frank J. Ulivo
David C. Wierowski

VERMONT
Frank P. Buggiani
John Gaworecki

QUEBEC
Jim R. Burton



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM ROUNDUP

By BILL BROWN MMR, AP Chair

A Happy New Year with the Achievement Program

The passing of the New Year is always a great time to reflect on our lives, and to set goals for the coming year. So why not set some goals now for yourself, in relation to your next step in participating in the NMRA's Achievement Program?



For the greatest part of my life I coached high school football. Each year I counseled kids on the process of setting and achieving goals. (How can you ever expect to get

somewhere if you do not first decide to go...and then set a direction for yourself)? The first step is to establish your direction and a timeline. You will have greater success if you take the time to write it down. Make a statement to yourself such

as "My goal is to become an MMR within the next 5 years." The next step is to establish short term goals that give you initial direction. "I will accomplish all tasks necessary to submit two certificate applications during 2013." Now you need to decide what steps are necessary to get to that first goal.

How about printing out copies of the requirements for each of the eleven certificates, and putting them in a binder with a tab for each. All the material can be found on the NMRA website at www.nmra.org. Next, sit down and read through each category, making notes as to what you have already accomplished, what you can easily do with a little effort, and what points will take some time and more effort. (If you have been in the hobby for a number of years, you probably have

accomplished most that is necessary for one or more certificates). After going through each category and making notes, you can now select the two certificates that you will work towards this first year. From your notes make a checklist of the items you will tackle in order to complete your requirements. Now you have goals, direction, and have established the immediate steps on your quest.

Do yourself a great favor and GET STARTED! I can guarantee you that you will find this quest to be one of the most rewarding and enjoyable experiences of your hobby life. If you need assistance, be sure to contact me, or your division AP chair. Either of us will be more than happy to help. ☒

Digesting the MMR One Bite at a Time

By CHARLES (CHIP) STEVENS JR.

How do you eat an elephant? As the saying goes, one bite at a time if that's your goal. And how do you become a Master Model Railroader? One Achievement Award (or possibly two) at a time. Using the elephant analogy, I've had my knife and fork out and my bib on for quite some time, and I'm hoping I didn't bite off more than I can chew.

The biggest Achievement Program (AP) stumbling block I've encountered to date is setting aside time to actually accomplish the steps in the awards I've chosen to pursue. One of my friends has a novel approach to this problem. He gets up weekday mornings at 4 AM to get time at the workbench or on his layout before he goes to work. That is not an option currently under consideration from my perspective. But it does lead back to one goal (bite) I want to achieve, specifically finding some time daily to work on AP related projects.

Part of this problem may stem from procrastination. I've read all the books and articles I can find on each of the skills needed for the awards I want. But then, maybe I've missed one, so the search continues. Perhaps that time could be better used actually building, wiring, or writing something. And my prototype is in the mid-Atlantic region, so I need more research (which is easier than actually visiting the Appalachian mountain regions of Virginia and West Virginia). Hearing my wife tell the story, I also spend way too much time on my laptop "doing research". She may be on to something. I'll have to research that idea further.

Yogi Berra once said, "If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?" At least I have that part of the MMR journey figured out. I borrowed a spreadsheet from someone that has helped organize my endeavors. Maybe I spent too much time modifying the various spreadsheet pages to my needs (when I could have been gluing and soldering), but it did clarify what needs to be accomplished for the various awards I want, and it helps me deliver a plan of attack to achieve those goals. Each Sunday night when I lay out what's coming up for the week ahead, I try to include some of those steps into the game plan for the week. If you'd like a copy of the spreadsheet, contact me at civettelover@yahoo.com, or check the NER Region website at <http://www.nernmra.org>.

Now that cooler weather has arrived, and more thoughts are of model railroading rather than other pursuits, it's time to again get this MMR process underway seriously. As I discover other useful approaches, I'll let you know. ☒

The Coupler Team Needs You!



Are you interested in connecting with and interviewing other modelers, railfans, or manufacturers? Want to write for a prestigious publication - recently noted as one of the best NMRA regional newsletters in the Northeast Region?

How about earning valuable Achievement Program credits as an author or volunteer? Is fame, fortune, and stardom just around the corner for you?*

What are you waiting for? Take action. Call today!

The Coupler newsletter is looking for writers and associate editors to add to our staff, and to help vault The Coupler to the next level. You can be a part of this growing effort - and secure some AP points along the way.

But don't delay, this is your time! The Coupler team needs your expertise, enthusiasm, and passion right now! If interested, please contact editor John Doehring at john@jdoehring.com, or call 978-433-6848. Operators are standing by!

*Please note that fame, fortune, and star status are relative concepts, and often appreciated in the eye of the beholder!

Get great historical info from the people who lived it...



POUGHKEEPSIE STATION - METRO-NORTH AND AMTRAK



ALONG THE HUDSON AT BANNERMAN'S CASTLE

2013 NYCSHS ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 26-28 • POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y.

Are you a fan of the New York Central? Want to learn more about railroading? Join us for a great weekend of historic presentations, layout tours, and excursions. This year we travel to the Hudson Valley to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Grand Central Terminal. Enjoy once-in-a-lifetime tours of famous New York Central facilities and landmarks, as well as the excitement and convenience of New York City! You won't want to miss our great train show and dinner banquet. Registration is \$189.00 per person by March 27. Visit www.nycshs.org for details!



NEW YORK CENTRAL SYSTEM

HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

DEPT W • P.O. BOX 130 • GATES MILLS, OH 44040-0130 • NYCSHS.ORG