

THE COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION



No. 261 • APR-JUNE 2016

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Convention offers model/proto balance

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Heading to Albany in September

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COVER PHOTO

An RGS locomotive rounds a curve with a mixed consist on MMR Bob Hamm's narrow gauge *Rio Grande Southern*. This is a small part of Bob's finely detailed scenery. When you visit his layout, you *know* what parts of Colorado looked like almost a century ago! Bob's layout is just one of some 30 layouts that will be available for tours and operations during the Pacemaker 2016 NER convention. Story begins on page 6.



FROM THE EDITOR...

By JEFF PASTON

Coupler Editor

The folks in Saint John have "sold" me on their convention. I'm planning on making the trip in May to enjoy their camaraderie, their modeling, and their prototype trains. I should also add that I'm told the New Brunswick coast is quite beautiful this time of year!

As model railroaders, we have much to share and many stories to tell. Regardless of whether you're from Canada or the US, we have a common interest. Steve McMullin sums up the plans for *Port City Rails 2016* starting on page 4. If you haven't already signed up, the registration form was in the last *Coupler* and is available online at <www.portcityrails2016.org>.

It's going to be quite a year for the NER. After a year with no Region convention, we now have two for which we can look forward to.

This issue also previews *The Pacemaker*, the NER's fall convention in Albany. It too promises to be a winner. It's not too early to send in the registration form, especially if you're looking to grab a spot in the many layout operating sessions.

And speaking of conventions, David Insley offers a suggestion after seeing how the HO scale "little people" of Hamburg jumped on board promoting the Olympics for that city. His observations are on page 11 of this issue.

Welcome aboard! ☒



www.nernmra.org

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Issue No. 261

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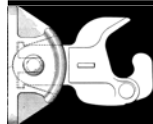
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Helpers and Leaders

I've been speaking a good deal lately with folks around the Northeastern Region - about *volunteering* at the region level. As you may know, we're busy now building a much larger and more robust regional team of fifty key volunteers - our so called "nifty fifty."

Since I assumed the President's role last summer, I've been continually impressed with the level of effort of so many of these volunteers. Some have roles that aren't so sexy - or even obviously directly connected to the fun part of our hobby. [You'd think that everything we do would be (or should be) connected in some way to playing with trains, yet there are many responsibilities needed to support the fun - like leading meetings, preparing budgets, writing newsletters, and connecting with others.] Lots and lots of this stuff.

So I thought I might share a just few examples of NER volunteers who have stood out over the last couple of months.

We had a nice turnout at the NER booth at the big Amherst Railway Show in Springfield in January. I'm particularly thankful for Bob Dennis of the Garden State Division, who spent most of the weekend at the booth, as did Doc Chiat from National (Doc's been coming to the show to help for a number of years, and he's fearless at going after new members). Thanks also to Dave Insley of the HUB, and Artie Krass, Kevin Surman, Bob Hamm, and the whole team from the Hudson-Berkshire (with a really nice and well-staffed display for this year's Albany convention). Two days at the booth during the largest train show on the east coast is not my idea of real fun, so I was most grateful for these guys - nifty fifty folks.

Long time layout guru Jeff Paston (CNY) is now editing *The Coupler* (a real upgrade over the last guy). Jeff has a

professional background (and lots of experience) in reporting and publications, and he's already making the newsletter better. Look for additional improvements in the months and issues to come.

David Insley recently also raised his hand to lead our convention committee - one of the most important roles in the Region. Dave doesn't have any real experience in the convention business, but he's a great project manager, and an enthusiastic learner. He has now scheduled a series of ongoing conference calls with all of the convention team stakeholders. And we have some tantalizing regional convention ideas in the works for the future. Really nifty!

You may have noticed that the NER Web site (and maybe your division site) were offline for a couple of weeks. Well, it turns out our sites suffered a pretty substantial attack, and were subsequently shut down by our host. New Webmaster Bill Poor (Seacoast) had a lot of work to do to get us back up and running - and he did a great job (though you've got to wonder how this counts as "train time"). We're live again now, and with greater threat protection than before. Thanks Bill!

These are just a couple of recent examples of outstanding volunteer contributions in the NER today. I know I've left out so many more - my apologies. I'm truly thankful for each and every one of you all who are working to make the Northeastern Region and its divisions more successful. Of course, there's still a lot to do. Perhaps it's time for you too to join the growing nifty fifty? Please consider raising your hand in whatever area you're interested in (or good at). Just give us a shout.

We're going to be the biggest, baddest, and best in all the NMRA! ☒



NEW MEMBERS

Compiled By
MARK HARLOW
NER Office Manager

As of 3/1/16

CONNECTICUT

Tom Chase
Robert Cochran
Stuart N. Dom
Orlando J. Rosell
Sarge Tower

MAINE

Harvey MacLeod

MASSACHUSETTS

Todd Bryda

Pierre Drouin
Mark Ferracane
Albert Kaifer
David Lewis
Eric White

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Doug Butrymowicz

NEW JERSEY

John Cate
Daniel B. Kenney
Jim McClaskey
Alexis Nawotka

Daniel Stroh

NEW YORK

Michael E. Bayard
Ben Frisch
Timothy H. Hodder
Geoffrey Kelley
Byron Lane
Michael J. Maniscalco
Thomas Mitchell
Omega's Train LLC
Stephen Porter
Alan Redeker
Glen Sauter

Mike Scanlon
Brenden Talasco
Tom Talasco
John Wachter

VERMONT

Doug Fisher



Recruiting Video Offered

The NMRA recently released a video aimed at recruiting new members. This five-minute video is perfect for use at train shows, home layout tours, swap meets - wherever there's anyone who may be interested in model railroading.

This new recruitment video can be viewed at - and downloaded from - www.nmra.org. To view the video, click on the large graphic that says "Welcome to Model Railroading" on the home page. To download the video, log in to the *Members Only* Web site, click on "Promo Materials" (in the red bar at the top of the page) and you'll be taken to a page that says, "Download the NMRA Recruitment Video." ☒



SAINT JOHN IS READY TO WELCOME YOU!



Rapido Trains' Jason Schron is banquet speaker



By STEVE McMULLIN

“Port City Rails 2016” is going to be a memorable model railroad convention as people from both the United States and Canada meet together to enjoy our shared hobby. The program offers a number of activities that cover a variety of model railroading and prototype interests.


If you are interested in learning about the prototype, you can be part of a tour of Canada's largest oil refinery, or you can tour a paper mill, or tour the facilities of the Port of Saint John. You can also attend clinics about Canadian National's operations in Saint John and about the Port of Saint John.

If you love operations, you can sign up for one of the operating sessions at some great model railroads in the Saint John area, and you can attend a clinic about car forwarding.

The public show on Saturday at the Lord Beaverbrook Rink will feature large modular layouts from the Maritime Provinces and from New England, along with dealers and manufacturers and rail activities. The convention will include a range of clinics and layout tours, including the host club's three modular layouts (N scale, HO scale, and O scale) that are located at a local shopping mall.

We are very excited that the featured speaker for the banquet on Saturday evening is Jason Shron, the founder of Rapido Trains, Inc. [Anyone who attended the 2012 NER convention in Syracuse, NY, will fondly recall Jason's multi-media presentation, replete with videos, photos, and newest model release. He's got a great sense of humor, which permeated his talk! -ed.]

The Saint John Society of Model Railroaders is looking forward to once again welcome model railroaders to Saint John for a truly international convention. The registration fee for the convention is only \$25 (USD)/\$30 (CDN) and the banquet is \$25 (USD)/\$30 (CDN) per person. The hotel room rate is only \$99 per night in Canadian funds.

All of the details and the registration form can be accessed at www.portcityrails2016.org. 

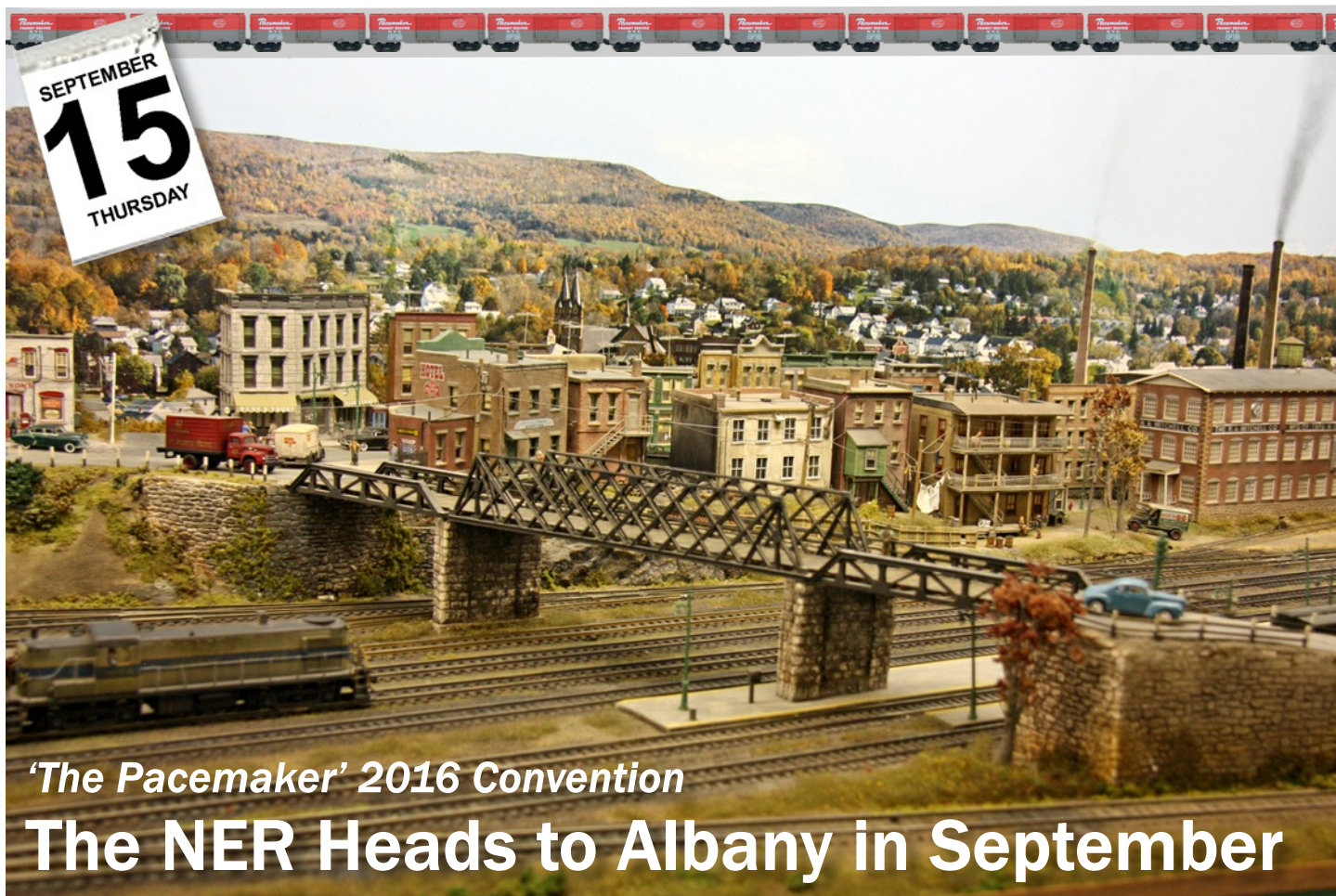
On the previous page, a steam loco eases past the local diner on Steve McMullin's HO module on one of three modular layouts displayed by the Saint John Society of Model Railroaders.

The prototype photos at right show the extremes of color to be found in the NB Southern roster. These would be quite familiar to New Brunswick or Maine railfans alike. The winter scene shows an eastbound freight near Fredericton Jct, NB, while the second photo is of a switching job at Island Yard in Saint John.

Below, a train passes through Upham on Lou McIntyre's HO scale *Hampton & St Martins Railway*.

(Photos by Lou McIntyre)





'The Pacemaker' 2016 Convention

The NER Heads to Albany in September

By BILL DOYLE and BERT PFLEGL
Plans for the Pacemaker 2016 NER convention are coming together nicely. Mark your calendars for a weekend September 15-18 packed with a variety of railroading activities.

Headquarters for the convention will be the *Desmond Hotel and Conference Center*, conveniently located off Exit 4 of I-87 (Adirondack Northway) north of the junction of I-87 and I-90 (NYS Thruway). Rooms are available at \$126 per night by contacting the hotel directly at 518-869-8100. Be sure to mention you want the "National Model Railroad Association 12700M" group rate. The hotel is unique in that the interior courtyard has been designed with facades representing "Old Albany."

The *Pacemaker 2016* convention will feature more than 30 layouts for tours and operating sessions throughout the weekend. There are 23 operating sessions involving some of the premier layouts in the region. Many of these layouts have been featured in publications like *Model Railroader*,

Railroad Model Craftsman, *Great Model Railroads 2008*; Kevin Surman's *New York and Long Branch* featured in *Model Railroader* with award winning structures and operations from Newark to the Jersey shore; and Bill McChesney's *Lehigh Valley* covering operations from Sayre through Allentown to Oak Island and powered primarily by Alcos.

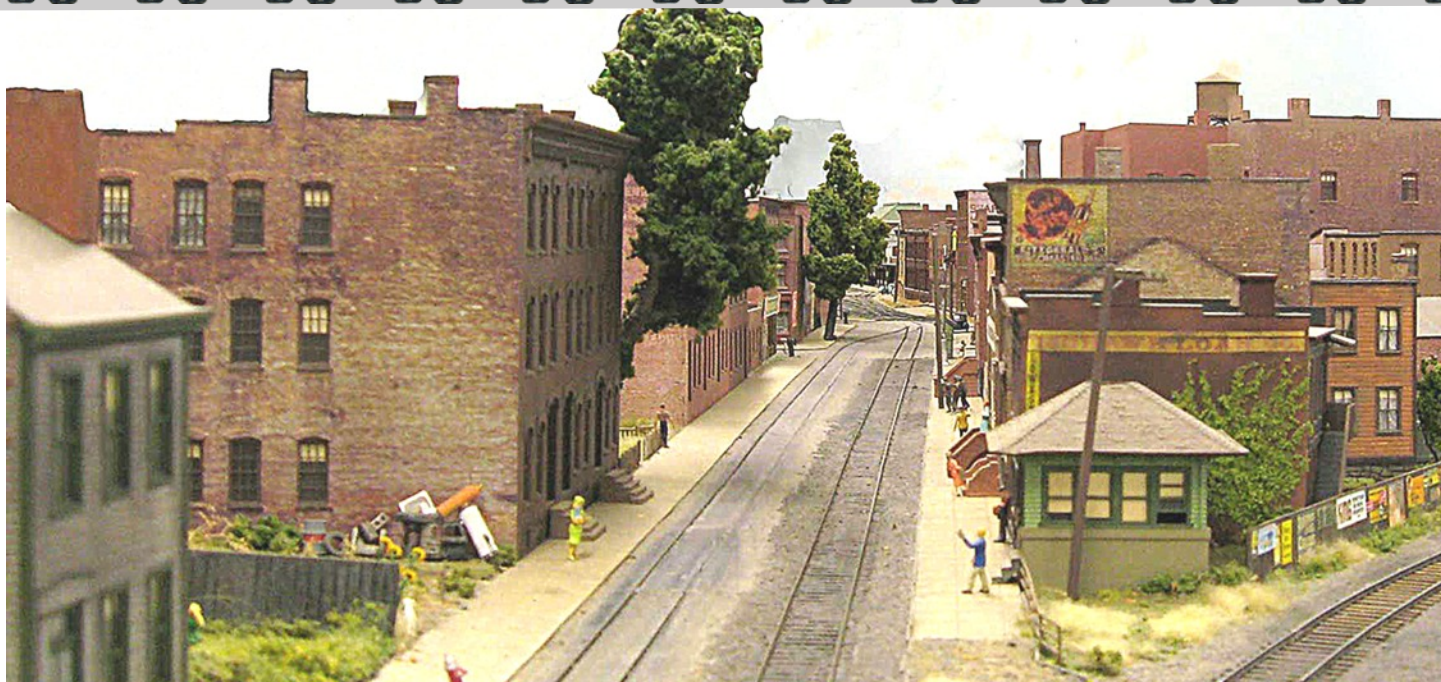


and in the Walthers catalogs. Check these out for a preview of the wonderful layouts, but seeing them in person is even better!

Layouts that will be open include Andy Clermont's *Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain (Rutland) Division* featured in *Great Model Railroads 2010*; Dick Elwell's *Hoosac Valley* incorporating railroads of Western New England in a museum quality layout which was featured in *Railroad Model Craftsman* (January 2012) and *Great Model*

Railroads 2008; Kevin Surman's *New York and Long Branch* featured in *Model Railroader* with award winning structures and operations from Newark to the Jersey shore; and Bill McChesney's *Lehigh Valley* covering operations from Sayre through Allentown to Oak Island and powered primarily by Alcos.

You can also visit Ken Nelson's *Poco Valley*, a freelance railroad incorporating aspects of the D&H, B&M, EL and NYC; Kip Grant's *D&H Sonnyvale Branch* featured in the April 2013 *Railroad Model Craftsman* and *Great Model Railroads 2011*; Vic Roman's *New York Central – Albany and the Hudson Valley* including the Rensselaer engine facilities (see *The Coupler* 260); Bob Hamm's *Rio Grande Southern* with spectacular scenery, structures, and trestles; and the legendary RPI club layout that has been recently reinvigorated with new members and was featured in the November 2015 *MR*. Many other layouts that are not as large and well known, but often just as spectacular, are 'hidden treasures' you can see during tours and operations as well.



Modular layouts, including one depicting European railroads, will also be well represented. Four will be located in the convention hotel. Registrants can sign up for operating sessions on these layouts at the registration desk. As an added bonus, Dominick Bourgeois, noted model railroader and author of two recent books on the D&H, will exhibit his Cobleskill module that was featured in *Model Railroad Planning 2016*.

Clinics are an important part of the
(Continued on page 8)

Opposite page: Adams, MA, in the late 1950s on Dick Elwell's famous *Hoosac Valley Railroad* gives an idea of the fabulous scenery and details that makes this layout a work of art.

The streets of south Troy, NY, as they looked on September 25, 1950, above, is depicted on the *New England, Berkshire and Western Railroad* of the Rensselaer Model Railroad Society at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. The

late Andy Sperandeo said, "It's one of the largest, finest, most detailed and historically accurate model railroad layouts anywhere in the world."

Rich Smith's super detailed layout, below, was in the December 2006 issue of *Model Railroading* magazine. Rich is now building a 'prototype' railroad based on the Milwaukee with carefully researched scratch-built structures. You get to see both with one visit.





The NER Heads to Albany in September

(Continued from page 7)

convention as we look to expand or learn new skills. Two 'hands on' clinics will include a 'make and take' with MMR Kevin Surman building a Santa Fe bunkhouse, and dry brushing techniques with Rich Smith on a DPM Laube Linen Mill kit. MMR Bob Hamm will conduct two separate clinics — one on 'Trestles' and one on 'Dirt, Grasses and Brush.' A visit to his layout will show you how well he has mastered these techniques! MMR Bill Brown will offer a two part clinic on 'Enhancing Your Modeling with Digital Photography.' MMR Mike Tylick is also scheduled.

Tony Steele will cover yard design, including prototype activities in the yard. Jack Cutler will build a turnout using the *Fast Tracks* methods and tools and Bill Gill will cover 'Letterbashing II – A Guide to Generating Signs for Your Railroad.' Check the convention Web site <www.hbdpacemaker.org> for other clinics. Prototype tours have been confirmed for

several area facilities, including CSX's massive Selkirk Yard, where we will tour the hump yard, engine servicing facilities, and possibly the regional dispatch office. Foreign power is often at the yard along



with engines from other railroads for contracted services.

The Port of Albany has become a major destination for Bakken oil trans-loading to barges, as well as GE steam turbines for shipment overseas, a large Cargill grain elevator and scrap metal operations — all

served by the Port of Albany Railroad with its new MP15AC locomotive. Railx is a dedicated rail service from Washington and California providing fresh produce directly to Rotterdam for cross-platform loading and distribution, which often utilizes run through UP power. The Northeast Industrial Park in Guilderland has local switching provided by SMS (with its green switchers), which also utilizes the former D&H main line through Altamont to interchange with NS at Delanson.

On Friday, September 15th, a day long trip is scheduled on the Saratoga and North Creek Railroad on the former D&H branch to North Creek and Tahawus, paralleling the scenic upper Hudson River. While in North Creek, you can visit the museum in the original D&H depot, featuring an exhibit railroad by Clarke Dunham. The S&NC RR — part of the Iowa Pacific family — often has its vintage locomotives, including BL-2s, F40s and S-2 switchers, at its

Among the prototype activities, conventioners can ride the *Saratoga & North Creek Railroad*, photo at right, on its 57 mile trip along the upper Hudson River.

Far right, is CSX's Selkirk Yard, where a tour will take visitors to see hump action, and experience the vastness of the 70-track classification facility and 11-track receiving yard.





Here's the large icing facility at Whitefish, MT, on Doug Dederick's N-scale *Great Northern Railroad*, left. At right, John McBride's F-scale *Crown Point Iron Co.* depicts a narrow gauge line into the Adirondacks in the late 1800s.



servicing facility. Local retail shops feature a variety of Adirondack goods. The excursion cost is \$28 per person.

Non-rail activities will include a 'paint and sip' program, a wine tasting event featuring New York State wines, and self-guided tours to several nearby malls or a trip to Saratoga Springs.

The Banquet on Saturday evening will feature Bob Mohowski, former associate

editor of *Railroad Model Craftsman* and noted historian and author of numerous articles and books on railroading. Bob will share his lifelong journey with railroads through stories and pictures and how railroads can take us places other than geographic destinations.

An important sidelight to the banquet is the silent auction/raffle of rail-oriented and other donated items. All proceeds will

go to the Toys for Tots program in the NYS Capitol District. Last year, the Hudson Berkshire Division donated 66 train sets to encourage new participants in this wonderful hobby.

So there you have it! The crew is working hard to assemble a first class convention for all to enjoy. We hope you will join us! ☒

Operating Sessions

Operating sessions will be assigned in the order of convention registration number (the lower the number, the higher the priority). Given there are other activities happening at the same time as operating sessions, the following priorities will be used in making assignments unless you request otherwise (see #6 below). Contact Operation Coordinator Doug Dederick at <ddederick@nycap.rr.com> (please include "Convention Operations" in subject heading) or (518) 283-5063 by JULY 31, 2016. NOTE: For weeks of July 17 to July 31, contact Kevin Surman at <spacity4@nycap.rr.com> or (518) 583-1383.

- 1) You will first be assigned to tours and other activities.
- 2) You will be assigned to your highest choices (First TWO) operating sessions available that do not conflict with your other tours or activities. (On Registration Form, enter your choice #1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- 3) The Operation Coordinator requires a month to finalize operating session groupings, special requests, and to make notifications as needed, therefore, JULY 31st is the cutoff for primary operating sessions.
- 4) After July 31st, any remaining operating session slots will go to persons (in registration order) who have requested more than two operating sessions.
- 5) If any openings still remain, they will go to late registrants
- 6) Example of requests:

A) Person "X" and I are driving together and would like to be assigned to same operating session(s). This may be done if space is available when we receive the higher registration # of the other person(s) NOTE: The earlier you ALL register, the better your chances will be. So, don't wait!

B) I prefer operating at my first request layout to my tour request. Please assign me the op session and take me off the tour. NOTE: Layout details, including general location, approximate time and distance from HQ hotel, crew size, operating scheme, control system, layout size, etc., can be found on the convention Web site at <www.hbdpacemaker.org>.

Address of "OP" Sessions will be provided in the layout book and again when you receive your operating confirmation assignments.

Thursday, September 15

Session	Layout Name	Layout Host	Time
0.01	P&MVS	Fred Gemmill	10 -1
0.02	Denver Union Terminal	Frank Czubryt	10 -1
0.03	Poco Valley Railroad	Ken Nelson	1-4
0.04	New York & Long Branch	Kevin Surman	1-4
0.05	The Sonnyvale Branch	Kip Grant	1-4
0.06	O&LC Subdivision	Andy Clermont	7-10
0.07	NYC Mohawk Div.	Henry Propst	7-10
0.08	Crown Pt. Iron Co. RR	John McBride	7-10
0.09	GN Kalispell Div.	Doug Dederick	7-10
0.10	Juniata Secondary of PRR	Jack Cutler	7-10
0.11	Milwaukee Railroad	Rich Smith	7-10

Friday, September 16

Session	Layout Name	Layout Host	Time
0.12	Hoosac Valley Railroad	Dick Elwell	1-4
0.13	Denver Union Railroad	Frank Czubryt	1-4
0.14	GN Kalispell Div.	Doug Dederick	1-4
0.15	The Sonnyvale Branch	Kip Grant	7-10
0.16	L. V. Allentown to Sayre	Bill McChesney	7-10
0.17	NYC, Hudson Div.	Vic Roman	7-10
0.18	NYC Mohawk Div.	Henry Propst	7-10
0.19	Milwaukee Railroad	Rich Smith	7-10

Saturday, September 17

Session	Layout Name	Layout Host	Time
0.20	Juniata Secondary of PRR	Jack Cutler	10 -1
0.21	Crown Pt. Iron Co. RR	John McBride	10 -1
0.22	GN Kalispell Div.	Doug Dederick	10 -1

Sunday, September 18

0.23	Adirondack Southern RR	Adk Live Steamers	9-2
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PLEASE NOTE: Due to the amount of work associated with organizing and setting up for this operation at ALS, anyone choosing to operate **MUST COMMIT** to all 5 hours to finish the operating session.



THE PACEMAKER
2016 NORTHEASTERN REGION CONVENTION
SEPTEMBER 15TH -18TH , 2016
SPONSORED BY THE HUDSON-BERKSHIRE DIVISION
ONLINE REGISTRATION AND CREDIT CARD PAYMENT IS AVAILABLE
AT: <http://www.hbdpacemaker.org>



CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

Please enter all information (PRINT LEGIBLY) especially Names as they will appear on registration Badges.

NMRA #		Region		Division	
Name				Name on Badge	
Street Address			City	State	Zip Code
Mailing Address			City	State	Zip Code +4
Telephone #		Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/>	Favorite Scale	This is my First NER Convention <input type="checkbox"/>	
Email Address					

ID	ITEM	COST	MAXIMUM	DAY		TRANSPORTATION	COST
101	Early Registration – thru August 15th	\$40					\$
102	Basic Registration – thru September 15th	\$45	Registration at the Door \$50.00				\$
103	Non NMRA Extra Fee	\$10	Includes six-month trial NMRA Membership				\$
104	Significant Other	\$10	Name:				\$
105	Saturday Evening Banquet Reception 5 PM to 6 PM; Dinner 6 PM to 11PM	\$33 <i>per person</i>	130 People	Pasta #____ Food Allergy <input type="checkbox"/>	Chicken #____ Food Allergy <input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetarian #____ Food Allergy <input type="checkbox"/>	\$
201	Saratoga & North Creek Railroad	\$28 <i>per person</i>	50 people	Friday 10AM to 6PM		Self	\$
202	Selkirk Tour	\$15 <i>per person</i>	30 people	Saturday 9AM to 1PM		Bus	\$
203	Rail-X Tour	\$15 <i>per person</i>	30 people	Saturday 9AM to 1PM		Bus	\$
204	Port of Albany Tour	Free event	15 people	Saturday 9AM to 2PM		Self	
205	SMS Industrial Park Tour	Free event	15 people	Saturday 9AM to 2PM		Self	
301	Make ‘n’ Take - wood laser-cut Santa Fe bunkhouse kit	\$15 <i>per person</i>	20 people	Friday 9AM to 11:30 AM			\$
302	Dry Brush - using a DPM Laube's Linen Mills kit	\$15 <i>per person</i>	20 people	Saturday 9AM to 11:30 AM			\$
303	Wine Tasting	\$10 <i>per person</i>	20 people	Friday 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM			\$
304	Paint and Sip	\$10 <i>per person</i>	15 people	Saturday 1PM to 3PM			\$
401	Map Book Advance Mailing	\$5					\$

**OPERATING
Sessions**

Total Number of op sessions you prefer _____ (example 1, 2, 3 etc.).

Enter the session # (from Coupler page 9) in Priority of your choices below

OP SESSIONS #1 _____ #2 _____ #3 _____ #4 _____ #5 _____ #6 _____

I am Traveling with: _____

Mark "X" in all Boxes that apply:

- ☐ - Like to attend ONLY one (1) Op Session
☐ - Like to attend 2 (or more) Op Sessions
☐ - I prefer my Op Sessions over any other activities/tours I have requested.
(Refer to note #6-B on Coupler page)

TOTAL REGISTRATION FEE – CHECK MADE PAYABLE TO "NER CONVENTIONS"

MAIL REGISTRATION FORM AND CHECK TO: GERALD COVINO, CONVENTION REGISTRAR -- PO Box 672 -- HOLLIS, NH 03049-0672

E-MAIL CONVENTION.REGISTRAR@CHARTER.NET --- TELEPHONE (617) 543-0298 -- ON-LINE REGISTRATIONS ARE ENCOURAGED

FULL REFUND IF REQUEST RECEIVED BY REGISTRAR NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 1, 2016

DO NOT SEND HOTEL REGISTRATION TO REGISTRAR

\$

HOTEL INFORMATION

Desmond Hotel and Conference Center

660 Albany Shaker Road, Albany, NY 12211

Local 518-869-8100 • Toll Free 800-448-3500 • www.desmondhotelsalbany.com

Group Rate is **\$126.00** per room night (maximum double occupancy) plus applicable taxes.

The rate is valid through **September 1, 2016** as long as rooms are available.

When booking, ask for the **NORTHEAST REGION NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION 12700M GROUP RATE**

Be Like Hamburg!



The little people of Hamburg at the *Miniature Wunderland* are showing their support for the 2024 Olympics.

By DAVE INSLEY

Photo by the Author

Last summer, I travelled to Hamburg, Germany, to take my parents on a trip for their 60th anniversary. As we walked the streets of the city we saw many signs advertising the 2024 Hamburg Summer Olympics. Even the *Miniature Wunderland* had an HO Scale display of the Olympics Rings in its version of Hamburg. It seemed the city was excited by the prospects of bringing the Olympic games there.

This was a bit of a contrast to what we had just experienced at home, as Boston was also in the running for the 2024 Olympics. There was some initial excitement generated after the announcement, but pretty soon the potential negatives started to dominate the conversation and the organizing team never adequately addressed these issues. Before you knew it, the bid was being withdrawn.

Are You Ready to Run a Convention?

Running an NER Convention is not anything like running an Olympics, but I still see parallels in the conversations that are bound to happen in the divisions wanting to host one. There will be a group of people that see the positives in running a convention, and another group that will see the negatives. From my perspective, hosting an NER Region convention is a great way to showcase the railroading activities in your area – both model and prototype. It gives division members something to rally around and could increase the local participation in not only the convention, but other division activities. It is certainly a way to attract new members in the local area.

Some of the negatives in running a convention would be the time, effort, and money it takes to run such an event. This is where the NER Convention Committee can come in. First, let's face it, it does take a group of volunteers time and effort to plan a convention.

Therefore, it is essential to get a broad range of support from the local division. But the region can also help as we have countless people that have many years of experience in running conventions. Is your Division just simply too small to get the volunteers to organize and run an event? The Region can help here, from coordinating with other divisions in your area to helping to organize portions of the convention from OpSig to registration. We can also help you find clinicians, help with the marketing of the event, help organize layout and industry tours, and help with any number of other tasks to lighten the load. And the money is no issue as the Region will assume the financial responsibility for the event and cover the reasonable costs associated with any convention.

We are Here to Help!

I recently accepted the position of NER Region convention chair, coming after a year in which the Region did not host its own convention. As I started, I learned not only was Albany well on the way to planning a fantastic event, but Little Rhody and Garden State were also putting together bids. The Region has some momentum which is now giving us – meaning the Region committee and you – the chance to start planning years in advance.

When I first accepted this position, I thought "How hard can this be? Other people are doing the work. All you need to do is make sure they have what they need to be successful." Well, I can assure you that your NER Region Convention Committee is here to make sure you are successful.

So, be like Hamburg and harness that positive energy and bring your ideas for the Region convention in 2019 and 2020. Bids are now open and we look forward to helping you put on a great show so the entire Region can come and see everything your area has to offer.





There are Stories Behind Each Vignette

Making a Layout Come to Life with Everyday Scenes

By AL SOHL MMR
Photos by the Author

When we have visitors come in to 'check out the Western Bay Railroad O scale layout' here in Port Saint Lucie, FL, they usually try to take in the whole picture in our 950 sf layout room. Once they settle in though, they will sometimes start looking at the smaller scenes we have built all over the railroad.

Let me regress a bit. I have been influenced by the late Earl Smallshaw's simple scenes that gave a look of what could be real daily life to his small (but well done) HO layout. Others I admire include George Sellios, owner of Fine Scale Miniature Kits, who still does some amazing little scenes all over his HO layout; and the person I grew up reading about – and most admired – was the late and great John Allen.

Here are some scenes we did that I feel tells a story or two, but more importantly, will draw viewers into the layout looking for more of our work beyond the standard old track work and scenery.

The scene above depicts a driver trying to get his delivery vehicle started – we even added a sound board of a cranking vehicle – while the butcher, having parked his horse drawn wagon, is (maybe) advising the truck driver to get a horse? Oh... and the Model T merchant driver was probably rubber necking and almost hit the butcher's horse drawn wagon!

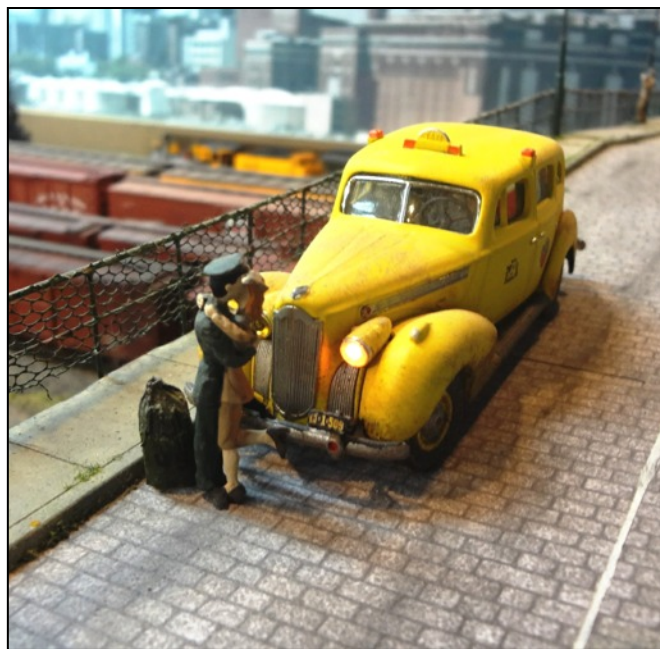
Pictured below left, a sign painter is touching up a faded bill board. In the next photo, I converted a military fuel truck into a well weathered water truck with sprinkler heads in the rear. I imagined it is used to water down the dry, dusty dirt roads during those dry summers in Colorado. Here the driver has used his

'hydrant' wrench to open the valve and fill the truck utilizing a hose. Some might also notice the leaking water about the area, which you might expect doing this mundane chore.

Continuing on to page 13, a simple scene to create probably has a story behind it! Maybe there's a shady deal going on alongside of the county jail? The other picture at the top of the page tells us a military man and his girl friend are saying their good byes after disembarking from the taxi. Note the lit headlight to draw visitors in.

Meanwhile, a few mechanics in our Denver yard are cutting a piece off a scrapped pilot with their oxyacetylene torch. I added a blue flickering bulb as well as a constantly lit red bulb buried under the cow catcher there. And last is little scene staged in front of the Placerville church. It looks like the hearse





has broken down after the undertaker – standing next to the driver's side door holding his bottle of Elixir while watching the mechanic under the hood – (hopefully) already delivered his 'cargo.' Note the gas can next to the front wheel of the car.

These are samples of some of the 'mini scenes' on the WBRR that help put some 'life' into the railroad besides moving model trains! Visit the layout online at www.westernbayrailroad.org. ☒

Al Sohl is a former NER member who relocated to the warmer climate of Florida.



ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM REPORT

By BILL BROWN MMR
AP Chair

Many to be Recognized in Albany

As we look forward to a great convention this fall in Albany, I would like to remind everyone that we delight at each yearly convention in recognizing all in the NER that earned AP program plaques during the previous year. This fall we will actually honor all recipients since the 2014 convention... two years' worth. We decided to do this last fall when our convention was held in the Mid-Eastern Region and not many of our own could attend. As of this writing (first week of March), we have a list of 42 people to be recognized. If your name is listed, please plan on attending the convention...or, at least the banquet on Saturday night September 17 to get your just due. We will of course add some names between now and then. So plan to be there!



As everyone should know, the AP program includes credit for participating in operations sessions on model railroads. Plenty of great opportunities exist both locally and regionally for you to log hours towards your Chief Dispatcher certificate. The Albany *Pacemaker* convention, September 15 through 18, offers many such opportunities. You might want to

consider the CNY Division's "Ops 'til You Drop" weekend scheduled for April 16 and 17. At this late date, if you want to participate please call me (Bill Brown) at 315-454-2516. Leave your name and phone number if I do not answer. Details are at www.cnymra.org. You may also want to consider the Sunrise Trail Division's "Island Ops," offering three days of operations April 22-24. The Web site is www.islandops.org. ☒

The following are being honored at the Albany convention for the Achievement Program.

Robert Bennett
Linda Bergemann
Lucien Champagne
Charles Cole
Gerald Covino
Bruce DeYoung
David Dekonski
Fred Dellaiacono
Robert Dennis
John Doehring
Howard Dwyer
Arthur Ellis
Steve Erickson
Kenneth Faulter
Van S. Fehr
John Feraca
Vincent Gallogly
Glenn Glasstetter
Mike Grahame
Jeff Hanke
Drew James

David Kiley
Ed Koehler
George Landow
Justin Maguire
David Metal
Rick Mills
Russell Norris
Brian Osberg
Susan Osberg
Thomas Oxnard
Andy Reynolds
William Rooke
Scott Russell
Michael Ryan
Keith Shoneman
Charles Stevens
James Van Bokkelen
Bob Vickery
Erich Whitney
Thomas Wortmann



Running Trains in New York

"OP"tober Fest

Last Fall, I had the opportunity to operate on several railroads located in the Hudson Berkshire Division. This was the fourth year a group of model railroaders north of Albany, NY, have hosted an event they call "OP"tober Fest. This time, my friend Mike Evans and I were able to attend and had the pleasure of operating on three outstanding railroads.

Kip Grant's D&H

Kip Grant's D&H "Sonnyvale Branch" was our first op on Friday evening. I first met Kip a number of years ago when I worked

running flawlessly, while two operators in Kip's group were professional railroaders who have provided many nuances that enhance the railroad's operation. I always enjoy the opportunity to operate Kip's Sonnyvale Branch.

RPI's New England Berkshire & Western NEB&W, most recently seen in the November 2015 *Model Railroader* magazine, is located on the campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. It is legendary in the model railroad community for its size, modeling, attention to detail and depiction of scenes in northeastern

our run in North Bennington, where we turned our train over to Yardmaster Greg Whittle. Greg can usually be found anywhere there are operating sessions. Our run, which was only about half of the 400 feet mainline run, took most of the morning. By that time, we had to leave for lunch before our next op session.

Bill McChesney's Lehigh Valley

After lunch, Mike and I headed over to Bill McChesney's to operate on the Lehigh Valley. Mike and I had paid Bill a short visit earlier last summer with Bob Hamm and Bill Brown. Bill McChesney's Lehigh Valley also has connections from staging with the Reading, Delaware & Hudson, Lehigh & Hudson River and the Central of New Jersey. Mike and I split up for this one with each of us taking a yard job in separate yards. I opted for Bill's new dock area with car float access.



We are seeing more and more railroads being built with car float access, as that is a great way to interchange cars on and off the railroad. Although the rest of Bill's railroad is fully scenicked, this dock area is still under construction, but all the track is operational.

After completing the backlog of work at the docks, Bill moved me over to operate several mainline freights. Bill has been operating his railroad for many years and always keeps the action coming.

The "OP"tober Fest Program

To cap it off Saturday night, a dinner was held for all of the participants. This year, Doug Dederick, Kevin Surman, and their crew opened the doors to 12 railroads for their weekend operations program. Although this was the first year I attended, it was evident that after hosting "OP"tober Fest for several years, they have a smooth running program.

In September, 2016, the Hudson Berkshire Division will be hosting "The Pacemaker" 2016 Northeastern Region convention. In addition to all of the great activities associated with our NER conventions, many – if not all – of the fine railroads open for "OP"tober Fest expect to be open for the convention. The first NER convention I attended in 1990 was hosted by the Hudson Berkshire Division. They have a lot of model and prototype assets in the area and always put together a great program. I hope I will see you there.

OK, break's over. Back to work! (X)

The Hill Freight arrives in Sonnyvale on Kip Grant's railroad. Details like the wash hanging on a porch and Halloween cutouts in the grade school windows in the upper right hand corner.

(Photo by Kip Grant)

at Tony's Trains in Essex Junction, VT. Shortly after that, his railroad was featured on the cover and was the lead article in Kalmbach's 2011 *Great Model Railroads*.

While not a large railroad, Kip's 1962 freelanced branchline is based on the D&H Lake George Branch and it keeps six operators busy for several hours. Also, since not being a large railroad, Kip has been able to detail the layout to a very high degree. Since it is a low key branchline, the operation is low pressure and affords the opportunity to really admire Kip's beautifully detailed scenes.

Kip also has the good fortune to have several in his regular op group that have added immensely to the operation. Don Buesing's mechanical work has the trains

New York and northwestern Vermont. For many years, it was virtually closed to all but the student and non-student members of the Rensselaer Model Railroad Society. In the last few years, it appears that they are opening to groups on a very limited basis.

As on Kip's railroad, Mike and I crewed together, which takes a lot of pressure off when operating an unfamiliar railroad. The NEB&W is a huge railroad and hosted 25 to 30 operators. It had been many years since I had last seen this great railroad. After giving us some time to look around the railroad, Dispatcher Kevin Surman got things started. Mike and I took a freight out of South Troy staging and switched cars in Troy, Cohoes, Johnsonville, Gassetts and Proctor, ending



MADE IN THE NER

LARC Products

For 11 years LARC Products has been supplying custom graphics and photo backdrops worldwide from its suburban Syracuse, New York headquarters. Sole proprietor Bill Brown, who also serves the NER and NMRA in

In the summer of 2005, he discovered a way to take those landscape photos and section them for printing on any standard home printer. Bill created several backdrops for his home layout that subsequently were featured in the August

from the name of Bill's home layout at the time, "The Lehigh Alliance of Rail Carriers," a fictional combination of several railroads in the Lehigh Gorge of Eastern Pennsylvania. Bill's new home layout continues using the initials as



various capacities, says the company began very modestly and "sort of by accident."

Bill has been into photography for more

2006 issue of *Model Railroader* magazine.

Bill also belongs to a modular layout group, the Central New York Modelers. The group asked him to create backgrounds for their layout modules. The results were so striking that the group's president, Andrew Rezsnyak, suggested that Bill try to market his images. Bill halfheartedly took the handful of images he had at the time and burned them onto a few dozen CDs. He was amazed when he sold out within an hour standing at the club's layout on display at the Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show in Springfield, MA.

From those modest beginnings, LARC grew into an international success. While the company is a serious supplier now, the name began just like the company...as a "lark." The title was taken

A LARC country scene backdrop helps create a stunning effect, making David Martini's CSX layout in Liverpool, NY, seem much deeper than it really is.

the "Leadville And Red Cliff Railroad," modeled after two towns in central Colorado. ☒



than five decades, and he has always enjoyed capturing beautiful landscapes.



LARC Products
PO Box 342
Jamesville, NY 13078
<www.LARCProducts.com>



A Fairbanks Morse switcher moves two empty lumber cars out of the Mars Hill siding on Blake Woolley's HO module. It is included in one of three modular layouts the Saint John

Society of Model Railroaders will have on tour during *Port City Rails 2016*. There is still time to register for the convention. More information is on page 4.



NEWS and EVENTS

CONVENTIONS

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.

<www.hbdpacemaker.org>

OPS OPPTS

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

<www.cnynmra.org>

April 22-24: "Island Ops," sponsored by the Sunrise Trail Division; Long Island and Metro NYC areas.

<www.islandops.org> ☒

The NER at Springfield

The last weekend in January I, along with others, assisted President Doebling by staffing the NER's booth at the Amherst Railway Society's Railroad Hobby Show in West Springfield, MA. Hats off to the Amherst Railway Society for a job well done! There were four buildings with over 160 exhibitors. This included more than 16 layouts, most of the manufacturers on the east coast, hobby shops, and lots of specialty sellers. There were also 20 clinics over the two day period for all skill levels, including a JMRI overview. Add to that beautiful weather with no mention of "snow" and you'll get a great turnout – well over 20,000 people.

The NER table was well attended by Bob "Doc" Chait, representing NMRA-National; NER President John Doebling; Bob Hamm, NER contest chair; Dave Insley, the NER's convention chair; and me. In addition, Paul Hoffman, Kevin Surman, Jack Cutler, and Doug Dederick of the Hudson Berkshire

THE COUPLER Deadlines

MAY 20 -- July-Sep issue

AUGUST 19 -- Oct-Dec issue

NOVEMBER 18 – Jan-March issue



Left top, Doc Chait and John Doebling man the NER NMRA table at the Springfield show, as



Kevin Surman pitches "The Pacemaker" convention, below. (Photos by Robert Dennis)

Division were there to showcase and answer any questions on the upcoming "Pacemaker" NER convention. We were able to sign up more than 22 people for a "Rail Pass." It was very productive from a membership perspective, and I feel we stirred the interest of quite a few people about the Albany Convention. A number of members also stopped by to say hi and chat with us for a while and learn more about the Region's convention plans for the next few years.— Robert Dennis, Garden State Division ☒