

THE COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION



No. 262 • JULY-SEPT 2016

A Life 'Model' Railroader 8
Dwight Smith still promoting at 91

Celebrating Narrow Rails 10
Augusta hosts national convention

A Grand Time in St. John 12
Looking back at 'Port City Rails 2016'



Page 4

REGULAR FEATURES

Open Doehr	3
Workin' On the Railroad	14
Made in the NER	15
NER News and Events	16
New Members	16

COVER PHOTO

The engineer makes a last minute inspection before setting out with his stunning 0-6-0 Wabash live steam locomotive... perhaps heading the Wabash Cannonball? The action takes place on the Adirondack Live Steamers layout, just one of the attractions at *The Pacemaker*, this year's NER convention September 15-18 in Albany, NY. Read more about what's planned starting on page 5.

(Photo by Bert Pflagl)



FROM THE EDITOR...

By JEFF PASTON



Canada Director Steve McMullin tells me he tries to put at least five minutes each day into working on his model railroad. Sometimes, he notes, that five minutes becomes far greater. But, no matter what, his plan "forces" him to spend time on his favorite pastime.

I'm going to try this idea because I always seem to get distracted from working on my railroad. Using Steve's plan, I actually may get something done, even if it is at a snail's pace!

I just returned from a most enjoyable time at *Port City Rails* in St. John, NB. Special thanks go to all of the convention organizers — Steve, Lou McIntyre, Don Fitzpatrick and everyone else I'm likely forgetting. We made a lot of new friends and learned a lot.

Now, it's time to turn our attention to upcoming

conventions: *The Pacemaker*, the NER convention in Albany, NY; and the National Narrow Gauge Convention in Augusta, ME — both in September.

I am also pleased to announce a major upgrade to *The Coupler* newsletter. The NER board just approved a transition to color printing. Those who receive this as a hard copy will be most pleased with some print-only benefits as well as seeing rich, full color photographs on glossy paper as you get in the national hobby magazines.

These improvements will only raise your cost a mere 75 cents an issue. Once you see it, I think you'll agree you'll be getting value for your investment! The changes will start with the January issue (#264). ☒



www.nernmra.org

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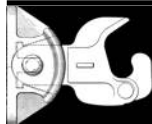
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The editorial policy of *The Coupler*, the official publication of the Northeastern Region, shall be to contribute, wherever and whenever possible, to the promotion, growth, and understanding of the hobby of model railroading. *The Coupler* is published 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 send all correspondence, news, photos, and drawings to the Editor by email.



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Something Special This Way Comes

I took over as NER President last summer with some trepidation. Of course the opportunity to lead the Region was special – and important. But I'd just made a big career move in the spring, and I was up to my ears in new responsibilities, priorities, and travel. Now several months later, things are looking up – both for me and for the Region. Here are a few highlights.

There is a lot going on today in the Region, but very little of it is my doing. Instead we're building a growing team of contributors who are making great progress on several initiatives. Chief among those helping me personally are Treasurer Peter McKenney and Secretary Chip Faulter. Both have specific duties that come with their appointed roles, but they also keep me organized and focused on the right stuff – and moving projects along. Without their support I'd be a lot farther behind in this job. Thanks Peter and Chip.

I'm especially excited about where we are now with conventions. After the low point of 2015, the Hudson-Berkshire Division has the NER back on track in a big way for 2016 in Albany this September with the *Pacemaker*. (If you've never attended an NER Regional you really must, and this is the year to do it - don't miss Albany!)

We also have a special opportunity to attend a national convention in our own backyard this year when the National Narrow Gauge Convention comes to Augusta, Maine (also this September). Looks like it's going to be a big bang start to this fall's railroading season.

Beyond 2016, we have proposals in progress now for a 2017 Convention in Newport, RI, and a 2018 gig in northern New Jersey. There's even a rumbling afoot for 2019 – though discussions here are preliminary. Our NER convention team is growing stronger now under the leadership of David Insley, and

it's our expectation that hosting a regional convention will naturally become much less of a burden for any one division to carry alone. Great job folks!

We're also making progress on several additional fronts – including regularly held BOD meetings using Go-to-Meeting software, a regional advisory committee on stewarding our financial assets, updates to the *Coupler* newsletter, creating a longer term strategic plan – all good stuff. But we also have a long way to go, and a lot more to do.

We need more help with our Web site. Bill Poor did a nice job this spring fixing the Region Web site (and five division sites piggybacking) when we were attacked from outside (thanks Bill!). Still, that work put our Web site overhaul on the back burner. What we really need now is a Web team of three or four individuals, and a shared vision for transforming the NER site into a true go-to source for information and knowledge. Events, clubs, layout visits, clinics, how to advice ... imagine the possibilities.

We need additional help with marketing and communications – for instance, running our new email communications campaign with *Constant Contact*. And I'd like to update our trade show booth (new graphics and signage) and then use it more effectively in a larger regional recruiting effort.

So as you begin to sketch out your fall railroading and modeling plans, I want to ask you to also consider becoming more active and involved with the association – both in your local division and with our growing regional team. Drop me a note to share your thoughts, ideas, or questions.

Let's build the biggest, baddest, and best region in the whole world. All aboard! ☒

Nominations Sought for Robert W. Spate Award

The Robert W. Spate Public Service Award is presented annually to an NMRA member or organization, or non-NMRA entity, within the area served by the Northeastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association that best exemplifies the promotion of the hobby of model railroading. Preference is given to those whose service to the hobby is in a public forum open to young people and/or others who are not usually exposed to the hobby. The recipient receives an engraved plaque and appropriate recognition.

Spate of New Harbor, Maine, was a Life Member of the NMRA and a member of the NER's HUB Division. He actively shared his model railroading interests with young people and others. After he retired, he continued to support other model railroaders from his rather remote Pemaquid Point location. The Spate Award honors Bob by recognizing others who share this spirit.

Louise Spate, Bob's widow, donated his 78-by-16 foot layout to the Great Falls Model Railroad Club (GFMRRRC), which used bits and pieces of the layout, rolling stock, and tools to help create the GFMRRRC HO scale layout. Those things not used by the club were sold off at train shows. Since Bob's primary connection to the hobby was in the Northeastern Region, the GFMRRRC decided to make a donation to the NER to create an endowment to fund an annual award in Bob's memory.

An individual, group, or organization may be nominated by the boards of active NER divisions or through the cognizant NER area director in the case of inactive divisions. The nomination must be accompanied by the citation that will be used for the award if the nomination is selected. The award is not for service to a specific Division or to the Region. It is for exemplary service to the hobby.

The NER president is responsible to appoint an

ad hoc panel to review the nominations and make the award. Over the years the award has been presented to the Bedford Boomers and Amherst Society of Model Railroad Engineers as well as Emmons Lancaster, Jack Alexander, Charlie Bettinger, Paul Allard, and Thomas Coulombe.

This year, Larry Cannon has volunteered to coordinate receipt of the nominations for the ad hoc panel. Therefore, nominations for this award should be submitted to Larry by e-mail at <larrycannon@roadrunner.com>, or by mail at 516 Pond Rd.; Lewiston, ME 04240. Each nomination *must* be accompanied by the proposed citation explaining why the nominee is deserving of this award. The deadline for the submissions is Monday, July 31.

This year's award will be presented in September at *The Pacemaker* convention in Albany. — Chip Faulter ☒



Albany Shaping Up as First Rate Convention!

By BILL DOYLE

Hidden treasures abound among the many layouts and events planned for the NER 2016 convention "The Pacemaker" September 15-18 in Albany, NY. The convention Web site hbd.pacemaker.org is ready to accept registrations and contains a wealth of information on the 30 layouts open for visits, 23 of which will be hosting operating sessions. It also offers slide shows for most of these layouts to give a more in-depth preview and aid selection of visits and operating sessions. There is a link to the NER online registration and a form that can be printed out to register by mail. Since some operating sessions have already filled, it is



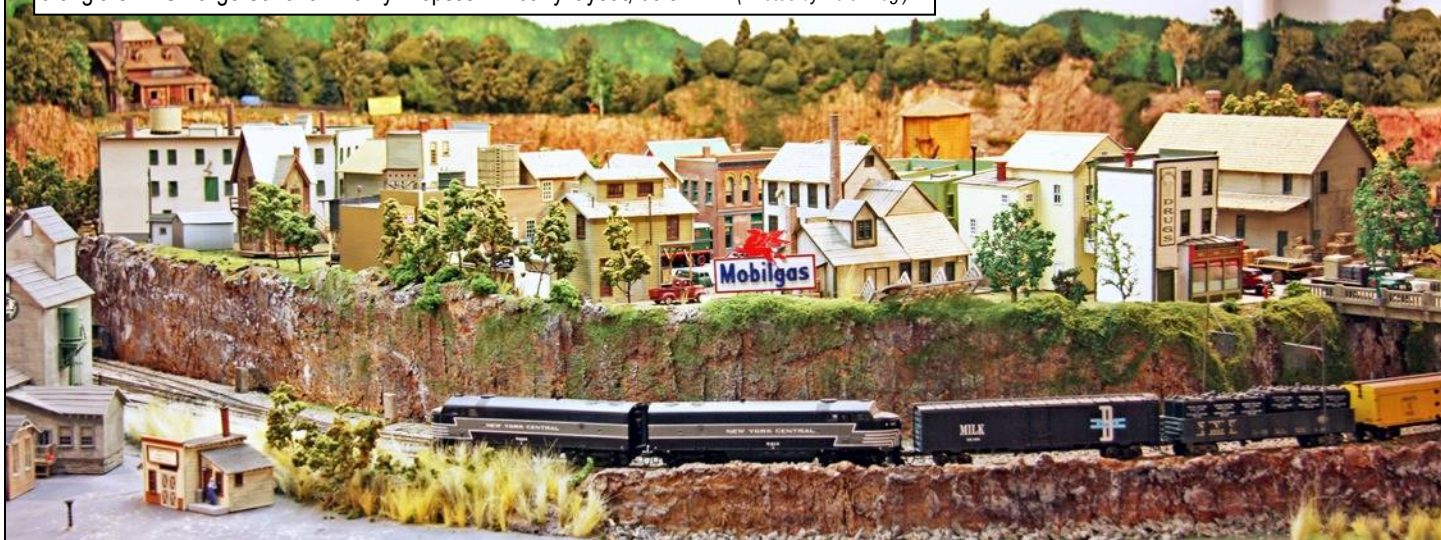
recommended to register early and reserve operating session selections.

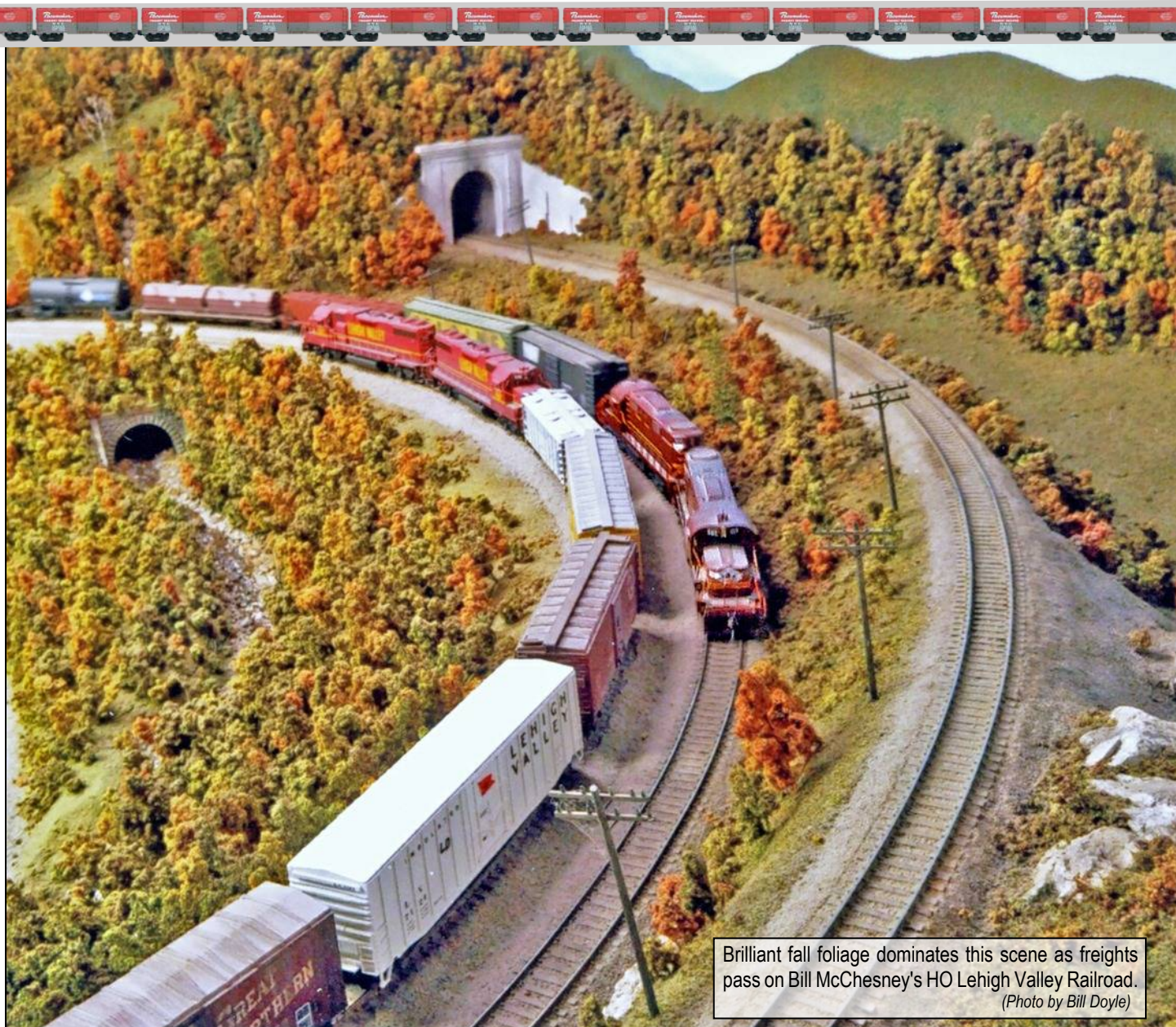
Some of the convention layouts have been featured in hobby publications; a few several

times. Among the layouts are Henry Propst's New York Central which incorporates a spectacular 50' run down the Mohawk Valley before splitting at Hoffmans to run through Schenectady and West Albany on its way to Albany Union Station or through Selkirk yard spiraling down to the Central's 60th St. yard and car float operation in New York City. Bob Chase's freelanced railroad incorporates numerous highly detailed craftsman structures. John McBride's F scale (yes, that is F scale) railroad depicts an 1874 to 1893 iron ore line from an Adirondack mine to a smelter on the shores of Lake Champlain. Jack Cutler's multi-level PRR operation makes up in electronics what it lacks in scenery (at this point) with totally signaled territory, a phone system, and a remote dispatcher.

Two scenes from the New York Central in HO: A long westbound freight passes Fonda, NY, along the NYS Barge Canal on Henry Propst's

Mohawk Division, *above*. An NYC freight skirts a town on Bob Chase's Boston & Albany layout, *below*. (Photos by Bert Pflagl)





Looking for a modeling of railroads outside the NER area? The ATSF is represented in layouts by Paul Hoffman and Dick Davis. Paul has a multi-level helix disguised as a water tower while Dick has captured the beauty of the southwest desert in his scenery. Doug Dederick's N-scale Great Northern captures the grandeur of the Rockies in Montana along Glacier National Park and Marias Pass requiring helper service on manifests. It also features his award winning structures. Rich Smith models the Milwaukee Road – both on his new layout and also on his award winning older layout (*Model Railroader* 2006 second place layout design) – incorporating multilevel operations and staging in a small area. Tom Rhodes' layout highlights both standard and narrow gauge lines in Colorado and utilizes digital photos for backdrop scenery. Bill McChesney's Lehigh Valley features long runs with a variety of LV, RDG, L&HR, NW and D&H equipment in wonderful

fall scenery.

For a different experience, the Adirondack Live Steamers will host an operating session on Sunday behind live steam and diesels. Another visit will take you to Joe Kavanagh's 1½" scale Luzerne Valley around nearly two mile (yes, real miles) of signaled track through the woods of the southern Adirondacks.

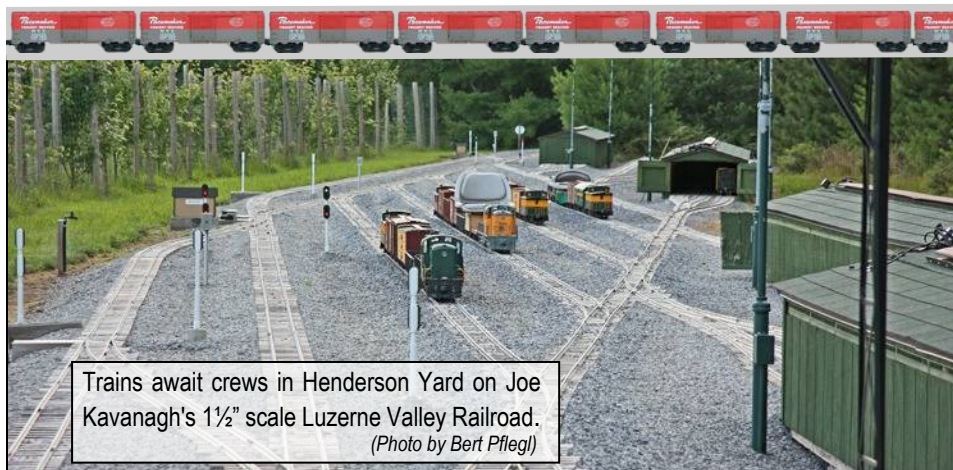
There will be four modular railroads on display – both N-scale and HO – including one depicting European model railroading. The layouts will be set up in a large conference room at the convention for close up viewing. Three will also have operating sessions which can be booked at the convention registration desk.

Clinics covering prototype railroad operations as well as modeling are always

an important part of an NER convention. The conference rooms for clinics will be large and comfortable. MMR Mike Tylick will offer constructing a lumber yard building, Bob Mohowski will discuss modeling coal hoppers and loads, and MMR Bill Brown will cover 'Creating a Model Scene: research through execution.' A hands-on clinic with MMR Kevin Surman will feature a limited run Santa Fe bunkhouse produced by CHR Structures Ltd.

This area is D&H country and author/modeler Dominic Bourgeois will present 'Modeling the D&H.' His module of Cobleskill, NY, will be on display throughout the convention. Additionally, Mike Evans will discuss the D&H Rutland Branch and Kip Grant will describe 'the Origins of Sonnyvale Branch' reflecting the D&H in the Glens Falls area.

(Continued on next page)



(Continued from page 5)

Artie Krass will offer two sessions introducing the Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI) Decoder Pro 3 which helps maintain a roster of DCC-equipped locomotives and reads program decoder configuration variables (CVs) from associated lists.

The ladies will also have several programs: a paint and sip where wine and good company share time with creating a 'masterpiece'; a wine exploration and tasting; and a moderated discussion of the book *Murder on the Orient Express*, Agatha Christie's famous novel.

NER members are encouraged to bring locomotives, cars, structures, dioramas and photos for this year's contests under the able management of Ken May, Andy Clermont and Bill Barry.

Prototype tours include the Port of Albany, whose railroad is jointly operated by CSX and CP; the Railex distribution terminal for west coast produce; and the SMS switching service for the Northeast Industrial Park in Guilderland. The featured day long trip is a chartered coach on the Saratoga and North Creek Railway running behind two F40s (ex-Amtrak) on the former D&H Adirondack

Branch. These engines have been repainted in a scheme reminiscent of the D&H. The trip will include a layover in North Creek, NY, just voted one the top 10 small towns to visit in New York State.

The layout book for *The Pacemaker* convention will not contain any local maps or local step-by-step directions. It will include an overall map and seven zone maps. These maps are intended to be used for context, orientation, and trip planning. The layout book will list a validated GPS address and validated GPS coordinates for each layout. Each location has been individually checked and then rechecked to insure accuracy. Attendees should have no problems visiting layouts if they have a GPS unit or a smart phone.

The Pacemaker convention headquarters is the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center, conveniently located off Exit 4 of I-87 (Adirondack Northway). Rooms (and they are terrific) are available at \$126 per night by contacting the hotel directly at 518-869-8100. Be sure to request the "National Model Railroad Association 12700M" group rate. Check the hotel's Web site, desmondhotelalbany.com for views of the splendid rooms and gathering areas. ☒



Photo, Art Contests Offer Another Judging Venue

By WILLIAM BARRY
NER Photo Contest Chair

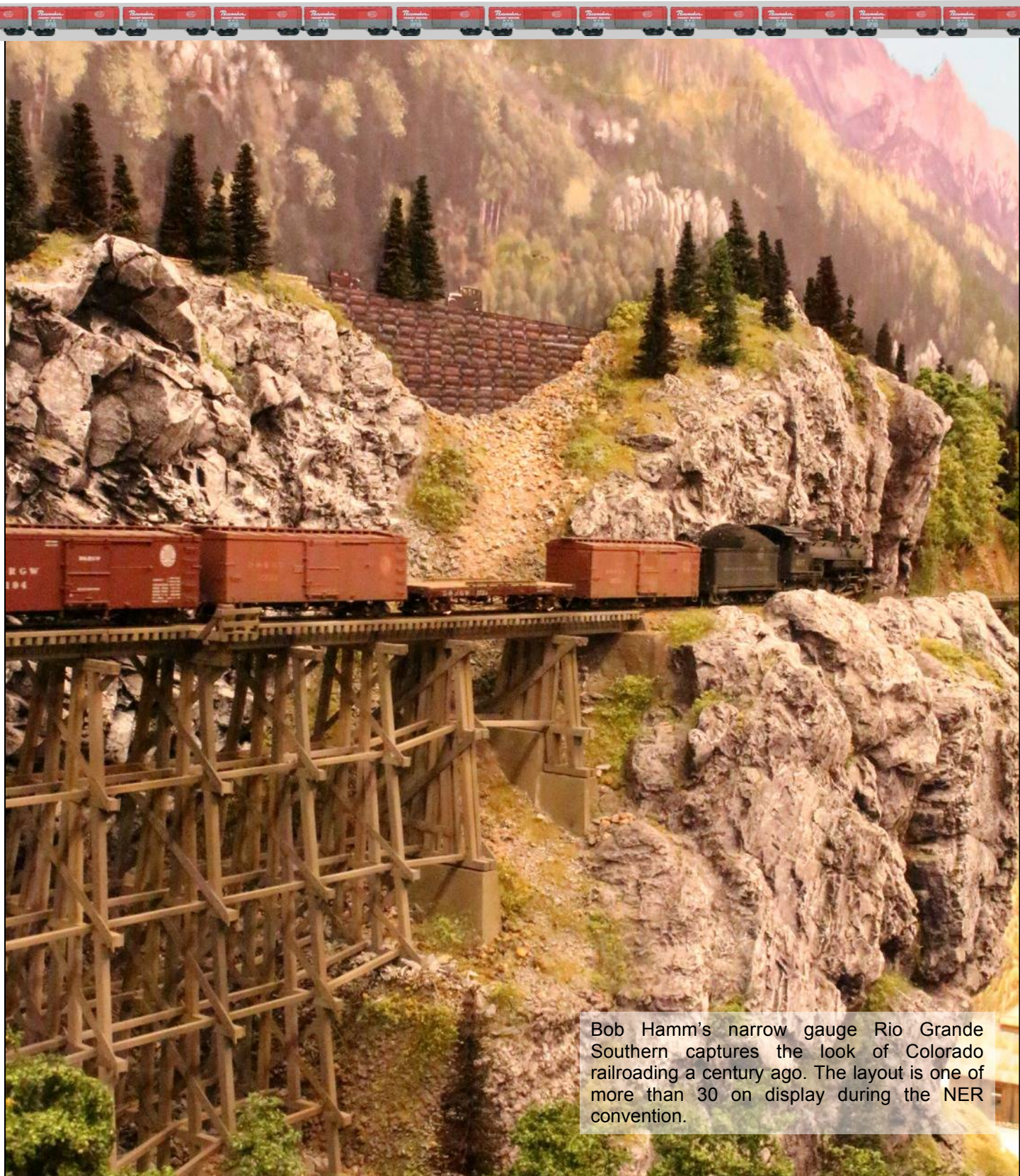
The NER Photo Contest will be back again this year at the Albany convention. It is an opportunity to show off photographic and artistic handiwork to fellow model railroaders. If you're not comfortable with entering a "contest," there is also a *Display Only* category. Look through your collection of photos and find your favorites, or head out and take some new photos. Who doesn't like an excuse to go railfanning or to visit a friend's layout?

There are categories for model and prototype photos — color or black & white. Some digital photos may look more striking as black & white. Photo manipulation has been done for years in the dark room and has now moved to the computer. Just keep it reasonable and let us know what you did. Otherwise, show off photo manipulation skills by entering the "*Imagineered*" *Photography* Category. All entries should be mounted and not framed.

For those with an artistic bent, there is the judged *Art Show* category. This is for any type of graphic art, paintings, drawings, etc., with a railroad theme.

The contest guidelines and entry form are posted on the NER Web site at www.nermra.org/contests. There is an editable pdf version of the form as well. Keep in mind that each entry requires a separate form. Please fill forms out ahead of time so they can be dropped off and not take away time from other convention activities. Pre-printed return address labels on the forms are highly recommend to save time.

Entries are accepted in the contest room on Friday evening from 5 to 9 PM and early Saturday morning between 8 and 8:30. Please email the photo contest chair at ner.photocontest@gmail.com with any questions. ☒



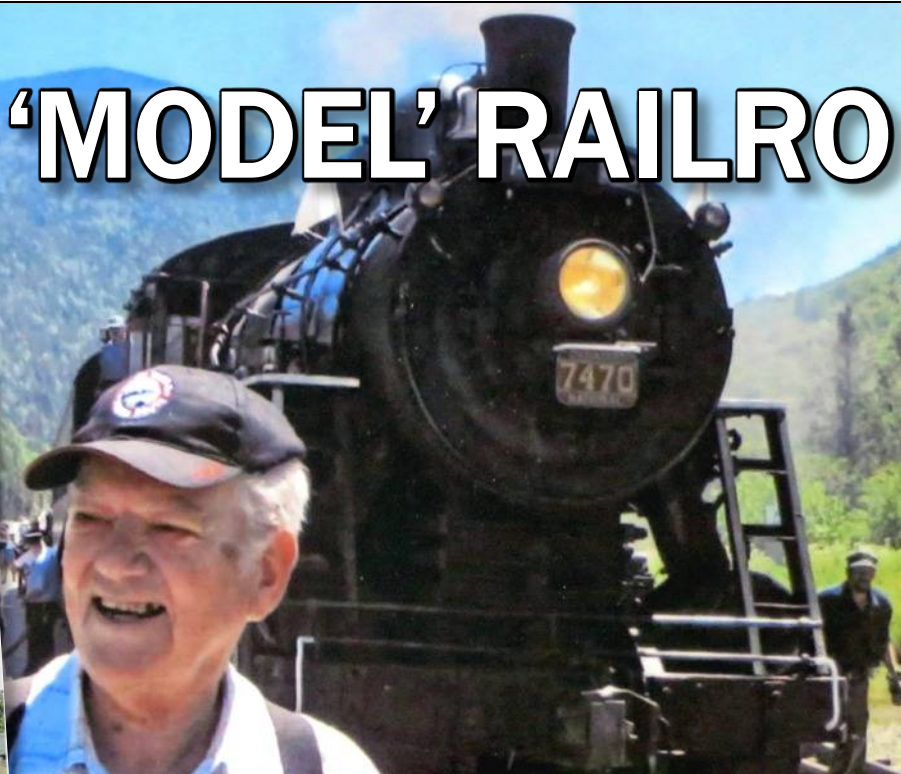
Bob Hamm's narrow gauge Rio Grande Southern captures the look of Colorado railroading a century ago. The layout is one of more than 30 on display during the NER convention.

REGISTER ONLINE at <hbdpacemaker.org>

Click "REGISTRATION" tab

Dwight Smith MMR

A LIFETIME 'MODEL' RAILRO

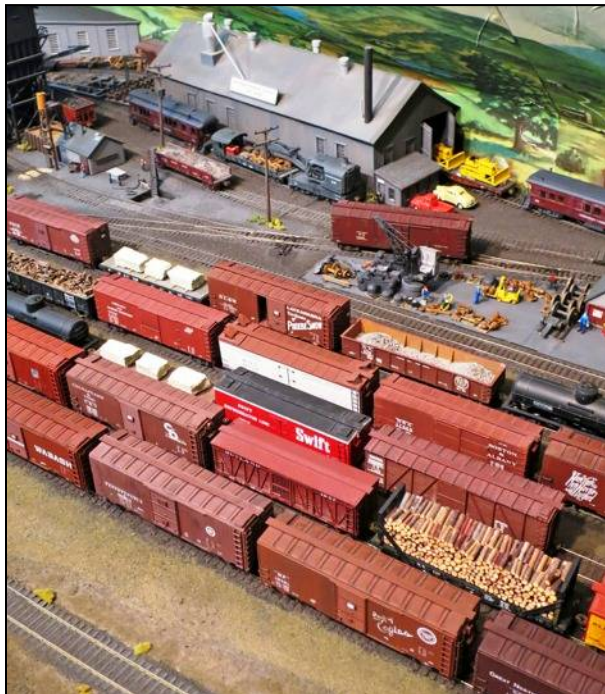


HO Northern Vermont Railroad, Dwight has the credentials for anyone who cares to engage in conversation. He received his NMRA Master Model Railroader award (#329) in 2003 as a member of the Seacoast Division.

His Vermont Northern is set in 1950, a time for which Dwight has fond memories. He told *Daily Sun* reporter Tom Eastman, "Because I started model railroading in 1940, and I like that era from then to 1950. I wanted to have my layout stuck in 1950. Those businesses back then used railroads. If they are still in business today, they use trucks — so I wanted to depict that era before all of that changed."

Just a few months ago, he was on the front page of *The Conway Daily Sun* sharing his story. Whether it is the real thing or his fictional

Another reason for 1950 is Dwight is a steam fan and all of his model locomotives depict steam. "In 1950, some railroads were



At top of page, Dwight Smith at Crawford Station, Crawford Notch, NH, around 1990 with Conway Scenic RR 0-6-0 #7470 in the background. The locomotive just completed a run from North Conway, NH — a rare day in the otherwise totally dieselized Crawford Notch line. It was 7470's first trip to Crawford Notch Station. The 0-6-0 is currently undergoing restoration in 2016. (Photo from Dwight Smith collection)

Dwight's HO Northern Vermont Railway car shop and freight classification yard at Caledonia on the layout, left.

Below, an overview of the engine terminal, yard office, snowplow and caboose storage tracks in Caledonia Yard. (Model photos by Tom Eastman, Conway Daily Sun)





ADER OF BIG AND SMALL!

partially dieselized, meaning they were still using some steam. My layout captures that time," he told Eastman.

The Northern Vermont Railroad occupies a former bedroom in Dwight's Intervale, NH, home. It has a six track classification yard, two track staging yard, a 30-foot continuous mainline, four villages, and two stub ended branch lines – one serving a granite quarry. Many locations and businesses are named for Dwight's five children, nine grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

With a background in the real thing, the HO layout operates as realistically as possible. Dwight says, "Whatever it is, I make the decisions – and the decisions I make come down to me wanting...

to make that model railroad realistic, and to have a purpose."

Dwight's model work had to take a hiatus while he and his late wife Gee operated the Conway Scenic with two business partners. Dwight acquired the rolling stock, including O-6-O #7470. Gee ran the gift shop. By the end of 1990, Dwight formally retired. The Conway Scenic was sold to Russ and Dot Seybold in 1999. So, for the past 25 years, Dwight turned his attention to the HO Vermont Northern.

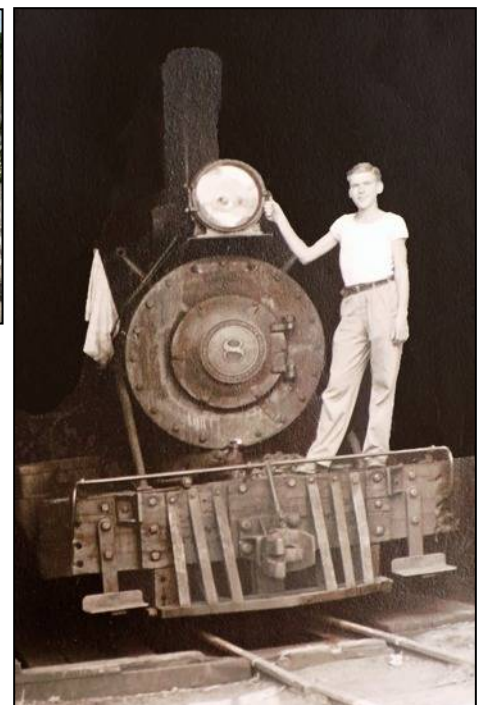
He told the newspaper that he loves to share his model railroad with interested visitors. "I have been very fortunate to have my hobby as my vocation – which is railroading – in both real life and in model railroading." — Jeff Paston with thanks to Tom Eastman of the Conway Daily Sun. ☒



Dwight displays his model of the Northern Vermont's station at Eden, VT, *above left*. He scratch built it from the original plans for the Maine Central station at Crawford, NH. *Above right*, the Martha Quarry of the Hall Granite Company on the NVR layout "produces" high quality light gray granite.

At *top of page*, the daily milk train on the NVR's Eden Branch arrives at Hazens Station. Next door to the station is the large Alexander Dairy facility, which ships daily one or more carloads of milk and milk products. (Model photos by Tom Eastman, Conway Daily Sun)

At *right*, 15-year old Dwight Smith poses on the pilot of 2-foot gauge Bridgton & Harrison RR #8 at Bridgton, Maine, in 1940.





National Narrow Gauge Convention Celebrating Unique Railroading from Maine to Colorado

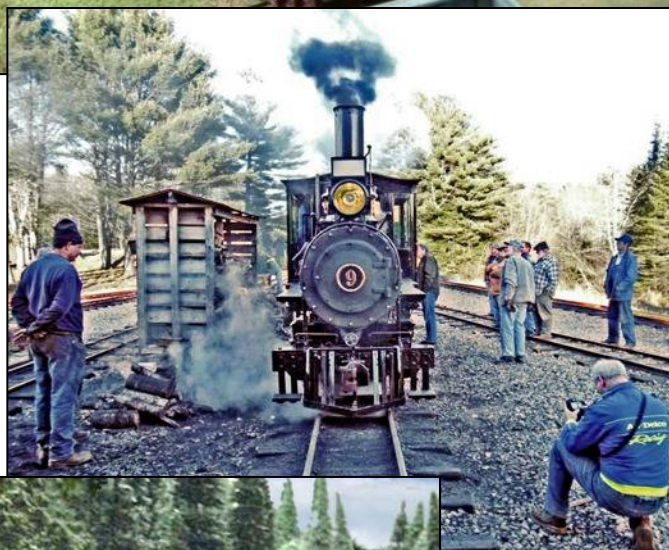
By LEE RAINEY
NNGC 2016 Chairman

Four days of top-flight model railroading, railroad history, and rail preservation that celebrate Maine's rich two-foot-gauge heritage is the focus of the 36th National Narrow Gauge Convention in Augusta, ME. It takes place September 7-10 at the city's Civic Center and is co-sponsored by the Seacoast Division, NMRA.

The inside program includes 90 clinic presentations. One theme is narrow gauge prototype history. Railroads covered by the programs range literally from coast to coast, as well as Canada and two-foot-gauge overseas. There will also be a large number of clinics on the latest modeling techniques. Attendees will hear from expert speakers including Lou Sassi, Tony Koester, Dave Frary, Bob Hayden, Peter Barney, Miles Hale, and Charlie Getz.

A standard feature of every Narrow Gauge Convention is a great hall of manufacturers, vendors, publishers, and preservation organizations. This year, more than 90 will be in attendance, with products for every scale.





An 0-4-0 sneaks through the Maine woods in the scene above on an Sn2 modular layout that will be displayed during the convention.

One of the prototype tours will

At top, it's train time at Gunnison on Bob Meckley's well-detailed home HOn3 layout. More of Bob's Colorado modeling is on page 10 as a stock train pulls into Sargents.

take conventioners to the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington Railway museum, where Forney No. 9 recently completed a 20-year restoration, above.

The Civic Center will also host 16 modular layouts — in Nn3, HOn30, Sn2, On30, On3, Gn15, 7/8n2 — as well as two large-scale live steam layouts on the front lawn. One layout is coming all the way from England to take part!

Attendees will not want to miss viewing the model and photo contest. The detail and creativity of the entries at a narrow gauge convention are truly remarkable.

The outside program is equally impressive. The format of the convention has activities at the Civic Center only in morning and evening, leaving the daylight, afternoon hours free for tours, layout visits and other special activities.

Original, prototype two-foot equipment will be operating at the museums in Alna, Phillips, Boothbay and Portland, with special photo opportunities and behind-the-scenes tours open only to convention attendees. Recently restored two-foot Forneys WW&F #9 (built 1891) and Monson #3 (built 1913) will be in steam.

A variety of guided bus and self-driving tours will allow convention attendees to explore all five of the Maine two-footers. Though the last ceased operations in 1943, a surprising amount still remains to be seen.

No convention would be complete without home layouts. Some two dozen are planning to be open before, during and after the convention. Prototypes modeled include both New England standard gauge and narrow gauge from Maine to Colorado. Scales range from N to 1:5 (three-foot prototype live steam on a 7.5" track gauge!).

For full details, visit the convention Web site at nngc2016.org, or write 36th National Narrow Gauge Convention, Inc., PO Box 1406, Gray, ME 04039. ☒



By JEFF PASTON
Coupler Editor

Six years had passed since the last get together in Saint John, NB, and the Saint John Society of Model

Railroaders, the Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders, and the NMRA's Northeastern Region got together to do it again with *Port City Rails 2016* between May 19th and 22nd.

There were certainly enough activities to keep everyone busy from the clinics to the tours to the operating sessions. From the organizers perspective, it was a very successful convention. For participants, it's what you take away from a convention that makes it worth the trip. At Saint John, we came away with a lot!



NB Southern excursion train was led by slug 003 and GP-38-3 906 (ex-UP). Riding in ex-CN coach, right, are NER members Larry Cannon and Tom Oxnard. Photo at top: Saint John sign at historic Fort Howe.



The train show at Saint John's Lord Beaverbrook Rink featured modular layouts, including the Narragansett Bay Railway & Navigation Company On30 from the Little Rhody Division and participants from Nova Scotia. Center, John Falconer of Moncton, NB, admires Andy Small's ore dock module. At right, Bob Pletl from the CNY Division concentrates on switching cars on Steve McMullin's Carleton Railway operating session. (Photos: Jeff Paston)



Saint John is an industrial city. For modelers, there is a wealth of prototype information. If you thought about building a port operation, an oil refinery, a paper mill, a salt and potash operation, or even a scrap metal operation, it was all here. Saint John also is home to the unique phenomenon of the Reversing Rapids, where water actually reverses direction due to the 30-foot rise and fall of ocean tides from the Bay of Fundy.

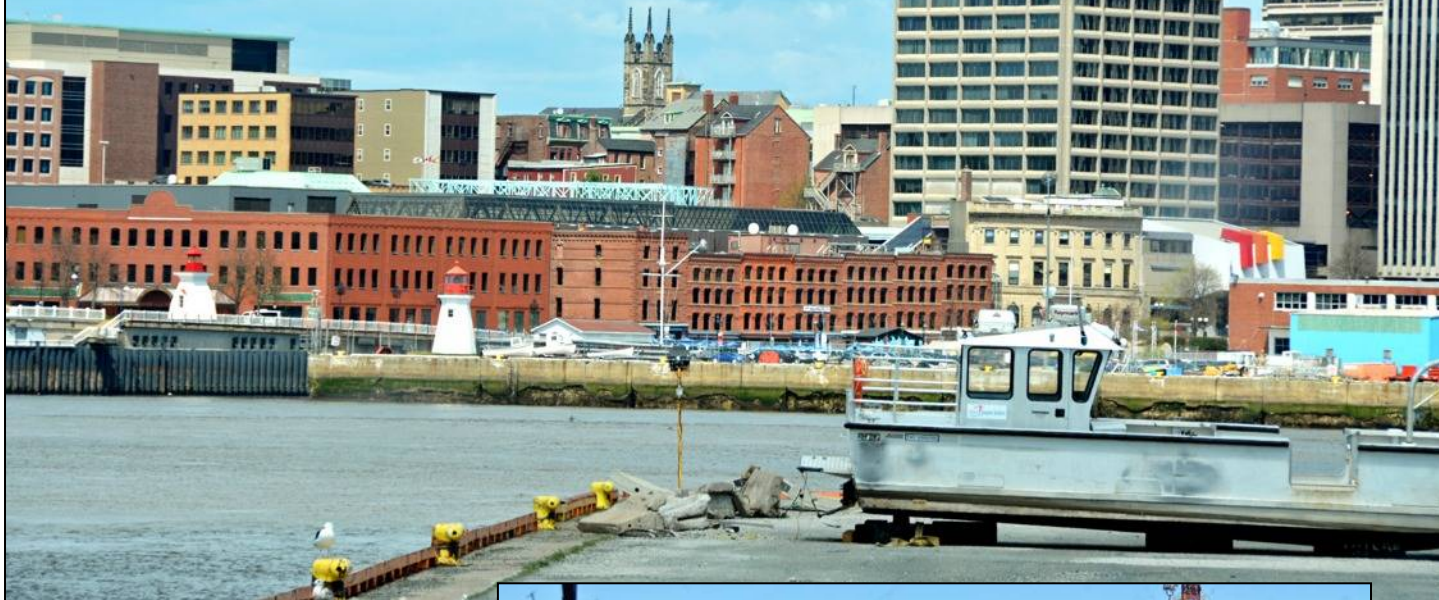
Among the clinics, Don Fitzpatrick's overview of Saint John railroading framed many events over the next few days. History – even history in a place we don't live or model – can still be a valuable tool. Learning about what was once in Saint John... then hearing about how the departure of Canadian Pacific Railway there gave rise to a new short line railroad that connected with the Canadian National. It is a scenario often repeated across North America, and one which might provide a back story for a model railroad.

In this case, that history provided context for an excursion on that short line, the New Brunswick Southern. Then, later visits to three layouts that model past and present Saint John were even more meaningful.

Saint John is mostly a "company town." The Irving family owns the oil refinery, the paper mills, the tug boat operation, the NB Southern railroad (and all of the newspapers in New Brunswick). However, Irving was most gracious in hosting tours of the refinery and a paper plant. Seeing operations of this magnitude will be useful to future modeling projects.

Port of Saint John Harbour Master Chris Hall led a bus tour of port operations. Saint John is the third largest port in Canada. His

Here's a view of Saint John's downtown skyline from across the harbor. *In pictures below from top, Courtnay Bay Potash Terminal GP7 (ex-PC) shunts potash cars at Port of Saint John. Conventioneers clamber aboard a Trackmobile at American Iron & Metal facility. Don Fitzpatrick gives a talk on the history of Saint John railroads. Keynote Speaker Jason Shron of Rapido Model Trains accepts commemorative plaque from convention co-chair Steve McMullin at the banquet. MMR Tom Oxnard accepts "Best in Show" trophy from model contest co-coordinator Marc Hemphill.* (Photos by Jeff Paston, except where noted)



tour included insight into cruise ship operations, potash and salt shipping, the tug fleet, and ocean freighter facilities. On that tour, the folks at Montreal-based American Iron & Metal showed off the company's huge scrap metal operation. All of this added fodder for model railroad industries.

A particularly popular clinic guided us in custom making our own HO or N scale turnouts using materials provided by Fast Tracks. Many clinics were presented by NER members, including Dan Bigda, Larry Cannon, Barbara Hoblit, David Insley, and Dick Johannes.

Convention participants saw some beautiful modeling on the layout tour, and three model railroads provided hours of operating fun for those who signed up.

The weekend was topped off with a banquet that featured Rapido Model Trains' Jason Shron as guest speaker. Among the many awards presented was the Best in Show trophy to MMR Tom Oxnard for his entry in the model contest.

What makes conventions like *Port City Rails* even more significant is all of the information shared and the many friendships made. Yes, it was definitely worth the visit! ☒



Two award photos: Peter Dykeman





Fresh Eyes

The Railroad

I have been building my railroad for, dare I say now, quite a few years. I have mentioned before that I like being able to work on different projects depending on my mood at the time.

We all use a variety of tools and many different materials to construct our railroads. Many times different tools and materials may be required when moving between projects. If the previous project was not completed, those tools and materials are sometimes not put away. You may see where I'm going with this. It can be easy to become complacent and soon end up with a large assortment of clutter on the railroad, or work area. As we move into the summer months, I don't work on the railroad as much as during the winter so tools and materials can sometime linger on the railroad longer unless someone is coming over to see it, or I plan to hold an op session.

Someone seeing the railroad for the first time, or on an irregular basis, sees the railroad with a different set of eyes and will easily notice the clutter. Lately I have learned to look at my railroad as a first time visitor and attempt to see it as others might.

I have found that looking at my railroad and its environment with "Fresh Eyes" offers me opportunities to improve their appearance from the viewpoint of a visitor. I find the best time for me to do that is if I wake up early in the morning, before my wife Ave, and head down to the basement. Looking around before I start working on a project, I tend to take notice of the railroad and room with fresh eyes as a visitor might. I also find that it is the best time for me to clean up the room, or areas I have been working on, but may not be working on again very soon.

The Room

Since discovering this, I now look at the entire room with the same fresh eyes and it is enlightening to identify some things I have failed to see for many years. I have two bright orange 100 foot long extension



cords coiled up at the end of two aisles under the railroad to use for power tools. They have been there for years and never seemed out of place to me before. When I built the room for the railroad, I enclosed the laundry area and installed a set of louvered doors to close it off. It has now occurred to me that I have never closed those doors, even when I hosted a layout tour for our NER convention in 2010!

Under the Railroad

Just about everyone uses some portion of the space under their railroad to temporarily or permanently store something. The only things that I store under the railroad are deck chair cushions neatly stacked on a rack under a peninsula that I don't have to access very often. Some people use a skirt to hide what is under their railroads. In my situation, that would block off the heat as well as making it difficult to access several hidden staging yards. I know. Don't hide

staging yards under your railroad. Too late! But that's another story.

The Work Bench

My work benches are another area that can easily become cluttered. In addition to my regular work bench, I also use the table I built for my dispatcher's board to build models. In my case, both of these benches are located fairly close to each other in an adjoining room. Again I find it easiest to clean these areas up with fresh eyes and a fresh mind when I first go downstairs in the morning.

Back to the Railroad

Finally, another way to look at our railroads with fresh eyes is to photograph a scene. This allows us to focus on a small area without being distracted by all the surrounding scenery. It is much easier to pick out small details that are just not quite right than when viewing an entire scene. Case in point: In the accompanying photo the Tichy tool box sticks out like a sore thumb. It has been set on uneven scenery, not supporting timbers, and consequently sticks up in the air. It also is not weathered as it would have been if it had been in use for a while. Photographs can also

work well when building models. In these instances the camera can provide us with "Fresh Eyes."

My Last Column

Unfortunately this is my last column. I have been dealing with an eye problem for the past 18 months that hasn't improved in spite of an operation in March. In addition to making it increasingly difficult to work at the computer, it has made me realize that I need to step up the pace on building my railroad.

Since July 1995, I have written approximately 50 articles for *The Coupler* and have enjoyed the opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I would encourage any of you who have considered writing an article – and those who may not have – to give it a try. It has been a rewarding experience for me.

OK, break's over. I'll see you around! ☒



MADE IN THE NER *Railway Design Associates*

By MIKE TYLICK
Contributing Editor

My story starts more than 25 years ago, when a friend introduced me to Rod Guthrie, the owner of Railway Design Associates. Although distantly related to musicians Woody and Arlo Guthrie, Rod's talents were really in the visual arts. Rod was a talented painter who had worked as an industrial designer for many years before launching his own design studio. Since he had considerable dealings with Milton Bradley, it seemed natural that his firm would gravitate towards designing and building prototypes for the toy industry. Also being a lifelong railroad buff, it seemed

would be rich in the character of a craftsman kit yet also be simple to build. Its first offering was an HO model of the New Haven mission style signal tower at Buzzard's Bay, Massachusetts — it is available in modified form today.

At the time of RDA's inception, typical hobby kits consisted of die stamped wood and paper, fragile plaster castings, and many small wood and metal parts. Rod, being comfortable with commercial processes, felt that more modern materials such as polyurethane castings could make for highly detailed but easy to build models in many different scales. Since Rod had the tools and

largest toy store in NYC, complete with a scale model of the Flatiron Building. Over the years, Rod and RDA worked with some great craftsmen and modelers who advised and helped on the kits. I feel quite fortunate that I was involved with a number of RDA's projects. In many ways, Rod became my primary mentor in the hobby — one who greatly influenced my thinking and modeling and taught me many things about model building.

Unfortunately Rod passed away in 2006, but his wife, Carole, and his sons, Matthew and Michael, decided to keep the RDA line going as a tribute to Rod's vision of creating



A later styrene version of RDA's first kit — the New Haven Buzzard's Bay tower, once offered in three different scales as polyurethane



castings. A replica of the New Haven, Vermont, railroad station, *above*. Hermanson Mills, *right*, named after an RDA employee, was an earlier



polyurethane kit in HO scale that utilized Grandt Line windows. The masters were built stone by stone from plaster.

even more natural that Rod's energies would eventually be directed towards designing products for the model railroad industry.

Railway Design Associates (a takeoff on his

the expertise to cut his own dies, RDA was soon able to offer injection molded styrene kits, which are usually only available from very large manufacturers. Since the dies were hand cut by an avid model builder, many of his kits offer the look of scratchbuilt structures. And since much of the die making cost was sweat equity, it was possible to offer models that would appeal to narrower interest groups. For example, in the stone buildings, each stone was "laid," or carved, into the molds individually. Many RDA kits suggest New England mills, factories, and depots, but they could be used on any layout.

products that are evocative of trackside buildings, mills, and stations — all dedicated to fine detail and a hand-built look. At one time, kits in many scales were offered. But over time, the line has been simplified and now consists entirely of HO models made from injection molded styrene. Many of the earlier models are still available, but new kits including a stone enginehouse and a new factory complex — Indian River Molding and Millwork — are now being offered. RDA has always been on the leading edge of technology. So, fully embracing cyberspace, RDA now only sells via the Internet. ☒



Rod Guthrie in his Monson, MA, workshop working on a project with his Bridgeport milling machine. RDA had a complete machine shop and was well equipped for almost any type of model project.

While creating his own line, Rod and RDA also produced most of the prototypes for Lionel Trains, Inc. For a few years, Rod was the head of design and development there. RDA also produced some major layouts, including the one at the Lionel

studio name) was founded in 1991 in Monson, Massachusetts, with the idea of designing model cars and structures that

showroom in New York City, and at Lionel headquarters in Michigan. A large Christmas layout was built for Kiddie City, then the

Railway Design Associates
241 Silver Street
Monson, MA 01057
<shop.railwaydesign.com>



THOMAS A. COULOMBE

The NMRA, NER, and Seacoast Division lost a valuable ambassador June 6 when Tom Coulombe of Lewiston, ME, lost his courageous battle with cancer. He was a Division director for 12 years and treasurer for 15 years. Tom's calm and patient nature, as well as his common sense and generosity, are credited with helping transform the Division from a small collection of model railroaders to one of the most dynamic and effective divisions in the NER.

He was a key leader when the Division hosted NER conventions, and he helped promote the NMRA and the Division at train shows. Tom welcomed young people to the hobby, often through Boy Scout activities. He participated in Operation Life Saver. The NER awarded him the 2014 Robert W. Spate Public Service Award.

Tom was a past president of The Great Falls Model Railroad Club, and until 2016, was the Station Master and treasurer of the club.

His fellow board members wrote, "He is a 'star' in our eyes and his star will forever shine on the model railroad hobby."




NEWS and EVENTS

CONVENTIONS

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 

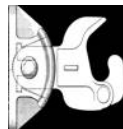
THE COUPLER Deadlines

AUGUST 19 – Oct-Dec issue

NOVEMBER 18 – Jan-March issue

FEBRUARY 17 – April-June issue

Watch for *The Coupler* in **COLOR!** Coming to print editions starting with Issue #264 in January.



NEW MEMBERS

Compiled By
MARK HARLOW
NER Office Manager

As of 5/1/16

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William Beagle
Edward J. Holler
Mike Messick
Richard Mulholland

John Randall
Jeff Thorton

MASSACHUSETTS

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