

THE COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION



No. 260 • JAN-MAR 2016

Much to Do in St. John 5

Joint convention planning full schedule

Albany in HO Scale 9

NER convention includes unique layout

Build a 'Soldier Wall' 12

This should hold back forces of nature



Saint John Shifts to 'Notch-8' with Convention Plans



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



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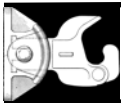
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COVER PHOTO

A group of horses go about their business as two MLW C630 locomotives demonstrate a lot more horsepower, rumbling past them on Steve McMullin's *Carleton Railway*. Steve's layout is one of many that will be on tour during the joint *Port City Rails* convention in Saint John, NB, in May.
(Photo by Lou McIntyre)

REGULAR FEATURES

Achievement Program Report	4
New Members	4
Empire Builder	9
Workin' On the Railroad	14
Made in the NER	15
NER News and Events	16



FROM THE EDITOR . . .

By JEFF PASTON
Coupler Editor

Consider this our “moving up” issue. John Doebling assumes duties as NER president, and I move into *The Coupler’s* editor spot. In making this transition, I would be remiss if I didn’t thank John and our many contributors for stepping up and filling these pages.

And “fill,” they did! First, after sharing a convention with the MER in 2015, we now have, not one, but two conventions in which to take part in 2016! Both of these are highlighted in this issue.



Steve McMullin tells us about *Port City Rails 2016*

starting on page 5. Lou McIntyre went above and beyond to supply more pictures than we could use.

This looks like a “not to miss” event. Saint John offers a lot of modeling and prototype information many of us will find useful in our layout planning. Especially notable is all of the industrial trackage around town. I see convention planners have a number of prototype tours at a few of these industries. And, New Brunswick Southern Railway has an excursion service so conventioners can enjoy the scenic coast of the province.

Switch gears a bit when you read our next article on page 9. Bert Pfligl profiles the work of modeler Vic Roman in our “Empire Builder” feature, which also gives a taste of one of the layouts you’ll see during the NER 2016 convention, *The Pacemaker*.

Vic’s layout and its structures take us back to the convention’s host city, Albany, in 1948. Vic has truly captured the feel of New York State’s capital city of that era.

Bob Dennis from the Garden State Division introduces us to a “Soldier Wall.” I’ll let Bob explain it starting on page 12. Here’s a hint: If you remember your history lessons and recall they way British troops fought in the 18th century, you’ll recognize that “Soldier Wall!”

The issue is rounded out with Glenn Glasstetter’s column and how he solves problems in his model world, and Mike Tylick’s profile of Highball Graphics in our “Made in the NER” series.

Welcome aboard! ☒



OPEN DOEHR

By JOHN DOEHRING
NER President

A Year for Conventionality

I enjoy being different, a “maverick” in my thoughts and actions. So why be conventional? Well, I’m thinking today about conventions - our annual get-togethers as model railroaders. 2016 is lining up as a doozy for NER area conventions.



Let’s start first with our own annual Northeastern Region Convention - the 2016 *Pacemaker* - in Albany, NY, courtesy of the Hudson-Berkshire Division. The H-B group has been working on this event for quite a while now, and they’re about ready to roll out the red carpet on clinics, layout visits, prototype tours, operating sessions - and all the normal trimmings of a first class NER gala. The dates for this year’s convention are September 15-18. Ink this in on your calendar now, and join the fun in Albany this fall. I’m 100% convinced this will be a winner - a can’t miss event for all of us in the NER.

Now, once you’ve got the *Pacemaker* booked, there are several additional options for you to consider some conventionality desserts on top of the main course.

The first of these is the *Port City Rails* in St. John, New Brunswick, May 19-22. The Northeastern Region is an enthusiastic supporter of this convention hosted by the St. John Society of Model Railroaders (SJSRM) and the Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders (MFMR). This team hosted a similar gathering in 2010, and many NER members participated then. The Doebling clan made this trip, and it was a memorable for our young kids - red rocks, reversing rivers, hotel swimming pools. (We probably wouldn’t know much about Atlantic Canada without this trip, which we extended to include extra days on Prince Edward Island.) Note too, the weak Canadian dollar means that your weekend adventure will cost you 30% less than just a couple of years ago. Anyone looking for a deal?

Next up, how about the Annual National Narrow Gauge Convention in Augusta Maine, September 7-10? Wow, that doesn’t happen every year! This year’s program is sponsored in part by the NER’s Seacoast Division, and it’s right in our backyard. At the risk of falling in love with a new scale and modeling opportunity (modules in On 2 ½?), I’m planning on being there as well.

Of course there is more. Our neighbors in the Niagara Frontier Region (NFR) are running their event in Ottawa, Ontario, in May. The Midwestern Region (MER) is hosting in Raleigh, NC - a little farther away, but maybe a good fit in your 2016 travel plans? And of course, we’ve also got the national big tent in Kansas City, KS this year, July 3-10. Are you thinking about attending? Wouldn’t that be something?

If you haven’t attended a regional convention in the past (or for a while), I want to encourage you to consider it this year. Obviously there are many choices. If you’re confused about these - or have any questions about how to get the most out of the convention experience - just drop me a line at <john@idoehring.com> - I’d love to connect with you about this.

Member feedback points to distance and cost as two big constraints to attending. I get it (and I’ve lived it) so let me share with you exactly how to solve this challenge: *find a buddy*. It’s that simple - you look around, talk to a few people in your division, and find someone to commute with and share a room. These are the big costs - not the registration fee! At last year’s MER convention, my HUB Division buddy Bill Barry was my weekend partner - we split gas, tolls, meals, and hotel rooms - and had a great time getting to know each other. (Bill is now the only non-family member who has driven my beloved BMW - but that’s another story!)

Normally I’d call for members to think and draw outside the lines, and to take action beyond the norm. But this year, I want to challenge each and every one of you to think more *conventionally* - at least when it comes to our convention. What do you say we band together and break the system! Let’s get more people to register for Albany than they’re expecting - because you will enjoy yourself more than you thought possible, and you’ll likely become a NER believer in just one trip. So Albany first, and then pick an additional event (close by or a priority for modeling) and sign up for that one too. I guarantee you’ll be glad you did. ☒



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM REPORT

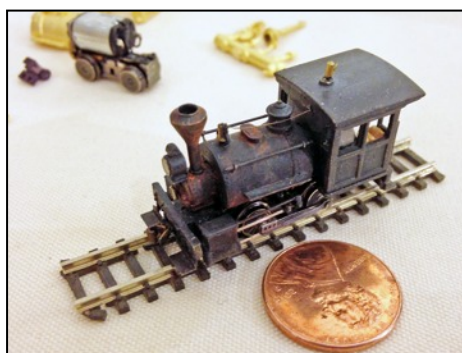
By BILL BROWN MMR
AP Chair

Notes from the National Convention; Questions About 3D Printed Models

The week spent in Oregon for this past August's national convention proved to be very rewarding... but very busy. As many of you know, I have taken a position as an assistant chair of the national contest room, which necessitates travel each summer to the national convention. I want to focus here on three

rail facilities and great vantage points.

When speaking of rail lines one must mention the outstanding light rail service in and around Portland. The Tri-Met system has four lines crisscrossing the downtown, extending out to each suburb. The system is super easy to understand and a blast to



aspects of the many, many things that took place that week.

First, Portland is a GREAT railroad town. Union Pacific and BNSF have a very strong presence there due mainly to the geography of the region. Sandwiched between tall mountains, Portland sits at the confluence of the Colombia and Willamette Rivers. Both banks of both rivers serve to be the only level routes for this important commercial artery for the Pacific Northwest. Much freight and passenger traffic pass through with numerous historic

ride. Amazingly senior citizens (oh yes, unfortunately I qualify these days) get to ride all day for \$2 with unlimited transfers.

My second thought here has to do with the emergence of 3D printing and how it will be handled in the contest room. As you might know, when a model is judged, some of the point value is based on what percentage is scratch built, as well as the complexity of the construction. The contest staff has engaged in extensive and deep discussions of how to handle models made with a 3D printer.



First and foremost the entire contest staff must work to enhance their knowledge of the entire 3D print process. One approach might be to develop a checklist of the potential steps. Did the modeler draft his own plans for each part? Did he scan or program the parts into the computer himself? Did he "print" each part on his own or contract out for the printing service? How many parts were involved and what was the level of complexity of the assembly? Only by answering all of these questions, and having a firm understanding of each step, can a contest judge evaluate the 3D printed model compared with traditional scratch built modeling.



This is quite a conversation! For the first time in a very long time, the contest room conditions are being changed through technology. One contest entry at Portland was of a Z scale locomotive created with a 3D printer. The builder reported that it has 22 individual parts that were printed and assembled. That's quite a remarkable model!

Lastly I should mention our four days of post-convention statewide exploration and photography. The Pacific Northwest offers outstanding views with profound changes of scenery within a day's drive. Portland is a fairly good sized city in a valley. A short drive leads to pine forests much like the Adirondacks before ascending the beautiful Cascade Mountains. Just a short distance eastward leads one down into arid high plains resembling those of Utah and Arizona. Diverting northward leads one back to the Colombia River and it's beautiful westward drive through it's gorge. Winding roads on both shores on the way back to Portland provided views of Mount Hood and Mount St Helens towering over massive rock formations and waterfalls, as BNSF and UP trains hug the beautiful scenery next to the roadway. This was my first venture into the states of Washington and Oregon, and it was well worth the effort! ☒



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NER Office Manager

As of 1/1/16

QUEBEC

Richard Larocque
Jean-Paul G. Patenaude

NEW BRUNSWICK

Miles Hall

CONNECTICUT

Robert Bazinet
Nathaniel Belknap
Anna Marie Lane
William Meier
Bill Morse
Gary Norman

MAINE

Owen Buck
Gregory Maxwell

MASSACHUSETTS

Joel Bouchard
Andrew Cerier
Jonathan Copeland
Jack Duffy
Keith Edwards
Joe Fitzgerald
Jerry Grochow
Thomas Hart
Roberta Hoffman
Tina Kerkam
Roy C. Larkin
Paul J. Meade

Stephen Ruma
Stephen Schneider
Dave Sefcik
Jeffrey Vannais
Peter B. Zaleski

NEW HAMPSHIRE

William M. Dearborn
Bill Hodges
Christopher Oliver
Ron Wood

NEW JERSEY

David Abeles
Warren Walsh

NEW YORK

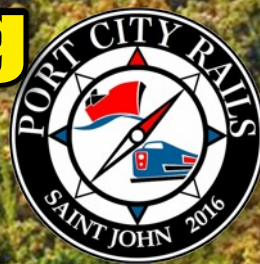
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George Lightfoot
Mitchell J. Sahagian
Arthur F. Sintef

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Daniel A. Drapeau
Tom Emmett
Jose Fernandez
Bob Gunnib
Craig Hurder
Williard M. Miner
D.K. Paul
David Proctor
Norman Roch
Michael Tomlin

MAY
19
THURSDAY

Proto and Modeling Opportunities Abound in St. John



By STEVE McMULLIN

With people from both Canada and the US already registering for the combined convention in May, *Port City Rails 2016* in Saint John, New Brunswick, will be an exceptional opportunity for members of the NER and the Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders to learn from one another as we share in clinic presentations, operate together on some great model railroads, participate in layout tours, get first-hand information about prototypical rail practices at local industries, and meet new and old friends. The convention will be held at the Howard Johnson's Fort Howe Plaza Hotel May 19 to 22. Hotel rooms can be reserved for the convention at the rate of \$99 per room (Canadian funds). People crossing the border to attend the convention are reminded that

(Continued on next page)



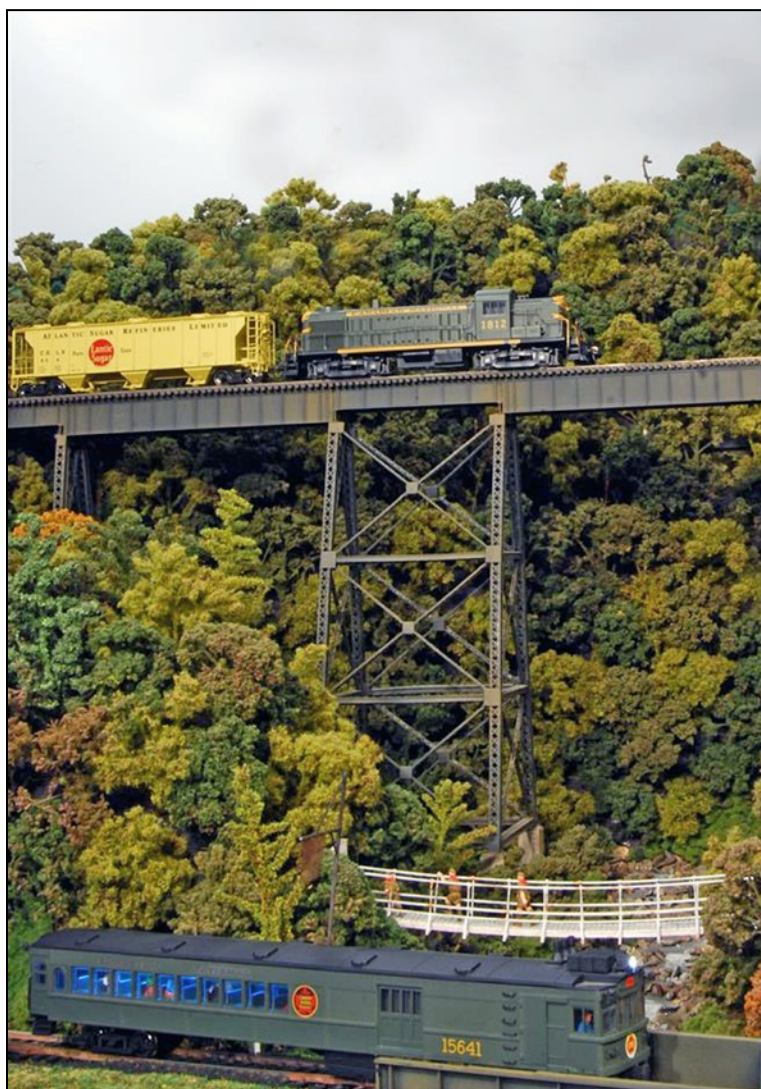
Photos by Lou McIntyre

Port City Rails



A VIA train departs Saint John on Doug Devine's *Island Central Railway* layout, above. Below left, multiple crossings of a river on Lou McIntyre's *Hampton & St Martins Railway* — a CN freight heads over a trestle, while a local "Doodlebug" gives passengers a scenic view from a lower

vantage point, and Boy Scouts take in the scenery from a walking bridge. Below right, Fredericton Jct. is depicted on Bob Boyce's layout as the Saint John area scene appeared in the 1960s. On page 5, switchers lead a log train through an agricultural area on Lou McIntyre's layout.



(Continued from page 5)

they should have a passport or other accepted government travel document.

The convention planning committee has lined up a full program from Thursday evening through Sunday that includes a large public show at the Lord Beaverbrook Rink (which is adjacent to the convention hotel), a meet-and-greet social time on Friday night, and a convention banquet on Saturday.

There are lots of industries served by rail in Saint John. Among the opportunities to learn about prototype operations in Saint John is an option for a limited number of convention registrants to tour Irving Paper, a local paper mill. The Port of Saint John is a major rail customer and is about to begin a \$205 million modernization of its facilities that will include expansion of its rail capacity. The PotashCorp Terminal is also expanding its facilities and adding two new rail sidings in its yard. The Irving Oil Refinery is also a major rail





customer in the city. Add to these industrial railfanning opportunities the NB Southern Railway and the Canadian National Railway's busy yard operations in the city.

The *Saint John Society of Model Railroaders* is a very active 30-member club that will be your hosts for the convention. They have three modular layouts that they open to the public each month at the Lancaster Mall. The new O-scale modular layout, along with the club's N-Scale and HO-scale layouts, will be open during the layout tours, as will several HO-scale home layouts and an impressive O-scale layout and collection — all located in the greater Saint John area.

A warm welcome awaits you in May. Saint John is a six-hour drive from the Boston area, a nine-hour drive from Albany, and a 10-hour drive from New York City. Follow Interstate 95 to Bangor, Maine, and then take Route 9 to the Canadian border at Calais, Maine. After crossing the border, follow NB Route 1 for one hour to the convention hotel in Saint John. Details and registration information are available on the convention Web site www.portcityrails2016.org. ☒

NB Southern's excursion train will be one of the *Port City Rails* venues. In this view from 2010, the train is carrying model railroaders past the convention hotel and across the Reversing Rapids Bridge.

Below, taken from one of the busiest railfan locations in the city, CN freight 406W arrives at Saint John's Island Yard from Moncton. There will be plenty of prototype activity to see while in Saint John!



Industries abound in the Port of St. John. This photo shows many of those industries in the eastern side of the city served by rail and ship (hence, the convention theme, *Port City Rails*), including a potash loading terminal in the foreground, newsprint loading facility from one of pulp and paper mills (in the middle distance), and the Irving Oil Refinery in the background. The three smokestacks on the left are part of an electric power generating station.





PORT CITY RAILS CONVENTION REGISTRATION

MAY 19 - 22 2016

Saint John NB

Name

(as you want to have it appear on your convention name tag)

Mailing

Address

City

**Prov /
State**

**Postal /
Zip Code**

Phone

()

E-Mail

(if you provide an e-mail address, we will send you a message to confirm your registration)

Because of the significant difference in the US Dollar / Canadian Dollar exchange rate, we offer you the option of paying in **either US dollars or Canadian dollars**

Convention Registration	Cost \$30CDN or \$25USD
Includes: access to the show site, social events, workshops and clinics, model and photo contest (competition open only to MFMR members), and layout tours	\$

+

Saturday Evening Banquet	# of Tickets	Cost Per Person	Total Banquet Cost
Awards Banquet (see website for more details) - Includes tax and gratuity. Please choose your meat entrée: Hip of Beef <input type="checkbox"/> or Chicken Breast <input type="checkbox"/>		\$30CDN or \$25USD	\$

=

Make Cheque or Bank Money Order Payable to:

Saint John Society of Model Railroaders

GRAND TOTAL

(Sorry, **Postal Money Orders** can not be accepted)

\$

Operating Sessions (Please identify 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices)					
See Convention website for layout descriptions					
Carleton Railway	Thursday May 19 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	↔ OR	Friday May 20 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
Island Central Railway	Thursday May 19 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	↔ OR	Friday May 20 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hampton & St Martins Railway	Thursday May 19 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	↔ OR	Friday May 20 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
CPR McAdam Sub / CN Sussex Sub	Thursday May 19 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	↔ OR	Friday May 20 6:00pm	<input type="checkbox"/>

Send Registration Form and Payment to:

SJSMR
c/o George Sabean
38 Mallard Drive
Grand Bay - Westfield NB
Canada
E5K 3K7

You will receive your convention package upon arrival at the convention site
Sign-ups for workshops, clinics and layout tours will be at that time

Convention activities will take place at the **Lord Beaverbrook Rink, Main Street**, and the **Howard Johnson Fort Howe Plaza and Convention Center**



For more information, see our website at portcityrails2016.org

If you have any questions, please contact us by e-mail at:

louism@nbnet.nb.ca

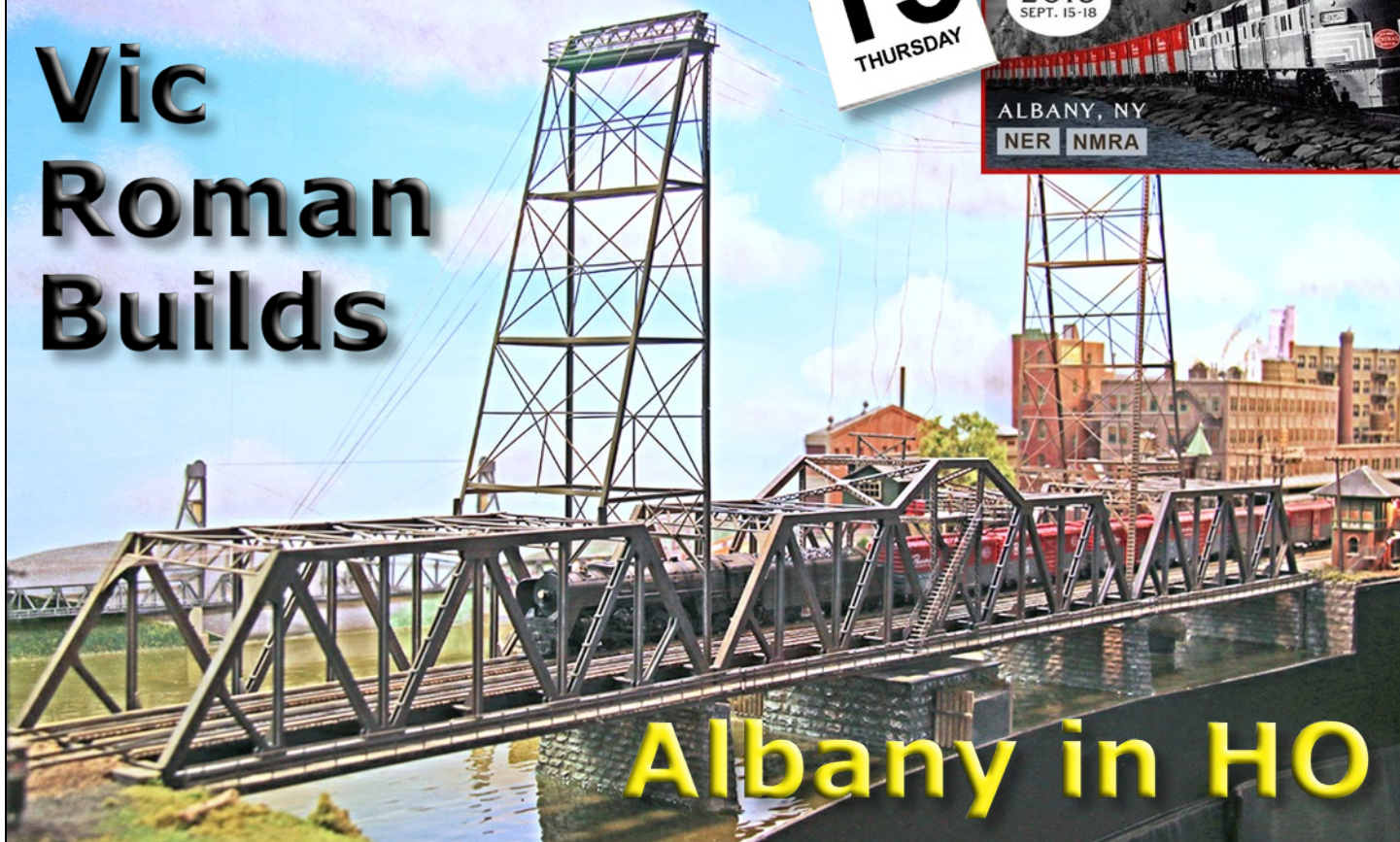




SEPTEMBER
15
THURSDAY



Vic Roman Builds



Albany in HO

When the NER convenes in Albany on September 15, one of the model railroad convention-goers will visit shrinks the host city to HO scale and takes us back to an earlier era.

By BERT PFLEGL
Photos by the Author

Vic Roman has captured several iconic Albany landmarks on his Hudson Division of the New York Central Railroad; the centerpiece being the former Albany Union Station, a stunning Beaux-Arts building that represented the New York Central and Delaware & Hudson railroads in the New York State capital. But, Vic's railroad is more than that one amazing building, though, which is why it is a featured layout for the convention.

The layout is set in the fall of 1948. The line has 150 feet of mainline that runs from West Staging through Albany, passing that gorgeous station, across the Maiden Lane Bridge to Rensselaer with its engine service facilities, then southward to the City of Hudson, and on to Tivoli and the NYC's water pans that kept steam engines moving north and south. From there, it goes to East Staging and back around the loop before completing the entire circuit. Vic has expanded his house so that he can increase the size of his layout — but that won't occur until after the

convention. That expansion will include NYC's West Albany yard and shops and the Albany Hill.

Vic has used artist's license in the creation of his railroad, and when you see it, you will see what an artist he truly is. Albany was created to give viewers the impression of the city in 1948 without being an exact replica, and this it does very well. Areas and buildings are compressed. There is just the large Maiden Lane Bridge across the Hudson River (no longer standing), but no Livingston

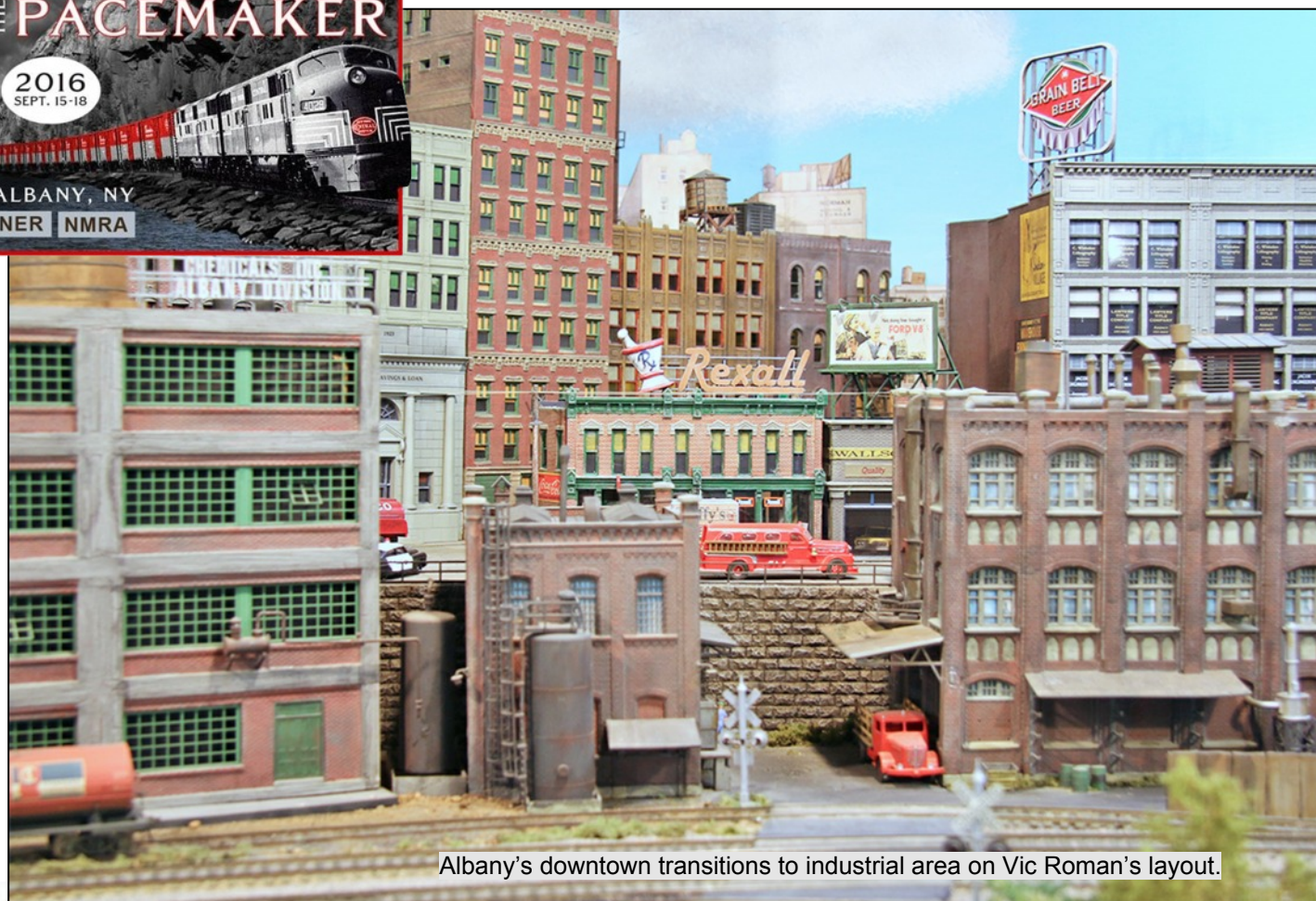
Avenue bridge that was used for freight traffic (and which is still used by Amtrak today). Vic's railroad functions as if the Selkirk Yard, built in the 1920s, does not exist.

Many of the structures were kit bashed to create the illusion of the City of Albany and the surrounding area, but certain structures that people can readily identify, and which give the city its unique character, had to be scratch built. Most of these are made of styrene with added parts and overlays.

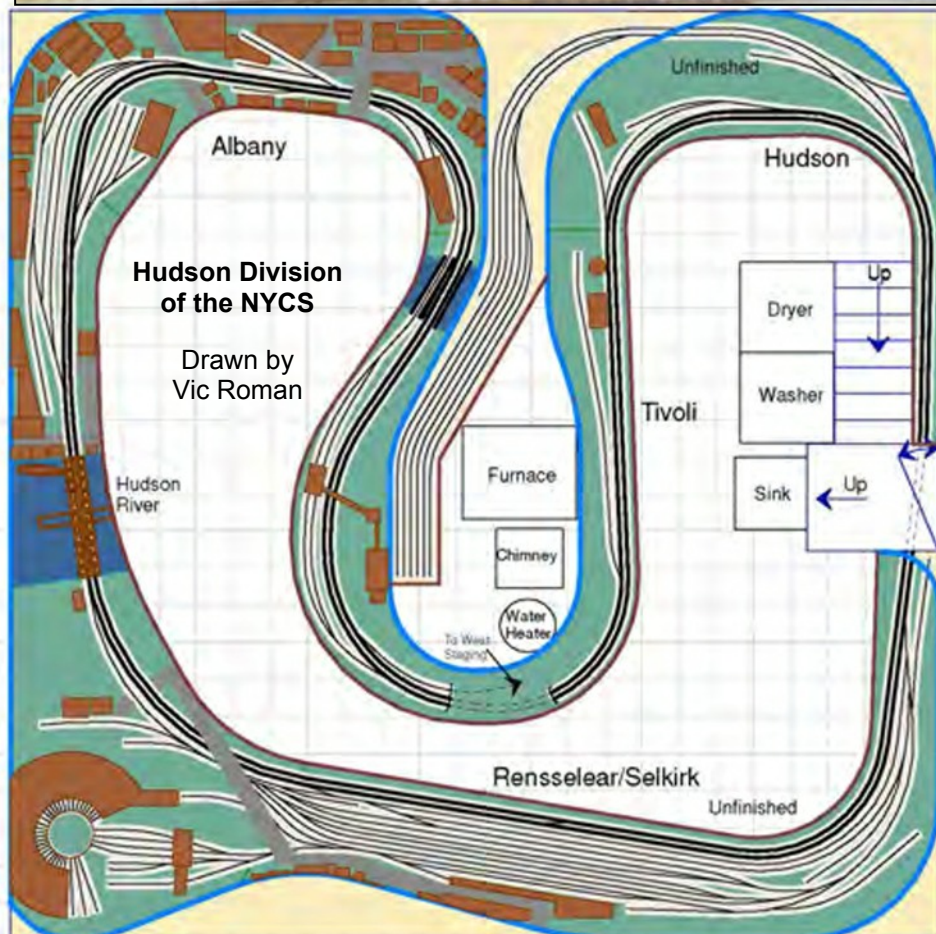
(Continued on next page)



Vic has captured the look of the former Albany Union Station with this multi-dimensional 'flat' in front of the backdrop. At top of page, Vic's rendition of the Maiden Lane Bridge across the Hudson River was kitbashed from six kits plus additional structural elements for the cable towers.



Albany's downtown transitions to industrial area on Vic Roman's layout.



(Continued from page 9)

Structures were painted and weathered using a couple of techniques that Vic has developed. The technique for each structure was determined by the nature of the building itself — some were painted and weathered as parts before assembly; others after assembly.

Motive power is both steam and early diesel — a mixture of brass, plastic and die cast. All locomotives have DCC sound and are painted and weathered as they would appear in 1948. Older locomotives have more weathering. Passenger service was still an important part of the railroad.

The layout is all DCC. Switches are controlled with Tortoise machines and ground throws, but all have power-routed frogs. Roadbed is Homasote® with code 83 track on the mainline and code 70 in the yards and sidings. The water pans at Tivoli are scratch built, as is the pumping station that supplied them.

The iconic Central warehouse, a dominant feature of the Albany landscape, was scratch built of thick styrene sheets with Grandt Line windows, and then painted and dry brushed with weathering powders. The towers controlling the north and south ends of

Albany's iconic Central Warehouse captured in HO scale.



Rensselaer street scene and bridge over the former NYC yard there.



Albany Union Station are kits created by Vic and his friends in their business, CHR Structures <chrstructures.com>. There is a NYC RR freight house in the downtown that Vic built from purchased wall panels, some scratch building of features and special painting techniques.

The Albany Union Station model was a collaborative effort between Vic and his friend, Jim Cesare, who designed many parts in CAD and then laser cut and etched them. Vic assembled the parts, layering many to create the three dimensional effect. All of the dentil moldings were made by gluing individual squares of styrene onto the structure. The three grand arches of the building were cast by Vic using a mold made with a rapid prototyping machine. Painting was done with his dark to light technique of painting and dry brushing.

The Rensselaer street scene and its bridge above the yard to the coaling dock is so amazing! Many people have looked at it and commented that they wished they could just

walk down that street and see what it was like; checking out the stores and talking to the people there. The Rensselaer coal dock was scratch built of styrene sheets, wire and Plastruct handrails, and fabricated chutes. The conveyor housing was made from commercially available corrugated siding stock and all was assembled on a milled wood based.

Sadly, we can't go back to Albany as it was in 1948. The scenes that Vic has created have changed. Albany Union Station is a registered historic site now partially occupied by an engineering company with ties to the University of Albany and formerly housed bank headquarters. The track behind the station and along Albany's waterfront was replaced by Interstate 787. But we can still get a feel for it by visiting Vic Roman's Hudson Division of the New York Central System. It will be just one of the many fine layouts on display during the NER Pacemaker 2016 convention. And, be sure to visit Vic Roman's three dimensional art — with the trains running through it. ☒

A Taste of the Division, A Toast to the Region!

The NER convention, "The Pacemaker 2016," is on track and on schedule for September 15 to 18 in Colonie (Albany), NY. Convention headquarters is the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center, conveniently located off Exit 4 of I-87 (the Adirondack Northway) and near Albany Airport. A block of 59 rooms has been secured and additional information will be available soon on the convention Web site and in the next *Coupler*.

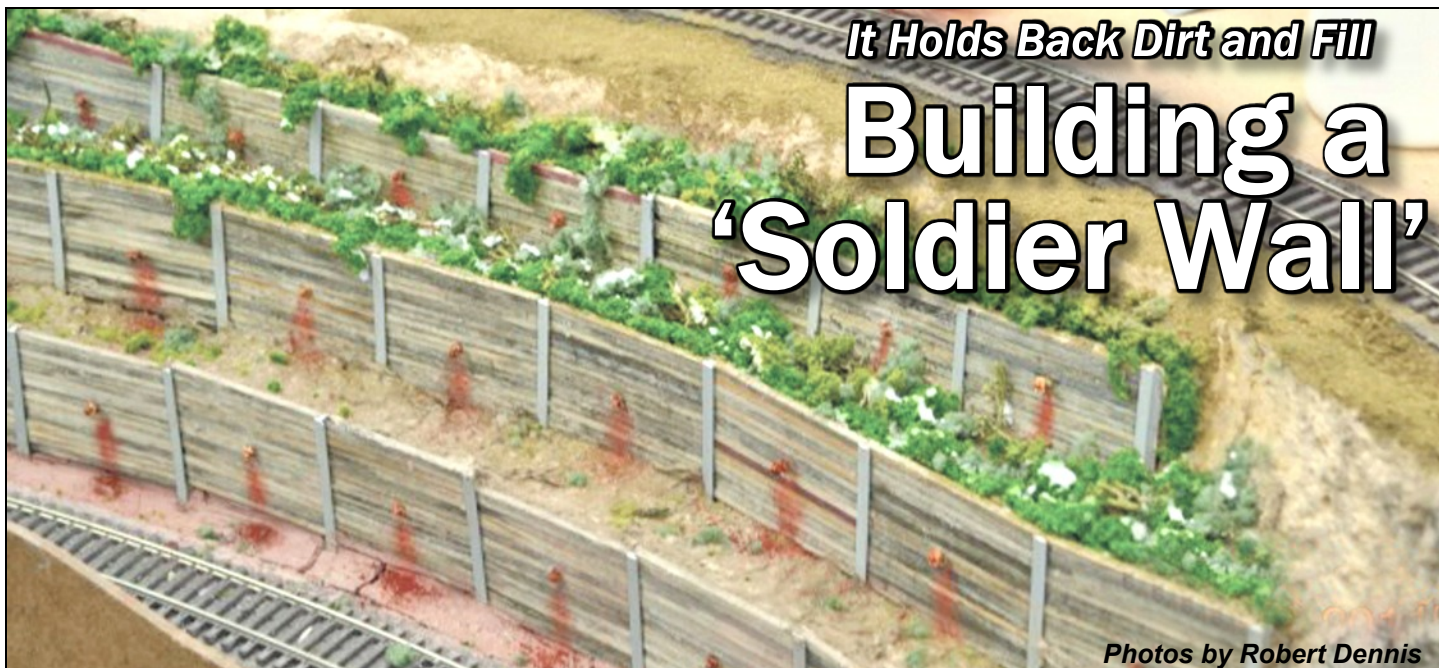
Variety is the spice of life ... and model railroad conventions! More than 30 area layouts will open for viewing and/or operations during the convention. Among those are layouts that have been featured in model railroad magazines, including Vic Roman's New York Central, Andy Clermont's Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain, Ken Nelson's Poco Valley, and the RPI club layout. They look good in photos, but you have to see them in person to really appreciate the artistry and attention to detail each has incorporated.

Prototype tours will take us to CSX's huge Selkirk yard, where we will see the hump yard operation and CSX's regional engine servicing facility. Or, you can visit the Railex facility in Rotterdam, where dedicated trains powered by UP locomotives unload produce and other products from California and Washington for local distribution. Or, visit the Guilderland Industrial Park, where SMS with their colorful green diesels switch the park and interchange with NS at Delanson.

Fan trips will include a day-long trip on the Saratoga and North Creek Railroad (the former D&H Adirondack branch) to North Creek, where you will see the 100-year-old depot and museum with a Clarke Dunham diorama. And you never know what the S&NCRR will have on property as such locomotives as an F40, S-4, BL2, E unit and B39-8 have all shined the rails in North Creek.

Of course, there will be contests for both models and photos highlighting the Region's best efforts. Four modules including one on European railroading will be displayed at the Desmond. And Saturday night's banquet will feature keynote speaker Bob Mohowski, former associate editor of *Railroad Model Craftsman*, and author of numerous books and articles on railroading. Spouses and companions have a multitude of opportunities at nearby shopping centers or day trips to beautiful Saratoga Springs and Lake George

Now is the time to mark your calendars for the NER "Pacemaker 2016" convention. ☒
— Bert Pflieg!



By ROBERT DENNIS
Garden State Division

While thinking through the process of getting my layout ready for the Achievement Program's Scenery Certificate, I had a unique problem that needed a unique solution. So I went to my resident engineer to see what I could use from the real world on my HO scale NYC bespoke railroad, the Sanilac Division. The problem was a space between two levels of track work. I didn't want to put rocks as the only scenery in that spot. I wanted more! My friend suggested a "Soldier Wall."

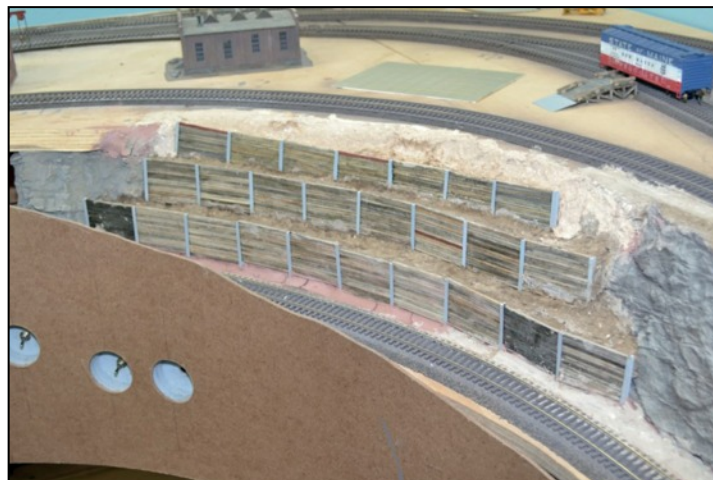
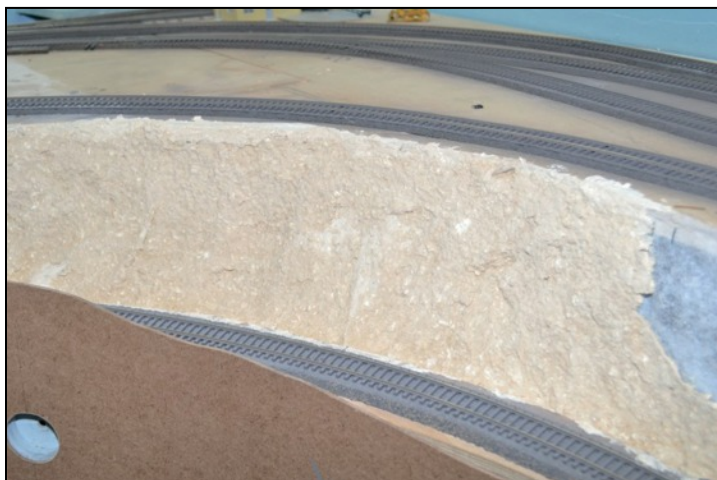
What is that, you ask? It is a means of shoring up two levels from the top down using "H" beams and timber. Hey, this sounds just like something a railroad would use! It's cheap to construct, and *cheap* works for me as well. So, the first

thing I did was to hit the Internet and see if I could get some of the details. Sure enough, there is more information than I could use.

I first went to my stash of plastic materials, but realized everything I had was too big. It was just right to make a building stronger, as long as you couldn't see it, but for an out in the open, center stage application, I had to get something that was more to scale. So my next stop was to call my friends at Evergreen Plastics for help. They suggested their strip styrene item No. 285 "H-Column." This was a perfect fit with my Midwest Products 3/32 x 3/32 basswood ties. Heck, I even have some Scale Structures Limited NBW castings that I'll use as the evidence of tie backs. ("Tie backs" were structural rods and beams used to hold the wall up with all the pressure from the

earth behind it. The engineers would use an "I" or "H" column with a rod through the center that would poke through the "Soldier Wall" and be bolted off.)

My first step was to cover the void between the two layout heights. A friend suggested I use old dryer sheets. At first I scoffed, but then saw the light after I tried a few. They stretched nicely between the two levels. The sheets are held in place with staples, so progress was quick. The next step was to cover the sheets with a skim coat of Sculptamold®. Out of the box it is stark white and I needed to tone it down a bit, so I added some Liquitex Heavy Body acrylic paint in Burnt Umber, mixed with wet water (water with a few drops of liquid soap), this worked perfectly and provided a nice tan base to the Sculptamold®. (Continued on next page)



Making a grade separation and embankment more exciting: add a "Soldier Wall!" Photo at left shows the *before*; right photo shows what a difference some walls can make. This is before nut and bolt castings were weathered.

'Soldier Wall'

(Continued from page 12)

My next step was to cut the lumber into strips that would be 16 scale feet. I wanted to stack these to a height of 12 scale feet and then insert them into the "H" columns. To do this, I used NorthWest Short Line's "The Chopper." Using this tool made replicating the cuts easy.

I wanted the "H" columns to be 16 scale feet high, 4' in the ground and 12' out. I felt that this would have been a manageable size for a railroad's use. Once again, I used the "Chopper" to cut the plastic "H" columns to size. Before I could start assembly, I would need to stain the lumber. To do this, I stained part of the lumber with Hunterline Weathering Mix in brown, but for the majority (I wanted to have a faded "grey" look), I used an India Ink/isopropyl alcohol mix.

The assembly went smoothly as I counted out 16 4x6 pieces for each section. I started by applying Aleene's Tacky Glue to the top of each board and placed them between two "H" Columns. I made a total of 25 sections to be placed on the layout. I laid the first course at track level. I



started by using air dry modeling clay to hold the track level wall upright. When dry, I placed Sculptamold® behind the wall. I put in the wall's second course in before the Sculptamold® set up. The process continued until all three courses were complete.

Now on to the detailing. I started by painting the Scale Structures Ltd's NBW castings using Wicked Colors' Detail Burnt Orange. Notice the length of the shafts on each of the castings; they differ in length

Seven layouts featured

CNY Division Hosts Ops Weekend



One of the featured layouts is Mike Shanahan's Brunswick and Tuscan. This HO layout includes a recreation of the Pennsy's famed Horseshoe Curve.

For a third year, the Central New York Division will host "Ops 'til You Drop," April 16 and 17. It is two days packed with 10-and-a-half hours of railroad operations on some of the best layouts in the Region.

Several of the host layouts have appeared in national publications such as *Model Railroader*, *Railroad Model Craftsman*, and *The Narrow Gauge Gazette*.

The event is open to any rail enthusiast. This year there are seven layouts involved including two new additions — the fabulous *Brunswick and Tuscan* of Mike Shanahan, and the expansive *Sioux City Lines* of Bob Vickery. The cost is only \$10 per person to cover snacks at each layout and Saturday evening dinner!

Each participant will operate on his or her choice of three of the seven available layouts. Operations begin at 12:30 PM on Saturday with an afternoon three-and-a-half hour session. Operators eat dinner there, then move to their second layout for an evening session. Everyone meets at a Sunday morning breakfast, then begins their third session, heading home after 2:30 PM. For more information visit <www.cnymra.org> or contact Bill Brown at <LARCproducts@yahoo.com>. ☒

and thickness, I wanted to exploit this feature and decided to leave the longer ones extend past the wall surface. To do this, I drilled holes in the wall sections using a 5/64 bit and used ACC glue to hold in place.

Once completed, I wanted to weather the rods, so I dry brushed rust color powders. The rust color will be toned down once the ground cover is added. I used a number of different ground foams, grasses, and lichen to give the wall life, and held it all in

place with white glue.

The next time you need to deal with a vertical separation on your layout or diorama, perhaps you will think of a "Soldier Wall" as an option." ☒

Materials List: Evergreen Plastics #285 "H" columns; Midwest Products 3/32 x 3/32 Basswood strips; Scale Structures Ltd #2101 Nuts, Bolts/Washers - 15 degree.



The Big Hole Chronicles #2

I'm modeling the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway in West Virginia coal country. Never having seen that region during in the early 1950s, I had no idea what those mines and coal tipples looked like. In years past, I saved photos and articles of tipples on other model railroads. However, not all tipples and the surrounding scenery

As I fleshed out this scene in my mind, I decided that a creek coming off the mountain behind the tipple would add a nice scenic element. The creek flows along the side of the tipple and out off the front of the layout. That meant that I had to cut the plywood/Homasote® sub roadbed underneath the mainline and

the scratch-built supporting structures can be seen from various viewing angles.

Behind the tipple next to the creek, a horizontal water tank mounted high on a concrete base holds water pumped from the creek to wash the coal. A steel, slack coal bin directly in front of the tipple holds fine coal to be taken away by truck to coke ovens yet to be built. Between the tipple and the bridge is a simple 16x43 foot board and batten building. Closer to the aisle is a hipped roof 17x26 foot concrete block office building. Yet to come is a gauntlet switch trestle, a wooden road



Photos from above and below showing the Coal Creek area and tipple.

are alike from one area of the country to another. Fortunately the C&O Historical Society has published many photo books on this subject and offered books published by others as well. These resources have been an invaluable aide to me in designing and building my railroad.

Developing the Scene

In the July-September 2015 *Coupler* (No. 258), I began the "Big Hole Chronicles" with an overview of the coal mining area called Saunders. Although it doesn't show, looking at the overall photo of Saunders in that issue, the Coal Creek area would be on your left. When the mainline sub roadbed went in a long time ago, Coal Creek was not envisioned, but the coal tipple was. Based on the Virgino Mine Tipple scene on Allen McClelland's first Virginian & Ohio Railroad, my Coal Creek tipple resides up a hollow behind a through truss bridge carrying the mainline over the tipple lead.

siding for a bridge. Later, I decided to create the Coal Creek Subdivision that originates off the original tipple turnout. The sub runs along the opposite side of Coal Creek and into a tunnel to a two track staging yard.

Structures

Looking at prototype photos of mine tipples and the surrounding area, I discovered ancillary structures and buildings surrounding these mines and tipples. An industry structure by itself informs the viewer what that industry is, but including supporting structures and details brings the scene to life.

The basis of the scene is a coal tipple Brian Whiton built for me based on plans in the March 1976 *NMRA Bulletin*. Although this scene sits back from the edge of the layout – the waterfall behind the tipple is six feet from the edge – and the bridge partially hides the scene, all of

bridge and the deck girder bridges under the foreground tracks.

Challenges

The challenge of building this scene and the others to come in the Saunders area, is working from inside the layout and creating invisible scenery pop-outs. In the February 1994 issue of *Model Railroader* magazine, John Pryke demonstrated convincing pop-outs using foamcore, cardboard and Sculptamold®. I built one of these years ago using his method, but with the advent of polystyrene rigid insulation sheets and Gatorfoam® <<http://www.gatorfoam.net/>>, these materials offer a big improvement. While the scenery in these photos is hardshell, most of the remainder in this area will use polystyrene sheets with the pop-outs mounted on more stable and durable Gatorfoam®.

OK, break's over. Back to work! ☒



MADE IN THE NER

Highball Graphics

By MIKE TYLICK
Contributing Editor

Hobby interests often turn into businesses; many of the manufacturers based in the NER trace their beginnings to a model railroading hobby. But, not nearly as often does one hobby business lead to another hobby business. Jim Abbott began his custom model painting business while in high school, which proved to be an enjoyable way to pick up extra cash.

Upon graduation in 1986, he went to work in a sign shop, which whetted his interest for graphic design. Eventually, Jim went into the trucking business with his father; all this time doing custom painting, and forming a partnership with the late Bruce Hodgkins, owner of South Waterville Shops. Finding a need for short runs of custom and unusual decals, they purchased an Alps printer and set up shop printing decals under the name Model Graphics in 1998. Woodland Scenics had already registered that name for their dry transfer line, so Jim and Bruce became Highball Graphics. Besides having an easily recognizable railroad connotation, "Highball" was also Jim's trucking CB radio handle!



Here are examples of Jim Abbott's decal and paint work. The contemporary C44-9W, CN #2505 *at top* is an Overland Models import. Jim also painted and lettered the earlier Overland Models brass CN SD-40 #5146.



Jim Abbott operates a somewhat larger scale CN unit in this 2011 photo. His locomotive is seen on the late Bob Allen's outdoor layout in Epping, NH.

Today, Highball Graphics has more than 180 diesel locomotive and 240 freight car decal sets available. Almost all are printed with a Kodak First Check printer on Microscale decal paper. The *First Check* was made by Alps for Kodak and accepts Alps media.

Similar to the former Alps printer, this Kodak printer was origin-ally intended for design studios to produce client samples of shrink wrap packaging and other

transparent products. The printers are able to print white, metallic, and opaque colors, all of which are of great use to hobbyists.

True to Jim's interests, the majority of his decals represent New England and Canadian prototypes from the 1960s to the present. There is likely a set for just about any railroad that ever operated in the NER. A perfectionist at heart, Jim will not release a decal set unless the artwork is accurate and flawless.

Of greater interest to many modelers (including me), is his custom decal service. Other companies offer custom decal printing, but most will only work on a minimum order of 25 or more – many more than I would need for one or two models. But if you supply the artwork, Jim will print an order as small as as half a sheet using his Kodak Printer. Recently Jim has partnered with Dave Lalerne of Davis Rail Productions, who will prepare the artwork for custom decals if you do not wish to create your own art from scratch. Needless to say, this work is for the discriminating modeler who wants prompt service.

If you've been putting off that special painting project because you can't find proper lettering, Highball Graphics may well have the solution to your problem. ☒

Highball Graphics
PO Box 57
West Ossipee, NH 03890
(603)367-8637
<www.highballgraphics.com>



CN switchers lead a log train over a trestle on Lou McIntyre's *Hampton & St Martins Railway* layout. If you aren't so focused on the train, take notice of the fisherman showing off his catch along the creek below! Lou's layout is just one of the model railroads on tour during *Port City Rails 2016* in St. John, NB. Read more in the story starting on page 5.



NEWS and EVENTS

CONVENTIONS

March 17-20: 7th annual *Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet*, Valley Forge, PA. Host hotel: Desmond Hotel, Malvern, PA. <www.rpmvalleyforge.com>

May 6-8: *Algonquin Turn*, the 2016 Niagara Frontier Region NMRA convention, Ottawa, ON. <Algonquinturn.ca>

May 19-22: *Port City Rails 2016*, The MFMR, St. John Railway Club, and NER convention, Saint John, NB. <www.portcityrails2016.org>

July 3-10: NMRA National Convention and Train Show, "Highball to Indy." Convention center and hotel: The Westin, Downtown Indianapolis, IN. <www.nmra2016.org>

September 6-11: 36th *National Narrow Gauge Convention*, Augusta, ME, co-sponsored by the Seacoast Division NMRA, Augusta Civic Center. <nngc2016.org>

September 15-18: *The Pacemaker 2016*, NER Regional Convention in Albany, NY. Desmond Hotel and Convention Center.

OPS OPPS

April 16-17: "Ops 'til You Drop," sponsored by Central New York Division; Syracuse and Utica, NY areas. <www.cnynmra.org>

TRAIN SHOWS

January 30-31: *Amherst Railway Society Hobby Show*, West Springfield, MA. <www.railroadhobbyshow.com>

February 6-7: *Great Scale Model Train Show*, Maryland State Fairgrounds, Timonium, MD. <www.gsmts.com> ☒



THE COUPLER Deadlines

MARCH 7 -- Apr-June issue

MAY 20 -- July-Sep issue

AUGUST 19 -- Oct-Dec issue



In December, the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington Railway museum steamed and ran the 1891 Portland Company Forney after a 20 year restoration. Originally built for the Sandy River Railroad and later run on the Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad, its final days were on the WW&F; its last run in 1933 – 83 years ago.

The WW&F will be a part of the 2016 Narrow Gauge Convention in Augusta, ME Sept. 6-11. <nngc2016.org> ☒