


THE COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION

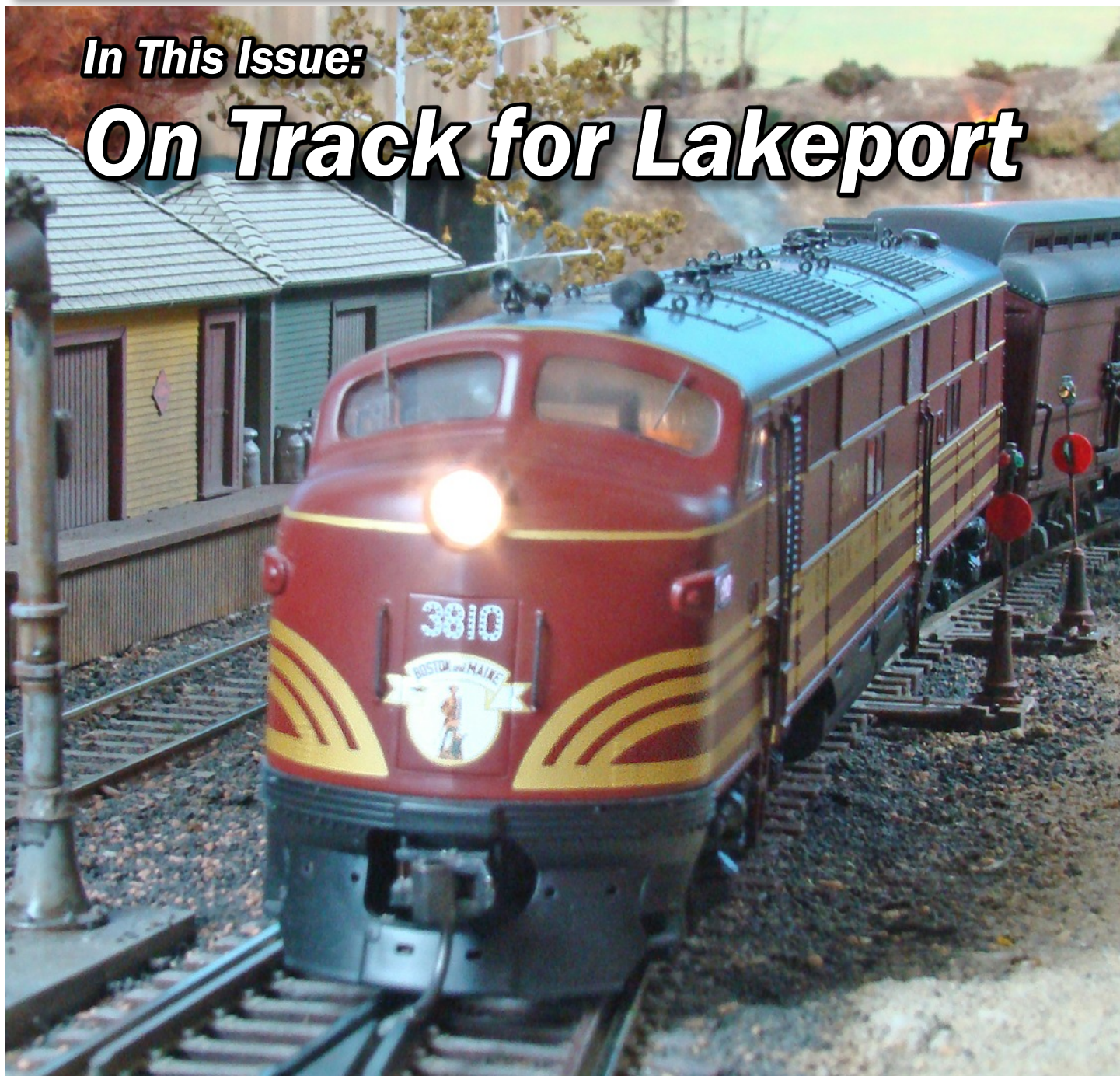


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www.nernmra.org

THE COUPLER

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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.



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Next submission deadline is
May. 5.
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COVER PHOTO

"The Paper Train" arrives in Plymouth with the morning Boston newspapers and a sleeper bringing passengers to White Mountain vacations. The scene on Dave Sias' beautiful HO layout can be seen in 1:1 scale during October's NER convention, as well as modeling such as Dave's. (Photo by Dave Sias)

FROM THE EDITOR

Contemplating the Why of Trains

By JOHN DOEHRING
Coupler Editor

Have you ever asked yourself – or been asked by others – why trains? What is it about railroading that means so much to you? Recently, it's a question I've been thinking about.

I know I was born with this bug. As a kid in Texas, I was smitten with trains. I remember family beach trips, caught at grade crossings while Southern Pacific and Cotton Belt freights lumbered by, dragging a hundred or more (I counted them every time) boxes, covered hoppers and long black tankers, headed for Gulf Coast refineries. (Train nuts of every age enjoy crossing delays). And then a chance meeting at 12 - a friend of a friend with an HO scale layout - and I was hooked (just like you?) by the magic of *scale* model railroading.

And on reflection, here is the why: *scale*. It's the *scale* of trains, railroad history, and our model railroading hobby.

It's the scale of the *locomotive*, unparalleled in size, sound, and power. Majesty in motion. The motion of transportation, of industry, of America. The scale of the locomotive was compelling to a six-year-old, and it is still today, in my 50s. I always relish chance to get up close and personal with the giants – the GEVOs and SD70MACs - that rule the rails now.

It's the scale of *history*, the great span of time, and the central role that railroads have played in our country and world. It's been said that completion of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific transcontinental line (and the associated telegraph) provided a *literal time machine* for the peoples of the 1860s who could then communicate almost instantaneously, and who could now travel in days what had previously required many dangerous months. Rails sped milk from upstate Vermont to New York City or Boston in a single day; rushed fruits from California's breadbasket to East Coast markets in a few days; dropped steel from Midwest foundries to industries nationwide; and delivered coal from the Appalachians or the Rockies to power hungry customers everywhere. Railroads supported our victory

Scooter's Junction

By GEORGE "SCOOTER" YOUST, NER President



I would like to start off this column by letting everyone know that there are some great changes coming down the line from the NMRA. The first is that the folks at National are really working hard to establish an email database, so that every NMRA member online can receive updates and notices from National on a regular basis. You can help this effort by updating your own contact data – see the link on the home page at www.nmra.org . Use this form to change or add your address, phone number, and email. For right now, all changes submitted through the Web site are being manually entered in the database, so your submitted changes may not hit the update list for a week or two. Be patient, it will be corrected!

Speaking of databases, we in the NER use the membership list that National sends us to update our own email database. So please make any necessary changes to your contact information as soon as you can, whenever your information changes. The national organization is also in process of updating its whole database system to bring it into the 21st century. As I understand, the current database is being held together with bailing twine, gum, and frog snot! I'm talking about how the data is handled. I'm not sure what software is used, but updates and support are no longer available. So the idea is that the database will migrate over to a newer, more user friendly software platform – one that regions will also be able to access. I hope that divisions too will also have access to this new database, so each division can make updates to its membership information. This development is a long time coming, and I know many divisions want to have this option.

On a sad note, our NMRA District Director, John Roberts, passed away recently. I met John several times when he attended NER conventions, and he also attended a meeting in my home Central New York Division. John was NMRA president in 2004-2006, vice president in 2000-2004, Eastern District director from 2009-2013, MCR president and trustee from 1989-1993, and over the years held a number of other elected and volunteer offices throughout the NMRA.

John was a well-known model railroad author, and was the builder of several highly regarded layouts in HO and O scale. His family has asked that donations be made in John's name to the Diamond Club of the NMRA. As I write this column, we have an NER board meeting in a little more than two weeks. At that meeting I intend to approach the BOD with a proposal to make an NER donation to the Diamond Club, not only in John's name, but also in the names of all NER members that have passed away this past year. I hope by the time you read this, the NER BOD will have approved my proposal, and that we can make this type of donation on a yearly basis.

Finally, Paul Hoffman, president of the NER's Hudson-Berkshire Division, wrote a great letter to NMRA President Charlie Getz, asking several questions that are of importance to all NMRA members. I had the privilege of being included on the emails back and forth between Paul and Charlie (and a couple of other NMRA officers). President Getz wrote some very clear and enlightening answers to Paul's questions, which Paul plans to publish in an upcoming edition of the Hudson-Berkshire Division newsletter, *Form 19*. I highly recommend you visit the Hudson-Berkshire Division's Web site, and download a copy of *Form 19* for this very eye opening and informative exchange of letters. ☒

in two world wars, and today form the backbone of a highly efficient transportation network. Everywhere you look, this history is interesting and compelling. Many of us enjoy uncovering this story as much as anything else.

It's the scale of *model railroading*, a hobby like no other, in its nearly limitless array of component parts: carpentry, electronics,

history, archaeology, photography, model building, operations. As individuals and together, we have a chance to find a niche, a special passion, unique skills - and ultimately a conquest. It's a chance to create our own world, a proprietary world, one in which you or I are Superintendent, President, King!

And finally, it's the scale of *life* – across the

(Continued on Page 5)

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION

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

The Sunrise Trail Division enjoys an active Achievement Program, with many thanks to AP Chair Mike Siegel.

April 13 (Saturday): 10-4, Spring Meet and Train Show, St. David's Lutheran Church, 20 Clark Blvd, Massapequa Park, NY – clinics, model and photo contest, operating modular layouts.

SEACOAST DIVISION

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

At the Annual Meeting held on January 12, in Portland, ME, members re-elected Larry Cannon, Tom Coulombe, and Mike Grahame to serve three-year BOD terms.

At the following BOD meeting, new officers elected to one-year terms: Peter McKenney, President; Erich Whitney, Vice President; Chip Faulter, Secretary; and Tom Coulombe, Treasurer.

April 12 (Friday): 7pm, *Derry Model Railroad Fun Night*, Track Laying and Ballasting, Marion Gerrish Community Center, 39 Broadway, Derry, NH.
April 20 (Saturday): 10am, *Division Quarterly Meeting*, at Rochester Community Center, 150 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH. Clinics on painting and detailing locomotives, modeling a wooden combination station, and project for the Wakefield Heritage Commission Model Railroad.

May 12 (Friday): 7pm, *Derry Model Railroad Fun Night*, Operations 101, Marion Gerrish Community Center.

June 14 (Friday): 7pm, *Derry Model Railroad Fun Night*, DCC Decoder Installation, Marion Gerrish Community Center.

NUTMEG DIVISION

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

April 13 (Saturday): 9:30am, *General Membership Meeting*, Wethersfield Police Station, 250 Silas Deane Highway Wethersfield, CT.

METRO NORTH DIVISION

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

May 18 (Saturday): *A Day on the Cross Harbor*, by Rick Abramson and John Grosner. Slide show of the last float operation in NY, and *Rocks of Ages - Carving Rocks from Plaster*, hands on

clinic after meeting. New Canaan Historical Society.

May 31-June 1 (Friday-Saturday): *Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet*, Collinsville, CT. <<http://www.neprototypemeet.com>>

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION

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

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

HUDSON BERKSHIRE DIVISION

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

April 26 (Friday): *Frank Adamec's D&H*.
May 18 (Saturday): *State of the Division and Model Showcase*.

June 29 (Saturday): *Family Day*, hosted at the ALS.

HUB DIVISION

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

Apr 13 (Saturday): The annual *RI/Southeast MA Model Railroad Layout Tour*, a free self-guided tour of home layouts. There are 10 layouts, five of which have been or will be featured in national publications. <<http://www.layouttour.com>>. [This event is not sponsored by the HUB.]

Apr 19 (Friday): *HUB Railfun Meeting*, 8pm, Cambridge School of Weston, MA. "Modules 101: Selecting a Theme & Design", by Dick Johannes.

May 17 (Friday): *HUB Railfun Meeting*, 8pm, Cambridge School of Weston, MA. "Modules 201: Hands-on Clinic: Build a HUB Division Module Kit."

May 18 (Saturday): The HUB-sponsored *Saratoga & North Creek Excursion*, Saratoga Springs, NY.

Jun 21 (Friday): *HUB Railfun Meeting*, 8pm, Cambridge School of Weston, MA. "Modules 301: Hands-on Clinic: Scenery, Structures & Details."

HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION

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

May 18 (Saturday): Division Meeting at Hopwell Junction Depot.

GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION

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

April 21 (Sunday): 2:30 pm, Division Meeting, Brownell Library

FROM THE EDITOR

(Continued from Page 4)

span of years. Most of us discover trains as a child, but the hobby moves quickly beyond a kid's game. Sometimes we act like children, but our railroad dreams are usually grown up (and often expensive – check with the spouses). And few things have stayed with me, remained important, and kept my attention for so long – four decades now. I'm only now making real progress on my railroad, but trains have been with me all along. I suspect they'll be with me till the end.

Trains, railroad history, and model railroading are not the most important things in my life. God, family, friends, career – there are many other areas that rank higher (or should). But trains are up there on my list, as are the many friends I've made in this hobby.

Why? Trains are big. Trains are personal. Trains are me. It's the scale of it all. ☒

GARDEN STATE DIVISION

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

The GSD has elected new officers: President *Ciro Compagno*, Vice President *Chuck Diljak*, Treasurer *Bob Dennis*, and Secretary *Anthony Piccirillo*.

May 4 (Saturday): 9-5, *GSD and NJD Dual Spring Meet*, Goetz Middle School, 835 Patterson Road, Jackson, NJ, clinic and layout tours.

July 27 (Saturday): *GSD's 50th Anniversary Dinner*, VFW Hall, Sparta, NJ.

CENTRAL NEW YORK DIVISION

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

The CNY Division elected *Bernie Messenger* as Superintendent, *Ken Cameron* as Assistant Superintendent, *Ed O'Rourke* Clerk, and *Charlie Albee* as Treasurer.

April 28 (Sunday): 12-4, *Layout Visits* with *Sandy Colabufo* and *Charles Romanick*.

May 18 (Saturday): 1-5, *Trip to Hanford Mills Museum*.

June 23 (Sunday): 2-4, *Layout Visit* with *Gordon Davis*.

July 27 (Saturday): *CNY Division Picnic and Joint Meet with the NFR Lakeshores Division*, at *Finger Lakes Live Steamers*.



John E. Roberts, HLM, MMR, 1947-2013

John Roberts passed away peacefully in Williamsburg, Virginia, on March 1, 2013. He was 65.

John was NMRA President, 2004-2006, Vice President, 2000-2004, Eastern District Director, 2009-2013, Howell Day Museum Committee Chair, 2006-2012, MCR President and Trustee, 1989-1993, and over the years held a number of other elected and volunteer offices at every level of the NMRA.

A native of the Chicago area, John also lived and worked in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh before settling in Williamsburg. A graduate of Southern Illinois University in Civil Engineering, John worked most of his career in the field of safety management and loss prevention for Fortune 500 corporations including Federated Department Stores (Macy's), Rockwell International, Ralph's Supermarkets, and Dick's Sporting Goods. Since 1988, he was a loss prevention specialist for AON Risk Services.

In addition to his many achievements in the NMRA, John was a well-known model railroad author and photographer, with

articles and photos appearing in *Railroad Model Craftsman*, *Model Railroader*, *Railroad & Railfan*, *Scale Rails/NMRA Magazine*, *Railroads Illustrated/CTC Board*, *Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Magazine*, and other publications. He was the builder of several highly regarded layouts in HO and O scale, all of them featuring both the C&O and his shortline, the Blue Ridge & Southern. His last published work was a track plan featured in the 2013 issue of *Model Railroad Planning*.



John had contracted Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a rare brain condition that causes a rapid decrease of mental function and movement, and inevitably leads to death. John first showed symptoms of the disease in early 2012.

John is survived by his wife, Suzie, his children, John (Collette) and Whitney, and two granddaughters.

The family has asked that in lieu of flowers, memorial gifts be sent to the Diamond Club, National Model Railroad Association, Inc., 4121 Cromwell Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37421. Cards and letters may be sent to the family at 104 Heritage Pointe, Williamsburg, VA, 23188. ☒

A Note from Joe, Our New Eastern District Director

My name is Joe Gelmini, and I was appointed by NMRA President Charlie Getz at the February BOD meeting in Atlanta to fill out the remainder of John Roberts' term as Eastern District Director. As you know, John passed away in early March. John gave unselfishly of his time and energy over the many years he was a part of NMRA. His wisdom and counsel will be missed. I'm not sure anyone could really begin to fill his shoes, but we need to push on the best we can. I don't pretend to be John, but can assure you I will do my best to represent the interests of all NMRA members. I also promise to keep you informed of developments at the national level and to voice any issues, concerns, or ideas for improvement you may have to my fellow directors and national officers.

We can only accomplish this through regular communication. I encourage you to take advantage of the many avenues we have available:

- Use me as a pipeline to national. My contact information is shown below and I will always make myself available to you.
- Use the Region Advisory Council (RAC). Stephen Priest is the RAC Director and is open to your ideas on how we can improve the NMRA experience for everyone. His contact information is in the NMRA Magazine.
- Contact President Charlie Getz directly. Charlie is a busy guy but I can assure you he will get back to you on any areas of substance you may bring to him.
- Contact Jenny Hendrix at HQ. She is a jewel, and can assist with any membership or administrative issues you may have.

My previous NMRA experience includes a variety of positions as officer and director

of my home Piedmont Division of the SER. I was Vice President of the Southeastern Region for four years, and Region President for the last two. I have a strong desire to give back to the hobby and the organization that have provided me so many years of enjoyment. So I am happy to accept the appointment as Eastern District Director and look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

A synopsis of the BOD meeting in Atlanta is posted on the NMRA website. Please review it if you have not already done so. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. I left that board meeting with renewed optimism about our future. Many exciting programs are on the horizon, and I know you will want to be part of them. I'll keep you posted as developments unfold.

I look forward to hearing from you and working together to promote the NMRA and our great hobby. ☒

NER Convention Preview

1:1 Trips Enhance 'Tracks to Lakeport' Experience

By RICH BRETON

"Tracks to Lakeport" is this year's NER convention theme, and convention organizers have been busy setting up plenty of activities that model railroaders and their families can really appreciate! These include a choice of prototype activities that should enhance your New England convention experience.

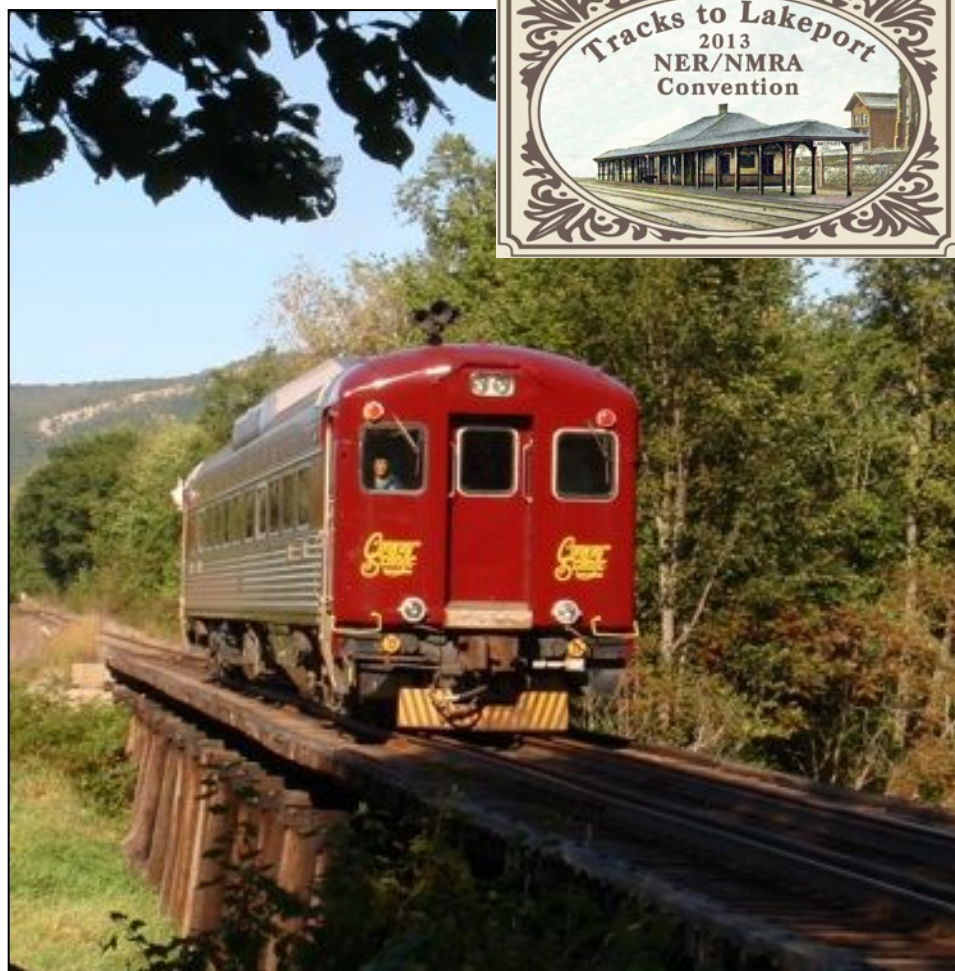
WSRR Train to Lakeport: This is the "Train to Lakeport" rail-fan trip. On Friday, October 18th, the *Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad* departs the Meredith Station at 1 PM, and travels south along beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee and Paugus Bay, through Weirs Beach to Lakeport. This two-hour railfan trip is self-guided. The Lakeport train will return to Meredith at 3 PM, where railfans and riders will find many wonderful shops, restaurants, and tourist attractions, including a relaxing walking path along the lakeshore.

Lake Winnepesaukee Cruise: What would a trip to Laconia and New Hampshire's Lakes Region be without a cruise on the *M/S Mount Washington* on Lake Winnepesaukee? Also on October 18th, the cruise departs from the Weirs Beach Station at 10 AM and travels across Lake Winnepesaukee to Wolfeboro, NH. Participants will have two trip options. Remain on-board the boat and return to Weirs Beach at 12:30 PM, or disembark in Wolfeboro at 11:15 AM and visit the town for about two and a half hours. They would return to Weirs Beach on the last (1:45 PM) departure, arriving at 3 PM. There are many wonderful shops, restaurants, and tourist attractions in Wolfeboro, which happens to be the oldest summer resort in New Hampshire. This tour is self-guided, and Weirs Beach is only a few minutes by car from the convention headquarters at the Margate Hotel.

Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad/Hobo Railroad General Motors GP-9 #1921 sporting the famous Boston & Maine and Maine Central "Minute Man" paint scheme in the beautiful fall foliage.

(Photo by Rich Breton)

CSRR Railfan Trip: For railfans looking to venture over to North Conway, NH, the *Conway Scenic Railroad* is offering an exclusive, private run on the Budd Car "Millie" (RDC-1 #23, formerly used in *Ontrack* service in Syracuse, NY, and before that, on Metro North). The trip will depart from the North Conway Depot at 10:30 AM on October 18th with destinations to Conway, Redstone, and Glen. There are lunch stops (cost of lunch not included in the fare) at either the Red Parka Pub or Glen Junction Restaurant. There will be a narrator on board and there will be photo run-by opportunities along the way. The train will return to North Conway Depot about 3:30 PM. The area near the North Conway station has a wide variety of shopping opportunities for those who want to come along, but not ride the train. There will also be an opportunity to tour the North Conway Depot facilities to examine the locomotives, cars, equipment, and roundhouse. The Conway Model Railroad Club, located in the freight house, may also be open. This is a self-guided trip, and is located about an hour from the Margate. *Note: Interested riders should reserve this trip before August 6, when we will determine if there is enough interest for it to be run.*



arranged bus transportation between the Margate and Meredith.

This is an 16 mile round trip with a lunch stop at a local diner. Enjoy riding the old rails just like the work crews of yesteryear. Each of these vehicles has been restored and maintained by group members—preserving a bit of the past and providing loads of fun! ☒

WSRR Fall Foliage Special: On Saturday, October 19th, the *Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad* "Fall Foliage Special" departs the Meredith Station at 11 AM and travels north, passing by Lakes Waukegan and Winona. The train climbs up and over Ashland Summit, passing by the Ashland railroad station and over the Ashland high trestle, where riders will get a splendid view of Ashland. The train makes its way through the Bonnie Brae Deer Farm and the Glove Hollow Tree Farm, where the owners may board the train to explain their alternative farming methods. About 12:20, the train arrives at the Common Man Inn in Plymouth, where passengers will detrain for a hot buffet luncheon. After lunch, the train returns to Meredith, making a stop at the restored Ashland railroad station. Each passenger will receive a souvenir booklet describing the journey and points of interest along the way. For your convenience, we have

Railroad Speeder Run: On Sunday, October 20th, the *Cotton Valley Speeders* will offer a limited number of seats on their railroad speeders in Wolfeboro, NH.





GOING... GOING... GON

More Ideas for Open Loads

By MIKE SHANAHAN

My interest in model railroading is centered on the transition era of the 1950's, allowing me to operate both steam and diesel power. Also, this period saw a vast amount of color and variety in rolling stock. In my attempt to capture this transition era variety, I became interested in open car loads. In the January-March 2013 issue of *The Coupler*, I focused on flat cars. This time I turn your attention to gondolas.

The gondola, perhaps more than any other type, is the catchall, do-anything railroad freight car. These cars are often rust buckets, usually beaten to death, their sides bowed outwards from the heavy loads dropped into them over many years. Gondolas are one of the railroads' most versatile cars – used for everything from carrying junk and scrap metal to new rails, steel beams, steel coils, and other commodities.

The gon's humble beginnings date back to around 1830, and the beginnings of the railroads themselves. Little has changed since, except that gondolas today are larger, and now made of steel rather than wood.

While the gondola will likely retain its image as the least respected car on the rails, it will also likely retain its important function in hauling scrap metal, junk, or other dense bulk materials and general merchandise. Whatever its use, the gondola will not be retired anytime soon.

One great way to add variety to the railroad fleet – and specifically to gondolas – is through weathering. Since I am into variety, all of my locomotives and a large portion of my rolling stock are weathered. All of the gondolas shown here are factory painted and lettered (except for the Tichy auto frame car, which I painted). Most of these cars were weathered using thinned Floquil paints applied with an airbrush. On a few, a brush was also used to add additional rust and weathering. I've also used a hot knife to add bulges, dents and holes to simulate the more extreme wear and tear of these heavily utilized cars.

You can find additional information about open car loads in "Modeling Open Loads," an NMRA Publication. ☒



At top of page, the Proto 2000 52-foot-6-inch drop end gon is used to carry a 64-foot load of I-beams. Due to the excessive length, as in prototype useage, idler flat cars are required.

At left, bulkhead ends (manufacturer unknown) add interest to an E-L gondola carrying steel beams. Next, a Tichy War Emergency Gondola with an auto frame and blocking kit from *American Model Builders* carries a *J.J.M. Railroad Enterprises* auto frame load. Note the rack at the rear. This was constructed with a pair of A-frames connected with a T-bar at the top. To secure the front, tie down rods are attached to the "hold down" frame. Finally, less-than-car-load (LCL) containers are carried in this Pennsy gon. LCL containers were often transported by truck as well as rail. (Photos by Mike Shanahan)



An easy way to ship various commodities was by separate containers placed into gondolas, as shown in the *two photos above*. At left are containers for liquids, and the *right photo* shows refrigerated containers, both offered by *Athearn*.

In the five photos at right, the top photo shows a load of steel wool soaked in vinegar used to make rusty debris, perhaps being transported from a junk yard. Note the rust and grime showing a hard life for this Michigan Central gon.

Next, scrap steel and aluminum bails fill a heavily weathered C&O gondola. These are easily made by constructing a small box and then stuffing it with aluminum foil.

The N&W gondola is filled with "scrap steel," easily gleaned from rusty automobiles, lawn mowers and hot water tanks around your house.

Steel coils are represented by the covers provided with the N&W car from *Con-Cor*.

Finally, corrugated pipe from *Jaeger HO Products* makes up the load in a Michigan Central gondola with fabricated bulkhead bracing.



Going...

Going...

GON

Above left, due to clearance issues this 16-foot wide sheet steel load must be carried vertically using steel I-beam bracing on the back. This was scratchbuilt using sheet plastic and plastic I-beams.

Many gondola loads are offered as one-piece castings available from a number of manufacturers. This scrap steel load is from *Chooch*.



Getting Connected with “Free-Mo”

By LARRY CANNON
and PETER McKENNEY

Free-Mo is a fast growing segment of the model railroad hobby. As in other modular systems, *Free-Mo* enables modelers with limited space to construct units that can be displayed and operated in conjunction with units from other modelers or clubs. But unlike the more common rectangular module concepts, *Free-Mo* is more flexible in track planning and allows a modeler to more accurately represent prototype railroad scenes and operation.

For the *Tracks to Lakeport 2013* convention October 17-20 in Laconia, NH, a significant portion of available display space will be allocated to spotlight *Free-Mo* model railroading. Plans include displaying *Free-Mo* modules in a 40' x 76' space that will support operating sessions as well as clinics focused on *Free-Mo* modular topics. Convention registrants will see and be able to discuss *Free-Mo* module construction with the owners and builders of these modules, learn about *Free-Mo*

standards, and enjoy realistic layout operations in this space.

If you have attended any of the last three National Train Shows, you have seen some great examples of flexibility, size, complexity, and quality that a group of modelers from the US and Canada can achieve in one day's setup time. At these shows, many of the modules involved had never been operated together previously.

Free-Mo popularity is increasing in the NER. At least three of our divisions currently support *Free-Mo* operations. Divisional standards may vary slightly, but



Members Bill Hodges and Fred Hessler demonstrate the magic of *Free-Mo* at a recent Seacoast Division meet. After correcting a minor wiring problem (which Fred is testing), the two modules worked well, despite having never before been connected together.

the necessary connectivity prevails. New England *Free-Mo* serves as the regional clearing house for meets in an informal manner, but with an extremely organized approach.

(Continued on Page 11)



Fred Hessler, center, oversees his teammates operating on the New England *Free-Mo* group's May, 2010, setup in Dedham, MA. *Free-Mo* style layouts can be configured to take advantage of the space available, and their irregular shapes add to the realism.

Getting Connected with “Free-Mo” Celebrate Models and Photos in the Contest Room

(Continued from Page 10)

What will be different at *Tracks to Lakeport 2013* is that attendees will see modules under construction and in progress – not just the completed and super-detailed ones. While national Free-Mo standards require certain items on modules to be complete prior to public display, the convention committee is purposely asking for some examples of ‘not-ready-for-prime-time’ modules to be included for educational purposes. Excellent examples of completed modules meeting the national Free-Mo standard will be on hand, but so will incomplete modules for registrants to see and study.

Space will be arranged so that Free-Mo and other modular model railroading-related clinics can be offered. There will be tables for people who wish to sit in groups to continue discussions, rather than stand and take pictures or make sketches. Not just a display, we’re envisioning the space also as a laboratory and classroom. The committee also intends to include operating sessions on Free-Mo

modular group has committed to participate in *Tracks to Lakeport 2013*. ☒



This year’s NER convention, “Tracks to Lakeport,” will include an approximately 40’ X 72’ space dedicated to a Free-Mo layout and modular modeling display. This gathering area will also be used for Free-Mo and modular rail-related clinics. To support the educational focus, Free-Mo style modules under construction will also be included. The only requirement



modules. These operations will be limited somewhat by the size of the space available at the convention. (Recent National Train Show Free-Mo exhibits have encompassed more than five times the space available for *Tracks to Lakeport 2013*).

In addition to the Free-Mo setup room, the Amherst Belt Lines – The Amherst Railway Society’s HO scale modular layout organized in 1978 as an NMRA special interest group (SIG) – will set up in the upstairs lounge for display and operating sessions. The convention team is delighted that this well-recognized

for space-available acceptance is that a module meets either the national or Seacoast Division Free-Mo standard, and that it be operational by Labor Day. Fully scenicked modules are also desired to showcase what can be done with Free-Mo.

While the convention is still a few months away, we’ve created a list of those interested in displaying modules, and are beginning now to design possible layouts. If you are interested in having your module included, please send a note now to Bill Hodges at hodges_b@myfairpoint.net, and include your drawing of the module plan and current amount of completion (planned, built- but not operational, operational, scenicked, completed). Please include “CFM” in the subject line of your email message.

We hope you will participate. ☒

By LARRY CANNON, MMR

There are lots of fun activities to enjoy at NMRA Conventions – like the upcoming *Tracks to Lakeport 2013 NER Convention* in Laconia, NH, October 17-20. For me and many other convention-goers, the Contest Room is one of the most enjoyable places to frequent. Or, as NMRA National and NER Model Contest Chair Bob Hamm refers to it, the “Celebration Room,” because it includes contest entries as well as non-judged “showcase” entries.

The room serves multiple purposes. Most people see the Contest/“Celebration” Room as a place to view examples of fine models and photographs. They not only enjoy the artistry involved in making these models and images, but they learn about the techniques that their creators have employed. They see examples that may inspire them to try something on their own layout, module, or diorama. People not only look, they take photos to show other people or to capture an idea. And hopefully, all who enter the Contest Room also vote in the People’s Choice balloting to choose those models and images that convention participants like best.

Of course, contestants enjoy another benefit in the Contest Room. They receive feedback from judges that can help them focus on ways to improve their techniques. Even the most experienced modeler can benefit from new information shared by a judge or another modeler. But not all models in the Contest Room are judged. Modelers may bring their works to display in the Model Showcase.

Another facet that I observe in the Contest Room is the interaction among all convention-goers. Naturally, they are sharing thoughts about what they see there, but these conversations often expand beyond the immediate environment. They exchange information

(Continued on Page 12)

Celebrate Models, Photos in the Contest Room

(Continued from Page 11)

about prototype railroading, like how to create realistic replicas of their favorite railroads. In short, the Contest Room has a wonderful “socialization” aspect to it.

All of this, plus the awards for the contest winners themselves, constitute the

Additionally, attaining a point score of 87.5 points (70% of the total) entitles the entrant to a Merit Award, which counts towards Master Builder Awards in the NMRA Achievement Program (AP). The judges usually give up a good portion of Saturday's convention activities to do



notable “output” for an NMRA convention Contest Room. Nearly 100 percent of the convention attendees see that output, especially if they attend the awards presentation. What about that “input” side of the effort?

How the Contest Room Functions

Of course, the most critical “input” for the Contest Room is the models and images that participants bring. Generally, only about 15-25 percent (or less) of convention participants provide these models and photos. Beyond the contestants, a lot of labor goes into the actual functioning of the Contest Room.

There are also the “officials,” who register and do the paperwork for judged entrants and prepare award documents, and the 10 or more judges who carefully examine each entry. The judging of the Model Contest is conducted by teams of experienced judges, using a point scoring system providing a grade between zero and 125 points. Five factors are judged including construction, conformity, detail, appearance and scratchbuilt. The final point score is the basis for award ranking.

their work. Other “contest officials”, i.e. the pencil pushers – or I probably should say “keyboard punchers” – devote considerably more time than that.

The payoff for modelers is showing off their efforts, the contest awards they garner, and finding out how their efforts compare to AP standards. Officials and judges are generally experienced modelers, and their “pay” is in returning the favor of their predecessors (who in the past did the paperwork and judged their models), and by making sure that this service is still available to current NMRA members.

At national conventions, contest models are subdivided into “kit-built” (more than 50 percent kit parts), and “scratch-built.” At NER conventions, a different classification system is used. The NER employs *Master* and *Craftsman* classifications. A modeler must “move up” and compete in the Master class if he or she has previously won a first place in the category of consideration. All models, except dioramas, are judged on AP judging standards. (The AP’s Prototype

Modeler Certificate includes more exacting standards than the contest judging standards applied to dioramas).

Models can be entered in the contest right up to the time judging starts. Judging is done usually on Saturday and awards are presented at the Convention Banquet Saturday evening, or at brunch on Sunday morning.

Get Involved on the “Input” Side

To get involved, simply bring one or more of your models that you believe are similar to the ones you have seen garner AP Merit Awards or placed in contests at previous conventions. If you haven’t been to an NMRA convention before, look online at the convention coverage issues of archived NER *Couplers* (or other regional publications). <http://www.nernmra.org/nercoupler/NERCoupler_247-w.pdf>.

You should also read the *Achievement Program Judging Guidelines*, May 2006, For Motive Power, Cars and Structures on the NMRA Web site, <<http://www.nmra.com/education/achievement/pdf/2006-judging-guide-lines.pdf>>. Another tip, if you are serious about doing well: Models that do well in AP or the contest judging most often were built from the start with that purpose in mind.

Contest officials and judges encourage you to download entry and model description forms early, and to complete these in the comfort of your home. Not only are these then more complete and accurate, they are also usually easier to read. (Not all of the volunteer judges have young eyes).

It is up to you to decide if you want to enter your models in the contest, or in the display showcase. Display models use a simplified receipt form completed at the convention. At your request, display models will be judged for AP credit. The officials and judges (who have done this before) will usually encourage you in this, if they feel your display model is contest or AP ready. These folks enjoy handing out awards!

Tracks to Lakeport 2013 is shaping up to be another great NER convention. Be sure to come to the convention, visit the Contest Room, learn more about modeling techniques by discussing the entries, and socialize with other modelers. Better yet, start today in creating an entry yourself and bring it with you in October! With your “input,” there will be lots more “output.” ☒

By JOHN DOEHRING
Coupler Editor

Laser Modeling 3 (LM3) was first conceived with Ron Kosmider Sr.'s purchase of a commercial laser cutting system. Ron's idea

Today Ron Jr. runs the business as operations manager, while Ron Sr. is responsible for design work. Ron Sr. retired in 2012, and today he works full time at LM3. His background in graphic design has proved quite useful in the work of creating dioramas, and in the photography used in marketing the company's products.

From their initial kit, the *John Murray & Son Coal Dealership*, LM3 has expanded rapidly. Today the company offers nine 'Limited Run' kits in HO, HO_N3 and O scale, with four additional kits on the way this year. Since its beginnings, the company's approach



**Sodus Point
Welding**

was to use this equipment to create custom structures for his own "O&W Northern Division" home layout. Then upon retirement, the laser would become the foundation of a new business, designing and producing craftsman structure kits for retail sale. But the operation got off to a faster than expected start when his son Ron Jr.

has been to produce carefully researched, designed, and engineered replicas of actual railroad structures that are usable in a wide variety of layout settings. Development of each new model has involved extensive field measurements, visits to local historical



A.R. Gilmore Grain and Feeds



Winchendon Machine Co.

societies, and research in numerous hobby magazines—all with a goal to create a more accurate and interesting craftsman kit.

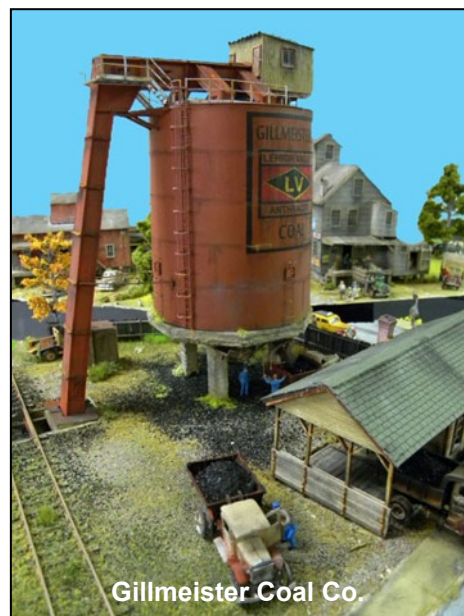
Since that first laser-cutting machine, LM3's equipment roster has expanded as well. First came 3D modeling software, and then a 3D printing system to create masters used in producing cast detail parts. Today detail parts are either resin-casted with LM3's equipment, or spin-cast by vendor partners. LM3 kits include castings from Scale Structure Ltd, Tichy, Grandt Line, and BEST, as well as high-grade wood materials from Northeastern Lumber. Acquisition of the 3D printer has also allowed the firm to expand into true custom, one-of-a-kind railroad structures for individual modelers, as well as into a variety of architectural models, trade

show displays, and industrial/commercial pieces.

John H. Murray & Sons Coal Distributors



LM3 exhibits at shows around the US, and can usually be found at major events in the northeast, including the Amherst Show in Springfield, MA; shows in Timonium, MD, and Syracuse, NY; and the Fine Scale Model Railroad Show (Pittsfield, MA, November 7-9). You can find out more about the



Gillmeister Coal Co.

company and its kit offerings on the web at <www.lasermodeling3.com>. And of course, if you're ever in the Geneseo area, please look the guys up, and stop by for a visit. There you'll find Ron Sr. and Ron Jr. at work — creating craftsman structure kits for model railroaders in the NFR, NER, and beyond. ☒

graduated from business school during the Wall Street downturn of 2009. The two decided to partner in the business, and they moved the laser into a commercial building they owned in Geneseo, NY. (Editor's note: Geneseo is technically just outside of the NER's boundaries, in the Niagara Frontier Region south of Rochester, NY).

MADE IN THE NER

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Geneseo, NY 14454
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WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD

By GLENN
GLASSTETTER



Stuck on a Project or Two without a Quick Resolution

Getting Stuck

How often have you been at work on some aspect of your railroad, and come to an abrupt stop because you get stuck on something that halts your progress? I'm not talking about running out of modeling supplies. I'm thinking instead about encountering something you didn't expect, or using a new technique you haven't tried before. Perhaps you are working to design more layout into a space not quite big enough, trying to figure out where those pesky electrons are hiding (instead of doing their job in a circuit), or coming up against a stone wall while researching your railroad.

Getting stuck happens to all model railroaders at one time or another. It can be detrimental to progress, but fortunately there are usually other projects to turn to until we overcome the problem. In my case, I currently have several projects on which I am stuck to varying degrees. Some won't be too difficult to resolve, while others will take more time and energy. Some problems are urgent, such as determining why a portion of –or even worse, the entire– railroad isn't working right before a planned operating session. But most issues are less urgent, for instance, determining how a prototype structure or car was originally painted, or how to represent water in a modeled river.

One Resolution

Sometimes a problem is resolved when a new or different solution comes along. Here's a case in point: Many years ago (during my first NMRA convention), I ran across five *Quality Craft* flat brass C&O caboose kits in an old model railroad shop in Pittsburgh. (You know the kind of store I mean – one that has been around for many years, and is full of old treasures to be found if you really look.) I felt I'd struck gold here, since the only prototype C&O cabooses I knew of were imported brass, which I could not afford at the time. I bought these, and built them all to the point where the roof walks and hand rails were installed. Next up was to install the ladders, corner posts and railings, but I didn't like the stamped brass ladders that came with these kits. So the cabooses took up residence in the "to be completed" drawer for awhile. Then the November 1999 *Railroad Model Craftsman* included

an article on scratchbuilding ladders using flat brass stock for the side rails, and brass wire for the rungs. But before I completed my first ladder I came across someone at the 2000 NMRA convention selling brass C&O cabooses at a great price. I bought some. And, after thinking overnight about what a great deal these were, I went back the next day and purchased the rest of them. Walthers has since come out with both wood and steel C&O cabooses, and the kits still remain in a drawer unfinished.

No Resolution Yet

Another project that has languished for a while is a full size HO scale model of the C&O St. Albans, WV, freight depot. I started this project from a copy of the original 1910 building plans I'd purchased from the C&O Historical Society. (When complete, the depot will reside in the city of Arlington on my railroad.) Unfortunately, at that time I had no photos of the depot, so I began building according to the plans. Since the plans showed no vertical board skirting around the building, and since I planned to enter my model in the NER Convention

Model Contest, construction began with all 94 support posts and concrete piers, and with all 124 sub-floor joists. In the meantime I started communicating with a couple of C&O modelers from the St. Albans area, and they provided several photos of the depot's final years. Low and behold, there was the skirting around the building. All that work I'd put into the substructure would be hidden! And there were other building modifications that would be necessary from the photographs. I had several options, but no clear direction, so I put the project aside, and haven't worked on it in several years – because in our hobby there is always something else to do. Unlike the caboose saga, the freight depot project is not going to resolve itself. I will have to figure out how I'm going to proceed, and get on with it – mañana.

Foward

There are other projects on which I'm temporarily stuck to various degrees, and I'll have to resolve these eventually. Until then there are other projects on which I can work until the answers come. The point here is, don't let getting stuck prevent you from moving forward on your railroad.

Maybe I should use a couple of those cabooses for my Cars Achievement Program Award. Hmmm.

OK. Break's over, back to work! ☒



NEW MEMBERS

COMPILED BY MARK HARLOW, NER Office Manager

As of 3/15/13

QUEBEC

Denis J. Tremblay

CONNECTICUT

Roger V. Autuori
Steve Brenneisen
Robert C. Desmarais
Anthony Fisher
Paul Fraleigh
Bruce R. Hoffman
Kenneth Hooker
David McCue
Richard Paskiewicz
Thomas Patch
Myron Wasilewski

MASSACHUSETTS

Paul Adduci
Ed Anzures
Evan Bangs
Thomas Best
Chris Brown
Frank Callahan
Thad Carpen
David Clapp
David Cochran
Kenneth R. Connell
Jim Curley
Dave Ferrick

William Fratkan
Paul Gaurill
John Harding
Chalres
Hodgkinson
Mike Hughes
Joshua Julien
Lauren Keene
Robert Keirstead
Jerry Lucente
Gregory Maas
Kevin Neprud
John Oliveira
James Park
Scott W. Payne
Daniel J.
Raymond
Tom Runstrom
Bob Sgroi
Lyle Sigworth
Sam Vail
Thomas Vallas
Robb Wilkinson
John Wojcik
Ronald Yates
Barbara Yates
Adrian Zeffert

MAINE

Robert E. Cronan
Stephen Labbe

Carter Sawtell

NEW HAMPSHIRE
Lawrence R. Carl
Larry Coplin
Sterling Eanes
Myles Gadon
Richard W.
Hazzard
Gordon Hercod
Leo W. Quinn
Roger Somers
Brenna Whitney
Holly Whitney

NEW JERSEY

George D. Aue
Kai Ebinger
Mark Janacek
Rocco Maley
Trudy Seeley
Joseph
Stypulkowski
Emil Walerko

NEW YORK

Mike Boland
William Brauer
Dave Brinkmoeller
Michael Capozziello

Marc Charton
Joseph D'agostino
Anthony Dunlap
Benjamin Faulter
Steve Howard
Mark Hubbard
Michael J.
Kendrick
Nicholas D.
Lombardi
Michael J.
Magusson
George Moore
John Nicoletti
John R. O'Connor
Greg Pittz
Thomas J. Riordan
Hank Sansone
Henry Schoppmann
Todd K. Stearns
Robert Wilkins
Mike Wright
Dick Wright

RHODE ISLAND

Kevin Costantino
Stephen Marler



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM ROUNDUP

By BILL BROWN MMR, AP Chair

Statistics Track AP Efforts; A Few Almost MMRs

Prior to retiring in 2010, I was a school director of athletics and football coach for 33 years. Now, anyone involved in sports knows how much we tend to focus on statistics. Stats are used for many reasons – like evaluating performance, validating success, and generating accolades. Of course, there is usually more to the story beyond the numbers, but statistics are often a good place to start the conversation. I have now been the NER's AP chair for a bit over a year, and thought it a good time to look at recent stats from the NER AP program for some telling trends.



Chart 1 below lists the number of AP certificates and Golden Spike awards earned by region members in the prior 13 months. In total, the NER earned 34 AP certificates during this period. Special congratulations go out to the HUB Division, and Division AP Chair Don Howd, for 'winning' the NER stats race. HUB members were awarded a total of nine awards, including six AP certificates and three Golden Spike awards. Congratulations are also in order for the Sunrise Trail, a very close second place finisher with six AP certificates and one Golden Spike. Little Rhody was close as well, with six AP certificate awards. CNY and Hudson Berkshire captured four AP certificates each.

Of particular interest to me in this review is that only four Golden Spikes were submitted. The Golden Spike is designed to recognize the basic achievements of modelers, and it's probably the easiest award to accomplish. Just think of all the great layouts that exist today in each division. With just a little effort, almost all of these layout owners could earn the Golden Spike – just by submitting a couple of sheets of paper. Let's get after them!

Chart 2 shows certificate awards by category. Our most popular AP category continues to be Volunteer with eight awards, followed by Electrical and Civil Engineer with four certificates each. Awards for Author, Cars, Structures, and Scenery round out the mix.

We also had one AP award for Official, but none in the categories

of Chief Dispatcher, Motive Power, or Prototype Models.

Further study of the AP records reveals some more great trends. Today we have 35 Master Model Railroaders in the NER, about

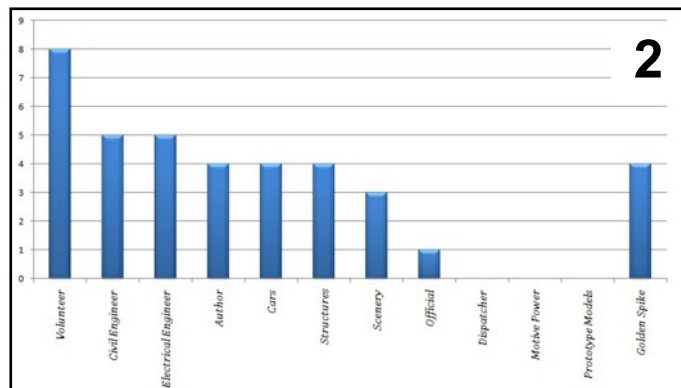
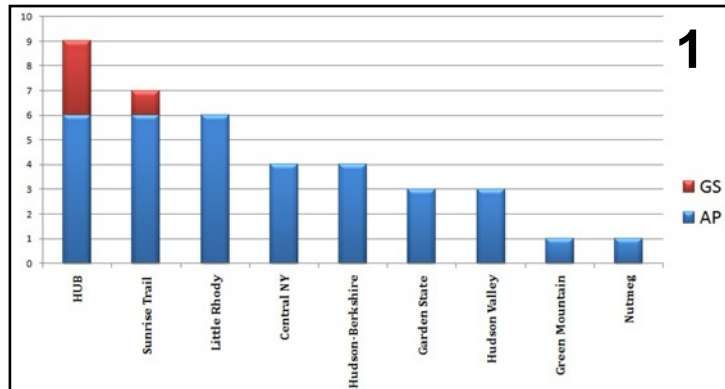
seven percent of the roughly 500 MMRs worldwide. Andy Clermont of the Hudson-Berkshire Division is poised to be our next. Andy has earned the seven certificates necessary, and must now complete the MMR paperwork. Beyond Andy, there are eighteen NER members who have captured five or more awards, and many of these are poised to become MMRs – a great accomplishment – in the next couple of years. The list of these modelers is included on this page – please give them a handshake (and a nudge) if you know them. [Note, these records are from our computer files and may not be fully accurate – let us know if any of this information requires correction or update].

Finally, a few months ago I approached the NER BOD (and received tremendous support from them) for the creation of an award and plaque for recognizing NER members who have earned all 11 AP certificates. This "All Eleven" award was given out by National at one time, but was discontinued after our own Larry Cannon achieved it a few years

back. Now I am delighted to announce that Paul Allard will be the next recipient of the new NER "All Eleven" Award, which will be presented at our Fall Convention dinner this year. Way to go Paul!

There are six NER members who have earned nine or more AP certificates, and some of these could be next up for the NER All Eleven Award. These modelers – all MMRs today - include Bill Brown, Bob Hamm, Walter Olevsky, Ivan Preble, Roger Ramsdel, and Ira Rothberg.

As I have reported before, the NMRA Achievement Program is alive and well in many of our divisions. It is fun to banter these statistics about, but I must say that the real joy is seeing all of the great modeling going on around the Northeastern Region. ☒



OUR NEXT MMRs?

SIX DONE—ONE MORE TO GO!

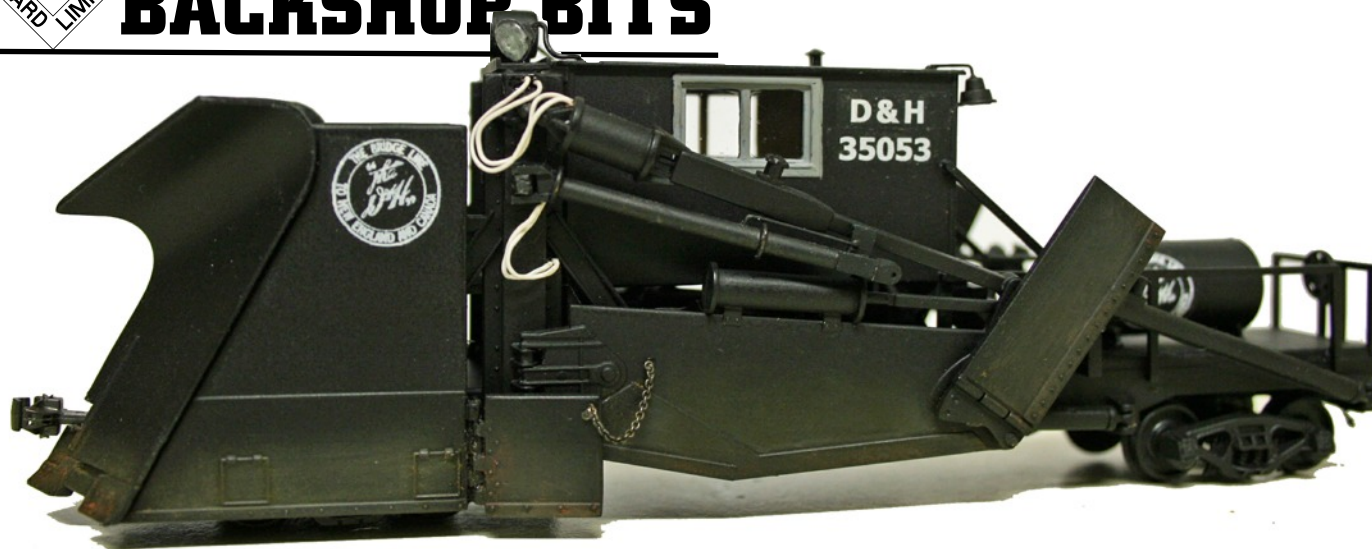
Steve Perry (Steve has seven certificates, but needs one additional category), Peter Eaton, John McGowan, Phil Monat, Ken Nelson, Earl Smallshaw.

FIVE IN HAND—TWO TO GO!

Gerald Abegg, Robert Bourdreau, John Dias, Howard Dwyer, Vin Gallogly, James Johnson, Joe Kavanaugh, Richard Lautenslager, Dave Metal, Dave Newcomb, Keith Shoneman, Kevin Surman

YARD LIMIT

BACKSHOP BITS



Welcome to a new feature, "Backshop Bits!" In the issues ahead, we hope to present "neat" and simple ideas that any modeler can use to turn average models into something special. We invite you to send photos and descriptions of your ideas to *The Coupler*. These can be motive power, rolling stock, or structures.

The Coupler's associate editor Jeff Paston starts us off with some really simple additions to the *Walthers* Jordan Spreader/Plow. Jeff is modeling a prototype used by the Delaware & Hudson.

He added appropriate lights and decals, but we're highlighting what anyone can do to make this fine model even better. It's a neat modeling idea often seen as engine wiring in larger scale plastic model automobiles. In HO, Jeff used the plastic insulation stripped from wire to represent hydraulic lines. Throw in a model chain to connect to the plow part, and you've added some simple, yet attention-drawing detail that adds realism to an off-the-shelf kit. ☒

(Photo by Jeff Paston)



Weirs Beach station is shared by both the M/S Mount Washington cruise ship and the Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad.

This location on Lake Winnepesaukee is a New Hampshire historical tourist attraction throughout the summer and fall.

Big bands performed at the Winnepesaukee Gardens here in the 1930's and 1940's, and the annual Laconia Motorcycle Week has been centered in Weirs Beach every year June since 1923. Weirs Beach is now home to the world's largest arcade at Funspot.

(Photo by Rich Breton)