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www.nernmra.org

THE COUPLER

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The Northeastern Region of
the National Model Railroad
Association

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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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COVER PHOTO

RGS 4-6-0 #40 crosses a trestle on the gigantic backyard large scale empire of Stan and Debbie Ames in eastern Massachusetts. Even with snow on the ground, the Ames' line operated during the annual "Tour de Chooch" Thanksgiving weekend. For more layouts on the tour, turn to page 11.

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Next submission deadline is February 6.

FROM THE EDITOR

Planning for the Region's Future

By JOHN DOEHRING
Coupler Editor

At the NER's October Board of Directors meeting (my first as a member), the BOD agreed to embark upon a strategic planning process for the Northeastern Region. Long-term strategic planning for organization development and improvement is a large part of my professional practice, and I'm very excited to see the NER undertake this important work.



New Region Director
(and Little Rhody
Superintendent) Steve

Erickson will lead this effort, and he is currently working to assemble a team. Timing hasn't been nailed down, but I'd expect the full process to unfold over the next several months, perhaps with a final product before next year's annual meeting.

Some of the parts which will likely be addressed in this strategic planning effort include:

Mission – What's the Region all about, why does it exist, what is our core purpose? Certainly the NER's mission is closely aligned with that of the national NMRA, but what's most interesting here will be to define more specifically our own Region's purpose.

Vision – Where is it that the NER is headed, what will its future look like, what are our big goals? Just as a layout begins with a track plan, so an organization grows and develops best with a clear picture of the objective ahead. A clear and compelling vision will help us considerably with what to focus on (and what not to), what fits into our plans, those things most important.

Strategy – Answers to the questions of "how?" Clearly defined strategies point to how the Region will achieve its objectives, what the most important initiatives should be, and how to focus our limited resources.



Scooter's Junction

By GEORGE "SCOOTER" YOST, NER President



I hope everyone had a very happy and healthy holiday season, and a great year of model railroading so far. The Mid-Eastern Region is looking for clinicians for its upcoming convention in New Jersey. We will be attending and supporting the Mid-Eastern Regional convention (hosted by the New Jersey Division of the MER) in Mount Laurel October 22-25. The convention will be at the ML Hotel on Rt. 73 in Mount Laurel, right between the interchanges for I-295 and the NJ Turnpike. If you want to present a clinic or help out at the convention, please email NER Secretary Chip Stevens at <readingchip@verizon.net>.

In this issue of *The Coupler*, you will find a general survey that we would like all members to complete and return to the NER. The NER Board has decided to form a strategic planning committee and we are looking for members from the NER to join the committee alongside the board members. The information gathered from this survey will be extremely helpful and important to this strategic planning committee in its mission to help the NER remain a strong and viable region serving the best interests of the membership. Steve Erickson will serve as the chair of the committee. If you'd like to get involved, please contact Steve at his contact info listed on the "Brass Hats" page of *The Coupler*.

I am pleased to announce that the Board of Directors of the Seacoast Division has voted unanimously to accept an invitation to be a co-sponsor of the 36th National Narrow Gauge Convention. The convention will be held in Augusta, Maine, September 7-10, 2016. More details about this convention will become available as the planning progresses.

Also, the NER will again be co-sponsoring the Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders Convention in St. Johns, New Brunswick, in 2016. Some of you will recall that a few years ago the NER was invited to participate in a similar MFMR convention, and all of the NER members that attended reported that it was a great time and well worth the trip for some great model railroading. The NER role will mainly promote the event among our membership and encourage all that can to attend. We will have more information about the convention in upcoming issues of *The Coupler*. If you have any questions, please contact our NER Canadian Director Steve McMullin. His contact info is also listed on the "Brass Hats" page of *The Coupler*. ☒

Actions – What exactly is it that we as individuals, small groups, and the organization as a whole should be doing to achieve our dreams. Ideas are important, but not so much if they don't get done. A detailed plan with clearly identified action steps, responsibilities, leadership, and due dates is necessary to capture real success.

The first step on this journey begins with information input – including the NER member survey included in this issue (both paper and online versions). Your response

will help the planning committee understand what members value most, where the consensus is (or isn't), and where to go from here. This survey will also help better engage more of us in the process, and then in the plan that follows.

I encourage each of you to take some time and complete the survey, and let your voice be heard concerning the future of the NER. Let the leaders of the Region know where you stand – and where you want to go. ☒

News and Events

NATIONAL CONVENTION

August 23-30: *Portland Daylight Express*, Portland, OR.

MER REGION CONVENTION

October 22-25: *Delaware Valley Turn*, MER Regional Convention in Mount Laurel, NJ. Convention Web site is www.DelawareValleyTurn.org or groups.yahoo.com/groups/MER2015.

CENTRAL NEW YORK

<http://www.cnynmra.org>

January 10 (Saturday): Joint meeting with NFR Lakeshore Division, Auburn, NY

GARDEN STATE DIVISION

<http://www.nergds.com>

February 7 (Saturday): GSD Winter Meet, Staten island, NY, Marine Corps League Clubhouse, 46 Ontario Blvd. (Snow date: February 28).

GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION

<http://www.greenmountainnmra.com>

January 18, February 15, March 22 (Sundays): *Division Meeting*, Brownell Library, Essex Junction, VT.

HUB DIVISION

<http://www.hubdiv.org>

January 10 (Saturday) *HUB Holiday Party*, Old Colony Café Norwood, MA. For details see the website.

January 16 (Friday) : *HUB Railfun Meeting*, 8 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA, Topic: "Railroad Car Repair and Reconditioning," by Rudy Slovacek.

February 20 (Friday): *HUB Railfun Meeting*, 8 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA, Topic: "TBA."

March 20 (Friday): *HUB Railfun Meeting*, 8 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA, Topic: "Operations," by Stan Ames, Keith Shoneman, and John Lutz.

April 12 (Sunday): Spring Training Meet, and HUB Division Annual Meeting, Holiday Inn, Taunton, MA.

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION

<http://www.littlerhodydiv.org>

January 17 and February 21 (Saturdays): proposed Division meetings, details TBA.

METRO NORTH DIVISION

<http://www.metronorthnmra.org>

January 17 (Saturday): Division meeting,

"Mind the Gap" by Boyd Misstear, and "Control Panel Fabrication" by Jeff Ward. New Canaan Historical Society.

March 14, May 16 (Saturdays): Division meeting (tentative). New Canaan Historical Society.

SEACOAST DIVISION

<http://www.seacoastnmra.org>

Seacoast Division will be a co-host of the 36th National Narrow Gauge Convention in Augusta, ME, September 7-10, 2016.

January 9, February 13, March 13 (Fridays): 7-9 PM, *Derry Model Railroad Fun Night*, Marion Gerrish Community Center, 39 W. Broadway, Derry, NH.

January 10 (Saturday), 10-2, Quarterly meeting, with clinic presentations, modules on display, annual meeting to elect directors, BOD meeting, First Congregational Church, 301 Cottage Road, S. Portland, ME.

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION

<http://sunrisetraildiv.com>

January 31 (Saturday): Winter Meet, clinics to be announced, Westbury Public Library, Westbury, NY. ☒



Vermont Rails 2015! Saturday, March 14, 10:00 - 4:00

New Location!
Collins Perley Sports & Fitness Center
Exit 19, Interstate 89, St. Albans, Vermont

- Operating Layouts in N, HO, O and G scales
- Dealers selling new and used model railroad equipment, accessories and scenery supplies, and railroad books and DVDs
- NMRA NER Green Mountain Division Display

Admission:

Under 6	Free
Ages 6-12	\$1.00
Over 12	\$5.00

Information:

www.nwvrailroad.org
(802) 878-1135
ronpiro@aol.com

Sponsored by: **Northwestern Vermont Model Railroad Association**

Alternative to a NER Convention

Mid-Eastern Region Invites Us To “Delaware Valley Turn” This Fall

By CHIP STEVENS

The Northeastern Region will not have its own convention in 2015 (but will be back in 2016 in Albany, New York hosted by the Hudson-Berkshire Division). However, just across the Region's border to the south, the New Jersey Division of the Mid-Eastern Region will host the *Delaware Valley Turn* — the annual MER Regional Convention, October 22-25 in Mount Laurel, NJ. The MER convention promises to be a winner, and our neighbors have graciously invited NER members to come down and participate.

The convention Web site is <www.DelawareValleyTurn.org>, and on Yahoo Groups at <groups.yahoo.com/groups/MER2015>. Check the former for all convention information, and the latter to receive updates as they occur.

Much of the convention's planning and development is underway now. Here are some of the early highlights:

The *Delaware Valley Turn* is now open for early registration. The early registration rate is \$35 (through August 31). Afterwards, registration will be \$40, and walk-ins at the door will be \$45. For more information, see the Web site.

Convention central will be located at The Hotel ML, 915 Route 73, Mount Laurel, NJ. The hotel includes a restaurant and bar, health club and outdoor pool, and ample free parking. The CocoKey (indoor) Water Resort is right next door. Reservations can be made by calling the hotel directly at 856-234-7300 or online at <<http://tinyurl.com/msqk6iy>>. Make sure to mention the "Mid-Eastern Region Model Railroad Association" to receive the discounted room rate of \$94 a night.

The *Delaware Valley Turn* will feature more than 50 clinics; many of these will be repeated to allow for scheduling of other

activities. More than 40 layouts (in four scales) will also be available for visits beginning Thursday afternoon on the drive in, during the convention on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and on Sunday afternoon for the drive home.

The convention will feature a unique, Free-mo style, modular layout open Thursday through Saturday. Convention attendees will be able to sign up for onsite operating sessions on this innovative layout. Attendees will also have the opportunity to operate on some of the best layouts in the Delaware Valley through the Operations Callboard sessions. The current goal is to assemble more than 100 operating slots!

The *Delaware Valley Turn* will also feature many other familiar convention activities, including prototype tours, contests, silent auction, non-rail events, and a Saturday night program.

On Saturday evening, attendees will gather for the banquet at the hotel featuring roast beef, chicken parmesan, and sea bass. Awards for the convention contests will be presented. Richard (Pat) McKnight, historian and archivist at the Steamtown National Historic site, will present and discuss his program entitled "New York Harbor: A Pictorial Progression."

Without our own region event, the MER's *Delaware Valley Turn* promises to be a great alternative to a NER convention. We hope many will be able to travel to Central New Jersey next Fall. Save the dates — October 22-25. See you there! ☒

Note: The MER Delaware Valley Turn convention committee is looking for volunteers from the Northeastern Region to participate as clinicians, contest entrants and judges, and to be generally active participants in next year's convention program.



OCTOBER 22-25, 2015

Central NY and Sunrise Trail Divisions

Operating Weekends Full Throttle for April

Any NER member who enjoys operating model trains more like the real railroads do is invited to participate in the CNY Division's second annual "Ops 'til You Drop" operations weekend on Saturday and Sunday April 11 and 12.

Sessions will take place on six model railroads in the Utica and Syracuse NY area. Participants will be assigned to three different operating sessions beginning at 12:30 PM Saturday and ending at 2:30 PM Sunday. The registration fee is \$10 and includes all three sessions (including snacks) plus a Saturday night dinner. Participants are responsible for their own overnight lodging (suggested hotels will be supplied upon registration). For more information and/or a registration form, email Bill Brown at <LARCProducts@yahoo.com>.



Following its successful debut in 2014, IslandOps will again host a weekend of operations on layouts in the Long Island, NY, area April 17-19. The weekend's schedule will have one operating session on Friday evening, two on Saturday, a complimentary light dinner and railroad presentations in the evening, and one additional operating session on Sunday. After that, several layouts will host open houses in the afternoon. Many of the great layouts from last year will again be available for selection.

Sponsors of IslandOps include the Sunrise Trail Division of the NMRA, the West Island Model Railroad Club, and the Queens County Model Railroad Association. Pre-registration will be available on the IslandOps Web site, <www.Islandops.org>, with layout operating session selection beginning on February 1. ☒



A Small Division with Big Plans

By JOHN DOEHRING
Coupler Editor

Little Rhody is one of the smaller divisions in the NER (about 70 total members), and it serves Rhode Island, the nation's smallest state (along with neighboring Bristol County, MA). But Little Rhody is far from small when it comes to plans and actions.

New Superintendent Steve Erickson shares a compelling story of a Division on the move and headed forward. Steve says that despite

attracting new members, and enhancing the interest and engagement of existing members. At the train show, continuous clinics were offered throughout the day. Some 20 volunteers each wore name tags with suggested introductions, like "ask me about modeling structures."

To bolster new member efforts, the Division offered to rebate the \$5 show admission fee for those who bought a Rail Pass that day. Fourteen new members signed up – a 20% increase for the Little



The Division's train show last October at the Rhode Island Armory, *above*, was a big hit! Among the highlights, Seacoast Division's Bruce Robinson leads a clinic on operating his Valley Junction Railroad (*top right*). At *bottom right*, LRD Superintendent Steve Erickson and Past NER V.P. Henry Pierce answer questions from modelers – and potential NMRA members. (Photos by Sue Osberg)



Rhody. In total, about 1100 attended the show (verses 600 expected) and 79 dealer tables were sold resulting in a nice profit for the Division. Exit surveys also provided some good feedback on how the team can make the show better next year.

its past successes, area leaders agreed last summer that the Division needed some new ideas. "We were frankly in a bit of a rut with our meetings, newsletter, and annual dinner – all a little too 'same as always.' It was good, but we agreed that we could still take it up a notch."

So a group of the leaders, including Steve, Assistant Superintendent Sue Osberg, Immediate Past Superintendent Brian Osberg, and past NER Vice President Henry Pierce, set out to do just that – beginning with the creation of a new strategic plan. In September, 2014, Division leaders and members gathered at Erickson's home for hot dogs and hamburgers and four hours of discussion concerning the future of the Division. Prior to the meeting, a 10-question survey was sent to all members, and 36 (about 50% of the Division) responded with their input. One of the meeting's results was a new, informal purpose statement:

"We are a friendly group of people, know a lot about trains, and can help you enjoy the hobby."

A second output involved plans for the Division's upcoming train show in October. "It was clear from our discussion that we shouldn't simply just have a train show, but instead we needed to host a show with a purpose," Erickson said. The group worked to redesign the show to meet the mission: increasing visibility of the NMRA,

Little Rhody is also working to improve its monthly meetings, moving beyond weeknights only, to host a few on Saturday (an idea Steve co-opted from the nearby Nutmeg Division). Though 15-20 members attend monthly, it's hoped that weekend events will help to bring in additional participants who can't make it during the week. Leaders also have reinstated a holiday pot luck get together as a way of further increasing the social interaction of Division members.

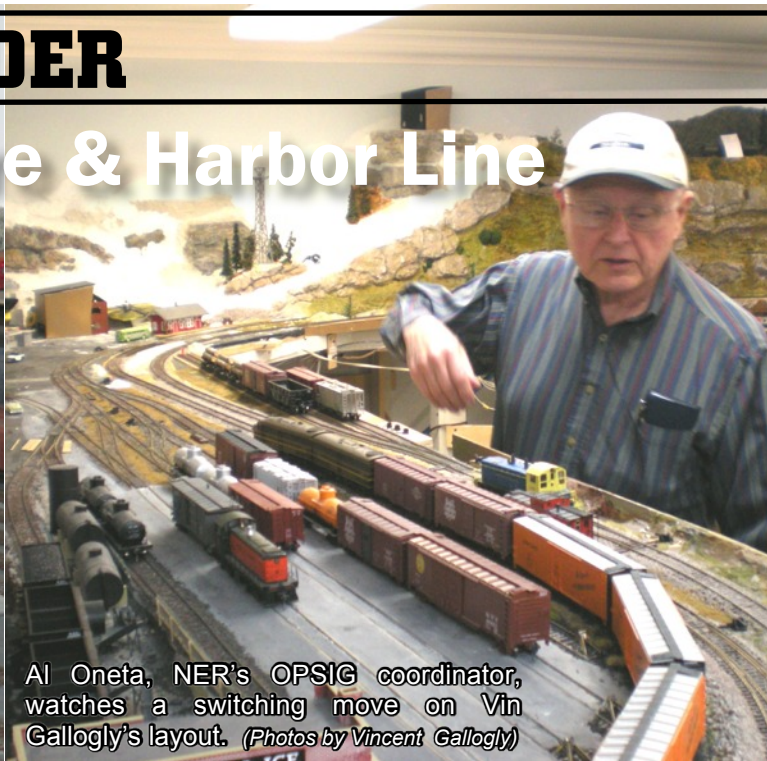
Finally, during the planning retreat leaders discussed the need to better support N scale modelers in the Division, and they agreed to pursue building a Free-mo style modular layout in N scale. This new layout should also help with the goals of increasing visibility, signing up new members, and engaging the existing group of member-modelers.

"Most of us agree that the real value of the NMRA comes through participating in local division activities," said Erickson. "Our job is to make these activities more relevant, useful, and fun – for both new and existing members."

With a new action plan in place, new initiatives identified, and a successful train show on the books for 2014, the Little Rhody Division looks well poised for continued success. Proof yet again that good things often come in small packages! ☒

EMPIRE BUILDER

The Westport Shore & Harbor Line



Al Oneta, NER's OPSIG coordinator, watches a switching move on Vin Gallogly's layout. (Photos by Vincent Gallogly)

By VINCENT GALLOGLY

I re-entered model railroading in 1995 in Westport, CT, and commenced constructing a free-lanced railroad serving industries that required switching — all in a 10-by-10 area. The layout was a two level, two track road with a two track helix. I then joined the NMRA, and a journey through railroad history and model making with friends and fellow enthusiasts began. These friends included Wednesday night groups, Friday night groups, regional layout tours, operating sessions, clinics, conventions, and just plain “come and visit my layout” folks. All contributed to my knowledge.

In 2004, my wife and I decided to downsize to a smaller house, and a new design for the railroad came into being. My friend Phil Monat drafted the trackplan to scale, and armed with that 22”X 36” scale plan and about 500 square feet of open basement, it was off to bench work. Assisted by a Wednesday night group, the railroad supported running trains by 2006.

My road, the Westport Shore & Harbor Line (WS&HL), is a transition era branch line carrying both freight and passengers between Westport, CT, and Mt. Ruth, with intermediate connections at Seanville and Cassieville. The pike is designed for operations.

Four off line areas representing Albany, New Haven, South Bronx (in staging), and Oak Point (a car float transfer area) generate the traffic that runs between offline cities and Westport yard. Principal locations on the layout are named for my daughter Ruth, and grandchildren Sean and Cassie. My wife and sons, along with several fellow modelers, are also recognized by industries and other landmarks. The WS&HL exchanges traffic with both the New York Central and the New Haven.

Westport is the primary yard and terminal area for the WS&HL, hosting an icing facility, engine service facility, round house, coaling, watering, sand, and diesel servicing areas. A nine track arrival/departure and classification yard, handling consists from

both northern (Albany) and southern (New Haven, South Bronx, and Oak Point) points, as well as locals, is always a center of activity.

At Union Station in Cassieville, through passenger trains meet and connect with the WS&HL's local passenger service (powered by two doodle-bugs and an RDC) between Mt Ruth, Cassieville, Seanville, Westport and New Haven.

Switching areas include Seanville, Cassieville, Mt Ruth, and a logging camp siding, along with a car float loading and unloading area at Oak Point. At Mt. Ruth the WS&HL interchanges with the Rutland. Also found here is a seasonal ski resort, where ski excursion trains call at the Mt Ruth Station.

In 2010, I felt it was time to start operating the Westport Shore & Harbor Line. I drew my operating concept from many articles in the OPSIG's *Dispatcher's Office*, and from the personal knowledge of Jim Dahlberg, Dick Foley, Phil Monat, Steve Benezera, and others - as well as my own local FRIMOPS and Second Tuesday members. I wanted to use car cards and way bills, but the task of writing these up called for the use of a computer. Bob Collet suggested I read an article in the *Dispatcher's Office* by Ray Fisher. I liked the cards and waybills he crafted. So I contacted Ray, and that began a relationship that has greatly increased my operations and scheduling knowledge (and Ray created the needed car cards and waybills).

I am often asked when the WS&HL will be completed. My answer is “never.” I keep finding new or different ways to operate the road. At present, I am slowly replacing some Tortoise machines with Tam Valley activated servos. These are smaller and directly programmable, and they reduce the intrusion of switch machines into my staging (which is situated directly under the primary layout). I now have two single track helixes in the layout in addition to a long ramp to keep trains flowing during op sessions.





Save Time! Save a Stamp! Take this survey online now at:

[<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BFY95Q5>](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BFY95Q5)

If you want to participate using this hard copy, please detach or make a copy, and send to:

Coupler Editor

P.O. Box 87

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Northeastern Region Member Survey

About You

Note: Information in this section is collected for overall demographic analysis, and not for individual (personal) records. This survey is confidential.

1. Please provide your resident city, state, and zip code: _____
2. In what age group are you today? (circle) <30 31-40 41-50 51-55 56-60 61-65 66-70 71-75 76-80 80+
3. How many years have you been a member of the NMRA? (circle) <1 1-3 4-10 11-15 15-25 >25
4. With what Division do you associate/participate most often? _____
5. How would you describe your level of modeling experience and skill? (circle)
Beginner Intermediate Accomplished Master
6. How would you describe your level of participation in the model railroading hobby today? (circle)
Very active Somewhat active Not very active Just starting Other _____
7. What, if anything, prevents you from making the kind of progress you'd like in the hobby?

Division

8. How would you describe your level of participation in Division activities? (circle)
Participate in most Participate in some Participate occasionally Participate rarely
Other _____
9. At the Division level, I find the most value in the following (choose up to three)
 - ☐ Regular meetings, meets, and event with other modelers
 - ☐ Participating in modular layout setups
 - ☐ Information in the newsletter/publications
 - ☐ Advice/assistance from other modelers
 - ☐ Friendship and social interaction with other modelers
 - ☐ Volunteering to help others
 - ☐ Other _____
10. Today the most positive thing about my Division is

11. Today the most negative thing about my Division is

12. What (if anything) prevents you from participating more in Division activities?
 - ☐ I'd like to, but don't have the time
 - ☐ It takes away from other hobby time
 - ☐ It's just not my thing, not a priority
 - ☐ No one has ever asked me
 - ☐ Other _____
13. Overall, how would you describe your satisfaction with your Division? (circle)
Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Somewhat unsatisfied Very unsatisfied

14. What could your Division do to increase its value to you? (choose up to three)

- ☐ Have more events
- ☐ Have less events
- ☐ Hold events closer to me
- ☐ Help me with more hands on learning
- ☐ Connect me with more modelers
- ☐ Clarify volunteer and participation opportunities
- ☐ Other _____

Region

15. Describe your level of attendance/participation in the Region Convention (circle)

Participate in most Participate in some Participate occasionally Participate rarely Participate never
Other _____

16. My favorite parts of the Region convention are (choose up to three) (circle)

Clinics Tours Layout Visits Op Sessions Banquet Connecting with Friends Other

17. I would consider attending the Region Convention more often if it (choose up to three)

- ☐ Cost less
- ☐ Had more value
- ☐ Was closer to home
- ☐ Was shorter in duration
- ☐ Had more program focus on _____
- ☐ Had less program focus on _____
- ☐ Other (explain) _____

18. At the Region level, I find the most value in the following (choose up to three)

- ☐ The Region's annual convention
- ☐ Other regional events
- ☐ *The Coupler* Newsletter
- ☐ Assistance from other modelers outside of the Division
- ☐ Friendship of other modelers outside of the Division
- ☐ Volunteering to help with Region activities
- ☐ Region help and support to my Division
- ☐ Other _____

19. Today the most positive thing about the Region is

20. Today the most negative thing about the Region is

21. Overall, how would you describe your satisfaction with your NMRA Region?

Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Somewhat unsatisfied Very unsatisfied

22. What could the Region do to increase its value to you?

- ☐ Add more events
- ☐ Add less events
- ☐ Hold events closer to me
- ☐ Help me with more hands on learning
- ☐ Connect me with more modelers
- ☐ Clarify volunteer and participation opportunities
- ☐ Other _____

Achievement Program

23. Are you participating now in the Achievement Program? (circle) Y N

24. If yes, how many AP certificates have you earned to date? (circle) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

25. If no, what most prevents you from participating? (choose up to three) (circle)

Time Priorities Skill Interest Level Other _____

General

26. What would you like to see NER Region leadership focus most on? What should be the top priorities for the NER?

27. What other comments do you have? What else would you suggest? How can we make the NMRA better?

NER NEW MEMBERS

COMPILED BY MARK HARLOW, NER Office Mgr.

As of 12/15/14

CONNECTICUT
 Bill Bouchelle

Joseph Grisetti
 John Hanlon
 Robert Piccarillo
 Lee Ritchie

MASSACHUSETTS
 Mark J. Hauser
 Lynn Klock
 Kyle Leblank
 Joseph Piscitelli
 Bud Sharrow
 John Titus
 Christopher Yens

MAINE
 Robert Bennett
 Brenda L. Leslie

Kathy Melvin
 Barbara Schermerhorn
 Rob Selberg

NEW HAMPSHIRE
 Matt Keiser

NEW JERSEY
 Peter Cantalupo
 Philip Noberini
 Paul Sommers

NEW YORK
 John Crotty
 Timothy Mahoney
 Ronald F. Moran
 Thomas Ogden
 Sebastian Schiffman
 Earl White

RHODE ISLAND
 Arthur Degre-Markley
 Steve Dolloff
 Stephen John Grabbert

Steve Lakeland
 Joseph O. Langton
 Ryder Lorenzo
 Callan Maytum
 Jan Okolowicz
 Paul Rush
 Brian Spero
 Stephen Tullie
 Richard Wood

VERMONT
 John McLeod

INTERIM NER TREASURER'S REPORT

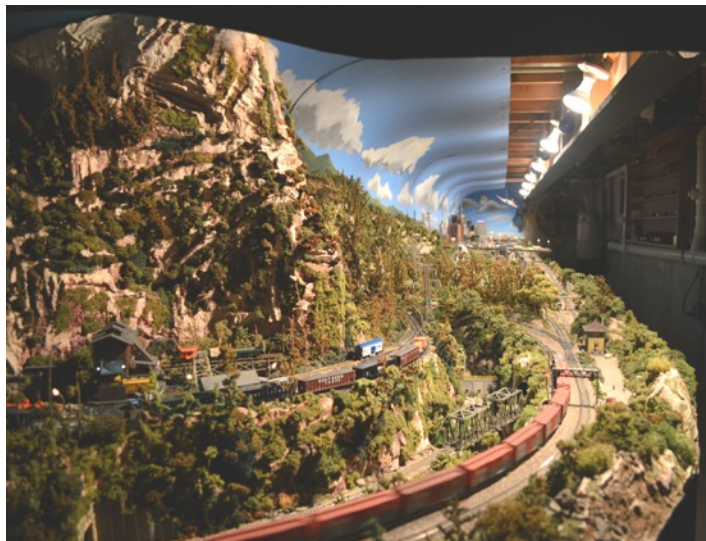
by PETER MCKENNEY
 NER Treasurer

Thanks to the persistence and foresight of the NER leadership over the last several years, the Northeastern Region NMRA now has achieved a stable and strong financial position so that it can adequately support NER conventions, *The Coupler*, and its 11 active divisions. The recently adopted comprehensive division distribution policy resulted in the largest distribution to the divisions in the history of the Region: \$7,109 in September. Future distributions will occur in early March and September of whatever amounts of dues paid by NER members to the NMRA that it chooses to rebate to the NER. The divisions will also receive annually half of the annual appreciation, if any, of NER's liquid assets.

The fiscal year of the NER starts on June 1. Financial operations so far in this fiscal year are slightly below break even, but that is because *The Coupler* cost double the normal amount for the July issue because it was an election issue. The large distribution to divisions in September substantially reduced the cash on hand and the net equity of the NER, but that reduction was anticipated and deemed to be appropriate. The financial results of the New England Diamonds 2014 convention are not reflected in these figures as the NER Convention Committee maintains its own accounts. So far this fiscal, financial results are matching expectations. The following simplified balance sheet and profit and loss statements reflect the fiscal year results through December 11, 2014.

	12/11/14	06/30/14		7/1/2014- 12/11/2014
ASSETS			INCOME	
Checking account	3,619	10,594	Dues Rebate Remittance from NMRA	1,488
Reimbursement receivable		9	Newsletter subscriptions revenue	2,374
Marketable securities	50,329	51,218	Newsletter advertising revenue	150
Security deposit	400	400	Interest income	3
Total Assets	54,348	62,221	Change in value of invested funds	(432)
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			Total Revenue	3,583
Liabilities	-	-	EXPENSES	
Equity	54,348	62,221	Coupler expenses	3,904
Total Liabilities and Equity	54,348	62,221	Investment management fees	375
			Office expenses	20
			NMRA credit card fee for subscription collection	14
			Total Expenses	4,313
			Net Profit/(Loss)	(730)

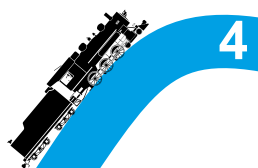
All Aboard for the Tour de Chooch



Photos by John Doehring

The Tour de Chooch is a home layout open house, held each year over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend in eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Founded in 1994, this past tour boasted some 26 superb layouts — including everything from single owner shelf layouts to massive club empires.

Tour de Chooch isn't an official NMRA sponsored event, but it was originally formed (and is managed today) by active NMRA leaders as a public outreach and celebration of model railroading for the entire community. ☒



Planes, trains, and automobiles! Among the layouts on tour is Ric Keller's large, museum style, N scale "New England Rails." (*Photos 1, 2, and 3*) There's plenty of scenery to astound. Ric's turntable is crowded with B&M power. Meanwhile, (*Photo 4*) the B&M local approaches on Ace Cutter's operations-oriented HO scale "Atlantic Coast and Eastern."

Tour de Chooch

5



6



7



8



Photos by John Doebling



9



B&M 4-6-0 #2101 heads for the mill with a train of logs on Tom Oxnard's HO scale "Boston & Maine Railroad" (Photo 5). More of Tom's modeling is displayed in Photo 6 as workers prepare to load cars at the wharf.

In Photo 7, it's a busy day on Ernie Poole's N Scale "Montana Rail Link." Eight feet of portable modules (Photo 8) become part of "B&M Eastern Route" layout owner James VanBokkelen's HO scale home layout. Another scene on Ace Cutter's HO "Atlantic Coast and Eastern" (Photo 9) features a busy B&M engine facility. There are a lot of details to study in this town (Photo 10) on the right of way of the large HO "Chesapeake System" of the North Shore Model Railroad Club in Wakefield, MA.

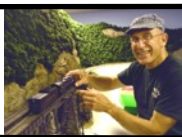
10





WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD

By GLENN GLASSTETTER



Batch Building

Batch Building? No, that's not one of my typos that *Coupler* Editor John Doehring didn't catch. Whether you are scratch building or building kits, it pays to build your models in batches if you need to build multiples of the same, or very similar, models.

Structures

I've just completed scratch building two freight houses and three team track freight platforms. The freight houses are identical, except for the back of one, which is not seen.

be scratch built in the future. The Northeastern board and batten wood siding for the coal houses and speeder sheds was all cut at the same time. I brush paint wood (as opposed to Evergreen styrene siding, which looks better when spray painted). Doors and windows for most C&O structures were painted in two shades of gray, which I custom mix. I hand paint these, but if I had a lot to do at once, I would spray one color and then hand paint the second color. I expect the miners' housing will eventually be made of Evergreen and will be spray painted.

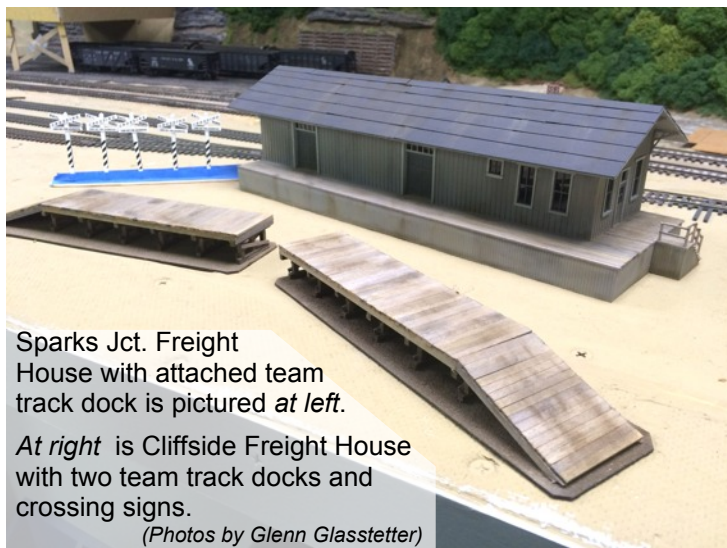
Rolling Stock

Several years ago, Andy Clermont told me he

More on Painting

Even if you have pre-decorated kits from the same manufacturer, assembling them in batches will ultimately save you time, especially if you spray paint the underbody, truck frames and wheels. Speaking of which, I have seen several multiple wheel painting fixtures available for purchase, or you can make your own. I made mine several years ago along with a truck frame painting fixture, which allows me to spray paint 25 wheel sets and 12 truck frames at one time. These fixtures were described in an article entitled "Ten Cool Tools" in the February 2004 issue of *Model Railroader*.

Whether it's structures, cars, detail parts, or anything else for various projects that are to be painted the same color, spraying them all at once will save time. I have a cabinet drawer that I use to collect items for various projects that will be painted the same color



Sparks Jct. Freight House with attached team track dock is pictured at left.

At right is Cliffside Freight House with two team track docks and crossing signs.

(Photos by Glenn Glasstetter)

The freight platforms are identical with one attached to a freight house while the other two stand alone on separate team tracks.

I selectively compressed the freight houses based on photos of the C&O Ronceverte, WV, freight house. The freight docks are modeled directly from plans of a standard C&O dock published in a *Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Magazine*. The Ronceverte structure had an attached freight dock similar to the plans that I had, so why not build all three at once.

I saved time by cutting all of the styrene and wood parts together. I spray painted both buildings at the same time, and pre-stained all of the strip wood (as I discussed in this column in the April-May-June 2014 issue of *The Coupler*).

A number of small structures replicating C&O 10 ton coal houses and speeder/maintenance sheds, as well as family housing for coal miners, will need to

built seventeen Dennis Storzeck Rutland resin box cars at once. The cars required a number of different processes to complete – build, paint, decal and weather. Andy said he was able to complete some of the work on the coffee table in front of the TV. Although doing the same procedure 17 times in a row became tedious, doing it in front of the TV helped to relieve the tedium. And, efficiency is gained with experience. Again, an assembly line process was used to complete the remaining tasks. All told, this saved Andy considerable time completing these cars.

Andy is one of the best model railroader time managers that I know. He always has a number of projects ready to go that he can work on in small increments of time, and he is very diligent about devoting some time to the hobby before he goes to work. Since he lives quite close to work, he usually goes home for lunch to work on his railroad. Over time, Andy has accomplished quite a lot during those short work sessions.

– and then I paint them all at once when I need one.

Another Advantage

After mastering a certain task, I sometimes find that I forgot how I did it a year or more later. The crossing signs that can be seen in the photo of the two docks and one freight house are five of 20 that I need on my layout. These Alkem Scale Models C&O style cross bucks have a wraparound barber pole style decal on the post. It took a couple of tries to develop a method of encouraging the decal to snuggle down around the four corners without coming apart. By building them all at once, I won't have to re-learn how to accomplish that task when I need more.

Building a model railroad involves a lot of repetitious tasks. By batching some of these tasks together, we can save time.

OK, break's over. Back to work! ☒

One Chore Re-examined

Finding “Fun” in Ballasting!

By RON PALMQUIST

One of the model railroading jobs that I dislike the most is ballasting – spreading all of that miniature crushed rock between the rails and ties and along the track, and cementing it in place (while remembering to leave enough space for uncoupling magnets and working turnout points). But I am at that point on my Chicago Creek Branch of the Evergreen Central Railroad, a division of the Sandy River Lines.

I bought a pair of medicine droppers (one straight tip and one bent tip) for \$1.99 at the local drug store and thought I would be ready to go. I have been unsuccessfully looking and looking through all my references for the correct ratio of white glue to water. Well, I experimented and failed. (Oh, I know I should know this, but I don't. So, sue me! And, pour me a second cup of Joe!) I have dry ballast laid on the track that really needs firming up. So, I hollered for help and received a number of replies. I'm sharing these here for your enlightenment as well.

Tom Jones, Grand Junction, CO: “I have been doing a lot of ballasting over the last month (a lot still to go). I spray my ballast with 70% or 91% isopropyl alcohol (drug store less than \$2 a quart). I pour it into an old hairspray pump container to spray it, but any sprayer should work. I mix my white glue half and half with water in an old mustard bottle – the kind with a twist open top similar to the small glue bottles. I thoroughly spray the ballast with the isopropyl then drizzle glue until everything is white and soaked. I've found eyedroppers too slow.”

Bill Gaver, NH: “I use a 50/50 formula, i.e. 50% white glue, 50% water pre-mixed before application by dropper. I pre-wet ballast with alcohol applied by dropper. The alcohol hastens and spreads glue/water mixture to all ballast surfaces including the base on which the ballast and track ties rest. Just plain rubbing alcohol sprayed or dropper applied to ballast will do the “trick.” No need to use the more expensive denatured alcohol. I use push pins (those

w/multi-colored plastic head) to hold trackage in place while applying alcohol and glue. Remove pins after 18-24 hour period. Helps retain track alignment during application and drying process.”

Dwight Smith, NH: “First I spray the ballast until wet with denatured



alcohol & water. Ratio? Heck, I don't know, I just mix the two ingredients in a spray bottle and let it go at that. Before this mix dries, I use the medicine dropper to apply the white glue and water combination onto the ballast drop by drop. Ratio glue to water? Again I don't have an exact unit of measurement, just get the glue to a consistency that it drops from the dropper and spreads among the granules of ballast.”

Rick Shoup, FL: “Proportions do not need to be precise. My club (in Florida) sprays the denatured alcohol on the ballast and pours on diluted white glue with a drop or so of detergent to keep the glue from beading up. It reduces surface tension. Let dry and vacuum the track and then put on more ballast in the bare spots. On my (home) layout, I never bothered with the alcohol and just went from dry ballast to diluted white glue. Some times I sprayed the ballast first with water but not always.”

Stan Jordan, South Portland, ME: “Well, I use four parts of water to one part of Matte Medium plus a

‘squirt’ of clear liquid detergent (don't use colored detergent or your ballast will be colored) to make the mix flow readily into the ballast. Probably the same concept would work with white glue instead of Matte Medium (which is sort of like a glue).”

Roger Robar, NH: “I'm sure you will have several replies and all of them will work. I thin my glue down about 50/50. This does not need to be exact. Instead of using water and a couple of drops of dishwasher detergent, I use 91 percent isopropyl alcohol; you will not believe how well this works.”

Armed with the words of wisdom from all of these experienced modelers, I began ballasting work on the trackage around Chicago Creek Station. A couple of passenger platforms tucked up close to the track added to the “fun.” And, what do you know? It worked! Thanks, guys. The next cup is on me. ☒

Ron has been a member of the NMRA since high school days in Denver, and is the retired editor of the Switch Tower newsletter of the Seacoast Division.



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM ROUNDUP

By BILL BROWN MMR, AP Chair

Don't Overlook "Motive Power" Category

Of all the AP categories, the one that seems to have the least submissions is "Motive Power." Many folks who dive into the Achievement Program seeking an MMR are scared away from this category. The requirements seem too difficult for most people, since they require one to scratchbuild a locomotive, as well as to super-detail two others. Most do not know even how to approach scratchbuilding a locomotive, so they immediately pass over this category. My message today is that this certificate might be easier to accomplish than it looks. I will get to scratchbuilding in just a moment.



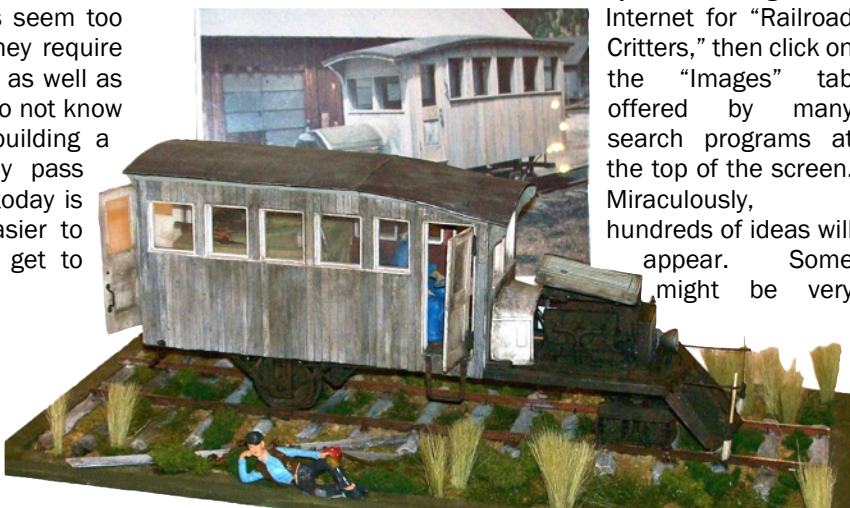
Let's start with the two super-detailed submissions.

This is an area that many of us have already dabbled in. Take a stock locomotive (either steam or diesel) and add a bit of detail. MU hoses, real coal in the tender, an engineer, etc. You can easily search the Internet for some photos of your prototype railroad equipment, and then add some details specific to that prototype. Add the proper weathering, and your TWO super detailed submissions will be ready to go.

Now for that scratchbuilt engine...

This is the requirement that has candidates running away before they even consider it. Now some of you have the skills to solder and fabricate an intricate brass model, but many of us MMRs do not. Remember that the AP rules only require that your submission be a "self-propelled vehicle." That is, when placed on the tracks with power applied, it must run. Further scrutiny of the rules tells us that many of the most difficult parts do not have to be scratchbuilt. You can start with commercially available motors, gears, drivers, wheels, couplers, light bulbs and electronics, trucks, paint, decals, bell, marker and qualification lights, brake fittings, and basic shapes of wood, plastic, metal, etc. Now you can decide how elaborate your

model will be, but I am here to tell you that your choice does not need to be complicated (and can actually be a lot of fun). Start by searching the Internet for "Railroad Critters," then click on the "Images" tab offered by many search programs at the top of the screen. Miraculously, hundreds of ideas will appear. Some might be very



easy to make, and add something special to your railroad!

I have included here some examples of my search that can be easily built, starting with a commercial power truck for the propulsion system. The rest is easy for most MMR candidates. I have also included a photo of my scratchbuilt submission. Since I model the Colorado narrow gauge, and used to do some "G Scale" (F scale really), I chose to model the Casey Jones rail bus that I photographed one year in Silverton. I started with a simple motor and some race car gears from a local hobby shop. These were linked by a rubber band. The frame was fabricated with some scrap brass. The rest is wood and glazing. The project was a great deal of fun and added a lot to my collection.

Don't too quickly overlook the "Motive Power" category of the AP. It just might be easier than other certificates on the way to your MMR! ☒



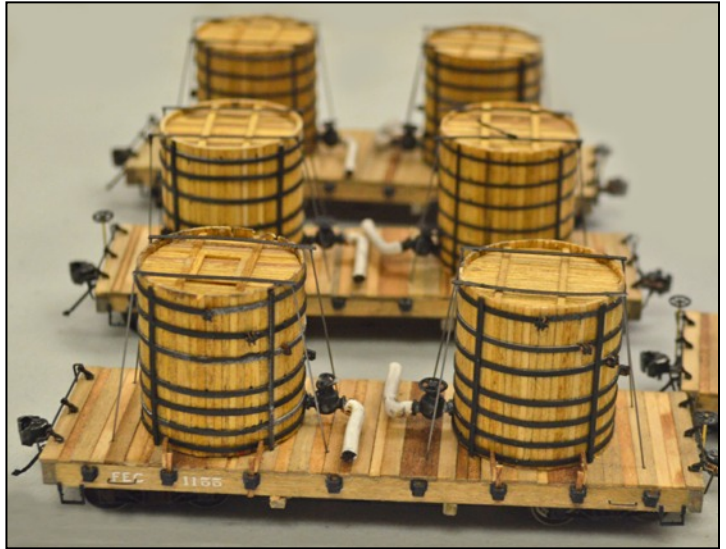
**What is it?
It doesn't
matter! It just
has to run!!**



A Hobby “Side Trip”

My layout building is at times interrupted by side trips into aspects of model railroading I find interesting. For example, in early 2014 my wife and I headed to Florida for some sun and respite from the extreme cold gripping the Northeast. There, I visited a book store in Marathon Key and came upon the book *“The Railroad that Died at Sea – The Florida East Coast’s Key West Extension”* by Pat Parks and Tom Corcoran. As I learned, this road was abandoned following a 1935 hurricane, and significant portions of the right of way and bridges were then “re-purposed” as US Route 1. The story was gripping, and on page 46 was a photograph of Cyprus water tanks on wooden flat cars, traversing the Long Key viaduct toward Key West. I had been contemplating completing the Cars Certificate in the Achievement Program. Four scratch-built cars were needed. Wooden flat cars with Cyprus tanks? Why not?

A three month side trip from working on my Westport Shore & Harbor Line (page 7) ensued. Research to determine dimensions, years of use, car numbering etc. involved contacting Florida East Coast modelers – with almost all of these found through NMRA contacts. I scratch built four of these cars, and through these received the Cars Certificate at the 2014 NER Convention in Palmer, MA. “Cars” was my seventh certificate earned, and I now held one in each of the four required categories, so I had completed the requirements for Master Model Railroader. I received that award and recognition at the Palmer convention as well. — Vincent Gallogly ☒



In judging at the NER 2014 Convention in Palmer, Vin Gallogly “cleaned up” with his FEC Cyprus tank cars. He earned an honorable mention for his FEC Cyprus tank #1135, a third for his Cyprus tank #1133, a second for his Cyprus tank #1155, and a first for his Cyprus tank #1131.



Photo by Mike Shanahan

How about a place of “honor” for one of your model railroading friends? That’s what Mike Shanahan did for Tom Kehoskie. In fact, there’s Tom now bedding down in an alley on Mike’s HO scale Brunswick and Tuscan Railroad.

Tom’s resting in the box labeled “Tom’s Place” with the latest

issue of the *Brunswick Daily Blab* newspaper over his head and a rat at his feet. Mike said he is honoring Tom because he gave him the Idea for this neat scene.

The boxes are made of brown grocery bags and the tarp is tissue paper painted Big Sky Blue. Just shows you that you’ll never know what idea you’ll find around the next corner! ☒