

NER COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION

No. 278

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2020

Stay-at-Home issue:

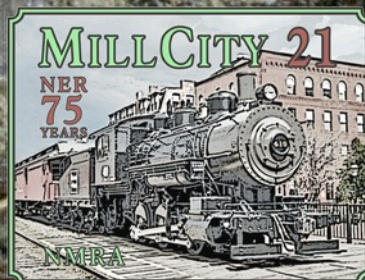
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COVER PHOTO

The engineer's hand is on the brake handle as an inbound local drifts out of Bexley Tunnel toward the depot. Businesses along Railroad Avenue above are quiet as the summer evening grows dark on James Van Bokkelen's Boston & Maine Eastern Division. The HO layout will be a part of the Mill City NER convention, and is featured in this *NER Coupler* beginning on page 5.

Photo: James Van Bokkelen

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FROM THE EDITOR . . . By JEFF PASTON

Who would have imagined in a hundred years what has happened in the world these past few months? Actually – and unfortunately – it is indeed a hundred years since the last time the world experienced such a pandemic!

For our model railroading community, the resulting lockdowns presented opportunities in the face of uncertainty, and even tragedy. So, most of us hunkered down and made the best of a bad situation.

Many of us have gone back to work on long-delayed modeling projects. (My N scale coffee table was rebuilt 35 years ago, and I'm still trying to put the layout back together!) I also worked on archiving historic photos and discovered that I could "travel" via the Internet. The story is on Page 14.

With in-person meets, meetings, and conventions cancelled, our NMRA divisions and National folks stepped up to fill a void. NMRA Marketing Consultant Christina Zambri shares the huge effort underway to provide an international

virtual convention and clinics with NMRA-X. She'll tell you more on Page 4.

My own division (CNY) has an Internet "Homebound" blog and online virtual meeting. Garden State has been having Internet-based meetings and clinics, as has HUB Division. Other divisions are stepping up with virtual events, as well.

As we go to press, many areas are slowly reopening, but with stringent restrictions. That still leaves the *Mill City* NER convention up in the air. And, even if we do have it, the question remains how many will attend with the COVID 19 virus still out there. And, restrictions on gatherings may dampen means to hold the banquet, have large clinics, and conduct tours.

The cliché, "Time will tell," sums it up. In the meantime, please stay safe and follow the guidance of health experts – social distance, wear face masks, and wash hands often. We'll get through this together and be back behind the throttles soon.



OPEN DOEHR By JOHN DOEHRING NER President

Staying Home... Safe... and Busy

Over the last three months, our world has been rocked by the uninvited Coronavirus guest. Some in the train tribe have been infected, others had loved ones or friends affected, and nearly all of us have been shifted, disrupted, and turned otherwise downside-up. Anxiety, uncertainty, change. We're all adjusting to a new (ab)normal.

In my professional work, I've noticed two different experiences. Some have been busier than ever: doctors and nurses of course, and police and firefighters, but also food processors and grocery clerks, warehouse workers, and commercial drivers, and a myriad of others spending long days on an endless schedule of Zoom calls. Many of these folks have been crucial to holding some semblance of normalcy and safety in our lives, and we owe them a great deal for their work.

Others have had more free time. Some are 'hite space' workers – artistic and creative types, business developers and salespeople of many stripes, and thousands and thousands of employees and firm owners whose businesses have been closed, collapsed, or slowed to a crawl in this period. And of course there are many of you who are retired.

And perhaps there are some who, like me, toggle back and forth between camps – sometimes with "I've got way too much to do" and sometimes "don't know what to do" mode.

Whatever your situation (and competing life demands), it is – I think – worth asking what given the current situation could (and should) I be doing with my hobby time. And if it's not (at least for a while) going to be train shows, division meets, regional conventions, or operating sessions – then what will it be?

Here are three areas I'm focusing on now:

1) *New paths for content:* my business has shifted substantively to online delivery (a good thing) and so has our hobby. We now have NMRA-X clinics (from around the world) on Facebook Live; division meets on freeconferencecall.com; virtual operating sessions, layout tours, and clinics on Zoom – and more and more connections popping


up each day. Honestly, I think some of these subjects may be better delivered online than in-person. There is a lot to see now, and much of it is being recorded and archived on YouTube. Jump in, and learn something new in a new way!

2) *New paths for connection:* Even before stay-at-home, I'd been thinking a lot about making more local connections with NMRA members I don't know well – in small pods or squads of 10 or so. My sense is that this personal connection could be quite valuable for many members. To be fair, I haven't really gotten there yet. It's still on my work plan. Maybe now, I'll start with a Zoom call with a handful of local modelers just interested in connecting and talking a little shop.

3) *Sand. Paint. Glue:* I've cleared off our formal dining room table (not popular with the boss) and have been cranking out new, finished Walther's kits every couple of days. I'm working today on two N scale modules to satisfy my *Golden Spike* requirements. Soon I'll move to the garage, where a new module project – this one focused on the *Civil and Electrical Engineer* certificates – awaits construction. In this moment, I'm reminded again to 'just do it' – build something that isn't perfect, but is done.

This strange time will at some point end, though the road ahead is not at all clear. We all have much to do – and a lot to consider. Model railroading probably isn't the most important thing on our list – though mental health is (or should be). Perhaps a bit of tinkering on the railroad will help some with that. And while it's too easy to focus on the things we can't do right now, there is plenty that we can do – alone and with others. If only we can think a little differently, try something new, make a new kind of connection, and simply get on with it.

When this piece of the story is done, and you and I are able to leave the current stage – we'll each have a chance to exit through one of two doors. One of those will be labeled "glad I did" ... and the other "wish I had." Which door will you choose?

Stay safe, find peace, and High Green! 



Mill City 2020

NER Convention Postponed to 2021

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team planning and running the next NER convention has made the difficult decision to postpone *Mill City 2020*. There has been a great deal of work put into this convention and the team is disappointed we will not be able to host you live in October.

At this time, we plan to host the *Mill City* convention in person a year from now on **October 8-11, 2021**. The Mill City planning team has finalized plans with the hotel to move the convention out one year. It was clear we would not have the ability to safely host the type of event we all have come to expect had we tried to have the convention with the restrictions brought on by the COVID 19 pandemic.

The team has confirmed the activities originally planned for the 2020 convention will be available in 2021. This is subject to change as we are over a year out, but with the exception of a few changes to the operating sessions and layout open houses, the tours and clinics should continue as originally planned. The new Website is <millcity21.org>.

If you have already registered for *Mill City 2020*, then you have several options for either getting a refund, or keeping your registration for *Mill City 21* active. Please follow the instructions in an email you received from the registrar and indicate how you'll proceed.

Option 1 - You are entitled to a full and complete refund. Funds will be returned based on your method of payment. Please allow up to six weeks for processing.

Option 2 - You can maintain your current registration, keep your current registration number and all activities for which you have registered, and receive a \$10 credit. The credit will be based on your original payment method. Please allow up to six weeks for processing.

Option 3 - You can maintain your current registration, keep your current registration number and all activities for which you have registered, and get a coupon for \$20 off the registration fee for the 2022 Convention in Farmington, CT.

We want to thank the staff of the Westford Regency for helping us with the replanning of our event. They have agreed to keep the room rates the same for our event in 2021. Please look for an announcement in the fall when the new room block will be available for reservations.

In the tradition of many events these days, we plan on taking our 2020 Convention *online*. Details are being worked out and you will get updates via email in the near future.

We are planning to host clinic sessions, sponsor layout tours, and even run contests. We are planning a virtual banquet celebration to showcase the accomplishments of NER members for the AP program and the model and photo contests.

We hope that you will join us online in 2020, and plan to see us in 2021 as we come together and celebrate another year in modeling. - Dave Insley

NER COUPLER Deadline
AUGUST 21 - Oct.-Dec. issue

TIMETABLE

Compiled by JACK LUTZ

<alton_house@yahoo.com>

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

July 5-11: Lionel Operating Train Society National Convention; Dayton, OH **CANCELLED** <www.lots-trains.org>

July 12-18: NMRA Nat'l Convention: Gateway 2020 St. Louis, MO **CANCELLED** <gateway2020.org>

July 16-18: O Scale National Convention SONC 2020; St. Louis, MO **CANCELLED** <sonc2020.com/WP/>

Sept 2-5: 40th Narrow Gauge Convention Saint Charles, MO **CANCELLED** <40nngc.com/>

Oct 9-12: NER Convention - Mill City 2020 Lowell, MA **CANCELLED** <www.millcity2020.org>

SHOWS

Aug 8-9: Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show; Edison, NJ <trainshow.com/edison08>

Aug 16: Concord Model Railroad Club Show; Everett Arena, Concord, NH <trainweb.org/cmrc>

Sept 13: NETCA Southern Chapter Train Show; Varnum Armory, E. Greenwich, RI <snechapter.org>

Sept 20: 20th Annual Train Show; Taunton, MA; <oldcolonymodelrailroad.tripod.com/train-show.html>

Sept 26: Phillips Rail Fest; Phillips, ME <phillipsrailfest.weebly.com>

Oct 3: So. New England Model RR Club Fall Show; Gardner, MA <www.snemrr.org>

Oct 10: First Annual Kora Shriners Model Train Show; Lewiston, ME

Oct 17: Maine 3Railers Annual Model Railroad Show Augusta, ME

Oct 17-18: Railfair 2020; Boxborough, MA <nvrra.com/railfair-19>

Oct 24-25: Fall Model Railroad Show & Open House; Hingham, MA <ssmrc.org>

Oct 31: The Great Northern New England Train Show; Dover, NH <netca.org/>

MEETS

July 25: Seacoast Division NMRA 2020 Summer Event; Auburn, ME **CANCELLED** <seacoastnmra.org>

Sept 26-27: Maine Model Railroad Tour; <mainemodellrrtour.com/>



Why so many people hoarded toilet paper is one of the mysteries of the COVID 19 lockdown. It prompted CNY Division member Jim Leach to offer help in what he titles, "G Scale to the Rescue!"

NEW MEMBERS Compiled By MARK HARLOW NER Office Manager					
As of 6/1/20					
CONNECTICUT					
Rick Abramson	Stephen Sopelak				
William Bacon	MASSACHUSETTS				
Brooks Bentz	Jason Baughman Sr.				
Jim Sinkowski	John Conant				
	Joseph Corn				
	Stephen Ferris				
	Dudley Foster				
	Rick J. Freni Jr.				
	Ricky Freni Sr.				
	James Levine				
	Eric Miceli				
	Savery Moore				
	Robert E. Moores Jr.				
	Mike Shipp				
	Ron Stupski				
	William Suarez				
	Greg Thompson				
	Robby Waxman				
	MAINE				
	David Aspinall				
	Charles Hastings				
	NEW HAMPSHIRE				
	James Bronson				
	Joseph Collins				
	Tim Moore				
	David Taylor				
	NEW YORK				
	Robert Arcus				
	William Austin				
	Douglas Barberio				
	Joseph Boyle				
	Donald Brumbaugh				
	John M. Cameroto				
	Anothony Cassone				
	Rick Compton				
	Christopher Costello				
	Matthew Dudek				
	John Gillespie				
	Alex Hermann				
	Tom McCullough				
	Joseph E. Murrer				
	Peter W. Peters				
	Erik Pioselli				
	Karl Schwarzenegger				
	Edward J. Welch III				
	Michael Whitman				
	RHODE ISLAND				
	Paul Crabb				
	VERMONT				
	Kenneth Horne				

Meeting Needs Through Virtual Programs

An nmra® Challenge Met

By CHRISTINA ZAMBRI
NMRA Marketing Consultant

It has been a challenging time for the NMRA due to the lockdowns that have been in place in most states provinces since March. The Gateway 2020 National Convention in St. Louis was cancelled. Event rescheduling in the United Kingdom has forced the cancellation of the 2022 Birmingham convention. Many regional conventions for 2020 have been either cancelled or rescheduled, along with many train shows. Divisions have moved from face-to-face meetings to virtual ones. Zoom, Skype, Facebook Live and other virtual platforms have become the norm for many regions and divisions.

Given the current restrictions, the NMRA has chosen to step up its technology game to bring benefits to its members.

A perfect example of this is the creation of the NMRAx, managed by Gordy Robinson and a team of members from around the world. The NMRAx started off with a bang by live-streaming clinics and layout tours for 24 hours straight. This has been followed by four more 12-hour sessions in May and June, as well as two live "Ask the MMR" events.

The icing on the cake will be the Gateway-X Convention, which will run from 8 AM EDT to 11 PM EDT during the week of July 12-18. The Gateway-X is designed to bring some of the same great benefits of a national convention to members' homes. There will be clinics, tours, vendor specials and even a celebration/contest "room." All NMRAx productions are viewable on the NMRA Facebook page, in the NMRA Facebook group and on the NMRA YouTube channel.

Participants can ask questions in real-time and have them answered after each session. At the moment, these events are public, but will eventually switch to member-only. If anyone would like to contribute their knowledge or talent, please contact Gordy Robinson at <gordonrobinson18@hotmail.com>.

That leads into the rise in the use of technology at region and division levels. Virtual meetings, clinics, and even operating sessions have been incorporated into the activities of quite a few regions and divisions with great success. Members that normally could not attend live events due to any number of reasons such as physical limitations

or geographic challenges are now enjoying and participating in local events and reaping the benefits of membership in a way they previously could not. This has led to a boost in retention and a re-ignition of the joys of the hobby and the NMRA.

The same can be said for the NMRAx, which has attracted new members and former members! Regions and divisions may want to consider publicizing virtual events to attract new members, as well.

People all over the world are becoming more engaged in model railroading due to the lock downs, and the NMRA can provide just the tools and resources to foster that engagement. If any assistance is

needed to set up quality streaming experiences, Gordy Robinson is also offering to work with regions and divisions to help them take advantage of this unique time. Hopefully, all levels of the NMRA will continue to offer live-streamed events even after face-to-face meetings and shows begin again.

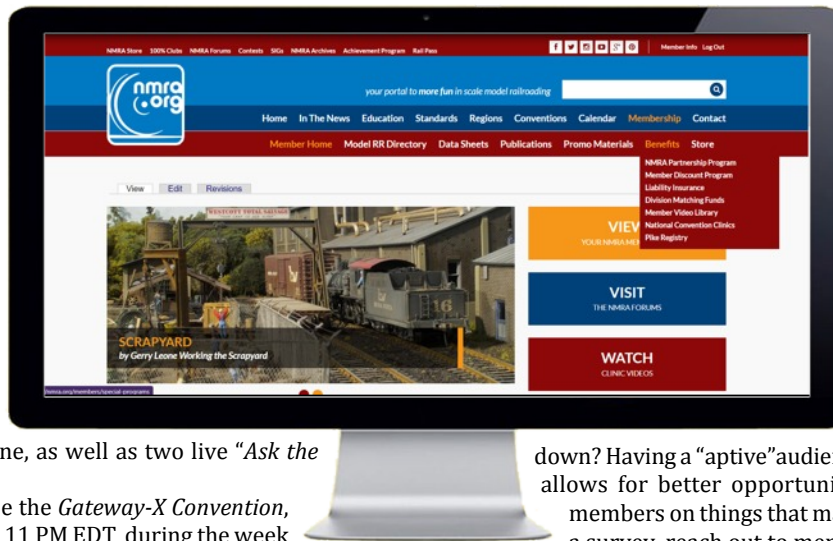
So, what else can be done during the lock

down? Having a "active" audience, for lack of a better term, allows for better opportunities to communicate with members on things that matter most to them. Conduct a survey, reach out to members and see how they are

doing, schedule a video call, ask what more both National and the local levels could be doing to improve the NMRA, etc. It also enables attempting new activities, such as starting to work on the *Achievement Program* or continuing to work towards becoming a *Master Model Railroader®*. Thought about writing an article for the NMRA Magazine? Go for it! Interested in remote operating? Now is a good time to find like-minded members and give it a try! Need to brush up on particular skills or techniques or learn something completely new? Reach out to the appropriate department at National or seek out fellow members who excel at those aspects of modeling. One way to find someone with similar interests is to check out the Model Railroad Directory on the NMRA Website. While you are on the Website, perhaps you can catch up on previous publications like the *eBulletin* or *Turntable*, or read up on newer standards. Take a peek at the *Member Benefits* section, including the *Partnership Program* – a great way to save money while you are working on your layouts!

Never had a chance to view the clinics filmed at previous national conventions? Now is a great time to do so! And, don't forget about the other terrific videos available in the *Video Library*. There is a ton to discover on the Website. Remember that you must log in to the Website to access these tools and benefits!

The most important takeaway of this article is to take advantage of the current situation by strengthening and improving your modeling, your relationships, and the NER and its divisions. National is trying to help members do just that, as are the leaders of the NER and its divisions.



Here is a sample program you missed. But, you can check the NMRA Website or Facebook page for similar upcoming offerings.

nmra
virtual model railroading convention

Saturday May 30, 2020
6am-6pm ET

Streamed live at
www.facebook.com/nmra.org

ET	Clinician	Location	Title
6 AM	Mike Mackey, MMR	TX, USA	Scenery with Florist Foam
7 AM	Gerry Hopkins, MMR	AUS	More Layouts from Down Under
8 AM	Lloyd Henchey	ON, CAN	Layout Tour: MHO Junction
9 AM	Jerry Britton	PA, USA	Moving the Presidents by Rail
10 AM	Dwight Sturtevant	MA, USA	Layout Tour: New Middletown and Stonypoint RR
11 AM	Duane Richardson, MMR	TX, USA	If it ain't dirty it ain't done!
12 PM	Scott Perry	SC, USA	Scratch building Structures
1 PM	Randall Hammill	CT, USA	New Haven Steam: A Detail Study for Modelers
2 PM	Pete Steinmetz	CA, USA	Simple, Effective Weathering Techniques
3 PM	John Bate	MB, CAN	A Gentle Introduction to Arduino Programming
4 PM	Jim Sacco	PA, USA	Easy City Streets Using Sintra (and Tips on Modeling Streets)
5 PM	Clark Kooning, MMR	ON, CAN	Modeling Rocks on your layout



A B&M CAB RIDE

Join James Van Bokkelen on GP7 1561 as it moves freight on his HO Boston & Maine Eastern Division

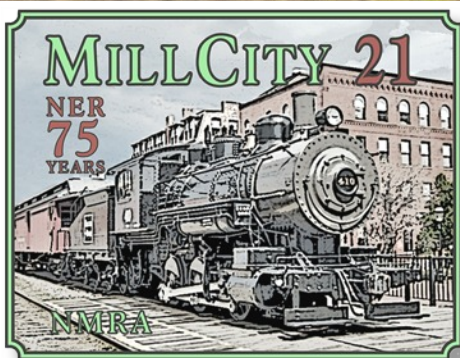


Photo 1-above: Boston Freight is stopped at Rowley, MA, station to pick up a Form 31 train order.

Photo 2-below: Our freight leaves Newburyport West, crossing the Little River. Gilbert Rice's farm is in the background.



HUB Division President James Van Bokkelen is faithfully recreating the North Shore communities in Massachusetts traversed by the Boston & Maine's Eastern Division in the early 1950s. James has invited us along as he rides the cab of a GP7 making pickups and drop offs along the line. James' large layout (14.5' x 39') will be open for tours and operations during the Mill City 21 NER convention.

By JAMES VAN BOKKELEN
HUB Division President
Photos by the Author

The 'Portsmouth Freight' (eastbound) and the 'Boston Freight' (westbound) run over the *Eastern Route* daily except Sunday.

The *Portsmouth Freight* leaves the Somerville, MA, yards in the wee hours of the

morning, working its way up the Saugus Branch to West Lynn. Once on the main line, it goes direct to Bexley Yard to pick up eastbound cars brought from New Haven points by the "Casco" (time freight Cedar Hill to Portland via Providence, South Boston and the Eastern Route).

Leaving Bexley around dawn, it works all stations to Portsmouth, usually clearing up during the morning rush hour for breakfast at Newburyport West. To ensure that perishable loads get timely delivery, at most points it works only trailing point spurs. Cars for facing point spurs are left for its counterpart, the *Boston Freight*.

ARRIVING AT NEWBURYPORT

The Boston Freight departs Portsmouth after the morning rush and works westward. It usually meets the Portsmouth Freight at the long siding between Hampton and North Hampton. When it arrives in Newburyport, it's usually pretty short since most traffic to and from Portsmouth is routed via Rockingham Jct. and the Western Route main.

Today, I first saw it crossing Merrimack Street in Newburyport with GP7 #1561 and three tanks on the head pin, followed by a single covered hopper. I knew the tanks were empty because otherwise they wouldn't have been allowed next to the locomotive. They stopped with the buggy (caboose) just west of Washington Street and Joe the conductor walked over to the depot.

He hurried back, shouting directions to the crew.

"One to spot, then four Mystics and a South Boston on City Siding. Two pick ups. Tom, cross us over at Newburyport West and shove back to clear the freight house switch. Nothing

(Continued on page 6)

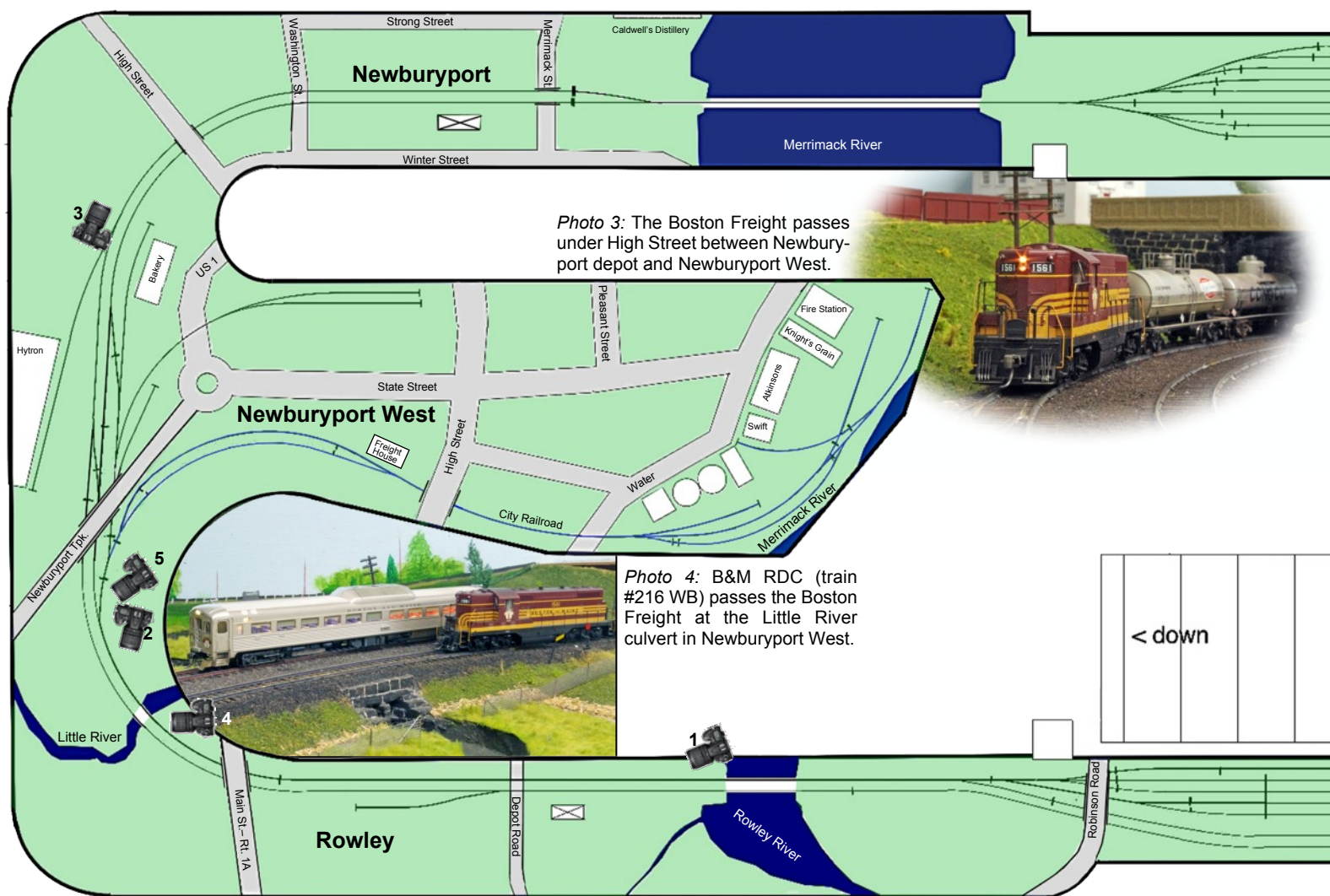


Photo 3: The Boston Freight passes under High Street between Newburyport depot and Newburyport West.

Photo 4: B&M RDC (train #216 WB) passes the Boston Freight at the Little River culvert in Newburyport West.

< down

Eastbound till #211 at 3:45. Ed, here's the list. You and Tom do the City work while I make sure the freight house is ready to switch."

As he boarded the buggy, Joe looked at me and said, "If you feel like making yourself useful, you can ride as far as West Lynn. For an early quit, we must clear #213 at Bexley."

I hopped up, Joe gave a highball, and off we went to the crossover. The brakemen hustled and a few minutes later our train was tied down beside Prost Bakery on Route 1.

ON BOARD #1561

First, we took an old CPR grain box from the City Siding and shoved it down the City

Railroad with Tom riding the car end. A brief stop to flag Water St. and we were among the waterfront industries. W.E. Atkinson had a partly unloaded hopper of coal, so it took a dozen moves to pull an NP empty from Knights and replace it with the CPR load.

Returning to Newburyport West, we set the NP on top of the other Mystics. The South Bostons had to be together on the head pin, so we shoved back and cut the South Boston under the High Street bridge.

When we returned to our train, Joe called, "The Frisco we want is third in on the right hand track. It's Caldwell's, so be gentle, put it on the

head pin and use train air. I'll flag Route 1."

We all got busy setting two reefers over to the left, pulling our load of rum, setting it against the other South Bostons and replacing the reefers.

PICKING UP THE LAST CARS

We pulled the South onto the eastbound main and shoved down the City to get the last South Boston. Then we coupled to the Mystics on the siding. While we were pumping up the air, #211 drifted through right on time, slowing for its Newburyport stop. Our orders gave us the eastbound between Newburyport and East Bexley for the next 90 minutes.



Photo 5: B&M P-2c Pacific (train #211 EB) meets the Boston Freight in the clear on the City Railroad track at Newburyport West.

East ->

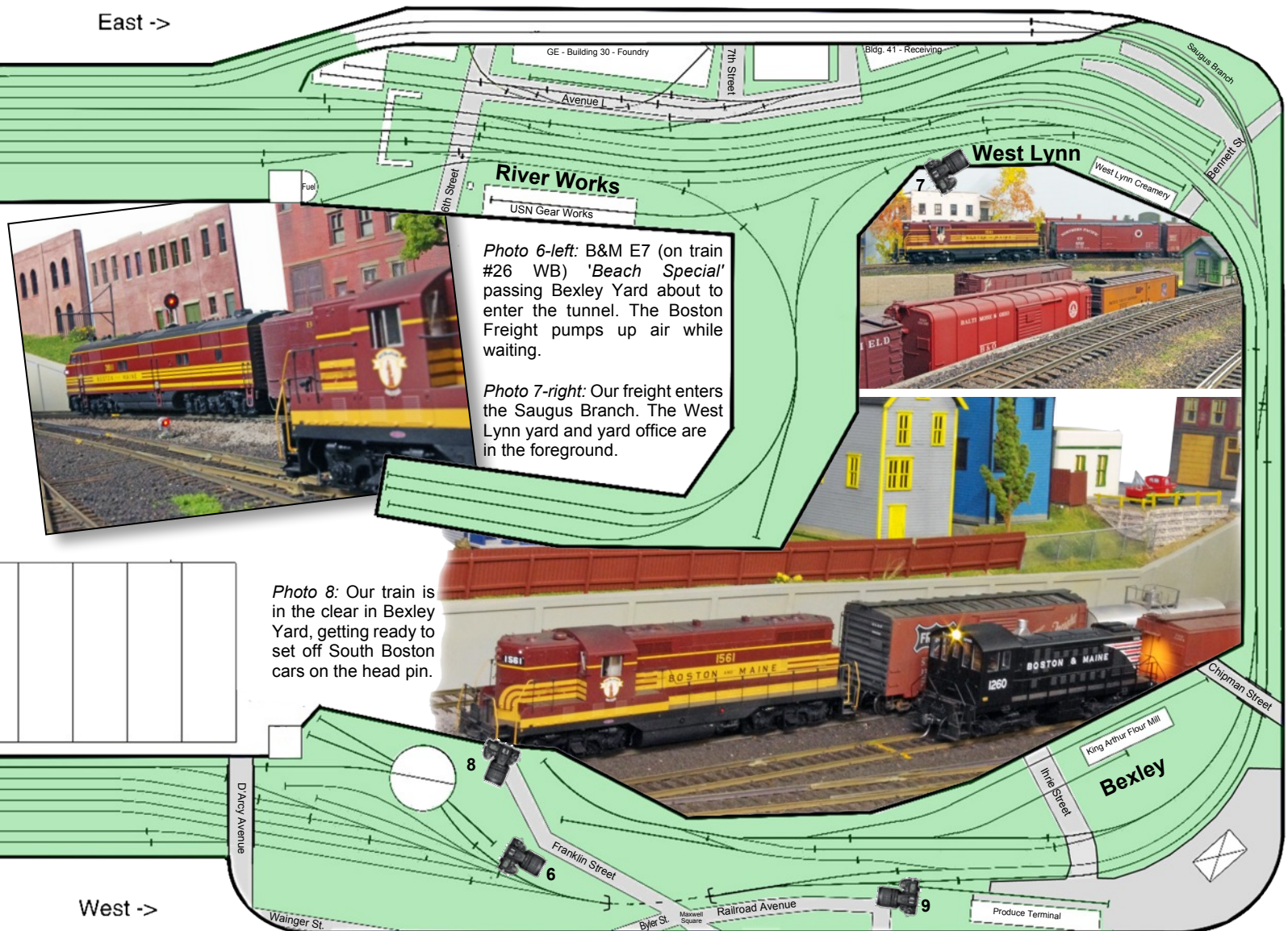


Photo 6-left: B&M E7 (on train #26 WB) 'Beach Special' passing Bexley Yard about to enter the tunnel. The Boston Freight pumps up air while waiting.

Photo 7-right: Our freight enters the Saugus Branch. The West Lynn yard and yard office are in the foreground.

Photo 8: Our train is in the clear in Bexley Yard, getting ready to set off South Boston cars on the head pin.

West ->

We pulled out, tied onto the last Mystic and the buggy, did the air test and headed west with 11 cars, pausing only for Ed to board after locking the City Railroad switch.

SETTING OUT "SOUTH BOSTONS"

The power switch at East Bexley was lined for the yard, so we pulled in without having to stop. We had time to set off the South Bostons after #220, but didn't finish the air test soon enough to beat #26. I got a photo of its E7 about to enter Bexley Tunnel.

Now down to five cars again, and no longer worried about damage to the rum load, the Boston Freight pulled west through the tunnel.

Passing the Bexley Depot, Tom called out a welcome 'Middle Green' on the home signal at Chipman St. The trip down the Saugus Branch would be quiet and the rush hour well past by the time it reached Mystic Junction in Somerville.



Photo 9: The Boston Freight enters double track west of Bexley Tunnel, right.



LET'S GO GET 'STONED!'

PREVIEWING MIKE TYLICK'S CONVENTION CLINIC

By **MIKE TYLICK, MMR**
Contributing Editor

Just about everyone my age thinks of model railroad pioneer John Allen as their railroad hobby "mentor," but first and foremost in my mind has always been Jack Work, a quiet but prolific model builder from Canada who built incredibly realistic models from mostly scrounged materials using simple tools. The models he built were something I could attempt at home – a teenager with limited resources and use of the kitchen table between meals.

The last Jack Work article I could find was published in the first *Mainline Modeler* magazine in 1980. He described a technique for making stone walls that, along with numerous manufacturers, I have used to this day for modeling stone walls in all sizes and scales.

I am planning to elaborate on Jack's methods during an extra length, extra fare, hands-on clinic scheduled for the *Mill City* NER convention. Here, I'll give you a taste of part of this clinic by making the individual stones.



A common building material from the early 20th century still seen in modernized versions is a cement block with a cast stone face, commonly used on service stations from that era. I remember a number of them from my childhood, all painted white with the Mobilgas Pegasus, and can still take you to a few of them. The blocks are cast from the same mold and give a repeating "wallpaper" effect that I found most interesting.

▷ *Upper right:* Here I needed only two stones – a rough faced one for the walls and a smooth surfaced corner stone. The mold in was made from brushed on latex material. Note diagonal corner to align the mold's "mother."

▷ My garage walls, *right*, were drawn with a CAD program using the measurements taken from the length and width of the blocks. The final O scale model was built using "jigsaw" puzzle pieces cast in polyurethane laid over the drawings. These puzzle pieces greatly speed up the labor involved in building stone structures. They will be discussed in greater detail in my "*Stonewalls Unlimited*" clinic.

▷ *Top of page:* The finished Warren Garage was made from these wall castings.

▷ A closer view, *left*, of the Warren garage wall shows the wallpaper effect.



All photos on pages 8-9: Mike Tylick

Step by Step...



1 We need lengths of "plaster stripwood"

to quarry our stones from. The strips should be the height of the stone and spaced at intervals of varying widths. There are no hard and fast rules as to the size, and the same stones will often work in different scales. I followed the dimensions given in Paul Mallery's *Bridge and Trestle Handbook* for stone railroad abutments. The stones were usually cut anywhere between 12 and 24 scale inches, but all to the same height.

2 PAM® cooking spray makes an inexpensive and readily available mold release. The original version will leave no residue on the styrene.

The mold is filled with plaster and allowed to harden. Mix the plaster thoroughly according to directions and gently tap the mold while pouring to remove air bubbles. By the time the plaster is cool to the touch it is ready to use. Most molding and casting plasters will work well.

3 Strips removed from the mold. If they become too hard, lightly moistening the plaster with a wet brush will make them work more easily.



Railroad walls were often made from stones with carefully dressed edges, but a rough cut face. This was most likely a result of the influence of H. H. Richardson on late 19th century architecture and eastern railroad architecture in particular. Most of the stations along the former Boston and Albany were designed by Richardson or his associates.

4 The faces are cut using combinations of two methods. The four sides of the stone are scribed (far left stone) and snapped to create a rough face (second from left). Additional working can be done by scoring the sides a short distance in from the front and prying the edges off with an X-acto® blade forced into the crack to provide a chiseled effect. These methods closely duplicate prototype quarry practices. Small air bubbles are easily filled. Broken stones are dressed to become smaller ones.

Photo at top of page shows my first attempt of building with individual stones, an arch viaduct across Quabbin Reservoir on my former HO scale Fitchburg and Southbridge Railroad.

5 While the Quabbin photo shows a model built exclusively with hand cut stones, a more efficient way is to fashion several dozen stones for a master. That way, you can easily cast an unlimited number of stones. The stones are attached to an .080" styrene base with white glue to permit easy removal. A fence is built around the master and sealed with Plastecine® modeling clay.

6 There are a number of materials to use in mold making. In this case, I tried a mail order

product which advertised a mold making material that could be re-melted for reuse.

7 The Composit-Mold® is poured into the master. Be sure to level the mold and pour and spread the material slowly and evenly. Tap often to eliminate air bubbles.

I had used this product previously for several small molds made from styrene and polyurethane castings with good success, but the materials reacted badly to the plaster. It crumbled and broke into pieces when I tried to remove it. I did salvage what mold material I could and it seemed to continue to work with styrene masters. Fortunately the master was not harmed.

After spraying the master again with PAM®, I used brush on latex mold material available from Michael's and other craft stores or Amazon.com. After a few days and about a dozen coats, my mold was ready.

Before removing the mold from the master it is advised to pour a plaster "mother" over the back to flatten the mold and help eliminate distortion. Again, read the instructions provided with the material. An alternate method is to pour the two part rubber mold material available from sources such as Castolite <castolite.com> and Micro-Mark <micromark.com>. These materials make a more permanent mold that is less prone to distortion, but are considerably more expensive. I think they are more suited to commercial applications. These materials are prone to air bubbles during pouring. Large molds seem to require a vacuum chamber for curing.





Dave Kiley and his granddaughter ran his large scale Hogwarts Express.



Among the modules was this accurate depiction of narrow gauge tracks at East Providence by Justin Maguire, MMR.



Dave Dekonski, who runs the trains and troubleshoots electrical problems, talks with Asst. Supt. Brian Osberg.

Little Rhody Division Reaches Out Bringing Trains to the Library

By **GEORGE LANDOW** and **MIKE TYLICK** MMR

As part of the Little Rhody Division's education mandate, a number of successful operating model railroad exhibits have been held at public libraries throughout the Division.

Before the pandemic shut down public gatherings, the latest program was conducted on January 18 at the Middletown, RI, Public Library. It was difficult to get an accurate head count, but suffice it to say the large meeting room was filled with people of all ages throughout the entire two hour event.

With proper publicity in local news media, the library's own events network, and numerous

judiciously placed fliers, these events have proven to be well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by the public. The event sows seeds with the younger generation as potential future model railroaders. Organizers believe that although few of the young visitors will immediately rush headlong into the hobby, a number will decide to pick up model railroading later in life.

Being very easy to transport and set up quickly, the N scale T-Trak system is ideal for these "op-up" shows. Unlike most other modular setups which often require several trailers to transport, most of a day to set up, and several hours to break down, a nice T-Trak layout can be set up in less than a half hour.

The modules are about the size and weight of a loaded cafeteria tray. They will even fit into a Smart Car. They sit on tables supplied by the facility – just plug them together, plug in the power bus, and we're ready to go. As television character Sheldon Cooper said, "Half the space, but twice the fun."


Realizing that the Division wanted to introduce the hobby to people young and old, Little Rhody decided to schedule some of its monthly meetings at local public libraries that welcome the T-Track modular railroad.

The members of the club wanted this event open to the public as a way of introducing model railroading to as many people as possible, and they had great support from the host Middletown Library, which helped by publicizing it widely. The wonderful result produced a room packed with children and parents.

David Dekonski and Tom Emmett took charge of assembling and running the modular layout, while Dave Kiley and his granddaughter ran the *Hogwarts Express* on the single loop also carrying a Lionel stream engine.

In addition to being a free vehicle to promote the hobby to the public, the library visitation has been a great source of satisfaction and fun to the presenters. Little Rhody organizers say they would be happy to advise any division interested in having similar events.

Little Rhody Division officers can be reached at littlehody.div.org.

Information about T-Trak can be found at t-trak.org. 



Tom Emmett works on the layout near his warehouse module while Little Rhody Supt. Sue Osberg comments.

Photos this page: George Landow

The crew is "loading" coal at the yard, getting ready for the morning freight run from Manassas, VA, 52 miles west to Front Royal, VA. And there is the capacitor, hiding in plain sight ... under the coal load.



DISGUIISING A DECODER TOO BIG HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

By JAMES G. KERKAM

Photos by the Author

Set in 1918, my Manassas Gap Railroad uses small 4-4-0s and 4-6-0s to haul two or three cars for passenger service and six to eight 36 foot box cars and reefers for freight service. All engines are Bachmann Spectrum with factory DCC with sound.

Bachmann Ten-wheelers can be temperamental. The Internet forums are full of concerns about the locomotive's operation. The problem is in the design of the electrical pickups.

One set of pickups is on the tender wheels, which power the sound decoder. The other set of pickups is on the engine drive wheels, which power the motor. Each drive wheel has a copper, electrical wiper on the back. Prone to picking up track dirt, the wipers are easily fouled and interrupt power to the

motor. The short wheelbase is also a problem on long, unpowered frogs. My layout uses #6 Walther's Shinohara DCC friendly turnouts, which have un-powered frogs. My Bachman 4-6-0 might make it through a straight #6 switch, but will stall on a curved #6 switch, because of its longer frog. And my mainline has six curved turnouts! It is not fun to manually push your locomotives through switches. It definitely kills the realism of operating trains.

At the HUB Division Spring TRAINing clinic last year, *Model Railroad Hobbyist* magazine publisher Joe Fugate spoke about having "reliability" as a goal in model railroad operations. If a layout looks great, but doesn't operate correctly, then it's just no fun!

He suggested two improvements to make layouts operate reliably: Add current

keepers or stay alive capacitors to locomotives, and power all switch frogs. Great advice! However, I was not about to rewire 50+ turnout frogs which were already ballasted. But the keep alive or current keeper capacitors sounded like a possible solution for my 4-6-0s.

I started my locomotive wiring project by noting that I had two different tender styles on my 4-6-0s. One is a large, boxy "long haul" tender; the other is a smaller, "short haul" tender. The larger tender shell has plenty of room to house the extra capacitors. They can be attached to the top of the tender shell with double sided tape. The decoder for the Bachmann 4-6-0 locomotive is made by Soundtraxx. Soundtraxx customer service sent me a picture by email showing where to solder the two wire

(Continued on page 12)

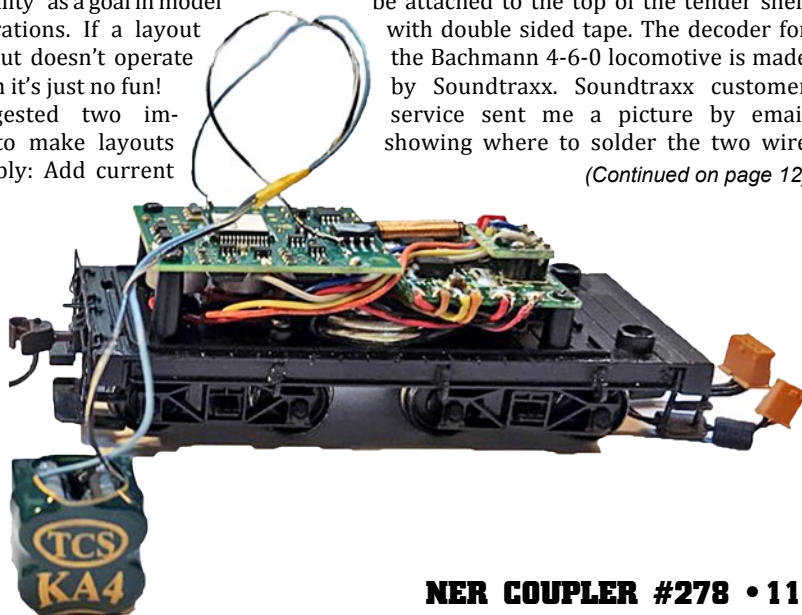


Photo 1: The tender shell is only large enough to cover the DCC decoder – and nothing else.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

(Continued from page 11)

leads to the circuit board for the capacitor. After the installation, the locomotive worked flawlessly. The fun was back on the Manassas Gap with the problem solved!

With the stalling problem resolved, there was still another issue to fix. One of my ten wheelers has a short haul tender. The tender shell is only large enough to cover the DCC decoder – and nothing else. (*Photo 1 shows the shell and a sugar cube size TCS KA4 keep alive capacitor wired to the decoder.*)

I was fortunate that the plastic coal load in the tender could be removed without damaging the shell (*Photo 2*). The shell just fit around the capacitor without any modification (*Photo 3*). However, the capacitor, which is

stacked above the existing circuitry, sat well above the top of the tender, as you can see in *Photo 4*.

I remembered the first HUB Division SpringTRAINing clinic I attended, where Rudy Slovak showed how to make coal loads for coal cars. I figured I could use the same technique to build a new coal load for the short haul tender and hide the capacitor.

I cut some cardstock to fit around the capacitor to prevent the new coal from falling into the decoder circuitry. This forms the base for the new coal bunker.

Next, I cut some scrap lumber into scale 2" x 12" boards for the sides of the coal bin and glued them together with white glue.

The next step was to cut a small piece of pink rigid foam insulation (*Photos 4 and 5*) and shape it to look like a coal load. It was large enough to hollow out the inside to fit around the capacitor.

Once installed, I painted the foam flat black and stained the wood side walls of the bunker.

When the paint and stain had dried, I glued scale size coal included with the Bachmann locomotive to the foam with white glue (*Photo 6*).


With all of the materials dry and in place, I reconnected the tender and locomotive. Now, my Ten-wheeler runs perfectly with the capacitor. 



Photo 2: The plastic coal load in the tender could be removed without damaging the shell.

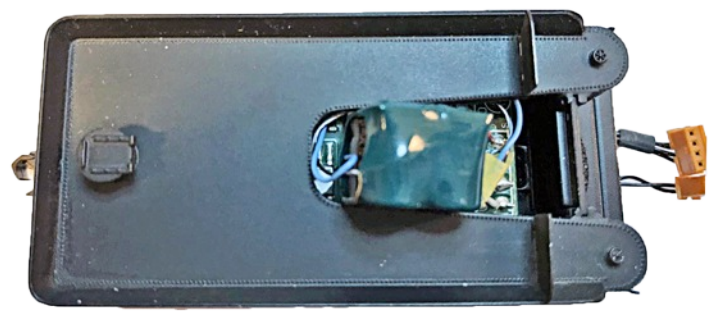


Photo 3: The shell just fit around the capacitor.



Photo 3A: Side view.



Photo 4: A small piece of pink rigid foam insulation will be shaped into my coal load.



Photo 5: Shape the foam insulation to look like a coal load and hollow out the inside to fit around the capacitor.

Photo 6: Scale size coal and weathering add finishing touches to the project.



Building Another Road Underpass

By **JEFF HANKE**

In the last column, I covered how I built the relatively simple East Burke Street highway underpass in Martinsburg, WV. This column will cover the more complex underpass at North Queen Street in the same town.



A few months ago, there was a huge hole on the west end of my Martinsburg section waiting for this underpass to fill it in. This side of Martinsburg is home to a B&O freight house, the A&E automobile shop, and Consumers Fuel Co. These three structures are at track level and have a relatively steep driveway down to Queen Street. I built their shared parking lot and driveway first, so as to help define Queen Street later. The driveway is carved from pink foam insulation board covered with lightweight spackle, sanded smooth and dyed with a black acrylic paint wash and weathering pastels.

Unlike the East Burke Street underpass, Queen Street has a substantial supporting structure. It is wider than East Burke because it has a sidewalk on both sides and the road lanes are wider. The railroad steel through girder bridge has mid-span supports between the sidewalks and highway on each side of the road. There are also substantial concrete retaining walls on each side.

LOCATING NORTH QUEEN ST.

Just as I did with East Burke Street, 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. Based on my layout limitations, as with East Burke, there is no room to model the other side of this underpass near the backdrop. The modeled underpass dead ends under the tracks in the shadows.

This underpass started with removing all of the foam where the road will go. I dug out the foam under the tracks, leaving a thickness of about a half inch to support the main tracks. I didn't want this area to be weak, so it is



Three photos: Jeff Hanke

probably a little too thick. However, the girder bridge part of the overpass hides the extra thickness. I made the hole 5 1/4" wide, to accommodate two lanes of traffic and two 3/4" wide sidewalks. The highway and underpass sides were built from thin plywood and fitted to the opening. The side walls are 2 1/4" high, to accommodate semi-trailer traffic. Next, I applied lightweight spackle in the back to blend the road into the rear tunnel wall and painted the whole assembly with Rustoleum® Gray Primer. I painted the sidewalks flat white like the prototype.

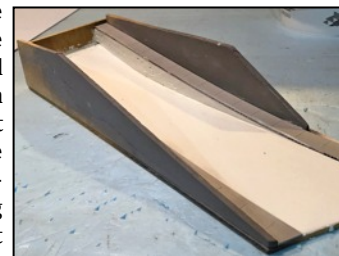
Now comes a difficult part – fitting the two sidewalks. I used a 3/4" wide strip for each; I used a panel line scribe, to mark off a 1/4" curb and 1" sidewalk squares; and glued this piece perpendicular to the side walls on the line I wanted. I then filled underneath the sidewalk with scrap foam and lightweight spackle, keeping a sharp edge where it meets the roadway. Then I painted it flat gray, blending the gray of the sidewalk and roadway into black at the back of the highway underpass. This makes the end of Queen Street vanish nicely into the shadows.

FINISHING SCENERY AND BRIDGE

Once the highway was painted, I glued it with Gorilla Glue® to the layout. I blended the surrounding scenery into the underpass with scrap pieces of pink insulation foam and lightweight spackle. I covered the ground with house paint and sprinkled in dirt and ground

foam while it was still wet.

Next came the toughest part – fitting the girder bridge. This bridge started as a Central Valley 72' Plate Girder Bridge (#1904). I shortened it to fit the span and notched the bottom of both ends as in the prototype. It took many efforts of trial and error to make it fit properly. I painted it with Rustoleum® Flat Black. Once the bridge was attached with Gorilla Glue®, I fit parts of the Micro Engineering City Viaduct tower kit



(#75-168) and Plastruct™ I-beams to represent the two midspan supports between the roadway and sidewalks. This gives the bridge the heavyweight appearance of the real thing.

Now that all of the major parts were installed, I added sections of Faller™ Iron Railing Fence as seen on the prototype to both sidewalks. My North Queen Street is now ready to become a bustling roadway as the real thing.

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



Touring the NER, Lockdown Style

By JEFF PASTON
NER Coupler Editor

So, what were you doing during the pandemic lockdown? I took some time to go traveling... and I never even left my desk! No road closures, no detours, no long border crossings. Thanks to Google Maps (or Microsoft's Bing), we can visit prototype locations for all kinds of research or to tour places we've never been.

I've been working on a project to archive photos for my local National Railway Historical Society chapter from as many as 50 years ago. It should probably surprise no one that these donated slides often have no reference as to the locations at which they were photographed.

That's where Google Maps came in. The more you look at old photos, the more you spot structures or geography that hasn't changed. And while I'm following old rail lines or roadbeds, I often stumble on sites I never knew existed... or that I would like to visit someday.

If you've ever looked at the street views that are part of Google's mapping process, you might have noticed the shadow of the vehicle taking those mapping images. Google uses an automobile with a sophisticated 360 degree camera mounted on a rooftop tripod.

Researching or touring using the map program has both benefits and deficiencies.

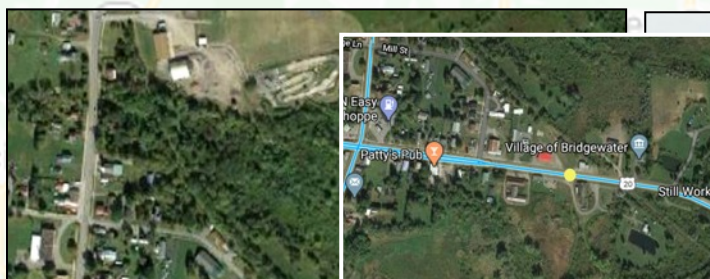
The benefit is that satellite views can spot long gone rights-of-way so you can trace a former rail line. You can also see how structures, roads, and track fit together in the real world.

The downsides can include heavy shadows that obstruct clear views of those ROWs – current or past. Another issue is the lower quality of those street view photos, or their lack of availability in rural areas

But, for the most part, this tool can make planning prototype-based model railroads extremely efficient. It also helps to see how scenery looks from the air – whether it's road colors or paving, or how railroad ground cover appears.

And, if you just want to see what may be behind those high fences at railroad facilities, the satellite views can be helpful... to a point. Keep in mind that the street view photo vehicle can't get any closer than you could if you were driving past.

So, join me for a few examples of where you can go and what you might see while in "stay-at-home" mode. Until greater reopening occurs across North America, some locations will remain unreachable except from your computer.



Historic Research

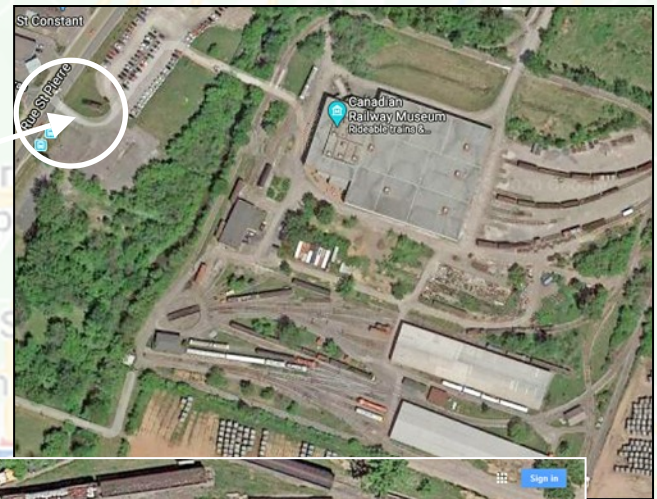
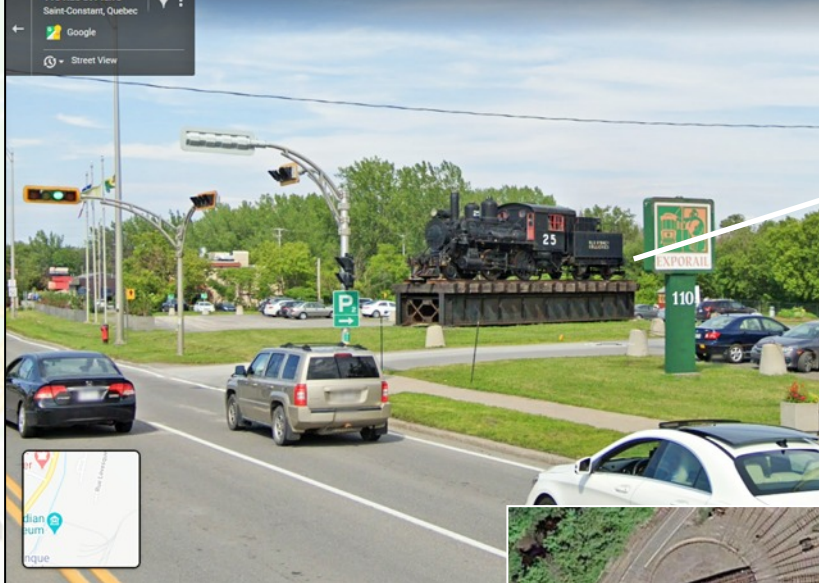
Bridgewater, NY, was once on the Richfield Springs Branch (yellow lines) of the Lackawanna, then Erie Lackawanna, and finally shortline operator Delaware Otsego (Central New York RR). It was also the junction with the Unadilla Valley Railway (orange).

The tracks are long gone: Unadilla Valley was abandoned in 1960, and Delaware Otsego ripped up its tracks in 1995. Unadilla Valley built the Bridgewater Union Station in 1901. Passenger service on the Lackawanna ended there in 1937. The building is now a historic site owned by the Bridgewater Historical Society.

Turning off the Google labels (*from inset*), you can clearly see the rights of way. There apparently was a wye and second DL&W connection for the UV south of US 20.

Switching to "street view," you can zoom in on the station building from US 20 for a better look. Maybe this might make a good structure to model or a scene to recreate on a model railroad?

All photos courtesy of Google Maps



Tourist Sites

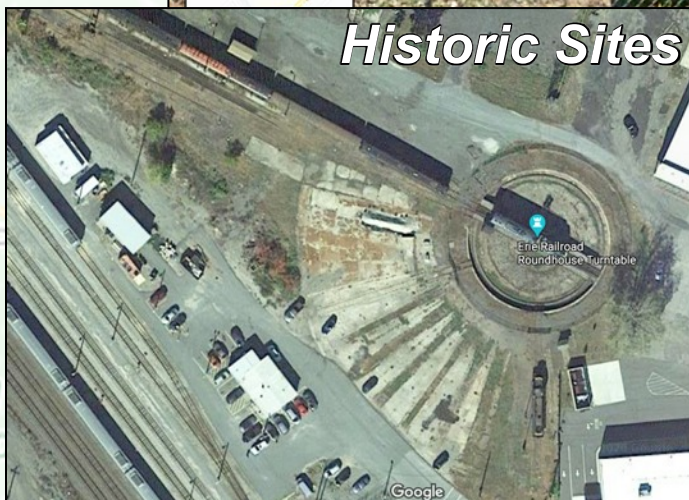
The Canadian Railway Museum, *Exporail*, located in Saint-Constant, QC, south of Montreal hopes to reopen soon as COVID 19 restrictions are lifted.

Meanwhile for those still locked down, the closest you can get using "street view" is the main entrance on Rue St. Pierre, where Old Sydney Collieries (Nova Scotia Steel & Coal) 2-4-0 #25 is on display.

The satellite view shows the scope of the museum's grounds. A Rail Diesel Car, various diesels, passenger cars, and a turntable are clearly visible.

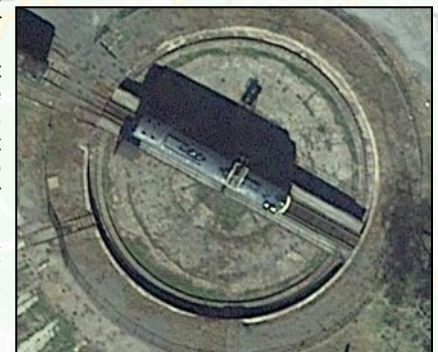


Historic Sites



While tracing former Erie Railroad tracks in southern New York State, the old yard in Port Jervis caught our attention. Near the current Metro North Railroad facility is an old Erie turntable and the remnants of the roundhouse. But, it was what was on the turntable that was of particular interest.

Our Google host was not able to jump the fence, so the best view of restored Erie E8 #833 is from the adjacent street. The satellite view also reveals a collection of passenger cars stored behind the locomotive and turntable. A bonus for Google street view tourists like us is a *readable* historical marker describing the turntable.



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