

THE COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION



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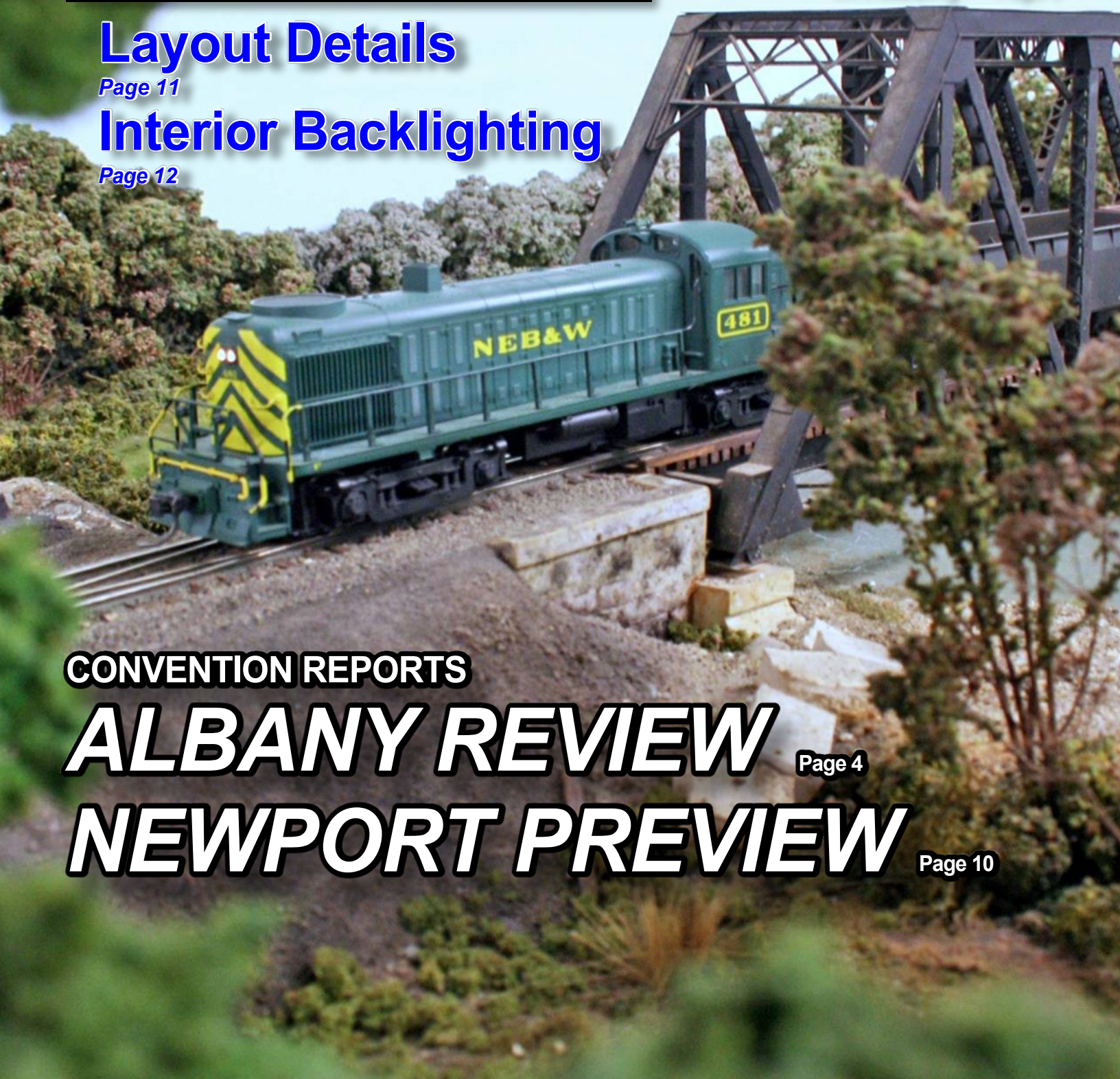
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COVER PHOTO

New England, Berkshire, and Western RS3 #481 heads a string of empty hoppers across a bridge on the famed Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute club layout in Troy, NY, during the recent *Pacemaker* NER convention. It was one of many layouts that convention-goers visited. The RPI club's NEB&W has been covered many times in the model press and is known for its attention to detail, as well as its replication of the city of Troy as it appeared in the 1950s. Photo: Jeff Paston

FROM THE EDITOR . . .

By JEFF PASTON

It is with much excitement that we debut this printed issue of *The Coupler* in color! It suffices to say that this publication has come a long way. You can check the archives on the NER Web site and see the earliest mimeographed copies from decades ago... and see us now shedding that "newsletter" look in favor of that of a modern magazine.


This issue also catches us up on *The Pacemaker* convention that was underway in Albany while the last *Coupler* was at the printer. As is our custom, we're showing you the winning models from the contest in Albany. I'm almost embarrassed to share my own "embarrassment of riches" with my many wins as a first time entrant. At the suggestion of my local Achievement Program leaders, I dug out models I created years ago and was pleasantly surprised to see how well they were received.



In addition to the look back, we take a look ahead. Steve Erickson gives us a preview of the next NER convention in Newport, RI. As you'll read on page 13, it promises tourism opportunities rarely seen during a convention — mainly due to its off-season scheduling.

In keeping with another goal of *The Coupler*, we're showing some neat ideas that you can emulate — or just plain copy — in two features. First, is a byproduct of touring many layouts during *Port City Rails* and *The Pacemaker* conventions in 2016. I enjoyed seeing innovative details on these layouts, so I'm sharing some with you in a series of articles beginning with one on page 11 of this issue.

Then, on page 12, Martin Collard solves a dilemma of lighting photo interiors so they won't glare inside model structures.

We also have our regular features, as well. Mike Tylick introduces us to Jimmy Deignan and his model kit companies in this installment of *Made in the NER*. Jeff Hanke shares his trials and tribulations of layout construction in *Workin' on the Railroad*. Enjoy! 



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EDITOR

JEFF PASTON

315-682-8144

media@cnynmra.org

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

MIKE TYLICK

COPY EDITORS

STEVE RUSSO

KEVIN KATTA

OFFICE

MGR./CIRCULATION

MARK HARLOW

nerofficemanager@verizon.net

PRINTING

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OPEN DOEHR By JOHN DOEHRING NER President

UP and Down, But with a Smile

Today I'm a little reflective — thinking about the value of my interest in trains and model railroading. Recently, I've been struggling with my health. It started a while back with a back strain after exercise. Then came back spasms that laid me low for much of the last month. It seemed that either I was in pain constantly, or sleeping off the drugs I'd been prescribed. Along the way I also developed some unrelated trouble with an eye, and now I have an ear infection to boot!

I know I'm not alone. Membership in the NMRA is dominated by folks (mostly men) who are more than 50 years old. About a third of members are 70 years or older. So aching backs, legs, and hands (and sometimes unfortunately worse) are going to be regular challenges with our members and friends.

That said, what has really put a smile on my face over this season are the trains. I had planned to begin two new modular projects — first a new set of NTRAK modules I've been dreaming up for the last two years, and then a new set of modules built to the N Scale Freemo standard. I've purchased the bench work materials and I'm anxious to get going. The back hasn't cooperated, but I have spent many an hour doing this work (and building these modules) in my mind. It's helped me to focus on something fun, and to take my mind off the pain in my back — or the boredom of lying around. Trains have kept a smile on my face.


Our family normally spends the Thanksgiving

holiday in Pennsylvania with my wife's parents and extended family. This year, my doc said no — the long car ride would be too much of a risk to the back. So we stayed home, and I (naturally) began to think about trains — and specifically about doing the *Tour de Chooch* — a now well known, self-guided layout tour held each year in New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

I felt better by the weekend, got permission to go, and set off early Saturday morning with six layouts on my list. After stopping at the first two,

and not yet far from home, I knew I'd be in trouble. The back ache was returning, and the next stop would require an 82 mile trip to Lake Winnepesaukee. So I decide to bail out, and return home to the TV and bed. Later, I realized that trains had helped a lot. I was disappointed, but the time I'd spent planning and mapping out the trip was enjoyable on its own — and I know I'll get to these layouts eventually.

Not all of our plans work out in the time we want them to — and sometimes they don't work out at all. Health is a challenge for some of our members, as it has been for me this month, but other priorities — family time, work and career efforts, and many other things — often derail our railroad dreams. This is normal, a part of the program.

Still, I'm thankful to have had some time to focus on my model railroading, even if it's been mostly in my head. Through this period it's kept a real smile on my face. 

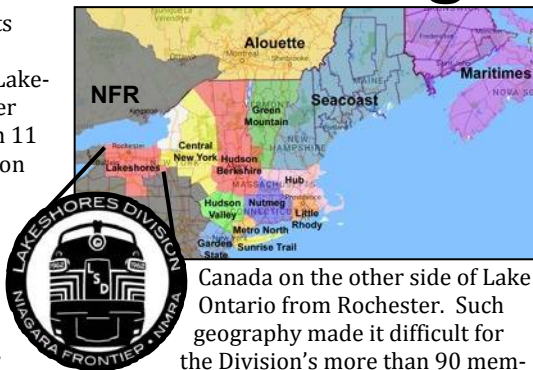


NER About to Grow Larger

Two and a half years of effort awaits only the National NMRA Board approval this spring to move the Lakeshores Division from the Niagara Frontier Region to the NER. Lakeshores covers an 11 county area of New York State centered on Rochester.

On Oct. 16, the NER Board signed off with its approval to accept the Division. The NFR Board gave its approval on May 7 at the NFR convention in Ottawa after reviewing signatures on the Division's formal petition to transfer regions.

A primary motivation for the transfer is the distances involved in attending NFR events. A lot of NFR activities are located in



Canada on the other side of Lake Ontario from Rochester. Such geography made it difficult for the Division's more than 90 members to take part at Region events. Already, the Lakeshores Division has held joint meetings with the adjacent NER Central New York Division.

Seacoast Division's Bill Gaver Named Spate Award Winner

An enthusiastic promoter of model railroading, Bill Gaver of Brookfield, NH, is not only a hard working dedicated individual, but a very modest humble person, quickly willing to give others credit for things he clearly started and promoted. Bill is this year's Robert W. Spate Public Service Award winner in memory of the late Hub Division member who actively promoted the hobby, especially among young people. The award is presented annually in the NER to a person or organization that best exemplifies the promotion of the hobby of model railroading.



Bill fills the requirements as an excellent model builder, who has extensive contacts and model railroad friends and acquaintances across the US, and in Australia and the UK. Bill opens his personal model railroad to many visitors and is always willing to answer questions and offer hands on assistance. His HO scale "Balboa Granada & Eastern Railroad" located in

Defern Depot in Brookfield, NH, is a serious well-built model railroad housed in its own railroad station building. He has had his layout open for several NER conventions, *Tour de Chooch*, school group visits, local community events, and Seacoast Division NMRA events. Bill uses his layout and his excellent knowledge of history to build an extensive contact list and support resources in the community.

Bill spearheaded the historical HO scale 1909 B&M Railroad located in the restored 1875 Freight House in Union, NH, for the Wakefield Historical Commission. Bill has organized numerous promotional events at the Heritage Park Railroad Museum. Bill is well organized and a promotional powerhouse, with well executed publicity distribution methods through mailings and print media. He organized and solicited an all-volunteer work crew with a combination of experienced model railroaders and newcomers willing to learn. He has organized multiple Boy Scout

THE COUPLER Deadlines

FEBRUARY 17 – April-June issue
MAY 20 – July-Sept. issue
AUGUST 19 – Oct-Dec issue

CONVENTIONS

July 30-Aug. 5: NMRA 2017 Convention – *Orange Blossom Special*; Orlando, FL.
November 9-12: NER Convention – *Rails to the Gilded Age*; Newport, RI
September 16-18, 2018: NER Convention – *The Erie Limited 2018*; Mahwah, NJ

SHOWS

January 28-29: Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show; West Springfield, MA
<http://www.railroadhobbyshow.com/>



Since Bill Gaver could not attend the Pacemaker Convention in Albany, former Northern New England Director Rich Breton did the honors.

Railroad Merit Badge programs with good attendance and success.

Bill's enthusiasm for promoting this hobby goes back many years. A prime example of this is the "Tradition of Model Railroading" program Bill presented weekly at the Wolfeboro Public Library during November 2003 when he was vice president of the Seacoast Division of the NMRA.

Congratulations to Bill for being named this year's Robert W. Spate Award winner! —*Rich Breton*

NEW MEMBERS

Compiled By **MARK HARLOW**
 NER Office Manager

As of 11/1/16

QUEBEC

Dominic Bourgeois
 Beth Fitzpatrick
 Dr. Donald A. Fitzpatrick
 Blake A. Woolley
CONNECTICUT
 John N. Adriani Sr.

Robert Branagan
 Gregory Cochenet
 Cochenet family
 Robert Conustock
 Robert Davis
 Seth Lindenman
 Robert Norton
 Michael Poidomani
 Sue Rhea
 Irving Richert

Michael A. Terminiello
 David Yale
MASSACHUSETTS
 Holden Acero
 Matthew Antonuccio
 John Barry
 Larry Beach
 Carl Chancey
 Joseph Donaghy
 John Foley

George P. Forte Jr.
 Bob Koster
 Bob Leblanc
 Sean Reynolds
 Brian N. Rickard
 Charles M. Sheridan
MAINE
 John Coelho
NEW HAMPSHIRE
 Daniel Guay

NEW JERSEY
 John Carlough
 Rudy Garbely
 Gregory Nieradka
 Daniel Santos
 Dr. Manfred Strott
 Larry Weppel
NEW YORK
 Susan Ascolese
 Ron Butchart

Elliot Courtney
 Ellen Cutler
 Jeff Easterly
 Rolf Gaeding
 Timothy Johnson
 Ken Karlewicz
 Donald Klose
 Willard Kohler
 Mark Lafond
 Bill Lippus

Vince O'Mahony
 Philip Sutter
 Peter Vassallo
 Robert Yustein
RHODE ISLAND
 Michael Ferrara
 Richard Krystof
 William Schwartz

Portable Switching Layout Attracts Attention to NMRA at Show

By ROGER BEISWENGER

“Would they like to run the train?” I asked the parents of eight-year-old Justin and his six-year-old sister Sarah as they admired our Central New York Division’s new 15” by 8’ “Port of Oswego” layout at the *Great New York State Model Train Fair*. “This is so cool!” Justin

inspired some of us to build the small switching layout to take to shows and other venues. Paul Boehlert’s “Port of Brunswick” plan in the May issue gave us an even simpler plan. The CNY National Railway Historical Society chapter that sponsors the show asked us to present some clinics.

Our layout team developed goals to:

- Encourage adults, youth and children to operate a layout, switch cars, and have fun;
- Demonstrate what can be done on a small shelf layout;
- Encourage others to build a layout
- Provide an opportunity for conversation about the CNY Division and NMRA;
- Recruit members for the CNY Division, and NMRA.

Our Division enthusiastically approved a proposal to spend up to \$1,000

to build the layout. Almost all of the material ended up being donated. This enabled us to also purchase a six-foot banner and stand to attract people to our display, where they could run the layout and learn how to build it.

We modified Boehlert’s one piece 80” plan by building two 4-foot sections. Desiring lightweight but sturdy sections that could be easily handled by one person and transported in a small SUV or sedan with rear seats folded, we adapted module standards from the Little Rhody Division. Strength is provided by ¼” Baltic birch plywood L-girder fascias and T-braces.

Our layout is designed to be displayed on a tabletop and accessible to children, as well as people in wheel chairs. Steel alignment pins (Finescale Baseboard Alignment Dowels from the UK), hex bolts and T-nuts connect the two sections. The threads of the T-nuts in one section were drilled out so the bolt will slip through, grab the threads of the other and pull the sections tight together.



A young boy tries his hand at switching as a little girl and parents watch. CNY Division members Roger Beiswenger, Bernard Messenger, and Ed O'Rourke offer guidance.

exclaimed as he and Sarah took turns spotting five cars on the pier in the order prescribed by shuffling the car cards. At a show where most layouts are strictly “Look but don’t touch,” families thanked us for inviting their children to run our train.

Do you have handouts on this?” a man asked as I presented a power point clinic, “Building a Small Layout,” in the little theater next to our booth. “Yes, they are on the table next to the layout along with information about the NMRA.” He picked up the handouts and took copious notes.

A college senior returned several times to operate the layout, learn how it was built and just talk about trains, model railroading and the NMRA. A small layout may work well for him as he moves into his first job and apartment next year. As our layout awaits its next outing to a Family Train Day next week, it rests on top of bookcases, exemplifying how easily it can fit into a den, family room or home office.

“You actually get to see other people’s layouts?” Bill, an up –to- this point solo modeler asked as we talked about his layout. He was thinking about tearing his layout down because no one but him ever sees it. “Maybe I will check you guys out,” he said as he picked up our Central New York Division schedule and an NMRA Rail Pass application.

Robert Penthous’s “Fall River Branch” article in *Model Railroader* last March



The author gives a clinic on building the layout.

Guests run the layout with either DC or DCC. An NCE Powercab and an MRC Tech IV power pack are connected to a center-off toggle switch. Anderson Powerpole connectors connect the layout bus and the MRC power pack.

A photo backdrop created by CNYD member and MMR Bill Brown pulls the scenery together. Sheet and strip styrene were used to pave roads and the pier. Sanded grout provided an easy-to-apply scenery base.

Laminated car cards featuring just the road and number above a large color picture of the car help young and older eyes identify cars more easily. When our spouses test-ran the operating plan to give us feedback, they noted, “This is a great brain puzzle.”

None of us on the team had ever built a layout quite like this. We learned much from each other and our research. The looks of joy, the words of thanks and the conversations we experienced at our debut show made it all worth it. Many more people now have a reason to stop and chat. Some may further check out our Division and the NMRA. At the very least, we are having more fun sharing this great hobby. We may also be planting some seeds that will grow over time.



CNY Division layout builders Bernard Messenger, Roger Beiswenger, Bob Pletl, Ed Olszewski, Ed O'Rourke, and Superintendent Bob Verkuyl.

Bernard Messenger

Pacemaker Convention Owes Success to Participants and Organizers

By ARTIE KRASS

Hudson Berkshire Div. President

People are what make a convention successful, and to that extent, the *Pacemaker Convention* fit the bill. The people behind the scenes and the participants who attended came together for an enjoyable experience. Albany's central location to 95 percent of the convention activities proved to be a winning combination. A significant number of attendees commented on how nice and convenient it was to have the majority of the layout visits and operating sessions within a half-hour or so drive from the convention hotel, the Desmond.

Clinics, contests and the celebration of our fellow modeler's work all made the convention a productive and educational experience.

Everything does not always go according to plan, but this can be the case with any large undertaking. Flexibility became the name of the game at times – and thanks to the staff at the Desmond, the local and regional convention volunteers, and in many cases, the attendees – we were able to minimize and handle these disruptions.


Model railroaders coming together to renew old friendships and acquaintances, and to begin new ones, are what conventions are all about. I cannot tell you how many new people I had the privilege of meeting over the course of the convention, sharing our common interests in the hobby.

Aptitude is "a component of a competence to do a certain kind of work at a certain level. Ability is developed knowledge, understanding, learned or acquired abilities (skills)." I think both of these were on display at various levels at the *Pacemaker*. I guess the point I am trying to make is that we should not be intimidated by some of the levels of modeling we had the pleasure to observe and experience. We are all good at something. The *sharing* of those skills and aptitude is what I found most prevalent from among all of you who attended. And, what better place than at a NER convention to share these talents!

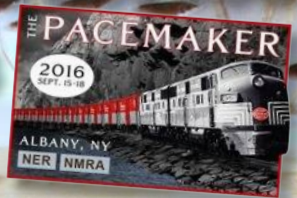
Keeping everything (and everybody) on track throughout the planning and execution stages of the convention fell to the local co-chairs, Kevin Surman, Bill Doyle, and Jack Cutler. Thanks guys!

Encourage your fellow model railroaders back home to attend a NER Convention! Even though we had some 200 folks attend the *Pacemaker*, that number is still a small percentage of the NER membership. While I do understand that not everybody is interested in attending (cost, travel, time – been there done that!). I think members need to "give it a try." You might just find out that you would enjoy yourself and others would enjoy meeting you!

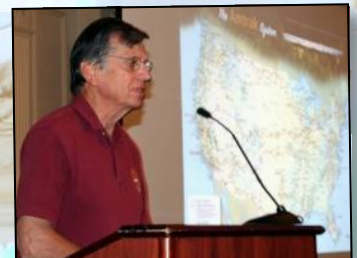
Regional help with the entire process was key to the success of the *Pacemaker*. The cooperation between the "new" teams at both the NER and the Hudson Berkshire Division was very good and the *Pacemaker* helped usher in the new on line registration that I believe will be instrumental in the success of future NER conventions.

See you in Newport... 

Hudson Berkshire Division President and Clinic Chair Artie Krass addresses banquet as Convention Co-Chair Bill Doyle watches.



Rich Smith accepts Baldwin Trophy for earning top awards in model contest from Contest Chair Ken May.



Author Bob Mohowski delivers keynote talk.



NER President John Doebling speaking to audience.



MMRs gather for a portrait: front, Mike Tylick, Pete Watson, Bill Brown; standing, Vin Gallogly, Ned Spiller, Bob Hamm, Pete Magoun, Kevin Surman, Bruce DeYoung, David Metal, and Tom Oxnard.



AP certificate recipients over the past year: front, Andy Reynolds, John Doebling, Jeff Paston, James VanBokkelen; standing, Bob Dennis, Gerry Covino, Mike Evans, Mike Bowler, Chip Faulter, Dave Insley, Bruce DeYoung, Name not supplied, Steve Erickson, Howard Dwyer, Sue Osberg, Name not supplied, Dick Johannes, Brian Osberg, David Metal, Tom Oxnard, and Erich Whitney.



High Quality Entries



By KEN MAY Model Contest Chair

There was quite a mix of models entered, with most categories containing at least one model. The quality of the entries was quite high. Thirty models were judged; 17 earned Merit Awards. Our Best In Show—the *Baldwin Trophy*—went to Richard Smith for his outstanding New Lisbon Station. This model placed first in *Scratchbuilt Structures*. Richard also received the *Hub Award* for the model with the second highest score—his New

Lisbon engine house was also second in *Scratchbuilt Structures*.

The *New Modeler Award* presented by the Sunrise Trail Division was won by Walt Grzebein for his model of Gurney's Service, which placed first in *Kit-Built Displays*. It is my hope that Walt will bring another model or two to Newport next year so that we may continue to enjoy his fine modeling.

In the *Kit-Built Caboose* category, Rudolf Slovacek won a first place for his Napier Junction #38. In the *Kit-Built Diesel and Other Locomotive* category, Jeff Paston won a first for his NYC E8 locomotive. Jeff also tied for second with his D&H PA1 locomotive;

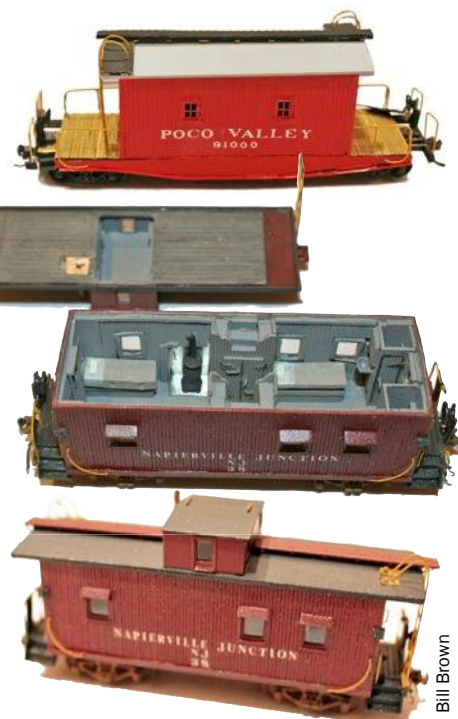
James Van Bokkelen took second place for his B&M BL2 locomotive. In the *Kit-Built Non-Revenue* category, Edward Skowronek won a first place for his McGiffert Log Loader. In *Kit-Built Passenger Car* category, Jeff Paston won a first place for his Rohr Turbo Train. In the *Kit-Built Steam Locomotive* category, Mark Sklar won a first place for his NYC 4-6-2 Pacific; Edward Spiller won a second place for his D&LS 2-8-2 locomotive #117.

In the *Kit-Built Display* category, Thomas Oxnard took second place for his



Walt Grzebein won 1st place and the *New Modeler Award* with this service station display, above. Rich Smith earned the *Baldwin Trophy*, the *Hub Award*, and 1st place for his New Lisbon station, shown at

top of page. At right, Ken Nelson's transfer caboose earned a 1st place, as did Rudolf Slovacek's interior-detailed Napierville Junction caboose.



Bill Brown



Photos by Jeff Paston (except where indicated)

Stand Out in Albany

Ashland Lumber Co. In the *Kit-Built Structure* category, Howard Dwyer won first place for his Schwann's Confectionary Co. Jeff Paston won second place for his abandoned gas station and third place for his convenience store.

In the *Scratchbuilt Caboose* category, Ken Nelson won a first place with his Poco Valley transfer caboose. In the *Scratchbuilt Display* category, Andy Reynolds won first place for Milton Crossing.

In the *Scratchbuilt Freight Car*

category, Ray Muntz won first for his Bulline stock car; Ken Nelson won second for his flat car with load. and third for his CN box car. In the *Scratchbuilt Passenger Car* category, Ray Muntz won first place with his Rutland business car. Ray also won second place with his Swift reefer.

In addition to Richard Smith's first place and second place awards in the *Scratchbuilt Structures* category, he also won a third place with his bucket coaling station.

(Continued on next page)



Ray Muntz, 1st place



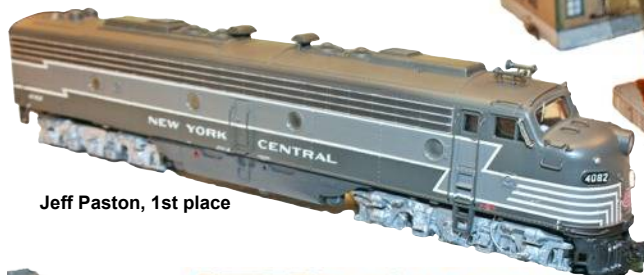
Ray Muntz, 2nd place



Ken Nelson, 2nd place



Ken Nelson, 3rd place



Jeff Paston, 1st place



Howard Dwyer, 1st place



Jeff Paston (left), and James Van Bokkelen, 2nd place



Edward Spiller, 2nd place



(Continued from page 7)

Two additional models deserve recognition. Steve Erickson won an *Honorable Mention* with his Eastwick Junction water tower and shed, and Andy Reynolds won for his cranberry screening house.

Thanks to the people who gave up their time to serve as judges: Bill Barry, Rich Breton, Andy

Clermont, Mike Evans, Paul Lessard, Ray Muntz, Ned Spiller, Mike Tylick, James VanBokkelen, Dick Walz, and Brian Whiton. It makes it easy to run a contest when you have quality judges. Thank you all!



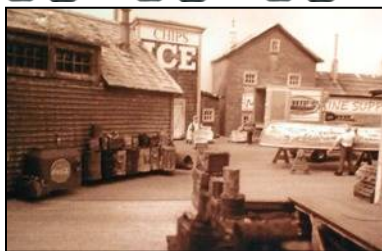
Winners

(clockwise from top)

are 1-McGiffert Log Loader by Edward Skowronek, 1st place;
2-convenience store by Jeff Paston, 3rd; 3-bucket coaling station by Rich Smith, 3rd; 4-Milton Crossing by Andy Reynolds, 1st; 5-Rich Smith's New Lisbon enginehouse, 2nd; 6-Rohr Turbo Train by Jeff Paston, 1st; 7-Ashland Lumber Co. by Tom Oxnard, 2nd; 8-Rutland business car (closeup of interior) by Ray Muntz, 1st; and 9-abandoned gas station by Jeff Paston, 2nd.

At top of page is Mark Sklar's NYC 4-6-2, 1st place.

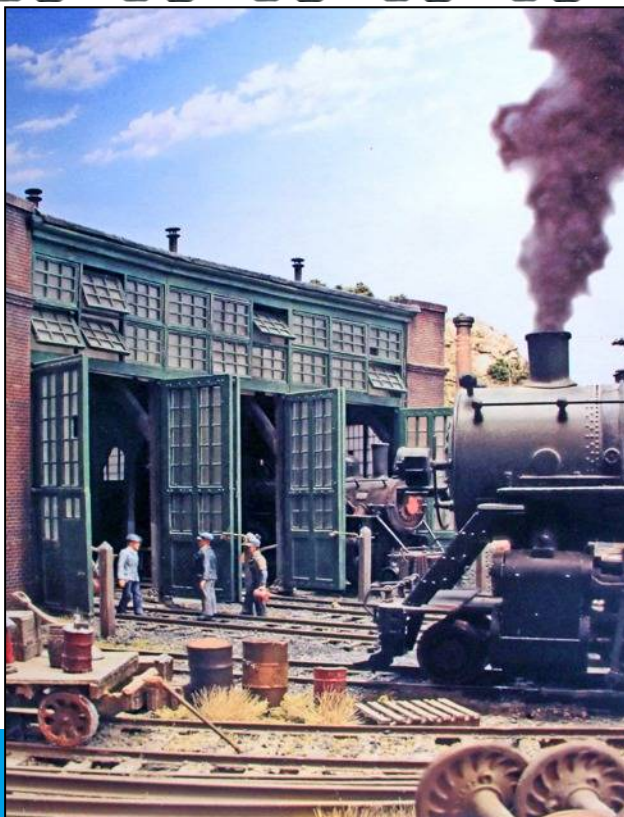
Bill Brown



Best in Shop People's Choice is Kaylee Zheng's "Harbor Life," above.


Richard Walz took away Best in Show, and People's Choice Favorite Model Color Print, "Before the Run," right.

Kaylee Zheng won People's Choice Favorite Prototype-B&W, and 2nd place Prototype-B&W with "Happy Couple," below.



"Blowin' Off Steam" won Peter A. Watson People's Choice Favorite Prototype-Color Print, and 1st place in the Prototype-Color category.

Photo Contest Clicks for Judges

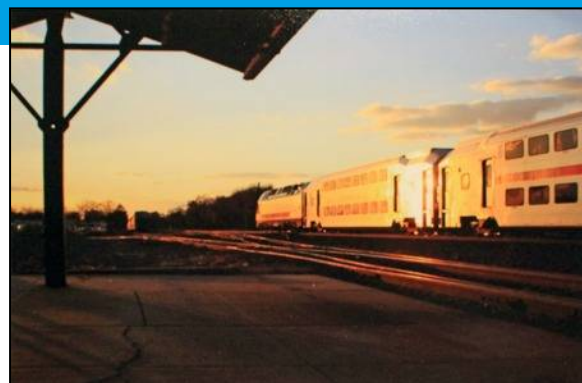
Eleven photographs were entered in four categories at The Pacemaker convention in Albany. Photo Contest Chair William Barry led a team of judges that made the difficult choices seen here. Judges were Bill Brown, Bob Peters, Mike Tylick and Tom Wortman. In addition to the regular judged categories, there were three People's Choice categories. 



"Bridge Scene," above, earned Michael J. Ryan a 1st place in Model-Color Print.



Second place in the Model-Color Print category was won by Howard Dwyer with "Island Central #815 44 Ton Hauling Scrap Metal."



Kaylee Zheng took home a few more awards with "Sunset in Jersey," 2nd place Prototype-Color, above; and 1st place Prototype-B&W with "New Hope GP30 #2198," below.



"Family Portrait," above left, placed Kaylee Zheng third in the Model-Color Print category, and "Mine Scene," center, earned an honorable mention for Michael J.



Ryan. Peter A. Watson got an honorable mention in Prototype-Color Print for "WW&F #9 Under Steam Again," right.





By STEVE ERICKSON

Mark your calendar now to spend Veteran's Day weekend in Newport, Rhode Island, at the brand new Atlantic Resort Newport! This resort location, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and minutes from downtown Newport, will be the site of the 2017 Northeastern Region annual convention *Rails to the Gilded Age*. The dates are November 9 through November 12.

This convention promises to be one of the most eventful yet. In addition to the usual prototype tours, rail fan rides, clinics, operating sessions, layout tours and banquet, we will have all of Newport to explore.

Some of the "off site" activities will include a tour of the Naval War College museum, the Tennis Hall of Fame, mansion tours, and fine dining. Newport will be wrapping up "Restaurant Week," allowing attendees to experience the full range of dinner options on Thursday and Friday at a reasonable cost.

We are working on a dinner train special for one night, "insider" tours and other special events. Because of Newport's unique location, it was one of the first "intermodal" ports, with steamships arriving from New York, trains running to Boston, and a substantial fishing industry.

Aquidneck Island (the island that is home to the cities of Newport, Middletown and Portsmouth) not only had rail and trolley service, nearby Portsmouth was the site of an unusual coastal coal mine, and Fall River, MA, was a textile capital — the "Spindle City." Nearby New


Bedford, MA, boasts the Whaling Museum and an operating port. Nearby Kingston, RI, boasts the oldest operational wooden train station — still a major source of Amtrak traffic. All of these locations are within an hour from the convention hotel.

The hotel features a breathtaking view from the contest room, a restaurant on site, and the capacity to provide inexpensive, on site lunch and breakfast options. There is an indoor pool, a shuttle to Newport at our disposal, and services to allow you to experience all that Newport has to offer.

This is definitely a "bring the spouse" convention. With museums, art galleries, fine shopping, wineries to tour, and several special events, attendees will want to come early and stay late — we have arranged with the hotel for reasonable additional day rates if you wish to extend your stay.

The major mansions will be open for tours — the famous Breakers (whose gates feature prominently in the convention logo), as well as the Elms and the Marble House. You can also visit the oldest Synagogue in the United States, as well as the oldest circulating library.

Several innovations are being planned for our program that will be announced as planning goes forward. There are a couple of exceptional surprises in the works, as well.

If you have been to Newport before, this is a chance to see it without the crowds. If you have never been before, this is the perfect opportunity to experience "America's First Resort." You'll see for yourself at all the great things to do at this convention. 



Steve Erickson

The Eastern Mass trolley awaits your arrival in Fall River, MA, on David Kiley's G scale layout, at top of page, one of many layouts that will be on tour. Rhode Island offers numerous tourist sites, including the famous Breakers Mansion, left. The new Atlantic Resort Newport, above, overlooking the ocean coast, will be the convention headquarters.

Back Stories

What's Behind Those Layout Details



Kip Grant

By JEFF PASTON
Coupler Editor

Some common — and not so common — sights replicated in miniature may elude the casual viewer because they are so common, or we fail to recognize the uniqueness.

But that's what make those "details" on our layouts so special. There's probably a story behind what's happening there.

For instance, in the scene *above* on Kip Grant's D&H Sonnyvale Branch, someone is taking delivery of a new sofa at their apartment probably located above the drug store. How do we know?

First, there is the *Davis and Shaw* delivery truck parked out front. Second, no delivery man is going to park very far from his destination. The upstairs door is right there!


Before we leave this scene, we'd be amiss if Kip's incredible attention to detail is not noted. Yes, he cut the doors open on the truck. But look really close. Note the parking meter; the street drain; and most rarely modeled of all — next to the 1970s painted mailbox, the US Mail storage box! Ask your letter carrier about these.

WHOA! WHAT'S THIS?

Just when you thought our model railroads escaped the safety concerns of the prototype, along comes an HO scale "poster child" depicted on Rich Smith's *City of Wauwatoga* layout, *left*. Rich is actually sending a valuable *Operation Lifesaver*

message to those who think they can drive around a crossing gate and beat the train.

There are all sorts of problems in the model world. An HO farmer struggles to connect a tiller to his tractor on Andy Clermont's *Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain Sub-division* layout, *below*. And, Kevin Surman has his hands full with a picket line of plastic people demanding better wages and benefits on his *NY & Long Branch* model railroad, *bottom*.

We'll continue our look at such neat layout details in our next issue! 



Three photos: Jeff Paston

Backlighting a Photo Interior

A Simple Technique Adds Detail



By **MARTIN COLLARD**
Photos by the Author

My Borodino & Southern Railroad is a fictitious HO_n3 railroad based on a proposed extension of the real Marcellus & Otisco Lake RR that once connected to the New York Central's Auburn line west of Syracuse, NY. The crossroads hamlet of Borodino is an interesting place on the east side of Skaneateles Lake in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. Being just one four corners, it had two grocery stores with gas pumps, as well as a hardware store that sold gas, and until destroyed by fire in 1946, a two-story hotel. As a hub of commerce, this area served its local patrons well.

On my 1950 era B&S, this four corners is represented with the IGA grocery as its focal point. Using a 1941 photo of the store as a guide, I was able to scratch build an acceptable version. The building sets back off the edge of the layout about 28 inches. This allowed me to develop an interior which didn't really need the hours and money invested to install every individual piece.

The process used in the IGA is one I have used before — using a photo as the interior. Searching the Internet for photos of the '40s is sometimes a challenge because a lot were taken in black and white.



Searching the '50s is a bit more productive with more color photos available.

Once I found that acceptable photo, I was able to crop, cut, and paste to come up with a picture to represent the store interior I was looking for. You may have noticed the aisle pictures look the same. That's because they are, but once in the building, it really doesn't matter.

The picture is printed on regular copy paper and its base was glued to the store floor about 3/4 inch back from the front edge.

A piece of scrap wood was glued to the floor to hold the pictures straight. The photo at the far right was from another store. Blending these photos together and the placement behind the model store front wall makes them feasible. Photos: Martin Collard



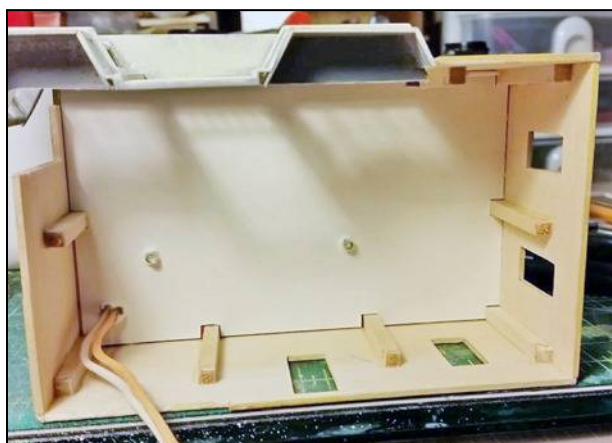


My initial intent was to back light this interior. Previous attempts were done by placing the photo in a U-shape inside a building, and placing a light in front of the picture. Unfortunately, this technique created a bit of glare when photographed.

A cardboard ceiling glued in place between the first floor to the second became a light block. I placed the 3mm Miniatronics Yelogo LED lights about 1 ½ inches from the front of the building to back light

the interior picture. I also printed and cut out a picture of stacked grocery items, which gave me a front window display.

The finished project provided a nicely detailed interior with little effort and very little cost. Add some foreground figures to bring it to life. Once the building is placed on the layout, this technique seems to become a viable alternative to hours of building a realistic interior.



The LEDs are placed about 1 ½ inches from the front of the model in the first floor ceiling. The photo interior is glued to the floor, right. Light from the LEDs

will shine through the paper on which the interior is printed giving a balanced lighting effect. The photo at top of page shows how figures and printed paper

stacks of groceries are placed at the window to give depth to the interior.

RailroadKits.com / Fine Scale Model RR Expo

By **MIKE TYLICK**
Contributing Editor

By writing these “Made in...” features, I have learned that many successful model railroading businesses were not planned, but were quite often the result of a serendipitous accident. CraftsmanKits.com began that way in 2003 when Jimmy Deignan

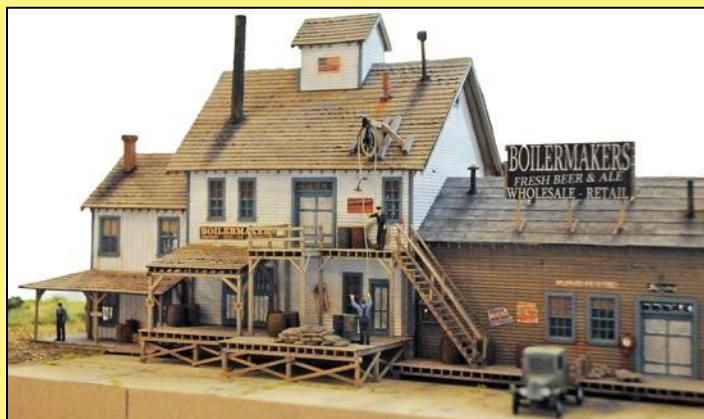
Series (2008), Southcoast Scale Models (2009). Although Sheepscot Scale Models still manufactures scale model vehicles, RailroadKits purchased its line of structure kits in 2010.

Almost yearly, other lines were added — the molds and masters for a number of Downton Deco structure kits (2010), Ed Fulasz’s structure kits (2011), and Pine Valley Scale Models (2012). In addition to a growing assortment of urethane detail parts, RailroadKits can now offer a wide variety of HO scale craftsman kits made of wood, resin, or Hydrocal®. All of these kits are now sold under the RailroadKits.com name and are available on the Internet. There are no plans for limited edition kits at this time — the kits are always available. You can meet Jimmy and see his offer-

has become a mecca for craft kit enthusiasts.

The Expo is held at different venues each time, thus far in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. The locations are centered around places that feature a railroad theme; well-known model railroads like those owned by George Sellios and Dick Elwell, or near prototype railfan locations like the Strasburg Railroad and Steamtown. In addition to a fine assortment of high end “craftsman” kits and materials, the show offers a tasty banquet and one of the more competitive modeling contests around. It is topped off by a large number of high quality clinics that are delivered by well-known clinicians.

It is difficult at best to make people happy. When the Expo was held in the spring, complaints were received about this being a bad time of year for a show. When it was held in the fall, about an equal number of complaints were received about a fall date being a bad time for a show. In an attempt to make everyone happy and to make the Expo available to more people, it is now being held every 18 months, alternating between Spring and Fall. Although the next expo’s location has not been set, it will be held in October, 2017.



A RailroadKits.com structure model, “Boilermakers Beer & Ale.”

bought a number of structure kits at an auction and decided to sell off those he didn’t want. They sold quickly, and Jimmy realized that reselling craftsman kits could become a niche service that he could provide via his home computer. He started by purchasing out of production high ticket model railroad kits from various auctions and selling them via eBay. Soon he did a brisk business. There seemed always to be a limited run craftsman kit collecting dust on a shelf of which someone else missed out and wanted to build — a clearing house for this market provided a sought after service.

The subsidiary RailroadKits.com was started in 2006 as an effort to sell new model kits under his own label. Friends liked one of

ings firsthand at local train shows including the NMRA HUB Division’s New England Model Train Expo held in December at Marlborough, MA and at the Amherst Railway Society’s Big Railroad Hobby Show in January at West Springfield, MA.

The workshop is on one side of Jimmy’s crowded basement; the other is filled with model railroad layouts. Jimmy has great help with running his businesses and he is the first to say he could not do any of it without the help of two and a half full time employees. His many friends and family are always willing to help out when necessary. Unfortunately, Jimmy was involved in a motorcycle accident and has been a quadriplegic for many years.

His first employee, Melissa Giacobbi, has been with the business since the start when she was interviewed as Jimmy’s home nurse. Melissa now works part time for RailroadKits.com. Jimmy is limited in dexterity, so he can only do limited model work, but he is responsible for the CAD and graphics work and any computer related tasks. Jimmy Deignan is certainly an inspiration to us all — showing that despite his handicaps, he is still able to enjoy his hobbies and make money from them at the same time.

As if two model railroad businesses aren’t enough, Jimmy is also one of the principals of The Scale Model Railroader Expo. Started in 2011, the “Expo” is produced with his partners Doug Foscale (Fos Scale Models), Hal Reynolds (Atlantic Scale Modelers), Brian Bollinger (BEST Trains), and Robert Seckler. The Expo is purposely kept small in focus in order to assure only high quality products are sold. It



Melissa Giacobbi was the first employee of RRRKits.com and is still a popular figure seen at its booth at train shows.

Kits.com brand sold quite well — over 200 of his first three kits went out to customers. In 2007, Wil Bostic’s White River Structures were added to the line and this began a string of acquisitions — Paul Turner’s Country Road



The Fine Scale Model Railroader Expo staff, from l to r, Brian Bollinger, Doug Foscale, Hal Reynolds, Bob Seckler, and seated, Jimmy Deignan.

Craftsmankits.com
email@craftsmankits.com
 785 546-0001

Railroadkits.com
email@railroadkits.com
 785 546-0001

The Fine Scale Model Railroader Expo
info@modelrailroadexpo.com
 530 346-3530

PO BOX 461
 Holden, MA 01520-0461

Work on what you can, when you can

By **JEFF HANKE**

As we work on our layouts, we should continue to work on improving not just our modeling skills, but the way in which we work on the railroad. I have some tips you might be able to use on your own railroad.

My first rule of building my Chessie System: East End is to find some time every day to do something on the layout. I know I



can't make progress without putting the work in. However, with a full time job, marriage, three kids, etc., free time is scarce. I may just go downstairs for a few minutes on a work day, or I might get a few hours in on a weekend.

Small and large projects always need to be done, which makes it easy to find one to fit the amount of spare time we have. Usually, my mood dictates which project I'll work on. Sometimes I feel like building bench work, sometimes it is scenery, or even on occasion, the dreaded wiring calls. Whatever the mood, the layout is better off getting some work in and making some progress, even if it is barely noticeable.



Under bench work can be cramped.

WE AREN'T AS YOUNG AS...

We all age. This is inevitable. We're all older than we were yesterday. With aging, comes an eventual realization that days spent contorted under the bench work soldering or fiddling with Tortoise™ switch machines is not nearly as fun as it once was. So, as I outlined in my inaugural column, I build my layout in sections. Originally, I would put two or three plain bench work pieces up on their wall brackets and start drawing the track plan and

laying track on the already hung pieces. This seemed like a great idea until I realized how hard it was to put in the switch machines, wire the track, and sculpt the scenery with the sections in place.

I have now adopted a policy of making the sections "off-layout" in my work area adjacent to the train space. This allows for free access to all sides of a section with no leaning or long reaches over multiple feet of layout. I also can tilt a layout section up on its side and do all of the soldering and connecting Tortoise™ switch machines with the wires in plain sight in an ergonomic position. Gone are the days of contorting myself under the layout. The eventual errant hot blob of solder no longer drips on me, and my wife is happy with the reduced amount of swearing from my accidental burns. These changes have an added benefit; I can work longer on each section without any of the fatigue that I used to get working in a cramped position under the layout.

WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER

One of the other things I have done is to adapt my work location to reduce clean up time. Clean up time for me is just wasted time. My layout – like many – is in my basement, which is both good and bad. It's easy to do most parts of model railroading there, but the messy or smelly projects are not well received by my family, sitting nearby watching television or playing a video game.

I have always thought it a good idea to make the bench work in the garage. It is a large open flat space with a relatively clean floor. Plus, doing the work in the garage keeps all the noise and sawdust away from the layout and the non-train parts of the basement.

A few months ago, I purchased a hot wire foam cutter and gave it a test run on a section of the layout in my basement. Never again! It stunk up the whole house with a putrid smell of burning plastic. Now, all foam sculpting work is done outside. I won't even do this work in the garage. It smells so bad, it is done in the driveway.



A community takes shape.

Once the scenery is basically sculpted, I generally cover the area in a skim coat of dry wall plaster. This premixed plaster dries quickly and fills in the small rough spots made when carving. However, when dry, the plaster requires a light sanding to make the finished terrain smooth. I have also moved this step to the garage or outside, as the white haze of sanded powder has a nasty habit of coating everything within several feet. It has reduced

the cleanup in the basement and unnecessary vacuuming of finished sections that were accidentally coated with dust.

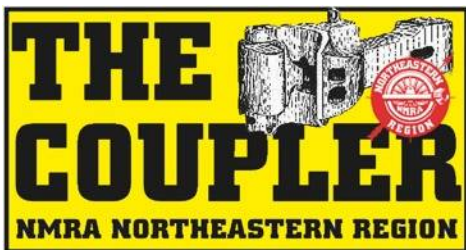
Covering the white plaster and stark pink foam with earth colored house paint can be done either outside or inside. Normal house paint does not have the odor of solvent based paints and washes up easily if you dribble some on the tile floor. If you work over carpet, I'd recommend moving this step outside too, or

using a really good drop cloth.

I look forward to sharing more on the new East End going forward, but until then... Keep on workin'.



Making the layout modular.

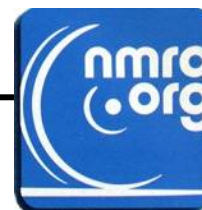


National Model Railroad Association
NER OFFICE MANAGER
47 Earle St #2
Woonsocket RI 02895-3105



NORTHEASTERN REGION

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION



PRESIDENT
JOHN DOEHRING
Pepperell, MA 978-877-9148
john@doehring.com

VICE PRESIDENT
Vacant

PAST PRESIDENT
GEORGE "SCOOTER" YOST
Baldwinsville, NY 315-303-0100
gyoust@me.com

DIRECTORS

CANADA
STEVE MCMULLIN
Saint John, NB 506-672-6960
mcmullins@nb.sympatico.ca

CONNECTICUT & RHODE ISLAND
STEVE ERICKSON
Middletown, RI 401-324-9051
sperickson@gmail.com

LONG ISLAND & NYC
KEVIN KATTA
W. Babylon, NY 631-759-0534
boxcarny@yahoo.com

MASSACHUSETTS
BARBARA HOBLIT
Marlborough, MA 617 955-6359
BLHoblit12@gmail.com

NEW JERSEY
ROBERT DENNIS
Staten Il, NY 718-351-0782
bob.dennis@gmail.com
NEW YORK STATE
BILL BROWN, MMR
Jamesville, NY
larcproducts@yahoo.com

NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND
JAMES VAN BOKKELEN
Amesbury, MA 603-394-7832
jvnb@ttlc.net

NMRA EASTERN DIRECTOR
JOE GELMINI
Fayetteville, GA 770-460-8873
papagel@comcast.net

DIVISIONS

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION
PRESIDENT
DENNIS DEANGELIS
Northport, NY 516-885-3901
rs31556@yahoo.com

HUB DIVISION
PRESIDENT
JAMES VAN BOKKELEN
S. Hampton, NH 603-394-7832
jvnb@ttlc.net

GARDEN STATE DIVISION
PRESIDENT
BRUCE DEYOUNG
W. Milford, NJ 201-803-9766
pres@nrgsd.com

NUTMEG DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
JAMES M. MAYO
Madison CT 203-245-7480
jmayo_raifan@yahoo.com

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
SUE OSBERG
Coventry, RI 401-822-0956
sosberg1@verizon.net

HUDSON-BERKSHIRE DIVISION
YARDMASTER
ARTIE KRASS
Ballston Lake, NY 518-229-6068
ajkwings@yahoo.com

SEACOAST DIVISION
PRESIDENT
ERICH C. WHITNEY
Derry, NH 603-537-1120
conductor@blackcatrailroad.com

HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION
PRESIDENT
WALTER PALMER
Otisville, NY 845-467-5161
Waltpal57@gmail.com

CENTRAL NEW YORK DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
BOB VERKUYL
New Hartford, NY 928-853-8770
watlingverkuy@msn.com

GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
DANA BROWN
Essex Junction, VT 802-872-8602
dana24mn@gmail.com

METRO NORTH DIVISION
SUPERINTENDENT
SCOTT RUSSELL
203-426-1407
upturbine@aol.com

INACTIVE DIVISIONS
MARITIMES DIVISION
DIVISION ALOUETTE

REGION STAFF

SECRETARY
CHIP FAULTER
Phippsburg, ME 207-443-3135
faulter@comcast.net

TREASURER
PETER MCKENNEY
207-776-2033
pmckenney36@gmail.com

OFFICE MANAGER
MARK HARLOW
Hopdale, MA 508-528-8587
nerofficemanager@verizon.net

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM
BILL BROWN, MMR
Jamesville, NY
larcproducts@yahoo.com

OP-SIG COORDINATOR
AL ONETO
Fairfield, CT 203-255-1331
aloneto@optonline.net

WEBMASTER
ED HINTON
Exeter, NH 603-321-0572
edfhinton@yahoo.com

CONVENTION STAFF

CONVENTION CHAIR
DAVID INSLEY
Townsend, MA 978-855-4363
david.insley@comcast.net

CONVENTION REGISTRAR
GERRY COVINO
Hollis, NH 617-543-0298
gcovino@charter.net

CONVENTION TREASURER
ROGER OLIVER
Denville, NJ 973-625-3414
oliver2@verizon.net

MODEL CONTEST CHAIR
KENNETH MAY
Tolland, CT 860-872-3441
kenneth.may@comcast.net

PHOTO CONTEST CHAIR
WILLIAM BARRY
Marlborough, MA 508-251-1252
ner.photocontest@gmail.com