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APRIL-JUNE 2020

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COVER PHOTO

The *Chesapeake System* has entered the modern era as a brand new *Chesapeake & Hudson* Dash 9-44CW #4400 leads a circus train (off camera) through Stuart, VA. The action takes place on the North Shore Model Railroad Club's layout, one of many layouts that will be available for operating and touring during the *Mill City 2020* NER convention. Read more starting on page 4.

Photo by John Rezuze

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FROM THE EDITOR . . . By JEFF PASTON

We often hear the line, "All good things must come to an end!" With mixed feelings, I guess that will also have to apply to the *NER Coupler* and my stewardship here. I have announced my retirement as your editor effective at the end of this year.

It has certainly been a fun run over my 10 year association with the *Coupler*. I replaced Otto Vondrak, who is now editor of *Railroad Model Craftsman*, when I took on the duties as layout/graphics editor in 2010. Phil Monat was the *Coupler's* boss then..

When Phil stepped down and John Doehring stepped in as editor, I soon added associate editor to my title. Then, five years ago, John became the NER president and I moved up to the editorship.

Having a degree in Graphic Arts/Journalism that I never really had a chance to use, I sensed an opportunity to create a slick magazine out of the newsletter format of the *Coupler*. Based upon all of the wonderful comments I have been hearing, I guess the goal of elevating the *NER Coupler* has been a success. Thank you for your support!



But, being a time consuming volunteer job, the magazine has become another "hobby" for me at the cost of accomplishing work on my model railroad.

Another factor is that I can't afford to "retire" in real life despite my advancing age, which is now well beyond typical retirement. So, as I attempt to find "real" employment, having time for everything I'd like to do is just not possible. (Where have you heard that comment before?)

Needless to say, the NER is in search of a replacement – or replacements – for me. While I have been doing two jobs for the last five years, we need an editor and a graphics/layout person, as I'm not so sure many of you would have the skillset – or desire – to do both.

If either job appeals to you, please contact me as soon as possible at editor@nernmra.org.

I will be available to assist in a transition, as will our NER leadership. I can safely say that the satisfaction of putting out a quality publication, coupled with the many NMRA friendships made over the past 10 years, have been rewarding.

OPEN DOEHR By JOHN DOEHRING NER President

A Time to Build It ...

A few years back, I authored a presentation entitled *Confessions of a (Reforming) Armchair Railroader: Seven Secrets to Getting Out of Your Chair, Becoming More Active, and Enjoying Model Railroading More*. After sharing this clinic a couple of times, I wrote it up, and it was published in *N Scale Magazine*. Candidly, admitting that I struggled to start, and sharing the path I found to get going, was cathartic.

Still, I wasn't cured. For me, getting stuff done remains an ongoing, daily challenge.

I'm optimistic, enthusiastic, and sincerely interested in lots of things. I have big dreams and plans, and I have trouble saying no. I'm a better beginner than finisher, and I'm frankly easily distracted. I need to re-read this article – and my follow up *Take Two: Lessons Learned and New Ideas for the Second Time Around* - over and over again.

I have three primary construction projects on my plate this year, each of which I hope to substantively finish in the next several months. The first of these is a two-module N-Trak set I'm building for my Golden Spike award. I've been stalled on these for a while, despite having finished all of the benchwork and track. Really, I just have a few buildings and cars to assemble

and display...

Additionally, I have plans drawn up for a new multiple module set in Free-mo N scale. My focus here is a small, transition era locomotive yard and servicing center – with facilities for both steam and diesel power. I chose this theme because I could (in a small space) fit in the right number of layout elements required for both the Civil Engineer and Electrical Engineer requirements of the Achievement Program. One module, two certificates. I've built this thing in my head dozens of times. This summer I plan to build it in wood and foam.

Finally, I've laid out a new plan to construct several T-Trak modules as an experiment – both in trying out this modular form, and for the possibility of joining together with other NER T-Trak modelers from other divisions. This too I've played out in my head many times. Now it's time to turn this idea into reality.

Just like so many of you, I have a busy life: work, family, community, dogs – and trains. I've spent some of my train time budget these last few years focusing on NMRA initiatives (with much benefit and no regrets). But now it's time for me to really get going on the doing – building these next modules.

Now, where is my hammer? ...



High Rent Closes Gulliver's Gate

Gulliver's Gate, that amazing HO scale model of New York and two dozen other world cities (see *Coupler* #268), closed January 22 after two and a half years in business. Published reports indicate the attraction defaulted on its \$5.7 million annual rent and has been evicted. Its location at 229 W. 43rd Street just off Times Square in the former New York Times building is owned by the Kushner Companies.

Gulliver's Gate reportedly cost \$40 million to build, and now its Website says it is looking for another location to reopen. The high cost of Times Square rent also drove a restaurant from the property, and tenant *National Geographic Encounter* is currently renegotiating its rent with Kushner.

Gulliver's owners attempted to recover some of its losses in a lawsuit claiming they didn't get all of the space agreed upon, but the court denied the motion.

COVID-19 Postpones "Ops 'til You Drop" Event

National guidelines to reduce the size of gatherings during the COVID-19 virus outbreak has postponed Central New York Division's "Ops 'til You Drop" weekend. The event had distinguished itself as a premier operations venue in the NER with a dozen layouts and an anticipated 46 operating spots available this year.

It was to run during the weekend of April 25 and 26. Layouts were to include Ed

O'Rourke's fabulous New Haven Railroad coming into the fold for the first time, plus a return of two layouts from earlier years – The *NY and Penn Central Railroad* of Roger Beiswenger and the *Sioux City Lines* of Bob Vickery. All 12 layouts are located in the Syracuse and Utica areas.

Organizers urge checking the Division Website www.cnynmra.org for updates on when this event will be rescheduled.

Faulter Memorial Fund Tops \$10k

A fund in memory of beloved NER leader Chip Faulter had already exceeded \$10,000 by late February, according to Seacoast Division President Tage Erickson. The memorial fund will provide assistance to young people who are interested in being involved with model railroading, something Chip was passionate about. Chip, who was the NER's secretary, passed away Nov. 1, 2019, after battling pancreatic cancer.



Chip Faulter

His wife Mona and family wanted something to honor Chip in a way he would want to be remembered. Since he loved the hobby and always wanted younger people to become involved and experience the satisfaction and joy that it always brought him, the memorial fund was established in his home division. The money will help those young people that can't otherwise afford to attend events or participate at model railroading events by defraying costs.

Donations may be made by check made out to *Seacoast Division of the NMRA* to David Kotsonis, Seacoast Division Treasurer, c/o Chip Faulter Fund, 1 Anne's Lane, Greenland, NH 03840-2201.

One Time NER Prez David Messer Dies

Former NER President and Trustee David W. Messer MMR (#115) died February 27 of pneumonia. He was 81. Dave had lived in the Hudson-Berkshire Division and worked in corporate governmental relations in Albany while with the NER. He later moved to Royersford, PA, near King of Prussia for other employment.

He continued his active NMRA participation in the Mid-Eastern Region, having his home open for numerous MER convention layout tours, as well as serving as the general chairman of the 1993 NMRA National convention at Valley Forge. Upon

Dave's move to Pennsylvania, he was appointed as the chairman of the NMRA national committee that created and implemented the design, construction and staffing of the NMRA's library at its former headquarters in Chattanooga, TN. The library was his baby! He was also published in *Model Railroader* and *Railroad Model Craftsman* magazines.

Dave is survived by his wife, Jo-Ann Messer, and other family members. His funeral was March 7 at the Royersford Baptist Church. – *Jim Heidt*

NER COUPLER Deadlines

MAY 22 – July-Sept. issue
AUGUST 21 – Oct.-Dec. issue

TIMETABLE

Compiled by JACK LUTZ

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Because of US and Canadian restrictions on gatherings due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, some of these events may be postponed or cancelled. Please check Websites for updated information.

CONVENTIONS

- May 22-24: NFR Convention – Bayview Junction; Hamilton, ON [<nfrconvention.ca>](http://nfrconvention.ca)
POSTPONED
- May 31-June 6: National Garden Railway Convention; Nashville, TN [<nrgc2020.com>](http://nrgc2020.com)
- June 5-7: Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders Convention; Wolfville, NS [<mfmr.ca>](http://mfmr.ca)
- June 22-27: Big Train Operator Club Convention; St Louis, MO [<bigtrainoperator.com>](http://bigtrainoperator.com)
- June 24-28: 28th Annual National N Scale Convention; Nashville, TN [<nationalnscaleconvention.com>](http://nationalnscaleconvention.com)
- July 5-11: Lionel Operating Train Society National Convention; Dayton, OH [<www.lots-trains.org>](http://www.lots-trains.org)
- July 12-18: NMRA Nat'l Convention: Gateway 2020; St. Louis, MO [<gateway2020.org>](http://gateway2020.org)
CANCELLED
- July 16-18: O Scale National Convention SONC 2020; St Louis, MO sonc2020.com/WP/>>>
- Oct 9-12: NER Convention – Mill City 2020; Lowell, MA [<www.millcity2020.org>](http://www.millcity2020.org)

SHOWS

- April 4: The Great Northern New England Train Show; Dover, NH [<netca.org>](http://netca.org)
- April 11: Moncton Model Railroad Show 2020; Riverview, NB [<mmr.ca/moncton-model-railroad-show>](http://mmr.ca/moncton-model-railroad-show)
CANCELLED
- April 18: Southern Maine Model RR Club Train Show; Westbrook, ME [<southernmainemrrc.wordpress.com>](http://southernmainemrrc.wordpress.com)
CANCELLED
- April 25: Great Falls Model Railroad Club Spring Show; Topsham, ME [<greatfallsmodelrrclub.org>](http://greatfallsmodelrrclub.org)
CANCELLED
- April 26: 26th Maine Hooksett Lions Club Train Show; Hooksett, NH [<e-clubhouse.org/sites/hooksett>](http://e-clubhouse.org/sites/hooksett)
CANCELLED
- April 26: Dartmouth Lake Simcoe Region Model RR Show; North Sutton, NH [<cvrr.railfan.net/cvmrr>](http://cvrr.railfan.net/cvmrr)
CANCELLED
- June 20-21: Montreal Model Train Exposition; Dorval, QC [<montrealmodeltrainexposition.com>](http://montrealmodeltrainexposition.com)
POSTPONED

MEETS

- April 4: Seacoast Division NMRA 2020 Spring Event; Newington, NH [<seacoastnmra.org>](http://seacoastnmra.org)
CANCELLED
- April 25-26: Ops 'til You Drop Weekend; Central New York [<cnynmra.org>](http://cnynmra.org)
POSTPONED
- May 16: GSD Spring Meet 2020; Middletown, NJ [<nergdsd.com>](http://nergdsd.com)
- May 29-30: New England/NF RR Prototype Modelers Meet; Farmington, CT [<nerpm.org>](http://nerpm.org)
CANCELLED

Masons Look to Model Trains

Many organizations are finding model railroading can serve as an excellent therapeutic tool. A recent addition to this "train of thought" is the Masons fraternal organization.

The winter issue of the *Empire State Mason* magazine reports interest in setting up layouts in multiple scales in a Masonic facility in Utica, NY. The article seeks interest in building model railroads at the Masonic Care Community and its new Horticultural Learning Center.



NER Convention

Ready with Layouts, Tours, Clinics & More



By DAVE INSLEY

Have you ever attended an NER Convention and been amazed at all the many things to do? Have you been challenged by the list of really good clinics that you hoped to fit into your schedule? Did that fabulous tour conflict with a premier operating session and you really wanted to attend both? Did you go home at the end energized but exhausted from staying up late talking to old friends in the lounge and then getting up early for a clinic you just had to see?

You'd be mistaken if you thought the *Mill City 2020* convention to be any different! There will be *lots* of things going on, and you will have to make some tough choices – a nice problem to have! If you have not been to an NER convention, you are missing a great opportunity to learn the latest trends in the hobby, view layouts from fabulous modelers, tour some local historical places, and discover more about prototype railroading during the convention, October 9-12.

FOCUS ON OPERATIONS

Historically, about 50 percent of attendees at a region convention take part in at least one operating session. While convention operating session hosts strive to welcome operators from beginner to expert, some people are intimidated by operations. 2020 convention organizers are encouraging everyone to try operations. After all, most of us in the hobby like to watch the trains move. So, why not make them move with a purpose?

To help new operators or those who want a little more coaching, *Mill City 2020* is offering an operations mentoring program. You can now sign up for a session and indicate that you would like to be assigned a mentor. This will be someone who can help guide you through the session and make you feel more at ease. If you an experienced operator who would like to be a mentor, just check that box on the registration form and we will pair you up so you can share your passion and excitement for operations!

Mill City 2020 will also offer clinics to introduce new operators to operating concepts, including car-forwarding schemes, how DCC simplifies and enhances operations, signaling systems to govern the movement of trains, and much more. Organizers encourage everyone to try operations at least once!

LOTS OF LAYOUTS

The last issue of *NER Coupler* highlighted several layouts that will be open for operations. They are just the tip of the iceberg as there are dozens of quality layouts within driving distance of the hotel. Many of these have been seen during such events as the *Tour de Chooch* and *RailRUN*.



OCT
9
FRIDAY



A pair of *Cumberland Western* Alco PAs charge up grade to Campanella Ridge with an eastbound passenger train in tow on the North Shore Model Railroad Club.

Photo: John Rezuke

The North Shore Model Railroad Club's *Chesapeake System* combines three railroads – the *Chesapeake and Lake Erie*, the *Cumberland Western*, and the *Chesapeake and Hudson* – covering an area from Chicago to New England, and south into West Virginia. The railroads feature HO scale standard gauge, as well as narrow gauge branch lines that service the mountains of West Virginia.

The club has been in its current location for more than 40 years. There is more than 5,000 feet of track in the 2,700 square foot facility. The railroad features two major yards, several smaller yards and staging that keeps it busy moving coal, oil, lumber, and industrial goods. This massive HO layout will be open for viewing and operations on Saturday morning.

The *Albany and Susquehanna Railroad* is an N scale masterpiece created by Rand Hoven. Rand models the Delaware and Hudson Susquehanna Division from Binghamton to Albany in Upstate New

York. This double-deck railroad encompasses 14 scale miles of track requiring multiple units to bring trains up the grade at Belden Hill, Richmondville Hill, and Mt. Ararat. Line side signals and CTC control train movements through the vast countryside of New York State. Located less than 15 miles from the hotel, this is a railroad you won't want to miss.

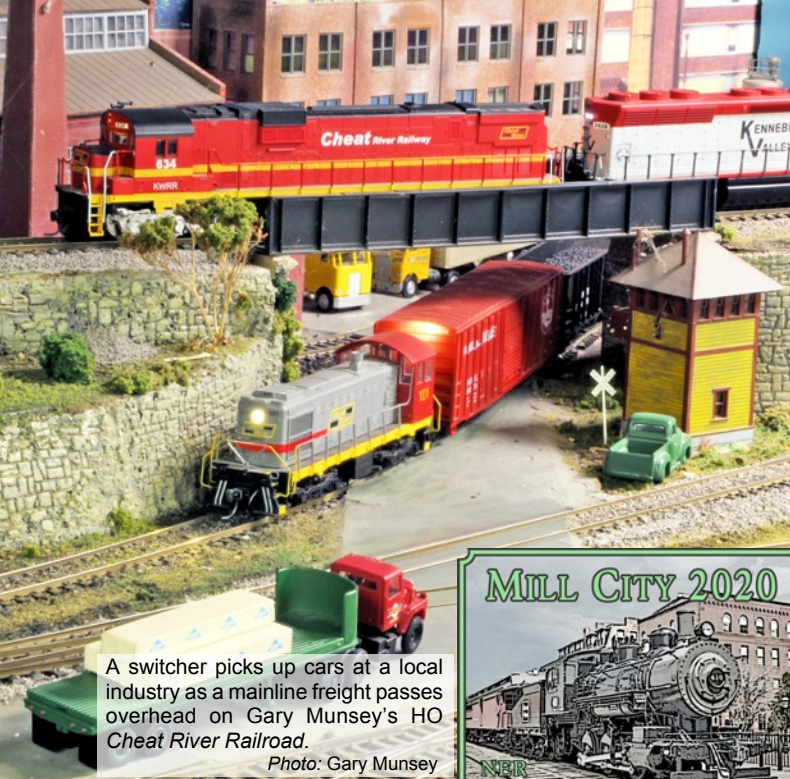
The *Cheat River Railroad* is an HO railroad set in the 1980s when mergers were the norm and railroads found themselves patching locomotive paint schemes that resulted from changing hands every few months. Representing the remnants of the Western Maryland in that state and West Virginia, the fleet of Cheat River locomotives deftly move coal and other commodities from Port Covington, Maryland, to Durbin, West Virginia. Gary Munsey is a former dispatcher for Pan Am Railways and brings that experience to his basement, located just 16 miles from the hotel.

(Continued on next page)



Rand Hoven's N scale *Albany & Susquehanna* is among the many layouts planned for touring.

Photo: Rand Hoven



A switcher picks up cars at a local industry as a mainline freight passes overhead on Gary Munsey's HO Cheat River Railroad.

Photo: Gary Munsey



Layouts & Tours

still make cloth as it was a century ago. After touring the Boott Mill, a boat will bring the group through the canals that fed water to the mills and then it will traverse one of the locks that enabled navigation on the river. There is plenty of history to see on this autumn afternoon in New England.

In nearby Peabody, Massachusetts, is the former home of George Sellios' *Fine Scale Miniatures* kit manufacturing business. While George is no longer making kits, he is still working on his railroad, the *Franklin and South Manchester*. There are two opportunities to visit this world-famous model railroad. The main tour will leave from the hotel on Saturday morning by bus to Peabody. To maximize the number of people who can go, the group will be divided in two, allowing half to visit the F&SM while the others visit the North Shore Model Railroad Club, and vice-versa. This tour is limited to the first 50 registrants.

There is a second opportunity to visit the F&SM on Friday morning before the convention officially starts. You must register in advance for this opportunity. It will be self-drive but there is no cost. Because space is limited, tickets will be issued for specific timeslots. You can select the time slot you want on the registration form. Please be aware that parking in downtown Peabody can be a challenge, so plan ahead. Come to the convention early and take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

CLINICS

Quality clinics are the foundation of every NER Convention, and *Mill City 2020* will be no exception. Clinicians from around the Region and around the country will be in attendance to share their knowledge and passion for our great hobby. More information on clinics will be featured in the next edition of *NER Coupler*. Mike Tylick, MMR, *NER Coupler* contributing editor, is already on board with a make-and-take clinic demonstrating techniques on how to make realistic rock walls. Other clinicians' schedules are being confirmed and their make-and-take clinics should be on the Website by the time this article is published.

There also will be a full slate of presentation clinics throughout the convention, starting on Friday afternoon and running until Sunday. Please see the Website for all of the details and schedule.

CONVENTION HOTEL

As previously announced, the convention hotel will be the Westford Regency Inn and Conference Center in Westford, Massachusetts. The hotel is conveniently located off Interstate 495 in the heart of the Merrimack River Valley. The convention room rate will be \$109 per night. Since this is the heart of the fall foliage season, you can take advantage of this great rate and extend your stay. You may reserve your hotel room by going to us01.iqwebbook.com/WRICCM543/?coupon=NMRA. Details are also on the Mill City Website.

(Continued from Page 5)

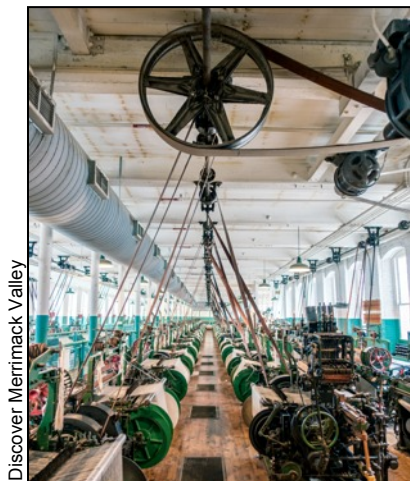
The convention Website www.millcity2020.org provides a complete list of layouts that will be open during the convention. And, don't forget to sign up for at least one operating session!

TOURS

Lowell, Massachusetts is nicknamed the *Mill City* and is home to the Lowell National Historical Park. Lowell was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in the United States. The Merrimack River provided ample waterpower for the textile mills that dominated the area during this time. Rail and Trolley activity continue to this day.

The convention will feature two tours in Lowell on Friday and Saturday afternoon. Friday's tour will start at the Lowell Historical Park Visitor Center. We will board a historic New Orleans trolley operated by the Seashore Trolley Museum for a trip to the Wannalancit Mill. A park ranger will demonstrate the technology that powered the mills and the textile industry. The tour will continue on the trolley navigating through downtown Lowell and tour various sites. Plans call for a tour of the park's car barn (a former coal bin served by the Boston & Maine railroad) that is still in use today servicing and storing the trolleys from the Seashore museum and the National Historical Park.

Saturday's tour of Lowell starts at the visitor center and rides a National Park trolley to the Boott Mill located a short distance away. This mill houses working looms that



Discover Merrimack Valley

A Saturday tour will take convention-goers to a historic working mill.

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George Sellios' famed *Franklin & South Manchester* layout will be open for viewing twice during the convention.

Jim Stekirk



For 2020 Convention information
and registration, please go to
<www.millcity2020.org>





Another Visit to the Western Bay Railroad

The Dirt on Making Dirt Roads

By AL SOHL MMR

Photos by the Author

The Western Bay railroad is an O scale narrow gauge layout I have been building for about nine years now and is supposed to represent Colorado and a bit of New Mexico during the 1939 era (actually, June 12, 1939). Railroads thrived, (survived?) up in the mountains of Colorado during my era *mainly* because getting to and from almost anywhere was difficult during best of weather and almost impossible during wet and winter weather. This was due to the lack of paved roads. And I love it!

Many visitors of the WB have often asked, "How did you do them roads?"

My quick and dirty (*pun intended*) answer to them is, "I used real dirt."

But for this article, I will explain it with a bit more detail.

Finding what real dirt to use is up to you. The results will not work using sand, loam, or clay – which kinda rules out finding the 'good stuff' if living where I do in the sunny state of Florida! I have my dirt brought in by one of our club members, John Lively, who gathered it from Alabama and North Carolina. John usually drops it off in buckets – sometimes wet and always unsifted.

I first sifted the dirt through a large sieve into a throw-away metal pan. Then I *cooked* my the sifted dirt on my barbeque (*OUTSIDE of course*). I let it cook until it was totally dry and steaming hot – at least a couple of hours.

Once it cooled, I sifted it again using finer sieves into small containers. (Fig. 1)

With the dirt ready to use, I prepared the diluted white glue which I used to secure my dirt (and all of my other scenery). I used *inexpensive* white glue. I poured the glue into my 'mixing jug.' I boiled about four cups of water (Fig. 1) to help dissolve the glue. Then, I poured the boiling water into my mixing jug and shook the jug vigorously for a few minutes before filling the remainder of the jug with *HOT* tap water.

Again, I shake it up *before* adding a couple of drops of dish detergent. Last, I decanted my diluted

white glue mix into smaller bottles – I use empty saline bottles used by contact lens wearers which makes it easy to dispense directly onto my scenery.

You will need to prepare some 'wet' water (water with one or two drops of dish detergent) to reduce 'surface tension.' This allows the diluted glue to soak into the scenery, not





sit on top. I used salad mister for this, but a good ole' spray bottle will work almost as well (I'll explain the difference shortly).

I prepared my roads by gluing down dry plaster gauze. (Fig. 3) When the glue dried, I saturated the gauze with water and let it harden overnight. The next day, I stained the gauze close to the color of the dirt I used. While

the stain was still wet, I spooned on my sifted dirt. I apply it about 1/8 of an inch deep using a teaspoon. I shaped and moved it until I was satisfied. Then I *misted* my dirt road with the 'wet' water I prepped previously. (If you use a regular squirt bottle, I suggest you spray it up in the air at first to allow the 'mist' to gently 'rain' down on your dirt.) The key is not to let the sprayed water move the dirt!

I then dribbled my diluted white glue onto and all over the dirt. If you plan on adding weeds or other vegetation (ground foam) in, on or about the area, now would be the time for that as well. When I finished adding my ground foam, I dribbled more diluted glue on it too. You do not need to re-wet the vegetation as it will have already 'sucked' up some of the




moisture from the wet dirt.

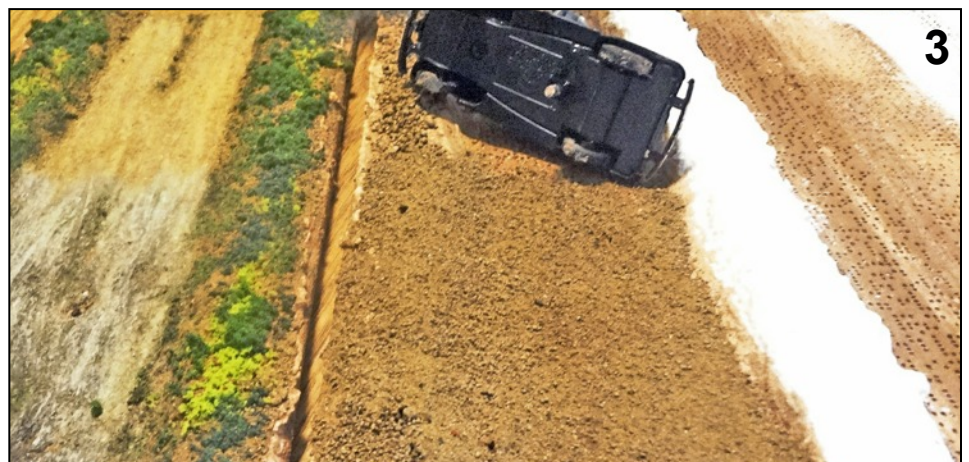
While my road was still wet, I used the handle of a small paint brush to add ruts. If I was going to add a vehicle, I like to press it into the road. Then, carefully pull it out to allow this 'muddy' scenery to dry over night.

The following day, I came back and burnished my dirt road using a cheap wood (*non painted*) paint brush handle.

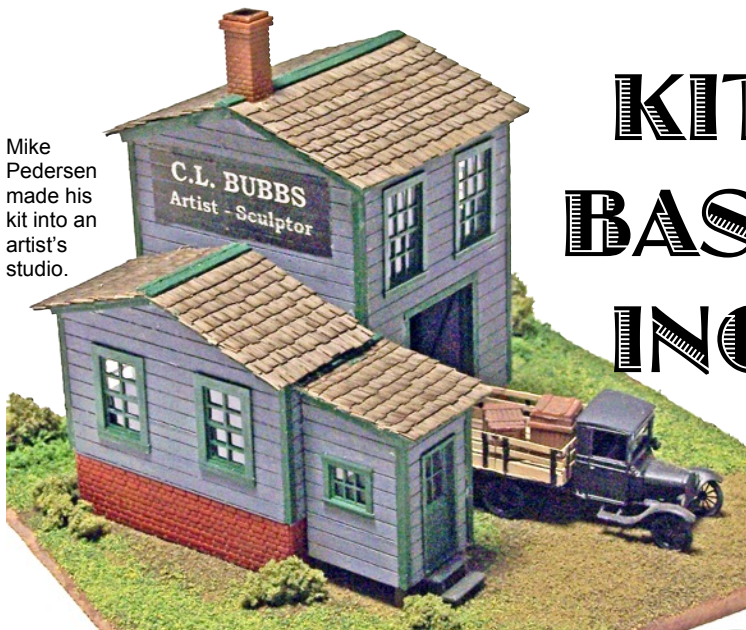
Why the burnishing, you may ask? We are mimicking how heavy cars and people grind up the dirt road or walkways, making the road or walkway dirt appear lighter than the surrounding scenery. Finally, I glued my autos and horse-drawn wagons with daubs of regular white glue. (If I had not made the indent for the vehicle ahead of time, then I would wet the area of the road with a bit of 'wet' water to soften the dirt and glue the wheels *into* (not on top) the dirt road.

I hope this helps you get the real 'dirt' on your layout! *Yeah another pun!* 

Al Sohl is a former NER and Sunrise Trail member who moved south for the warmer climate of Florida.



Mike Pedersen made his kit into an artist's studio.



KIT BASH ING

Jay Ehler's fuel dealer.



All photos provided by: Mike Pedersen

THE PALMER ICE HOUSE

By MIKE PEDERSEN

The Sea Coast Division decided to hold an event to increase interest and participation at its quarterly meetings. The Division purchased a number of craftsman FOS HO Scale *Palmer Ice* kits and offer them at cost. The members were encouraged to construct them however they saw fit and "think outside the box" with some innovative kitbashing. This was not a contest or a competition, but merely an enjoyable way to heighten members' interest, have some fun, and perhaps expand modeling skills. If they brought their completed kit to the fall quarterly meeting and explained what they did, they would receive a five dollar rebate.

I had never constructed a wood kit before, so this was a new experience. The laser-cut pieces were square and true and came out of their sheets with no problem and required minimal edge sanding. As far as thinking outside the box, I wondered what would be the opposite of a cold, dark ice storage building? What I came up with was an art studio that would be light-filled and airy.

Four other Sea Coast Division members brought their kitbashed ice houses to the meeting.

Rich Breton expanded his kit into a general store and supply. He widened the entry and added a large, one story room on the opposite side. He scratch built the foundation and docks. He fully detailed the interior and included lighting.

Jay Ehler made his ice house into a fuel and oil supply and appended it to a marine supplies building he had previously constructed. His presentation included a comprehensive back story

on how it had started as a bait shop after World War I and had grown over the years.

Dave Kotsonis chose to widen his building by twelve feet with matching scribed siding and added another set of double doors on the second floor.

Jack Lutz displayed his ice house as part of his in-process micro brewery. Jack says the ice house will become the shipping room for the brewery. The main room of the brewery will include a removable roof to show the completely detailed brewing equipment inside.

As for my project, I measured the height of the building and found it could be two stories. I reasoned the artist could do sculpting on the first floor and painting on the second.

I decided that I wanted pitched roofs rather than flat shed roofs on both parts of the building. I scribed the centerline on the back of the one story piece. From where is intersected the roof edge I duplicated the slope on the other half of the piece and cut off the excess wood. I used that piece as a template and scribed and cut matching pitched roof lines on the two pieces that would make up the gable ends of the two story section. From 1/16" basswood, I made a floor for the main level. I had enough scribed wall pieces to fabricate the second floor.

I wanted two windows on the gable end of the one story part of the building, so that necessitated moving the entryway. I decided to put it on the front of the building next to the loading doors. When I test fit the doorway, I realized I would need a higher foundation than what came with the kit. The instructions called for painting the parts before assembly. One of the things I like to do with my structures



The ice house is the addition on the left of Jack Lutz's brewery project.

Dave Kotsonis enlarged his ice house kit.





Rich Breton's kitbash became a general store.

to give them individuality is to use paints other than the usual model railroad colors. For the trim I chose Tamiya™ Deep Green, and for the walls, Tamiya™ Dark Sea Gray. I painted the first floor interior walls and both floors with some Polly Scale™ Railroad Tie Brown. After the second floor was dry, I buffed it with a soft cloth to give it a bit of sheen as if it had been varnished. The second floor interior walls were painted Tamiya™ Flat White.

I used Tichy double hung windows for my building. The pre-cut Tichy window pieces were glued in place with Elmer's® Carpenter's Glue. I assembled the walls following the kit instructions as much as possible. I used the supplied 1/4 inch square pieces to reinforce the corners. For the two-story part of the building I cut the corner braces at the proper height to support the second story floor. Because of all the windows, I intended to have at least some interior details, so I installed the doors in the open position.

I made a chimney from Evergreen .250" square tubing, painted it with Tamiya™ Hull Red, simulated a wood-burning stove from pieces in my parts bin, and glued them to the first floor. I glued a matching square piece, also painted hull red, on the second floor.

To make a sign with white lettering, I used Microsoft® Word and created a text box. I select the fill color first (in this case, black) and then I used white for my text color. I printed the sign and carefully sanded the back of the paper with 300 grit sandpaper until the text box began to show through. I cut out the sign and glued it in place, carefully working it into the grooves in the siding to make it look like it was painted on.

With the building on its foundation, I test fit the entryway. The door sill was high enough that I cut two steps off a Central Valley stairway for the entrance.

The card stock supplied in the kit was enough for my modified roofs. Since basically all I did was fold the pieces in different places, I didn't increase the size by changing to peaked roof parts. I chose Bar Mills Bark Brown Shingles for my roof. These were easy to install with white glue.

I placed a Preiser™ artist, easel, and model into the second floor room. To display the finished building, I temporarily mounted it on a piece of Masonite®, added various types of ground covers and a Jordan Model T flatbed truck.

I found this to be an interesting and enjoyable project. Wood and carpenter's glue actually seemed more forgiving to work with than styrene and solvent-based cement. I also noticed that wood sucks up more paint than styrene, but is also easier to add weathering and other effects.

Overall, the level of detail and inspiration everyone put into their kits was impressive. We all had fun thinking "outside the box," and enjoyed the opportunity to share the results of our efforts with other members of the Division.



Miller Engineering

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACCURACY!

By SCOTT DUNLAP

If my knowledge of motion pictures was based only on what I've seen on model railroads, I might conclude that *Gone with the Wind* was the only movie ever made.

Allow me to explain. I've seen more than 750 layouts in my life (I actually keep a list). On some of those layouts, there are model movie theaters or drive-ins, and on a lot of these, *Gone with the Wind* is what's playing! The number of other titles I have seen is limited and, more often than not, inappropriate for the time period being modeled.

Movies have specific release dates. They come out, they play for while, they go away. Occasionally some – usually the better ones – are re-released to play in theaters again. This was especially true before cable TV and home video.

Gone with the Wind premiered in Atlanta in December, 1939. New York and Los Angeles premieres followed shortly thereafter. It was re-released in the United States in 1942, 1947, 1954, 1961,

to such things as automobiles and trucks, buildings, signage and, of course, locomotives and rolling stock. All of these things provide clues to what time period is being recreated. If your layout's time period is the fall of 1974, for example, a theater playing *Gone with the Wind* could be correct. But, let's face it, would you or anybody else see *Gone with the Wind* and think 1974?

With that in mind, just go to the Internet and type in "List of years in film." Then choose movies that were released between April 1



Woodland Scenics

and July 31 because most layouts seem to be set during the late spring or summer.

I looked for movies people would recognize, or those which had stars that people know. I'm sure most people wouldn't know *Why Girls Love Sailors* (1927), but there's a pretty good chance that they've heard of Laurel and Hardy.

And, while you're on the Internet, you can also type in a movie title and click on images. There you will find all kinds of movie artwork you use on your theater models.



Miller Engineering

1967, 1974, 1989, and 1998, and I'm pretty sure I've seen it advertised recently. It's got to be the most re-released movie in history. But, as impressive as that is, even *Gone with the Wind* doesn't play all of the time.

In order to accurately depict a specific era, modelers pay special attention



Scott Dunlap



HUB DIVISION AT THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

By **JERRY GROCHOW**

From the March 2020 *HUB Headlight*

For a second year in a row, the HUB Division has developed and operated a holiday exhibit of model trains at the Boston Museum of Science. Museum billboards along several highways displayed a



Model of the museum, complete with a scale rendition of the Green Line Lechmere Viaduct.

Jeff Gerow

locomotive with “All Aboard! Trains at Science Park” in letters about 10-feet high. That was us!

Our exhibit supplemented the permanent exhibits that the museum has on locomotives (only a few), the train-themed movies (*Polar Express* and *Thomas the Tank Engine* in 4D, and *Rocky Mountain Express* in IMAX) and this year’s traveling exhibit of *Thomas the Tank Engine* displays and activities. While all got a lot of interest, clearly the HUB Division displays were a major draw, even getting us an almost four-minute slot on Boston’s WCVB-TV Chronicle program. The HUB got a shout-out, Peter Higgins got interviewed, and Dana Andrus, Jeff Gerow, and John Russo got cameos.

Under the outstanding leadership of HUB Division VP David ‘Shack’ Haralambou, the HUB-designed exhibit included G, O, and HO-scale train layouts. These lay-

outs ran continuously (well almost, and with occasional help!) every hour the museum was open from the week before Thanksgiving until a week into the new year.

BIG ATTRACTION

The Museum of Science is Boston’s most visited museum with almost 200,000 people of all ages visiting during the seven weeks of our exhibit. Based upon the crowds, and comments of museum staff, it is fair to say that almost every one of those visitors spent at least some time in our exhibit. New Year’s Day was one of the busiest. While this was designed as mostly a “do not touch – display only” exhibit, our members found a number of ways to involve the visitors and we expect to do even more next year. We also were reminded that signs like “DO NOT SIT” and “DO NOT LEAN” don’t mean much if you can’t read or your “grownup” isn’t watching!

MOVING FORWARD

In 2018, we had a large space with a single display “mountain” containing three tiers – G-scale on the bottom (eye level for

the 5-year-old set), O-scale in the middle (adult eye level), and HO-scale at the top (unfortunately, not even a basketball player could see all the details at that level). That space was under construction this year, so this forced us to separate the display into several smaller exhibits. As it turned out, the exhibit was very well received.

The MOS provided entrance and backdrops for all of the areas and had a well-known professional modeler provide an HO-scale version of the museum itself, complete with an elevated railway outside. We added Green Line trolley cars that ran back and forth under computer control (programmed by Jeff Gerow). This proved to be our most trouble-prone display as the trolley cars didn't seem to be designed for such heavy-duty service (just like the real thing!).

FREELANCED BOSTON

We also developed an HO-scale semi-freelanced part of Boston, complete with the Prudential Center (not to scale), Fenway Park, a CITGO sign, and other sites. This exhibit ran a commuter rail train (using DCC) in a figure eight that had only the occasional derails. Lots of detailed buildings and other scenery made this a very impressive setup.

O-scale was at a secondary entrance to the exhibit area consisting of a snowy mountain display with two DC-controlled trains circling on two levels. The upper level usually ran a steam freight while the lower level typically had a Lionel Super Chief passenger train, complete with a wireless controller for realistic conductor and station announcements.

During lighter traffic times, we were able to let some of the kids (ages 6 to 86!) operate the wireless throttle and have a great time running the train and stopping at the station. Scenery included a station, a number of buildings, lots of trees, and many people and animals. Add to this a looping replay of a train-mounted video camera going 'round the exhibit and there was a lot to look at.

G-scale was represented with another mountainous scene on two levels. The upper level had a stationary steam loco of the *Polar Express* that made typical sounds. The main level had a trolley track disappearing into the mountain and bounded by portals on each end. Again thanks to Jeff, the trolley made a realistic stop in the middle of its back-and-forth route to pick up passengers accompanied by appropriate sounds.

VOLUNTEER TABLE

Finally, we had a small table where our volunteers occasionally repaired some of the trains (when they weren't out removing scenery 'snowballs' that some of the older kids liked to throw on the tracks). We usually had a G-scale NW2 displayed on rollers. We could use it to discuss model railroad operations or technology with those who were interested. It let others learn whistle signals, simply push a button to blow its horn (which seemed to be a favorite activity for almost



Stan Ames

An overall view of exhibit, *above*. The two level O-scale layout is to the left. The museum model (also shown on page 10) is in background, while HO scale layouts are in the "building" beyond.

The Boston scene is in photo *below*. You

know it's Boston by the "Go Pats" in the lighted Prudential Tower windows! Fenway Park is at right corner.

And, what goes up, must come down. 'Shack' Haralambou and Gerry Covino deconstruct the O-scale layout, *below right*.



Two photos: Jeff Gerow

every age group), or rev up the throttle. Our volunteers also spent a fair amount of time track and wheel cleaning.

The original effort was proposed by the Museum of Science. Division VP Shack ably negotiated a three-year contract for HUB to develop and provide volunteers to keep the exhibit operational and answer questions from visitors. When the exhibit period concluded, HUB Division volunteers packed 120 buildings, more than 800 trees, innumerable people and animals, and various other train paraphernalia into crates and loaded our trailer to the brim!

We all owe a special thanks to Shack for design and supervision of construction, Stan Ames for leading operations and overseeing the G-scale display as crew chief, Jeff Gerow as HO-scale and electronics crew chief, Peter Watson as O-scale crew chief and train-tech for keeping our HO locomotives in operation. Thanks also to Dana Andrus for coordinating volunteer scheduling, Dick Ball who stores and prepares the parts of the layout and then packs and drives the trailer, Gerry Covino for overall coordination, and to all of the 30 HUB members who volunteered their time to staff the display.

Building an Underpass

By **JEFF HANKE**

In model railroading, there are many examples of highways being elevated over tracks. Crossings at grade are also common in many rural areas. However, fewer examples exist of a highway being routed below the tracks, creating a road underpass.



These are generally more costly because the supporting structure needs to handle significantly heavier train traffic than lighter weight

auto-mobiles. These types of crossings also present challenges to the model railroader, since sub-roadbed, bench work and wiring exist below track level on our layouts.

ABOUT THE PROTOTYPE

I am currently working on the Martinsburg, WV, section of my Chessie System East End layout. The yard there has not one, but two highway underpasses. The two crossings are similar, but different enough to highlight how I built both in this column and the next.

The East Burke Street underpass was the first one I built. It is a small double lane road that dips to go under the tracks.

The ceiling of the underpass is a simple beam with smooth cement. Both walls of the underpass are rough cut stone blocks. On one side of the street is a sidewalk with steel handrail. Also making this underpass interesting is the crossing at grade of the Frog Hollow Industrial Track right before the street dips below the mainline.

LOCATING EAST BURKE STREET

To begin, I put in all of the main track and switch machines before determining the exact location of the underpass. This allowed me to avoid having any bench work or a Tortoise™ switch machine in the middle of the underpass.

I thought it was also important that the East Burke Street underpass be located as close to the prototypical location relative to the Fruit Exchange business as possible. Based upon my layout limitations, there is no room

to model the exit of this underpass near the backdrop. The modeled underpass "dead ends" under the tracks in the shadows.

MODELING THE STREET

This underpass is fairly simple, but it starts with removing all of the foam where the road will go. I dug out the foam under the tracks, leaving a thickness of about 1/2" to support the main tracks. I didn't want this



area to be weak, so I probably made it a little too thick. However, the beam "bridge" part of the overpass hides the extra thickness well.

I made the opening 4 1/2" wide to accommodate two lanes of traffic and a 3/4" wide sidewalk. The stone wall takes up a quarter inch and there is a half inch strip of curb, grass, gravel and stone wall to the right of the road. I painted the ceiling of the underpass with flat black acrylic paint.

The next step was critical. I determined how much height was needed between the

ceiling of the underpass and the street by using a semi-truck as a "gauge." My underpass is 2 1/4" high. This then determined the slope of the road from the Frog Hollow Industrial Track located on the front layout edge to the underpass. Since the Frog Hollow Industrial Track runs at a lower elevation in this area, my street had to descend one more inch from that grade crossing in a run of 12". This created a believable slope for the road.

I made the bottom of the road in two steps. First, I glued and screwed a thin sheet of quarter inch Masonite® hardboard as the extreme bottom of the road. The back of the sheet was painted flat black, to hide the back of the tunnel.

I then lined both walls of the underpass with flexible cut stone blocks and painted them flat black dry-brushed with lighter and lighter shades of gray to give depth. With the walls in, I glued the overhead "bridge."

A styrene 'I' beam painted in rusty shades and a thin sheet of styrene painted to look like concrete finished the "bridge" facade. Today, that beam would be painted bright yellow, but I doubt the highway department was as safety conscious in the 80's!

The slope of the road started with some scrap foam and was shaped into a gentle downward grade. I then coated the road area with lightweight joint compound. After it dried, I sanded it with 400 grit sand paper and painted with acrylic washes and weathering pastels. I wanted the road to look used, so I used light shades of gray, not black.

The toughest portion of this project was the sidewalk. I made it out of two pieces of styrene, glued at a 90 degree angle. I shaped the vertical piece to fit the road's shape, leaving the horizontal part a more gentle slope like the prototype. I

carved the styrene with a panel line scribe to make the expansion lines, some cracks, and the curb joint lines. I painted it with concrete colored acrylics and weathered it with a wash and some weathering pastels. As with the prototype, I added a section of iron railing fence.

Next column I'll show how I built the more complex North Queen Street underpass.

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

NEW MEMBERS

Compiled By **MARK HARLOW**
NER Office Manager

As of 3/1/20
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Gamm family
Jeff Heisner

MASSACHUSETTS
Joseph Ferlazzo
Missimo Ferlazzo
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RHODE ISLAND
Raymond Cheney
Jason Fitzpatrick
Joan Harlow
VERMONT
Russell Pease

Berkshire Junction

By **MIKE TYLICK MMR**
Contributing Editor

I was fortunate enough to meet the late Jimmy Smith of Adams, MA, a number of years ago. A fascinating person, he was an accomplished model railroader and even more of an inveterate tinkerer whose basement was filled with all sorts of neat electronic and mechanical gadgets. They took up more room than even his large layout. It was Jimmy who inspired the founding of *Berkshire Junction*. In



1998, when Kathy and Leon Serre were laid off from their respective longtime jobs as a Tupperware® manager and a tool maker, it was Jimmy who suggested, "Why not start a business? I will teach you." So the Serres started learning electronics from Jimmy and started building the circuits.

Money was tight so they worked in their basement etching their own circuit boards and hand drilling all of the holes. Their first show in May, 1998, was a disaster. They drove more than three hours to sell about 18 dollars worth of product. They spent more for gas than they made; fortunately they brought sandwiches and saved the cost of buying lunch. A month later, they made their expenses at a "slow" show. The Serres travelled to every show they could within driving distance.

As things improved, they were able to afford manufactured boards, which made the work much easier and less time consuming. Weekdays were spent with Kathy "stuffing"

the boards and Leon soldering them. Weekends were spent at shows selling, and talking to customers about future products. They were surprised at how quickly word got out about what *Berkshire Junction* had to offer. The company is a true Mom and Pop business – all the work is done in one room of their house and they still hand assemble and solder all of their circuit boards.

EZ LINE

At their first show they met John Bock, who introduced them to the material that eventually became *EZ Line* – an elastic cord that will stretch 700% and will not dry out. *EZ Line* really took off! It was amazing just how many people never knew they needed telephone lines on their layouts! To their surprise *EZ Line* quickly expanded into the model airplane and model shipbuilding worlds. Several high end model companies recommend *EZ Line* for use with their kits. It is offered in six colors – black, rust, patina green, rope, French blue, and natural white in fine (.010") or heavy (.020"). It is now sold all over the world.

ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS

Berkshire Junction continues to manufacture and sell its electronic circuits for model railroads. The electronic products provide a wide variety of operational and scenic solutions for layouts.

It can be difficult to see from a distance which way a turnout is thrown, but the company's bi-polar LEDs make it easy. When turnout is in one position (i.e. main line) the LED is green. It changes to red when the turnout position is changed. The LED circuit also works in conjunction with slow motion switch machines and is available with a mounting clip for a panel mount, or with a right angle mount to simulate a layout dwarf signal.

Occupancy detectors from the company



indicate when a hidden track is occupied.

The infrared beam works well in all lighting conditions and does not require modifications to the track or to existing wiring. Their activation circuits (train detectors) will operate signals or flashing grade crossing warning lights. The infrared detection circuitry makes it easy to operate these units over multiple tracks.

Berkshire Junction also sells a 1.5 volt power adapter to make it easy to power 1.5 volt light bulbs often used in structure lighting.

Several animation products are offered; my favorites being the operating traffic lights and flashing crossbuck sets that are available in many scales. Any layout can use the flickering arc welder or flickering campfire sets, as well.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Quite an array of electronic accessories that have sold well for more than 20 years will likely continue to be in demand. Over the years, *Berkshire Junction* has grown into a prosperous business that could comfortably support its owners. But the time has come to semi-retire.

Kathy and Leon have loved to travel to train shows around the country, but recently have been taking more relaxing vacation trips. They say they hope to spend more time with their children and grandchildren. There's also a home layout which has been recently enlarged and that too is on their agenda. So, they are looking to sell the electronics part of their business, scaling *Berkshire Junction* back to just offering *EZ Line*. They placed information on the *Berkshire Junction* Website for anyone interested.



Leon Serre at work assembling electronic circuits.

Berkshire Junction

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