

THE COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION

No. 274

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2019

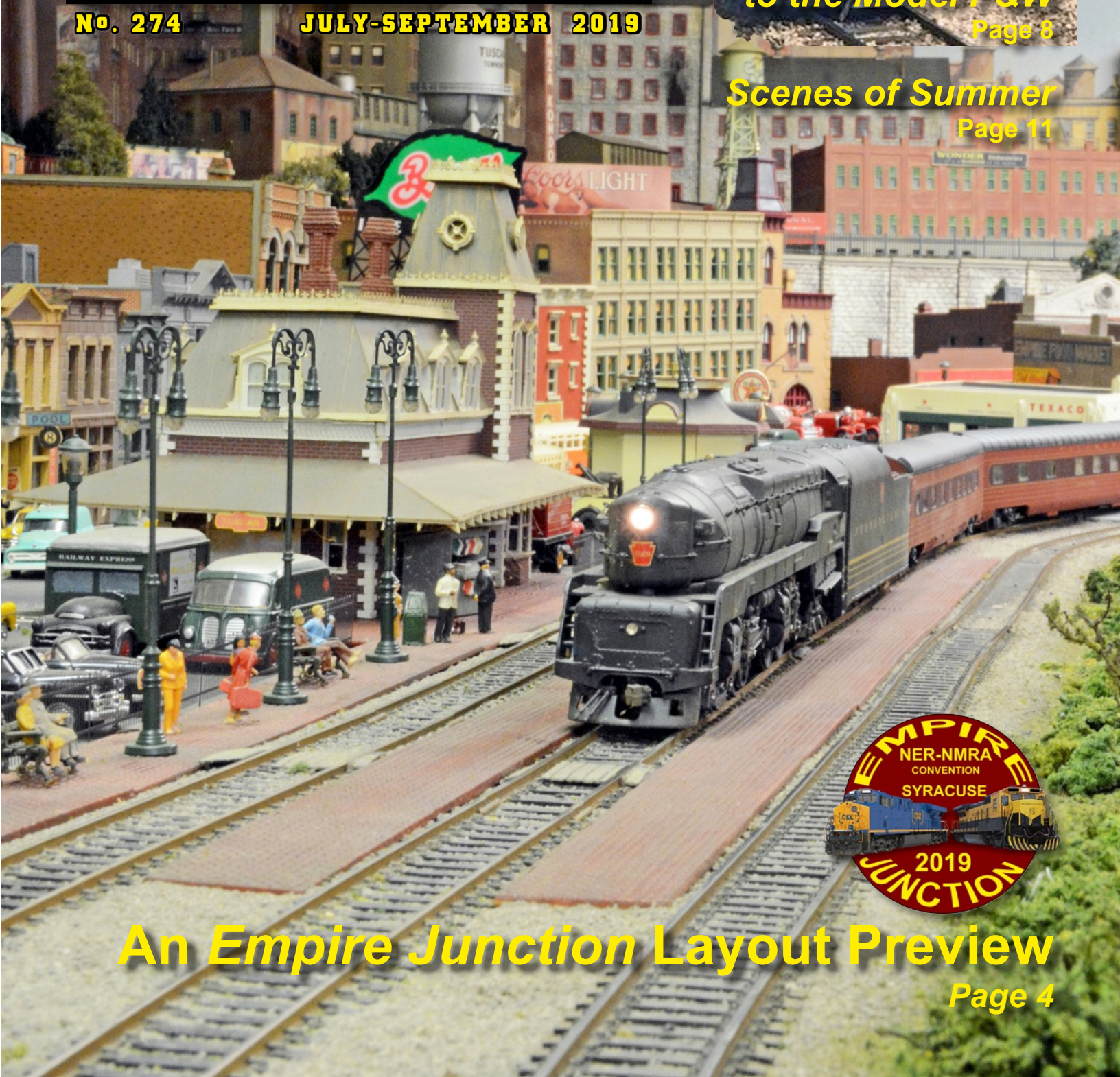


*Saying Goodbye
to the Model P&W*

Page 8

Scenes of Summer

Page 11



An Empire Junction Layout Preview

Page 4

INSIDE THE COUPLER

Open Doehr	2
News and Events	3
Visiting the CSX-Northeast	4
Syracuse Convention Update	7
End of an Era on the P&W	8
Summer on the Layout	11
New Members	12
Two Coats are a New Religion	13
Made in the NER: NCE	14
Workin' On the RR	15

COVER PHOTO

The Pennsy's famed *Broadway Limited* pulls into Tuscan station on Mike Shanahan's *Brunswick & Tuscan* model railroad. The HO layout is both on tour, and offering an operating session at the upcoming *Empire Junction* convention in Syracuse.

But our lead story focuses on another layout to see and operate – Dave Martini's *CSX-Northeast*. You can read about it and get a convention update starting on page 4.



www.nernmra.org

THE COUPLER

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FROM THE EDITOR . . . By JEFF PASTON

It's always fun to receive letters on articles we run in *The Coupler*. But, I must say the most fun I was receiving the following letter about last issue's article on using Pledge® floor finisher for ballasting. I actually broke into laughter! (And, yes, the letter writer is allowing me to share this with you.)

As soon as I saw the article in *The Coupler* 273, I read it! I printed it. I made sure I got the nomenclature exactly correct, and included the intention to immediately purchase some acrylic floor finish during my shopping trip. I have honestly not done any scenery since 1983. All I need to complete my Golden Spike Certificate is the ballasting portion. I find the possibility of ruining switches to be terrifying, and have put this and all scenery tasks off for entirely too long.

Disaster!

The people in four grocery stores and two large discount stores assisted me in searching, but none of us could find any product specifically for acrylic floors. I stopped at my local hardware store on my way home. They could not find it on the shelves, but did find it in the computer. My bottle will arrive in



two days! Ballast – I have you now!

When I got home, I became a bit miffed. Who touts a "revolutionary" ballast adhesive as available everywhere if you have to special order it? Some Google research made the light bulb go off above my head. (I don't mind being an idiot, actually. I just hate demonstrating the fact in public as often as I do.)

The error was that I was insisting on purchasing nothing but a finisher specific to acrylic floors. When I realized I was really looking for a floor finisher that was acrylic based, the "DUH!" factor kicked in!

The specially ordered acrylic floor finisher (available at every grocery, discount, etc. store in the world) will arrive in two days. I hope to have my Golden Spike requirements in three days.

—Stew Stewart
Fayetteville, NY

Thanks Stew. You really *did* make my day!

And, for those submitting entries to our gas station kitbash contest, please make sure I have responded that I received your entry. The deadline was June 30. 🚗

OPEN DOEHR By JOHN DOEHRING NER President

Creating a Digital, Virtual Train Club

If you're a long-time member of the NMRA, you've probably already perfected the mental proof needed to justify your membership. For me, the math is easy: membership gives me access to the *NMRA* magazine, *Coupler* magazine, NER convention, NMRA National convention (this year will be my second), Achievement Program, local HUB and Seacoast Division events, and dozens and dozens of friends and fellow modelers with whom to connect, commiserate, and collaborate. The NMRA has made model railroading a much more fun and memorable experience for me.

Nevertheless, as is my nature, I'm always after what would make it better still. NER and division leaders work tirelessly to answer this for us all – organizing meetings, train shows, and conventions; creating and publishing interesting and useful content; reaching out to bring in new modelers and members; and supporting model railroad enthusiasts as they advance their skills and achievements.

As I see it, our next opportunity now centers around becoming a much more connected, collaborative, and successful online tribe – a *digital, virtual train club* – of 200, 500, or 1000 (or more) train geeks. I imagine a living, breathing, energetic beehive of (self-sustaining) activity – including a Website packed with important and useful content; social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter abuzz with

news, information, and connection; a video library sharing important secrets on how to and where; and new video chats on Zoom or FB live springing up everywhere – all to better support each and every modeler's progression.

Technology is advancing so rapidly today that all of these ideas (and more) are well within reach – right now. Our lack of progress, our all-too-slow development, isn't a 'rocket science' problem – it's much more simply a matter of a lack of help; a lack of hands. To make real progress, we're going to need a bigger team.

What do we actually need? Technical people, yes, and content experts too – but really just able souls willing to jump in and learn. A team focused on developing, curating, and managing content for our Website and social media accounts. [Imagine, for instance, a list of upcoming train shows around the region, a database of operating session or layout tour possibilities, or faster support in connecting with a mentor or Achievement Program expert. Our potential is large].

Someday – not so far off – I suspect that we'll be experimenting with online and virtual conventions, virtual reality design software, educational delivery through holograms – and who knows what else. But right now, at this moment, we can together build a really cool, fun, and high-value digital, virtual train club – right here in the NER.

All it takes is me – and you! 🚗



NEWS & EVENTS

NEB&W Layout Moves to New Home

The famed New England, Berkshire & Western Railroad (NEB&W) of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, NY, is moving to new quarters this year. The college has leased space off campus in a modern office building to ensure the

insulation, and repair old water pipes located above the layout quarters..

The unique NEB&W depicted Troy and other New York State communities in HO scale as they appeared in 1950 with astounding accuracy. The Rensselaer Model Railroad Society was formed in 1947, and moved to Davison Hall in 1972, where the NEB&W grew in size and reputation.

The good news is that the new home at 258 Hoosick Street is larger and will not be chopped up with numerous walls.

Already, the Railroad Society is planning expansion of the layout and other improvements. The layout was removed in sections from campus and placed in temporary storage. Plans call for rebuilding to start in the new location this fall. ~~REMOVED~~



Google Maps

model railroad can survive, grow, and have public access. This is because increased campus security had placed its former home in the basement of Davison Hall off limits to non-students, and because of a large renovation project that will remove asbestos



Jeff Paston

Back in 2016, visitors attending the NER Pacemaker convention included Ron Stacy from Lakeshores Division, left, and Rich Breton from Seacoast Division, background, meeting with longtime NEB&W mentor John Nehrich, center, as they look over the Troy, NY, station scene.


NER on Facebook

The recently formed NER Marketing team has established a presence on Facebook to give you up-to-the-minute information on all that is happening around the NER, including its divisions. Stop by the page and make sure to "Like Us!"

You can find the new NER Page at www.facebook.com/nernmra.

The NER also has a Facebook group. The group will allow you to post your latest model railroading project and comment on the work of other members. This is a great way to share your modeling tips and tricks. You must request to join this group. You can find it at www.facebook.com/groups/1884645128243966 or by searching in Facebook for "NER NMRA." -Dave Insley

We inadvertently omitted the location and contact information for the family railroad attraction in Edmundston, NB, featured in Issue 273 of *The Coupler*.



So, here it is...

Centre D'Interprétation des Voies Ferrées Du Réel au Miniature (Railroad Interpretation Centre From Real To Miniature)
1091 Victoria Street; Edmundston, New Brunswick, Canada E3V3V5
www.durelauminiature.com
jefstyle@nb.aibn.com 506-739-9644

THE COUPLER Deadlines

AUGUST 16 – Oct-Dec issue
NOVEMBER 15 – Jan-March issue
FEBRUARY 21 – April-June issue

TIMETABLE

Compiled by JACK LUTZ

CONVENTIONS

July 7-13: NMRA National Convention; Salt Lake City, UT nmra2019slc.org
July 7-13: Lionel Operating Train Society National Conv. Louisville, KY www.lots-trains.org
July 14-20: 49th Annual Lionel Collectors Club of America Convention; Reno, NV www.lionelcollectors.org
July 30-August 3: NASG National Convention; Cincinnati, OH NASG.org
August 27-31: 35th National Garden Railway Convention Portland, OR ngrc2019.org
September 4-7: 39th Narrow Gauge Convention Sacramento, CA www.nngc2019.org
September 19-22: NER Convention— Empire Jct. 2019; Syracuse, NY www.empirejunction.org
October 11-14: MER Convention; Valley Forge, PA

SHOWS

July 21: Wayne Train Show; Wayne, NJ eastcoasttrainparts.com/wayne.htm
August 3-4: N-Scale Weekend Altoona, PA www.n-scaleweekend.com
Aug 3: South Shore Model RR Club Summer Open House Hingham, MA www.ssmrc.org
August 10-11: Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show Edison, NJ trainshow.com/edison08
Aug 18: 34th Annual Concord Model Railroad Show Concord, NH www.trainweb.org/cmrc
September 7-8: 26th Annual Glory Days Festival White River Junction, VT vtglorydaysfestival.com
Sep 7: NH RR Historical & Technical Assn. Train Show and 56th Annual Reunion; Essex, CT www.nhrhta.org
Sep 21: 8th Annual Rutland Train Show; Rutland, VT
Sep 22: Southern Connecticut Model Train Show Greenwich, CT www.southerncttrainshow.com
Sep 29: Phillips Rail Fest; Phillips, ME phillipsrailfest.weebly.com
Sep 29: Wayne Train Show; Wayne, NJ eastcoasttrainparts.com/wayne.htm
October 5-6: Railfair 2019; Boxborough, MA nvrra.com/railfair-19
Oct 5: Southern New England Model RR Club Fall Show Gardner, MA www.snemrr.org
Oct 20: Generation Station 33rd Annual Model RR Show Fairfield, CT housatonicmr.org/show
Oct 26: The Great Northern New England Train Show Dover, NH netca.org
October 26-27: Fall Model Railroad Show & Open House Hingham, MA www.ssmrc.org
Oct 27: Model Railroad, Train & Toy Show Wallingford, CT www.classicshowslc.com

MEETS

July 10-14: National Summer Steamup McClellan, CA www.steam-events.org
July 20: Seacoast Division NMRA 2019 Summer Event; seacoastnmra.org
Sep 28-29: Maine Model Railroad Tour mainemodelrrtour.com
Oct 12: Seacoast Division NMRA 2019 Fall Event Stratham, NH seacoastnmra.org

Visiting the CSX-Northeast

Open for Operation and Observation During Empire Junction 2019



By DAVE MARTINI
Photos by Jeff Paston

The *CSX-Northeast* is now more than 25 years old, starting as a simple switching layout and growing to a two-layout operating system representing the CSX after merging with Conrail from Albany, NY, to Cleveland, OH, in the 1990s. The rail system tied my father Dick Martini's layout to mine in a large HO empire.

But my Dad passed away shortly after the 2012 NER convention, so our *CSX-Northeast* was forced to take a new direction. Dad's *CSX-Central New York Division* is dormant now, while I continue to build my west end into a modern day version of the line.

My original concept of the *CSX-*

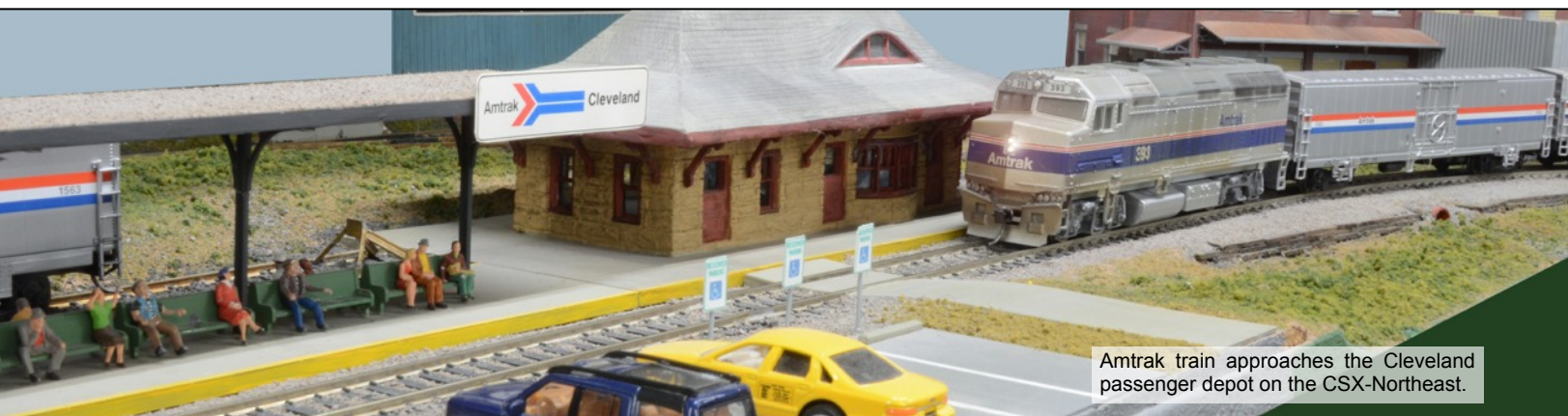
Illustrating the "Empire Junction" convention theme, *above*, locomotives representing CSX, Susquehanna, and Finger Lakes Railway cross bridges in unison on Dave Martini's *CSX-Northeast* railroad.



Northeast was a single-track route from Buffalo to Cleveland. It was intended to be a

secondary route focused on local switching, short lines, and interchange traffic paralleling the existing Conrail double track corridor. The *CSX-Northeast* is now a double decked 24-by-40' prototypical freelanced layout representing a fictional CSX and Conrail about the time of the Conrail breakup.

The *CSX-Northeast* was developed to accommodate overhead freights moving heavy tonnage (TOFC's, thru freights, unit coal, and grain), along with east and west Amtrak service. There are several large industrial switching areas served by both locals and sweeper trains. A branch line to the second deck was developed to access to a large coal loading facility, salt mine and the S&N Railroad.



Amtrak train approaches the Cleveland passenger depot on the *CSX-Northeast*.

My fictitious leasing company, DKLX, and its subsidiary short line S&N are named for my family – DKLX stands for me and my wife Kelly, while the S&N honors our daughters Samantha and Nicole. The S&N handles local industries south of Dunkirk and into the northeast corner of Pennsylvania, interchanging at Erie.

In my world, the DKLX does not own any track, but supplies motive power and rolling stock throughout the region. It purchased used equipment from both Conrail and its predecessors, refurbished, and then leased it back to the CSX-Northeast and the other regional short lines.

My CSX-Northeast west end recently expanded to include another regional short line between Cleveland and Columbus called the *Ohio Central*.

LAYOUT CONSTRUCTION

The layout is a combination of walk-in and around the wall design with a helix to the second deck. The shelf style benchwork consists of many open grid modules topped with a sandwich of half-inch plywood and Homasote®. The lower deck is set at a height of 38 inches while the second deck is set at 58 inches. The width of the benchwork varies from 4 inches to 30 inches along the walls and up to 60 inches on the peninsula.

Since the primary focus of the layout was to be operations, much attention and planning was done upfront to ensure the crew have plenty of room to move around and follow the trains. A second design consideration was the placement of the physical plant. The location of turnouts, buildings, roads, switch machines were all positioned within easy straight-line access for



Above, a CSX train led by leased power from Norfolk Southern and New York Susquehanna & Western, heads to Newton, Ohio, crossing over US 7. In photo below, a CSX freight just cleared the siding at East Euclid, Ohio, on its way to Erie, PA, through rural countryside. Note the billboard saluting Ohio native son Neil Armstrong.

human size hands.

Track is Atlas code 100 with Atlas, Peko, or Shinohara turnouts on Homabed or cork to create the roadbed profile. The layout utilizes walk around DCC radio throttles controlled by a Digitrax Superchief.

INTERCHANGE

Early in the planning stages of the CSX-Northeast, key elements of the multiple short line and interchange concepts were developed and tested to ensure prototypical and logical train movements. These operating features supplied one and two cars per industry that supported the heavy overhead tonnage that CSX needed to survive.

The CSX-Northeast also needed ties

to prototype short lines, a scenario which actually plays well into the upcoming NER convention in Syracuse. The "Empire Junction" in the convention name reflects the New York Susquehanna & Western and Finger Lakes Railway interchanges with CSX in Syracuse and Central New York. These short lines were a major influence on Dad's CSX-CNY Division too.

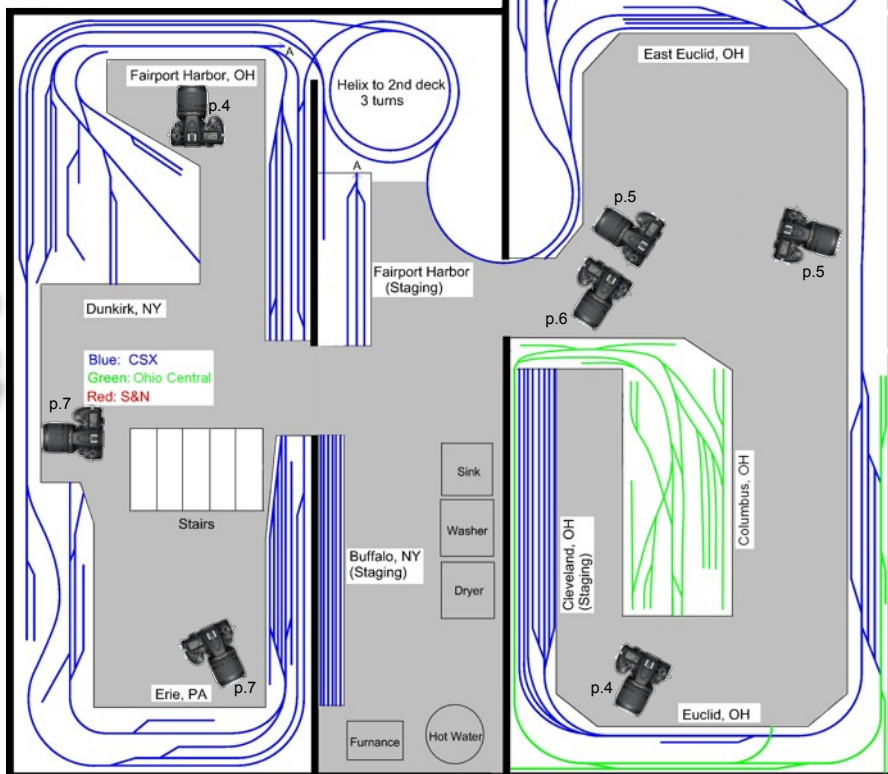
OPERATIONS

I try to hold regular operating sessions every six to seven weeks during the winter months. A typical session takes three hours and keeps a crew of nine and a dispatcher busy with 12 to 14 mainline trains, several local freights, yard jobs, and extras.

(Continued on page 7)



far right, inbound merchandise is waiting to be unloaded from a boxcar positioned at a warehouse. The backdrop is a LARC product and features a freight far up the distant hillside.





The Erie yard switcher, a unit relettered for CSX, heads a cut of cars up the lead on the foreground track, while the UP unit ethanol train awaits a crew change on the industrial lead. The billboard features a timely message!

(Continued from page 5)

Mainline trains are dispatched by a master schedule while locals and yard jobs work from switch lists.

The layout is verbally dispatched with a modified CTC system. There are operating signals on the west end of the division, slowly working their way east. Typical assignments include three road crews, three yardmasters, and three local crews. While there is plenty of action on the layout, the schedule is balanced so crews can

work at a steady but relaxed pace with plenty of time to railfan.

The thought of deciphering paperwork sounds too much like work, so it is kept at a minimum. I converted the typical card system into an Excel spreadsheet that automatically generates all the switch lists and train cards that govern the railroad.

I hope to see many of you during the 2019 NER convention September 19-22 at my CSX-Northeast. 🚂

EXTREME PERSPECTIVE



This scene on Dave Martini's CSX is a mere *nine* inches deep, but it seems to extend a "mile." Dave accomplished this forced perspective by steeply angling the left and right sides of the road to

meet the highway photo on the backdrop.

Using a small HO car in the foreground and an N scale truck another inch or so down the road adds to the illusion that the scene spans a greater distance. 🚂



Convention Opportunities Filling Up

SEPT
19
THURSDAY

Some activities for *Empire Junction*, the 2019 NER convention in Syracuse, are already "sold out," while others are quickly filling up. Central New York Division organizers advise any "fence-sitters" to make their move while opportunities still exist.

Already, an additional block of rooms has been added at the convention hotel, but even these are going fast. Early registration rates have ended, and online registration ends Sept. 4.

Most extra fare clinics are sold out, including the *Digital University* and the Jack Ellis "Modeling with a Master" clinic. As this is written, an added extra fare program by Barry Silverthorn and his *Roomettes* interiors has 11 seats remaining.

Another late addition is a Freemo layout planned at the convention hotel for "pop-up" operating sessions.

There are still plenty of seats available on the Saturday train excursion planned on the Finger Lakes Railway. The excursion is \$35 and pre-sold box lunches from Panera Bread are available at \$15 each. A café car with non-alcoholic drinks and snacks will operate during the trip.

There are also plenty of operating slots still open on nine layouts, including three in the neighboring Lakeshores Division.

Convention registrants will receive a link to a special section of the convention Website, where locations, descriptions, and a schedule for some 30 layouts open for visiting will be available.

A complete list of non-rail activities is also available on the Website.

Updates about the convention are being posted regularly at <www.empirejunction.org>. 🚂



FROM THIS...



A decision faced by many model railroaders was recently cast upon Don Irace. His HO Providence & Worcester layout had been visited by many NER members over the years at a number of conventions held not too far from Don's North Scituate, Rhode Island, house. But, now that he's retiring and making the move south, the layout can't go with.



A "selfie" portrait of Dick and Don Irace during an operating session. The father-son team built the model P&W and dismantled it too.

At top of page, an operating night on the P&W with Sudro Brown and Al Oneto.

By DON IRACE
Photos by the Author

I have been building the railroad for 22 years. It started out with just me and my father building a single level 24x42-foot layout. The line covered Worcester, MA, to Kingston, RI. We would do operations on Thursday night each week and work on it weekends.

It was not too long before others were finding out about it and would start coming over. Then another and another, and it was getting to the point that there was just no room for more operators. I had to refuse guys!

So, I decided to double the layout's size by going up in the main room and down in the back room. This move would extend the model railroad to Queens, NY.

Now I had a 15 member crew operating every Thursday night. But without someone to control the flow, it was getting very confusing. I needed a dispatcher to control things!

Next came signals, turnout control,

and a place for the dispatcher to sit. I bought two-way radios.

After that, one of my operators – Ed Juare – decided to move to Ringgold, Georgia. But, he still wanted to be involved. He set up remote dispatching so he could control things from his new home. It worked great, but now there were just too many operators on the radios at the same time.



I solved the problem by splitting it up with two dispatchers on two different radio channels, allowing a dispatcher on site, and Ed, based at his desk in Georgia. The Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) system was computerized. The layout was DCC with all locomotives upgraded to utilize ESU LokSound.

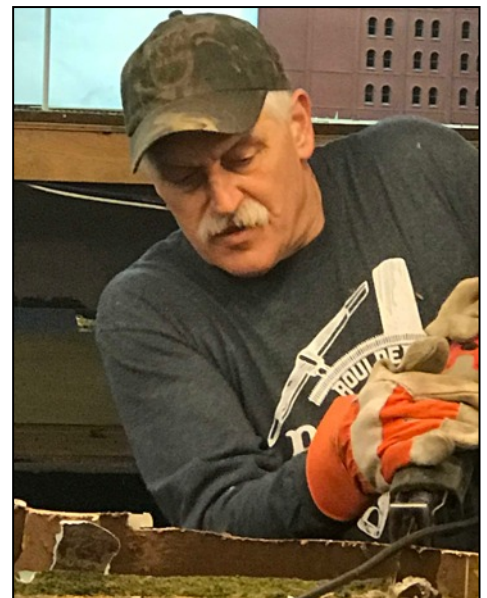
I have always been fond of the PW, not only because it was the local railroad in my area, but it was easy for me to model. I

(Continued on page 10)



After 22 years,
the model P&W
layout is no more

Piece by piece, the model Providence & Worcester is taken down by past operators Tony Donatelli Jr., Mark Herrick, and Mark Granville, *above*. A few sections have gone to other layouts as Skipper Farewell and Joe Mammay cart one away, *below*. Much of 22 years of work ended up in the dumpster. Mark Herrick takes a sawzall to benchwork, *below right*. Because Don is retiring to Florida where houses don't have basements, there was no room and no way the layout could go along. Don says he will build a small P&W switching layout in a spare room after the move south.





(Continued from page 8)

knew the area. I also rode with them at times, so I got a good lay of the land and now had seen their operations first hand.


My double deck layout covered the basement level of my home. It was a fictitious track plan envisioning the P&W as a regional freight carrier with trackage rights on Amtrak's *Northeast Corridor*.

Commodities shipped on my line included paper goods, coal, stone, plastic resins, produce, lumber, grain, cement, chemicals, general merchandise, and scrap metal. The model PW interchanged with CSX, the Rhode Island shortline Sea View Railroad, New England Central, and Guilford Rail.

I always tell folks who ask me for help to give their railroad a purpose to make it work. I'm not much for being a train watcher just sitting there seeing trains run in circles. I would never build a railroad that loops back on itself. I'm a point-to-point guy. You go back the same way you came from.

We have a great group of four layouts — now without mine. I took mine down because I will be moving to Sebastian, Florida, once I retire soon.

A part of the PW layout went to operate in other basements, and the rest ended up in a dumpster.

I do plan to build a new, smaller switching layout for myself in a spare room. There are no basements in Florida. It will still be the PW, but just a little section. 

The iconic scene, *above*, from Don Irace's model P&W included in *The Coupler* and other publications is no more. Don's model of the P&W's Southbridge Street yard was a credible replica of the prototype. The yard office was a close copy of the original built from a Railway Design Associates kit.

At right, nothing remained after the layout was dismantled from the Irace basement.

Don's grandson, Jace Peterson, *below*, gets one last time at the throttle before Grandpa and Great-Grandpa led the demolition crew.





Summer on the Layout

By **JEFF PASTON**
Coupler Editor

The weather should be improving for most of us after a very wet spring. While the past winter and the subsequent rain made for opportunities to work on the layout, many of us show our yearning for the pleasantries of summertime in scenes we model.

Jean Lacroix planted "healthy" lawns behind model homes on his railroad in Montreal. It's not often that you see our model folks cutting their grass as in the *photo above*. We're more accustomed to see model people relaxing as those are doing in the next yard – maybe awaiting some rail action on the adjacent track.

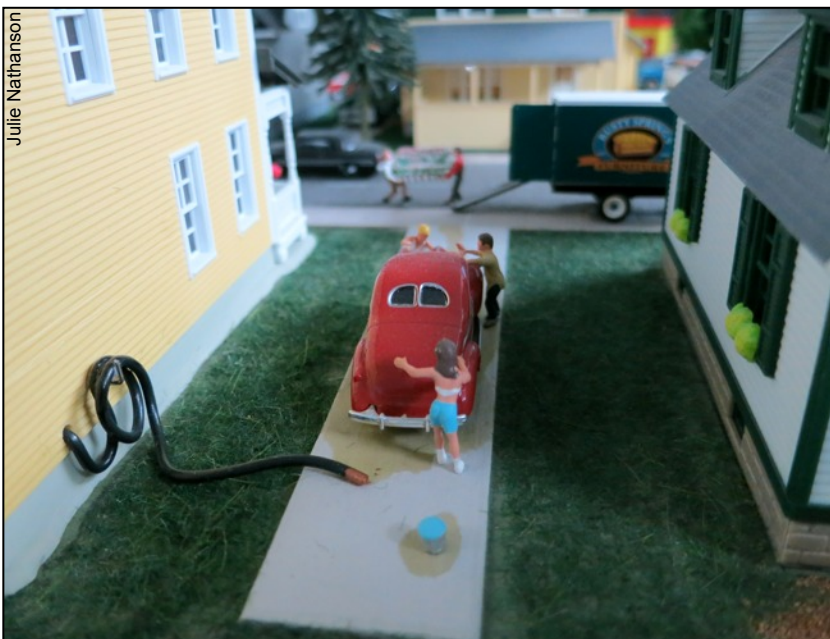
Summer also recalls youthful exploits for some, like skinny-dipping in a nearby pond. One-time *Coupler* editor David Marlowe staged some of that "action" of days gone by on his Linwood, Kansas,

layout. While the plastic youngsters are being naughty, look closely and you'll spot the local constabulary moving in to write a few tickets to those who forgot their swimsuits. The shrubbery blocks the view for prudish passengers traveling by in the Amtrak train in the distance.

Actually, David caught a few nuances here you might expect to see in such a scene. There's a dog "barking" at the one Preiser girl who apparently "just arrived" wearing "proper attire." The old tree makes a great spot for one of the girls to work on her tan. And, we must admit the water really looks wet and inviting!

Back in town, nice weather means its time to wash the car. Irwin Nathanson captured this snapshot of summer on his railroad in the NER's Hudson-Berkshire Division. Out on the street, a new sofa is being delivered to one of the homes here.

(Continued on next page)





(Continued from page 11)

Summer means stopping for hot dogs or hamburgers at a favorite eatery. Kip Grant used part of an Atlas interlocking tower, *above*, to create "Norma and Sonny's Drive-In" – named after his parents – on his Delaware & Hudson-themed *Sonnyvale Branch* layout. The ketchup and mustard "bottles" are made from stripped plastic wire insulation.

Back on Irwin Nathanson's railroad, *at right*, the local playground is bustling with youthful activity. As summer approaches, the school bus and chaperone will soon be on hiatus.

It is indeed a lazy summer day in Troy, New York, *below*, on the *New England, Berkshire & Western* layout at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. A couple are taking it easy in front of their vegetable garden



as kids play in a sandbox next door. Local cats are creeping by on a nearby fence. This scene and the rest of the layout is in storage until it is reconstructed in a new location this fall (see page 3 of this issue).

From one local watering hole on the *previous page* to a local creek, *below*, community denizens flock to the water in summer. It seems as though this waterway on Jean Lacroix's railroad is a good spot to fish, and one angler apparently caught a "big one" he is showing off.

Modeling summertime has so many possibilities. In many cases, the irony is that these warm weather scenes were created during the depths of colder, damper, and downright miserable environment outside of our model railroad habitats! 🚂



NEW MEMBERS

Compiled By **MARK HARLOW**
NER Office Manager

As of 5/1/19

NEW BRUNSWICK

Benjamin Featherston

CONNECTICUT

George Arnold
David Beale
Bruce Carter
Jack Ciarletto
Pete Damato
Fred Fassman

Charles Hemenway Jr.
Steve Mayerson
William Morris
William Mellott
Al Perry
Robert Stillson
Joseph E. Sweeney
John Thieling
Rick Vale
Steve Wysowski

MASSACHUSETTS

Bruce Benedict
Carl Gifford
Emily Hock
James Keegan
Richard Leary
William C. Morris
Jake Morrissey
Michael Palaschak
John Petrie
Neil Powers
James Royce
Joseph Silva Jr.

MAINE

Harold A. Blaisdell
Ted Gerber
Bill Grvener
William F. King Jr.
John L. Middleton

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Alan Bridgman
John Della Grotte
Robert E. Hayes
Daron Whitehouse
James P. Wiggins

NEW JERSEY

James Cummings

Frank DiStefano
Joe Dudek
Mikesh family
Preston Sewell
Henry Velez MD

NEW YORK

Michael Blas
Joe Buff
Matt Cannon
Raymond Castellano
John Chester
Edwin Cox
H. John Damino
Sherri Dewitt

Luke Dewitt
Dave Frideman
Michael Hoffer
Gilbert MacHado
Robert Matten
Gudrun Miller
Joe Moe
Nick Niceforo
Gordon O'Connor
George D. Powell
Richard Raczowski
Mark C. Williams

VERMONT

Stephen Fitzhugh

I Found a New Religion!

A New Gospel in Custom Decaling

By CHUCK DILJAK

A few years ago, I discovered a religion I never knew existed. Only people in the know seem to know about it. They are loyal followers who have kept this religion secret for so long. A secret society, they are. An underground religion. But, its followers let it slip out in the hobby press. They didn't give it a name. So, until someone comes up with a better one, I will call myself a *Glosscotant*!

I think the religion was formed from the Bible quote, "Two are better than one." You see, us Glosscotants apply *two* coats of Testors® Glosscote when decaling our models. That's right. Two! Blasphemy!

I never would have thought two coats would make any difference in the process. But, those in the know have shown me the light. I have practiced this religion over the last couple of years, and each time, my faith is renewed, restored and recharged.

Before becoming a Glosscotant, I was deeply disturbed by the evil process of decaling a model. No matter how diligent I was in using one coat of Testors® Glosscote as the base, setting the decal with Microsol spirits and applying a final coat of Testors® Dullcote, I always came away dissatisfied with the final result. I could see the decal film or silvering in some spots. I lost faith in the process. I was in search of a new religion.

Then, that someone in the know leaked it to the press. I was skeptical, but

intrigued. "Two are better than one," they said. So, I decided to test their commandment.

I applied the base coat of Testors® Glosscote. I applied the decals and set them into position with Microsol spirits, as before, and let the model dry.

Then....I applied a *second* coat of Testors® Glosscote. That's right. If one is good, two must be better. Blasphemy! What do I have to lose?

I already lost faith in the old process.



Wyoming Valley number 32, a former B&O wagontop caboose by Spring Mills Depot, used decals printed using an ALPS printer.

But, this second coat of Testors® Glosscote is magical. It does something that cannot be explained by us mortals. Because, after this coat of Testors® Glosscote dried and I applied a coat of Testors® Dullcote, the decal film magically disappeared. Gone. The evil spirits of silvering? Gone. Hallelujah! I am a believer!

I found a new religion. I have converted to Glosscoticism. Now, I am spreading the good word.

Reprinted from the Garden State Division Whistle Post, Fall 2018 edition.



Wyoming Valley number 901, a wedge snowplow model by IHC, used decals custom made by Rail Graphics.



Keith Shoneman

Nominations Wanted for Shoneman Award Deadline is Aug. 1st

In 2016, the HUB division and NER lost a friend when Keith Shoneman passed away. Keith was very active in the NMRA and was best known for promoting prototypical operations on his beloved *Pennsylvania and New England Railroad*, and beyond. It was this commitment to promoting prototypical operations that led us to establish the *Shoneman Award* to recognize an active member of the NER who is going above and beyond to promote operations.

If you know someone that is reaching out beyond their basements or back yards to promote prototypical operations within the NER, we would love to hear about them. Please send an email with a brief summary of why you believe they need to be recognized before August 1st to <info@hubdiv.org>.

We will make our third annual presentation at this year's *Empire Junction* convention in Syracuse.

At last year's *Erie Limited* convention in Mahwah, we were pleased to recognize Al Oneto. Al was selected because of his being an active member of the OpSig group and his role in scheduling operations at regional conventions for the past 10 years. —Dave Insley



Al Oneto, left, accepting the Shoneman Award from Dave Insley at last year's NER convention in Mahwah, NJ. Photo: Jim Walsh

NCE Offers Easy Entry into DCC

By **MIKE TYLICK MMR**
Contributing Editor

Remember how simple it was to wire your Christmas trains? Two wires went between a control box and the rails. Put the trains on the track, pull back the throttle, and let them rip.

Somehow as we progressed in the hobby, the two wires morphed into complex systems involving toggle switches, dual power supplies, common rail, reverse loops, and all sorts of other devices that somehow turned our two wires into a semi-organized rat's nest of brightly colored cables. Digital Cab Control (DCC) put an end to most of that! We've almost gotten back to the two wires and an electrical system that is easy to use.

Jim Scorse, the owner of NCE, feels that DCC should be regarded by hobbyists as an appliance to use and not think about it too much. Although some people make advanced electronics a hobby unto itself, most of us are very happy to have controls that are easy to install and use. NCE prides itself on manufacturing an intuitive, easy to use system that will provide many years of dependable service.

Trained as an electrical engineer, Jim worked for a large electronics company and had risen to the management level. Unhappy with the direction the company was heading, he decided to leave and form an independent contract design service, *North Coast Engineering*.

Among his commissions, he began manufacturing DCC products on an OEM basis for Wangrow Electronics in 1993. The NCE PowerHouse was intended to be sold by Wangrow as a next generation *System One*. Wangrow declined the product, and Jim decided that since it was a finished, ready to make product, he would release it under his own *NCE* brand.

When Don Wangrow passed away in 2003, some of his former customers contacted North Coast for Wangrow equipment. Jim

the word "engineering" to be used in a corporate title.)

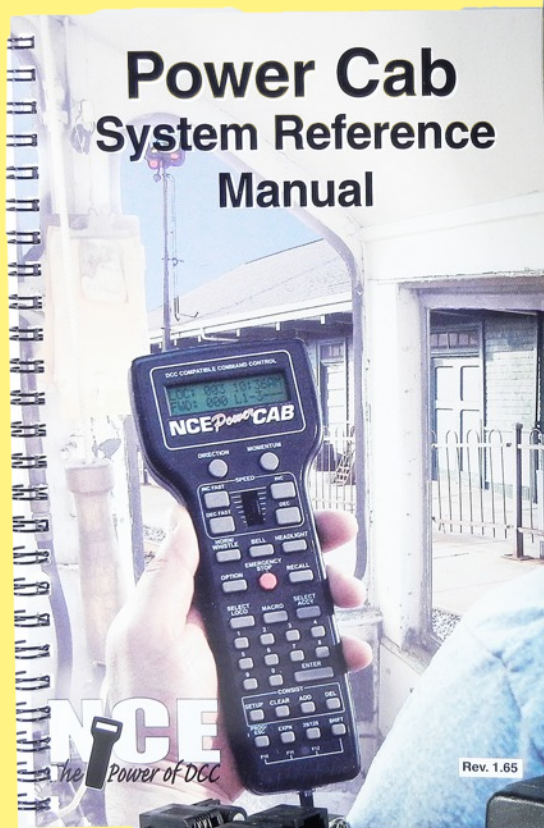
From modest beginnings in Jim's garage, NCE recently moved into a new 12,000 square foot facility, twice the size of its previous factory. Although robotics are extensively utilized for manufacturing its American made products, NCE has 14 full time employees, including a small office staff and three customer service representatives.

While writing this article I made

of their viability. The new equipment will look and act much the same, but will boast faster processing times and greater memory capacities. Much of this new equipment should be available at the time of this article's publication.

I've recently become involved with a local operating group. All of the participants now have an easy to use DCC railroad, but I remember times past with the added confusion of trying to stay out of each other's blocks.

We've come a long way since 1984 and General Electric's Astrac! 🚂



several telephone calls to their customer service, and was answered directly by a representative. I didn't have a technical question, but he was quite friendly and helpful nonetheless. Business is doing well – there's a three month backlog of orders.

For the future, Jim is in the process of re-designing NCE's line of products to reflect advances in technology. He feels electronics have about a 20 to 25 year life span of useful technology and his are nearing the end

made the decision to enter the DCC market full time. The business name was officially changed to NCE in 1997 when it was incorporated. (New York State does not allow

NCE Corporation

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585-265-0230

[<www.ncedcc.com>](http://www.ncedcc.com)

Towers, Towers and More Towers

By **JEFF HANKE**

During the Chessie Era, the East End of the Cumberland Division was still an area rich with interlocking towers. Towers were referred to by either their name or their identification code. For the East End, Brunswick (WB), Martinsburg (NA), West Cumbo (W), Miller (R), Hancock (HO), Patterson Creek (FN), and Mexico (M) towers were still in operation. That's seven towers in less than 100 track miles.



Interlocking towers were manned buildings next to the track that controlled turnouts in their local area. The tower operator manipulated the turnouts to route trains safely through their area of responsibility. The turnouts were "interlocked", which meant the selected route was

Towers are signature structures. Their shapes are generally well known in the respective railroad community. In the Northeast today – even if the building is boarded up and covered in spray paint – you can still spot the characteristic roof line and windows of old New Haven Railroad towers along I-95.

MODELING A TOWER

I am lucky in that good information exists to scratch build the East End towers. I'm also lucky that most (WB, NA, R, FN, and M) still exist today, even though they are all closed. I was also lucky I measured HO before it was razed in 2007.

Scratchbuilding a tower is just like scratchbuilding any structure. Start with a scale plan, either from available on line dimensions or your own measurements. I cut the sides out of Northeast scale scribed siding and cut window holes to fit Grandt Line or Tichy windows.

If you are very lucky, you can find a kit of your needed tower. After I finished scratchbuilding NA tower, I discovered a company that offered it. Just my luck!

OPERATING A TOWER

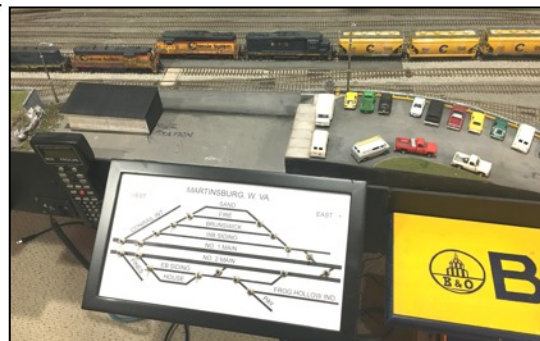
A tower operator position is one that adds lots of interest on your model railroad. My layout's first operational tower position is Martinsburg (NA). I have models of Brunswick, West Cumbo, and Hancock completed and waiting to become operational.

At NA, the tower operator stands in front of the panel with more than a dozen switches. These switches, in their respective spots on the layout map, control single turnouts and cross-overs. My tower

does not have any interlocking features, so collisions are still possible with misrouted switches. There are ways to program switches through computer programs so that interlocking is possible, but for me, a more basic system works just fine.

Trains approaching from either direction coordinate arrival with the tower operator. Some

trains, like the *Capital Limited*, stay on the same track running through town and just stop for a few minutes at the station. Unit trains drive through town on the same track and don't stop. Most mixed freights need



Jeff Hanke

The NA Tower operator has successfully lined the turnouts so that two freight trains glide safely by each other through Martinsburg. The westbound GP30s are on No. 1 Main, while the two eastbound GP9s are on No. 2 Main. Each switch is wired to a Tortoise machine to allow the operator to run the entire town from this one spot on the layout.

permission to tie up the main, while they set off a block of cars or pick up some in the yard.

Finally, a local originates at Martinsburg, which has to be put together in the yard, depart the yard on the north side of the main, and make its way to the Frog Hollow Industrial Track on the south side. This move ties up the whole place in the process. It's the tower operator's job to make sure this happens safely.

Today, my signals are dark, so everything is done verbally to stop trains and allow others to move. In the future, my signals will stop trains at the outside bounds of the interlocking and moves will be controlled with both signal and voice commands.

I hope you add a tower to your layout. They add a lot of operating fun.

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



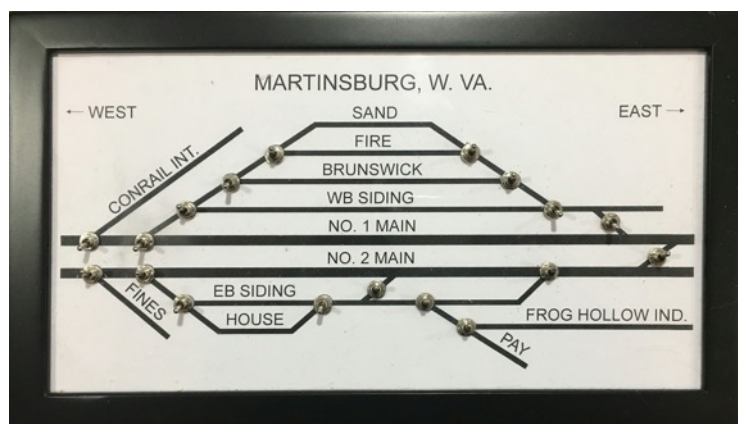
Jeff Hanke

Though not typical in construction, this one story tower served Martinsburg, WV for more than 100 years. It still stands today, although boarded up. It was scratchbuilt from measurements Jeff made.

safe and all other routes were locked out from interfering.

What made this section of the line even more interesting was several of the towers still operated Armstrong levers to move the points of the switches. Instead of the more modern electric switch and motor, these ancient Armstrong levers used the physical force of the operator moving a huge lever in the tower, transmitted through pipe and hinges to unlock and then move the points of the turnout. Distant switches required quite a lot of force to accomplish this.

Eventually, these towers were replaced with computer functionality controlled by a distant dispatcher. But in 1982, the old practice of manned towers still flourished.



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