



JEFF HANKE DELIVERS THE DIAMONDS...BLACK DIAMONDS
IN THIS ISSUE'S "WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD" PAGE 4

NER COUPLER

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION

NO. 280 JANUARY - MARCH 2021

John Feraca's Stone City Heights



In this web version of the NER COUPLER, watch for this YouTube icon for direct links to more online content.

NEWLY RETURNED FROM ITS LEASE TO THE SANTA FE, CHESSIE SYSTEM GP UNIT 4148 IS PREPARED TO WORK A CHALLENGING YET TYPICAL ASSIGNMENT ON A WEST VIRGINIA COAL DRAG.



Contest Photos, Layout Tours, Model Contests, Clinics, Awards and how to access the online content

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Our Cover Photo

comes to us from Jeff Hanke.

As evidenced by it's cab number style, newly returned from lease to the Santa Fe, Chessie System GP unit #4148 is prepared to work a challenging, yet typical assignment on a heavy West Virginia coal drag.

NMRA NORTHEASTERN REGION

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A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

BY CHRIS CARFARO, EDITOR



Welcome to a new chapter in the life of the *NER Coupler*. I am Chris Carfaro, your new editor. I recently picked up a copy of the NMRA Magazine I'd been meaning to read. The editor, Cynthia Priest, wrote about inclusiveness. How can we look at ourselves and our greater organization to see where we do and do not make room for other people? She got me thinking about our Northeastern Region's 75th Diamond Anniversary! That is quite something. In 1946, a group of model railroaders not only had the time to contemplate a hobby organization but the energy and effort to effectively bring the NER

into being.

History has come to show us that post WWII, the level of satisfaction with life had risen in the United States. These were remarkable times. A time worth remembering. Steam locomotives were still around and new impressive diesels were being introduced. Railroads still ran passenger trains with panache. This was a time when a family might go on vacation together, take a train excursion across the US or simply visit family far away. There was an appreciation for our railroads and the people working on the systems took pride in their jobs, uniforms and each other.

What's the point to all of this? It's seventy five years later and just maybe if we refuse to forget, that kind of life is not so far away. Can a middle class family today afford a vacation anymore? Is it only rich white people who can enjoy model railroading? Have we become an elitist group? Ouch. Hard to hear and very hard to ask these questions. A hard truth is that most middle class families now can barely afford leisure time, much less an expensive hobby. And a family vacation is not only financially challenging, but to take time off of work is just as hard. We can change this. We can nudge the minimum wage up and shift the income inequality from the richest 1%. We can encourage more clubs. Clubs are a great way for people who don't have a lot of resources or space to enjoy model railroading. I can't tell you how many "model railroaders" I know who do not have a layout. Who settle to be "armchair" participants. If you're in college and love trains, your dorm roommate won't tolerate a mainline across the room. And there's the rub, having room. Making room means opening up your club to new people and new ideas. Help start a new club where someone who has little, can still participate. I do not believe we are elitist. I think we appreciate what a gift this hobby can be. How we can be transported through our scaled down reality and for a moment get a reprieve from this stressful world. I also think it's time to take the blinders off and notice that we are not the only ones who

OPEN DOEHR

BY JOHN DOEHRING, NER PRESIDENT

OUR STORIES OF ORIGIN AND CHANGE



Many model railroaders in my age cohort share a similar story in the hobby - and it's likely one you've heard. We were fascinated by trains at an early age, got a train set from Santa one Christmas morning, and built a "plywood plains" before our teenage years. Then (as the meme says) we found cars, and girls, and then college, careers, and families. Fast forward a couple of decades, and poof - we were back in the hobby with vigor - and this time (presumably) with more focus, time, space, and money. This is our origin story.

Recently, a few of our national NMRA leaders stepped a bit in the doo-doo - by stating that these sort of hobbyists - people like me who are at or near retirement age (and with the aforementioned resources) were the real target of the Association. Unfortunately, many heard that expression as an exclusive focus - as though the NMRA didn't care much for anyone outside of the defined target group. I don't believe that was the intent, but I get the reaction. The real idea here was that, with limited Association resources, the focus of growth must be on the shorter term, and that means those who can afford scale trains (time, money, space) right now. Yes, we need to bring along the others (young kids and young adults) as well, but this longer term effort must also fall to others: manufacturers, distributors, and the hobby press - those with financial interests and motivations. Right?

This line of thinking has long made sense to me as well, but this year I've shifted. Or more bluntly, I now see this idea as fundamentally wrong. As it happens there are in fact other paths

into our hobby, other early and formative experiences, and indeed many vibrant groups of modelers in different age cohorts. There are other, differing origin stories.

What changed for me really was paying closer attention – to different things. In this crazy, topsy-turvy, pandemic year, my modeling rhythms changed (as I suspect they did for you). In March, I began listening to Model Rail Radio, A Modeler's Life, and the Mike Rose hobby podcasts. I joined Zoom casts with other hobby segments and groups, and I've spent more time learning about the unorganized, messy, wild, wild west that is model railroading on YouTube. Through these explorations, I've seen (as others have also said) that our hobby isn't really aging like I thought it was, and it isn't dying a slow and painful death of apathy. It's easier to forecast this death knell when you look only to traditional places – local hobby shops, train shows, print magazines, even NMRA memberships. But podcasters, bloggers, Zoom-captains, and video content creators today suggest a much different reality: a new, global hobby network; lots and lots of younger modelers; increasing specialization in many different sub-part areas (like high end-weathering, innovative electronics, computer simulation, and 3-D printing). The model railroading hobby isn't dying – but it certainly is changing.

And us 'life-experienced' folks are changing this year as well – proving that older dogs might in fact learn a new thing or two. We've hosted our quarterly NER BoD meetings now for several years using Zoom; many of our divisions are now providing clinics and social meet-ups via the screen; and we've just wrapped up a first, successful, and fun NERx virtual convention. [If you missed it, look for it on the NMRA YouTube channel: sixteen clinics, twelve layout tours, and both contest and achievement recognition]. Old dogs, yes – but new tricks too.

The lesson I've learned (or relearned) this year is to lean in, look more openly, and be more curious – to pay attention to new and different stuff, and to welcome diversity (in age, background, ideas, and interests). We're not all the same, and though it's often more comfortable in a tribe of lookalikes – we're much more vibrant together when we're different. Different origin stories.

Before long, we will, I think, begin to transition out of this strange, wacky, and unsettling year, and we'll start to return to our previous life. For many of us, that'll mean more in-person division meetings, local train shows, group operating sessions, and travel to conventions. But I hope we'll also hold on to some of what we've found this year as well: important social connectivity online (without the travel); a chance to engage with not only local modelers but those quite literally around the world; and new exposure to younger folks doing amazing stuff (though many not so visible in the traditional places we're accustomed to looking).

And into this new milieu, it is incumbent upon all of us in the Association to keep asking the 'why NMRA' question – and then together answering that query for ourselves and for others – so that we organically grow our tribe; provide more collaboration, help, and support to others; and make model railroading more fun for everyone.

Let's create a new story - worth telling.



MillCity21

SAVE THE DATE! October 8th - 11th Westford, Mass.

The HUB Division is proud to host MillCity 21, our postponed Northeast Region annual convention. We've had extra time to plan and we think it will be worth the wait. While headquarters and many activities will take place at the Regency Hotel in Westford, some of the most unusual and interesting events are scheduled to take place at the nearby Lowell National Park, a fifteen minute ride from the hotel. In addition to the fascinating live industrial exhibitions and excursion rides at Lowell, all the usual model railroad activities one has come to expect will be available at convention headquarters. Please check www.millcity21.org often for updated information.

COUPLER DEADLINES

February 20	April - June Issue
May 20	July - Sept. Issue
August 20	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 pandemic, most events have been postponed or cancelled. Please check websites for updated information.

Mar 27-28 Willmington, Mass.
TENTATIVE 2021 Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show. Check website for updates.
www.trainshow.com

Apr 2 Dover, NH Great Northern New England Chapter Train Show. Visit
www.railserv.com/events

NEW MEMBERS

Compiled By MARK HARLOW
NER Office Manager

CONNECTICUT

Michael Curran

MASSACHUSETTS

Kevin O'Leary

Dwight B Sturtevant

MAINE

John Weir

NEW HAMPSHIRE

John Richards

NEW JERSEY

Angela Sutton

NEW YORK

Heath Hurwitz

Randy Decker

Ted Tate

Daniel Tomlinson

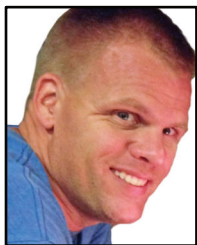
Stephen Gollow

RHODE ISLAND

Donald Collard

VERMONT

Maxwell Brisben



BLACK DIAMONDS FOR THE DIAMOND JUBILEE

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the NER, new Editor Chris Carfaro thought it would be appropriate to do this column on diamonds — black diamonds that is! What a great idea!

The Chessie System was a holding company composed of three coal hauling railroads, B&O, C&O and WM. More than half of all their freight cars were hoppers...almost 70,000 in total. With that sort of hopper fleet, any Chessie model railroad should have plenty of these riding the rails. Compared to a modern fleet of look-alike hoppers, Chessie's roster was very diverse. Chessie had over 45 classes of coal service hoppers! Their oldest hopper running in 1977 was built way back in 1934!



Chessie rostered both two and three bay hoppers for coal service. Two bay hoppers were 50T rated and three bay hoppers were 70T or 100T cars. Some 50T and 70T cars had peaked or arched ends. The hoppers also came in two main designs, offset and outside staked. The offset hoppers were not as common, since they were an older design and more prone to corrosion. They can be easily identified by their smooth sides. The C&O and B&O were known for running this design longer than most railroads. Also, not as common was the lighter capacity two bay hoppers. They too, were older cars and greatly outnumbered by the more modern three bay hoppers.

All of the Chessie System coal service hoppers were painted black, with the exception of a small group of light grey or oxide red Western Maryland hoppers. Finally, the Chessie fleet came in both predecessor paint schemes and Chessie's famous Ches-C scheme. A unique paint scheme on Chessie captive service hoppers were the "Moonshine" cars. These cars did not have roller bearing trucks, and by 1980, were not allowed to be interchanged with another road. To delineate this restriction, these hoppers had yellow ends and three large yellow "X"s on each side.



CREATING A CHESSIE COAL TRAIN

Luckily for the modeler, it is easy to model a Chessie coal train. There are many great models on the market, many of them available in Chessie paint schemes and multiple road numbers. My favorite is the Bowser 100T hopper. It comes in the predecessor C&O, B&O and WM (grey) scheme as well as the Chessie-C&O, Chessie B&O and Chessie-WM scheme. Through multiple runs of this car, Bowser has made dozens of road numbers. As this is the most common class in 1982, the year I model, I have finished 28 of them so far. Stewart also offers several models in C&O, Chessie-C&O and Chessie-WM paint schemes that are very good. Atlas offers a very good 2-bay offset hopper in Chessie-B&O paint. Its Trainman line also

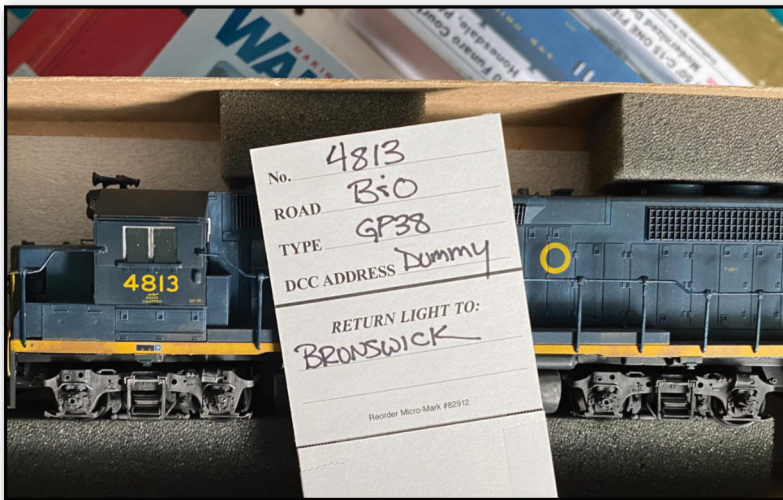


offers a similar scheme on a 3-bay outside staked model. Other manufacturers offering good Chessie hopper models are Athearn and Roundhouse.

Chessie freely intermixed their hoppers, so the standard train would see all three reporting marks at about a ratio of 50% C&O, 40% B&O and 10% WM. Predecessor or Ches-C paint schemes were about evenly split in 1982. Offset sided cars were rare, perhaps 10% of a train. The smaller 50T cars were also typically about 10%. Its diverse fleet really made for an interesting train. It was not uncommon to see a brand new Ches-C painted three bay staked car right next to a half-century old two-bay offset car in a severely faded B&O paint scheme.

COAL SERVICE


With one minor exception, Chessie's coal service in the area I model is simply bridge traffic. The coal is mined west of my modeled area, on Chessie's famed West End. Unit trains run out of the West Virginia mountains into



Cumberland, MD, over the East End and off my layout at Brunswick, ending in the Port of Baltimore. Simply, unit trains of loaded coal ran east and empties ran west. At times, if Baltimore was packed, loaded unit coal trains were temporarily stored in Brunswick.

Generally, Chessie used their best power on these trains, so a lash up of three or four GP38, 40 or 40-2s was normal. Surprisingly, they did not use their six-axle power much on these trains, as the few SDs were mostly relegated to helper service. This would change with the arrival of the SD50s, but that is after the period I model. Occasionally, a coal train would have a helper or two on my modeled area, but that was the exception and not the rule. On my layout, a loaded train is about 20 cars, while an empty is about 30.

The one exception for my coal service is the online industry, Consumers Fuel in Martinsburg, WV. This small local coal dealer still took deliveries of single hoppers of coal into the late 1970s. I'm uncertain if they were still doing this in 1982, but I am modeling this service anyway. Since the coal trestle looks fairly lightweight, I limit deliveries to a single two bay 50T hopper. Consumers Fuel seems to be out of a bygone era, but it is a unique consumer of coal, and is in a lot less space than a port would be.

I hope you take the opportunity to celebrate the NER's 75th anniversary by adding some diamonds to your layout! I look forward to sharing more on the new East End going forward, but until then...keep on workin'. 



BY JIM WALSH

The COVID-19 pandemic has made great changes in our lives through 2020. From social distancing, face masks, various levels of business closings and layoffs to more time at home and working on projects that previously, time wouldn't permit. And all of this has interrupted one of our strongest benefits of being in the NMRA, the social and community aspect of the hobby. Through our experiences at train shows, operating sessions, local division meets, and Regional and National convention, we find camaraderie and the collaboration of ideas. With a raging pandemic, 2020 looked like a "dumpster fire" as far as our convention. And yet, in spite of a rescheduling the convention to 2021, the team producing Mill City 2020 refused to let us down. Taking advantage of a great trend on the national level, namely NMRAx, MillCity undaunted, delivered this year's NER convention, online! **NERx**.

The content streamed live for four nights, December 1-4 and included inspirational clinics and layout tours. Instead of having to choose what clinics or layout tours you can attend like at a regular convention, NERx gave us the ease to see it all. And if you missed something, no problem. All of the NERx content is available right now, archived online. Let's take a look at the clinic presentations.



Best in Show "Promontory, UT" by Jeff Gerow



THE CLINICS

NERx demonstrated that there are many very accomplished modelers in the NER. Presentations were often broken down into steps to enable modelers of all levels. Clinicians not only illustrated what they had accomplished but they wanted the audience to know that they could do it too. A primary message throughout NERx was the suggestion to "just do it". Get a basic kit or a simple layout and make it happen. We learned that sitting in an armchair with a collection of books and magazine has a purpose but eventually you need to get building, assembling and running. For that participation, sooner is better than later.

DECEMBER 1

Foreground Trees with Leaves
by Jeff Gerow
PHOTO #3

Bringing the Railroad to Life Using Layers
by Lou McIntyre
PHOTO #1

Building Bar Mills Magee's Tire Repair Shop
by Andy Reynolds
PHOTO #2

Modeling An Operating Pre WWII Grade Crossing Signal
by Steve Perry



December 2

Basic Scenery Tips
by Doug Dederick
PHOTO #5

Coal Cod & Cash
by Steve Erickson

Using Paper to Build that Model for your Railroad
by Jim Fairbanks
PHOTO #4

Let's learn to operate local train POFR for the beginner- Part 1
by Bruce Robinson

Let's learn to operate local train POFR for the beginner- Part 2

The Clinics Continued

DECEMBER 4

DECEMBER 3

My Big Fat Clinic. Or, How to Weigh Cars Like the Prototype
by Chuck Diljak

The Welsh Highland Railway
by Edward Koehler

Take Two! Module Building Lessons Learned
by John Doehring

Just Build an Inglenook
by Jeff Faust



Building Stone City Heights
by John Feraca

Introduction to NeoPixels
by James Kline

Paints, 3D Printing
by Jon Silhavey

My Miniature Wunderland
by Irwin Nathanson

The Layout Tours

Through NERx we were able to get outside our homes and enjoy one of the best things about a convention, The ability to visit layouts. Presentations of an individual's work on his or her railroad asks a lot of that person. Getting the layout together, video taping, editing, hand-outs and being on screen to field questions. I am always grateful when another model railroader invites me into their home and this year is no exception. Sincerely, thank you all! Here is a healthy sample of layout tours and a link to many more.



December 1

Clinch Mountain Railroad

by Dave MacPherson

Danby Ludlow & Springfield RR

by Ned Spiller

Western Adirondack Model Railroaders

by Ed Olszewski

December 2

Buckeye Railroad

by Herm Botzow

Maine and Western Railroad

by Gordon Spalty

South Shore Model Railway Club

by Mike Dolan

December 3

Rails Across Marshfield

by Mike Tylick

New York Central

by Victor Hand

Great Northern Railway, Kalispell Division

by Doug Dederick

December 4

Binghamton Society of Model Engineers

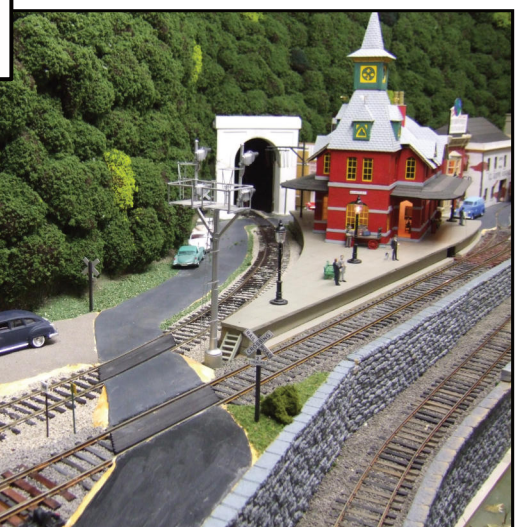
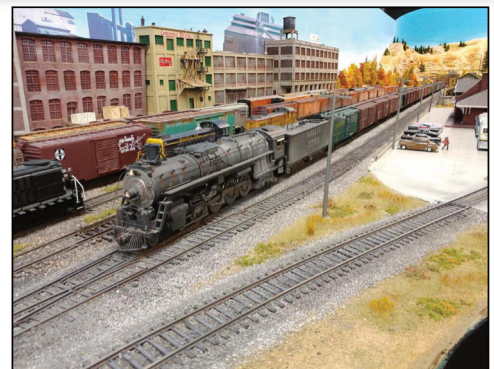
by Bob Peterson

Stone Canyon Railroad

by John Feraca

Kofferbahn von Sankt-Bartholomä

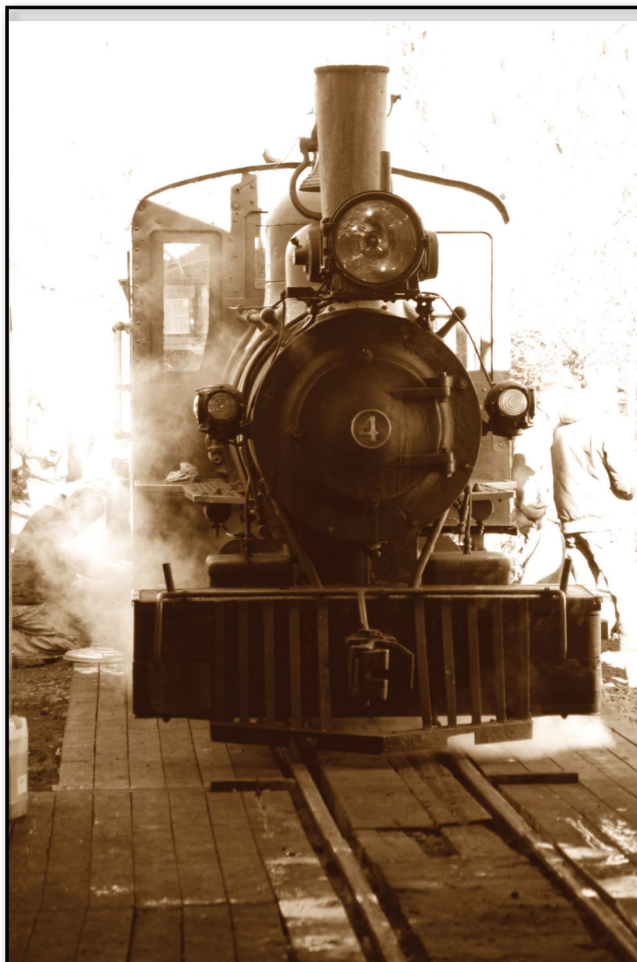
by Jeffrey MacHan



Each night Kaylee Zheng would host the results of the photo contests. And each night she thrilled us with the winners and a bit of humor. Apparently, entrants were supposed to include a photo of themselves. When they didn't, Kaylee put them on the "milk carton" as a missing person, rather amusing. In any event here are the category winners. And, don't forget to log-on to millcity2020.org to see ALL the photos.



PROTOTYPE COLOR: FIRST PLACE "A DASH OF OIL" BY CHUCK DILJAK



PROTOTYPE COLOR, SECOND PLACE "FINALLY HOME" BY LOUIS MCINTYRE

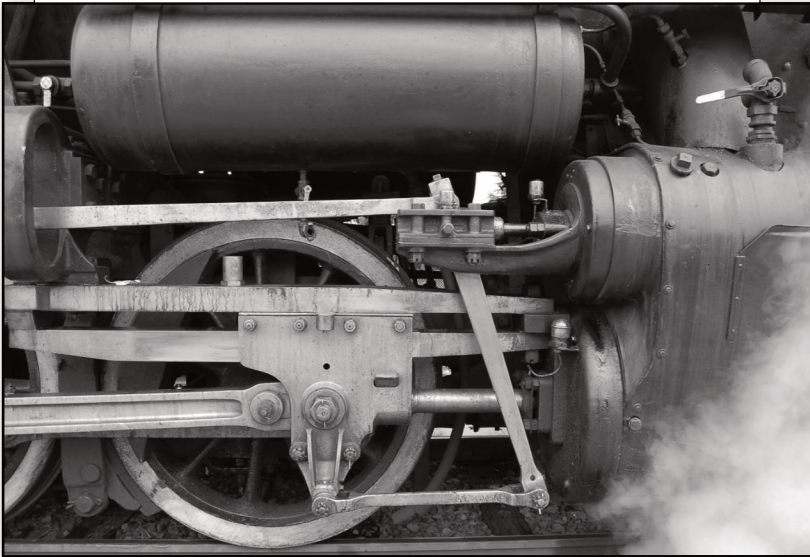


PROTOTYPE COLOR: SECOND PLACE "FULL MOON RUN" BY BRUCE SHEPARD

PHOTO CONTEST CONTINUED

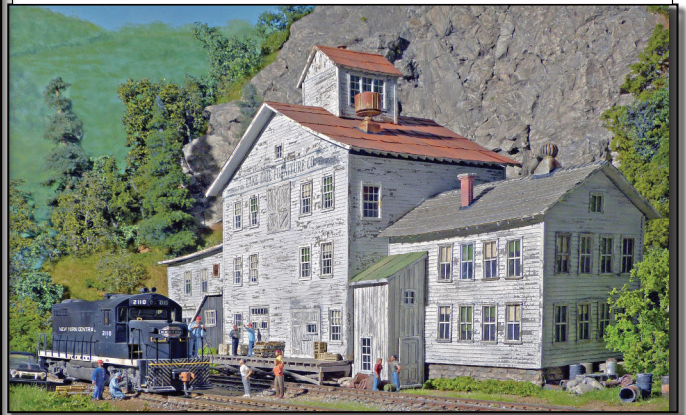


PROTOTYPE B&W FIRST PLACE "LETTING OFF STEAM" BY CHUCK DILJAK



MODEL COLOR

1ST PLACE "SATURDAY MORNING BREAKDOWN" BRUCE SHEPARD



2ND PLACE "2 LOADS OF SUGAR FOR JACK FROST" BRUCE SHEPARD



3RD PLACE "SWITCHING MISSING THUMB SIDING" BRUCE SHEPARD



THIRD PLACE "COMING INTO BURLINGTON" BY PETER WATSON

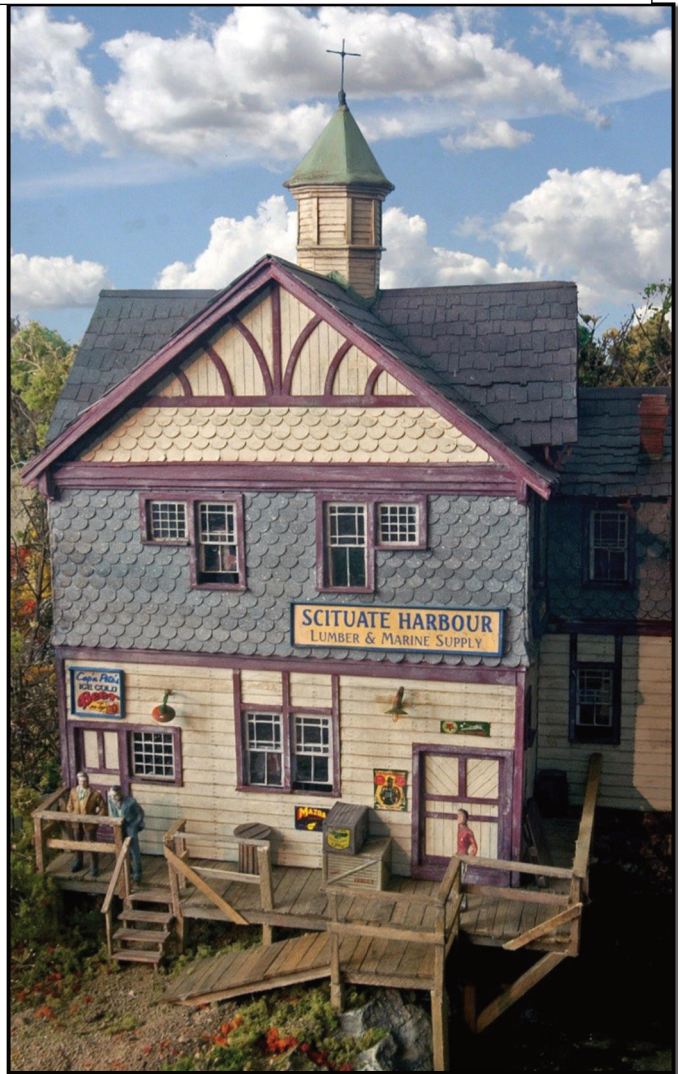
MODEL B&W: HONORABLE MENTION "COOL OF THE EVENING" BY JIM WALSH



We have some outstanding photos of the winning models here, but don't forget that online are photos of all of the models that were submitted. Go to WWW.millcity2020.org The model contest was a bit different due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a normal model contest, the judges would be able to thoroughly examine the entries. For this virtual convention, the entries were limited to photographs of the models along with information on the models as well as info and photos of the prototype. Twenty five models were entered in 4 categories of Structure, Rolling Stock, Motive Power and Display. Most of the entries were in the Structure category with a total of 11 followed closely with 10 entries for Rolling Stock and Motive Power and Display each had 2 entries.



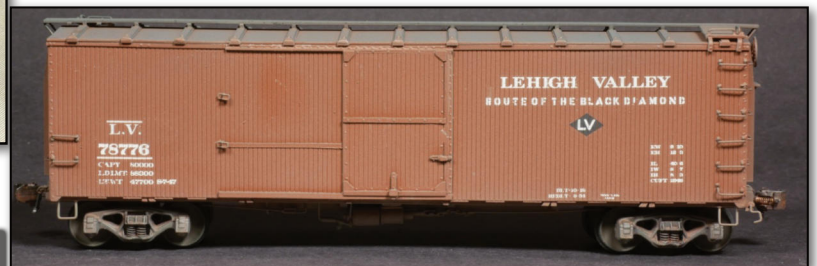
MOTIVE POWER 1ST PLACE PRR EMD F7 B DAVE DURR



STRUCTURE 3RD PLACE SCITUATE MARINE SUPPLY MIKE TYLICK

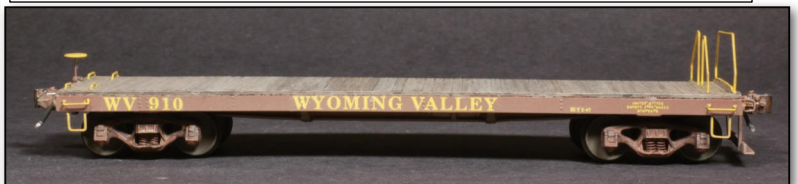
I would like to thank my judges:
 Bill Brown MMR, Andy Claremont MMR
 Bob Hamm MMR, Tom Oxnard MMR
 I also served as an alternate in the structures category.
 Thanks to all.

Ken May
 Model Contest Chair



ROLLING STOCK 1ST PLACE LEHIGH VALLEY "WRONG WAY" BOXCAR CHUCK DILJAK

ROLLING STOCK 2ND PLACE LEHIGH VALLEY "ICE SERVICE CAR" CHUCK DILJAK



MOTIVE POWER 2ND PLACE FAIRMONT SPEEDER JOHN E BECKER





STRUCTURE 1ST PLACE H.H. RICHARDSON DESIGN PASSENGER STATION
JIM MURPHY

STRUCTURE 2ND PLACE BRADFORD STATION THOMAS OXNARD



DISPLAY 1ST PLACE PUEBLO STAGE AT TOTAVI, NM JIM GORE



DISPLAY 2ND PLACE SULLIVAN'S SALVAGE JOHN BECKER

NMRA ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM NER RECIPIENTS

Each night of NERx brought a presentation celebrating the NMRA AP accomplishments along with appreciation for the division AP coordinators. You can still go online to see the video presentation. Here are the AP awards listed by division:

EASTERN CANADA

Bob Henry Chief Dispatcher
Steve McMullin Official

CENTRAL NEW YORK

Drew James Civil
Ed O'Rourke Official

GARDEN STATE

Steve Ascolese Golden Spike
Andrew Brusgard Volunteer
Chuck Diljak Golden Spike
Paul Harbord Volunteer
Jim Homoki Chief Dispatcher
Alex Nawotka Civil, Electrical, Scenery
Tom Wortmann Official

HUB

Stan Ames Scenery
Dave Insley Author, Electrical
James Kerkam Chief Dispatcher
Andy Reynolds Author, Proto Modeler, Structures, Scenery
Rudolf Slovacek Cars
Dave Trimble Chief Dispatcher

HUDSON BERKSHIRE

Andrew Clermont Volunteer
Doug Dederick Electrical, Golden Spike, Scenery
Joe Kavanagh Structures
Ben Maggi Cars, Civil

LAKESHORES

James DeMarco Cars, Electrical
James Fairbanks Volunteer, Structures
Ed O'Connell Author
Mike Pyszcsek Official, Volunteer

LITTLE RHODY

Steve Erickson Official

SEACOAST

Geoff Anthony Volunteer
Ralph Brown Volunteer
Ernest "Tage" Erickson Official
Brenna Whitney Chief Dispatcher

SUNRISE TRAIL

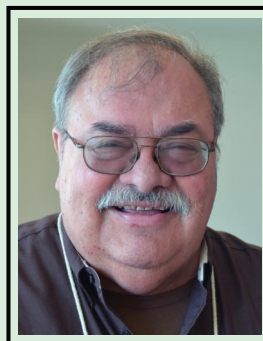
Dennis DeAngelis Official

MADE IN THE NER BY MIKE TYLICK

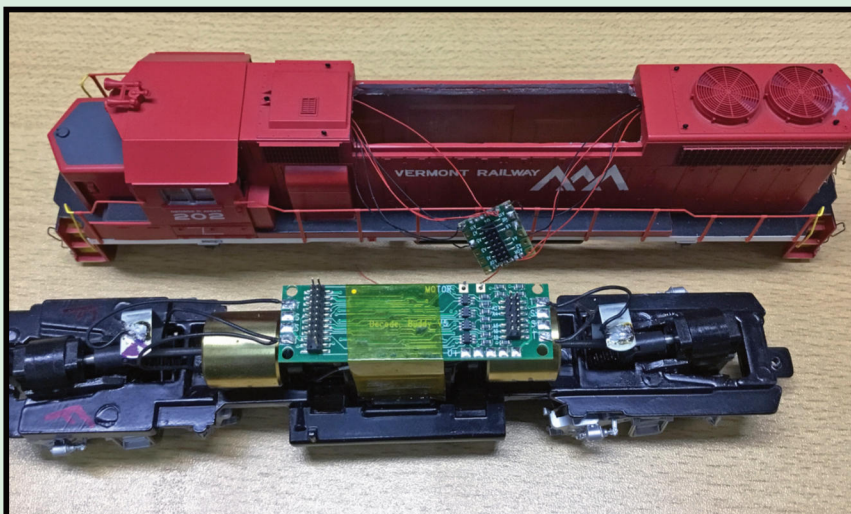
NIXTRAINZ

Nick Santos and his wife Sue owned and operated a flight school for twenty-one years. When time came to retire, the flight school was closed and to fill his new found leisure time Nick returned to model trains.

As happens the Nixtrainz Decoder Buddy was a product of his playtime. So much for retirement! Nick's train hobby became a full time job with Sue jumping in to keep the Nixtrainz books honest. The Decoder Buddy came about because of the need for a 'motherboard' that could supply more function outputs. This is in keeping with both the demands of the model train enthusiasts as well as new sound decoders providing in excess of twelve function outputs! Commercially available decoder 'motherboards' were often too wide and had no



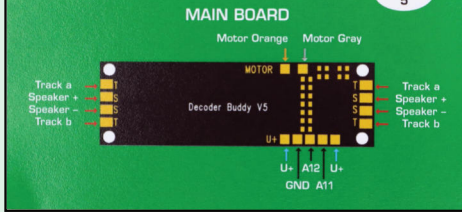
Continued on page 14



Decoder Buddy

by NIXTRAINZ

Version 5



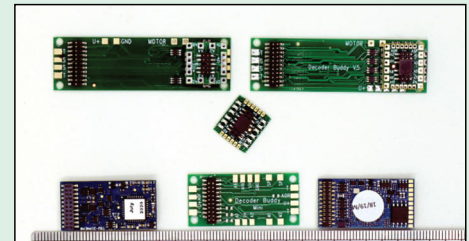
MADE IN THE NER

Continuation from page 12 Nixtrainz

provision for lights on the function outputs. Nick's prototype designs led to a board that provided eight auxiliary outputs useable for lighting functions and will fit into US locomotives.

The original Decoder Buddy has since been joined by another version that has twelve auxiliary outputs useable for lighting functions. Who would need twelve outputs? Well, for instance flashing Ditch Lights front and rear take up four functions. Class lights - another four, step lights, ground lights, cab lights, rooftop beacons. It adds up quickly. The Decoder Buddy parts and printed circuit boards are made in China, partially assembled in Arizona and then shipped to South Burlington, Vermont, where final processing, packaging and shipping take place.

Suggestions to improve the original design have come from experienced professional decoder installers and an electrical engineer who likes to optimize and produce high quality printed circuit boards for commercial use. Their help has allowed me, an electronics hack who enjoys railroads and model railroading, to produce some very useful, high quality products. Since then we've added fixtures for ground and high walkway lighting and LEDs with warm incandescent color. Our products are available at hobby shops and from our website. Custom variations are available as well. Since I retired to this new full time job I haven't had a lot of time to think about what's next! When I get a chance, I enjoy installing both the Decoder Buddys and the Loco Lights in my own fleet. I also enjoy running trains and photographing them.



What Floats YOUR Boat?

A random addition to the NER COUPLER, powered by your submissions.

There is Magic in What We Do

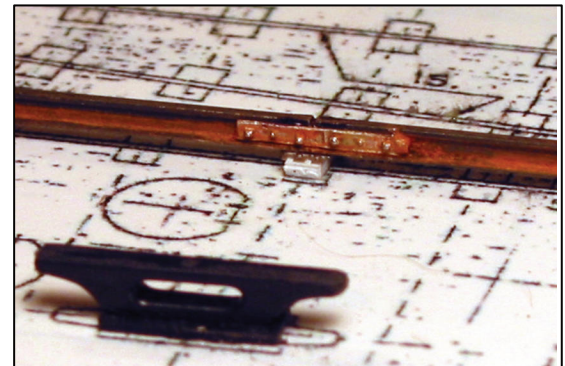
Model railroading gives us a great number of opportunities to specialize. For me, I love modeling along the waterfront. And, I love illusion. When I discovered an article in an issue of *Model Railroader Planning* that featured the Chesapeake & Ohio's carfloat service in Norfolk, Virginia. I was absolutely blown away. The C&O's Brooke Avenue yard in Norfolk was serviced solely by carfloat. The scene was captivating.

Not too long thereafter, what a thrill and inspiration it was for me to meet Thomas Flagg (*New York Harbor Railroads in Color*) at an NER convention in Stamford, Connecticut. THIS is what "floats my boat" literally! Just get me started talking about railroading along the waterfront. And as your eyes glaze over after hours of my yaking, you might just notice a glowing aura around me. You might just recognize where I find my magic. Recognizing what energizes people.

When we take the time and effort to learn about someone, we might understand how each of us can find a place where we "fit". Tell a teenager, "hey do you want to run a computer simulation? You get to control live action rail traffic. You'll sit in a room where you can't see the trains moving except by indicators on a display panel. You'll get to give commands to a bunch of old guys who you'll hear running around trying to keep up with your dispatch orders, "he wants what?!" "No I don't want to call out the hook" "tough, he said it, you do it." I hope you get the idea and the humor. Dispatching trains, running them, building them, are all homes that can call to people. I have always believed that simple exposure to the hobby is about all that's needed to invite participation. I recently described model railroading as "I work in an office where we create an animated 3d art form."

What floats your boat? Tell me, let me share it, let me offer it as bait to the unknowing people out there who need us. The world is stressed and crazy right now, maybe this is the stress relief they need, the stress relief we all need. - Best regards, Chris

TODAY, BY CHRIS CARFARO



What floats my boat? Here's MY boat, building a carfloat directly upon an actual blueprint - reduced, from plans that Thom gave me years ago. Plus a photo of a CNJ Stick Lighter, thanks Thom. Maybe I'll use American Model Builder's "Cabin Scow" as a starting place. Hmmm.



Editor's Note, re: new to the NER Coupler

When I stepped up to become the Editor of the NER Coupler, I was encouraged to put together a staff of my choosing. And first I must thank the existing NER members who assist in creating this publication, most of which are staying on. Although Jeff Paston is no longer editor, I assure you he's got my back. As do Jeff Hanke, Mike Tylick, and Jim Walsh. Not to mention the countless other individuals who contribute to make my job easier and to give us all a quality publication.

That said, let me introduce our new Assistant Editor, Max Brisben. I work with Max at Tony's Train Exchange and over the past year have been impressed with his knowledge and writing skills. He excels in DCC programming and his enthusiasm is exciting, inspiring and infectious. Dear God, with him around, I might actually get motivated to finish a project or three. Welcome Max to the NER Coupler and welcome to the NMRA, you've found your peeps.

FRESH AIR, stale basement

BY MAX BRISBEN, ASSISTANT EDITOR

My career as a life-long modeler began with trips to New Jersey Transit's Bay Head Yard with my father, and an HO scale layout in the basement of his house. Those early days were filled with a lot of dreams and aspirations of what I wanted to achieve as I got older, and a lot of figuring out how to get the most out of my Atlas Master DCC System. Twenty years on and I feel as if I am learning something new about this hobby that we all share daily.

By day I work at Tony's Train Exchange in Essex Junction, Vermont which is a great place to be if you're someone like me who likes to get into the gritty, technical side of the hobby, such as knowing the ins and outs of programming DCC. By night I am a published author and art photographer who explores and writes about abandoned locations around Vermont and beyond.



I was always around the hobby, but I began modeling in my current capacity in high school. Around the same time I decided I wanted to be a visual artist and was getting into photography and fine metals sculpture work. Something just clicked for me one day and I started working on weathering and detailing techniques for locomotives and freight cars. The first piece I customized was an Athearn Blue Box Vermont Railway GP38-2, adding air hoses, cut levers, and other detail parts. As a Creative Media major at Champlain College, I spent a lot of nights laying in bed on my phone, researching different techniques and materials to use for weathering and super detailing models.



For me, this is a very rewarding hobby. It's a good feeling when you take the masking tape off of a model you just airbrushed, and the lines are razor sharp. It pays to be meticulous. A lot of my effort goes into the Thatcher Brook Railroad and its surrounding universe. This is my freelanced railroad, which is a direct competitor with the Rutland, running from nowhere to nowhere.

I joined the NMRA with the intention of bringing about a more open and accepting attitude. I believe that this hobby is for everyone, especially younger generations. There's a lot of us out there who think that the NMRA and other organizations could be doing more to attract volunteers and prospective hobbyists. Beyond that, social inequality issues loom ever present over us, and many younger folks

who would like to be engaged in the hobby, can't be for reasons like student loan debt. Raising the minimum wage would also go a long way in allowing prospective modelers to have extra cash on hand to get into it. However, the best way to attract prospective modelers is to have a platform they can stand on like a local club, and we all know how club attitudes can be to new people.

This hobby is not dying. All it needs to thrive is some love and acceptance for all of those who share our interest.



2020 Keith Shoneman Award Presented Posthumously By Peter Higgins

This year's recipient of the *Keith Shoneman Award* for fostering the spirit of realistic railroad operations on model railroads went to a member that didn't even have a model railroad of his own. However, he knew where there were some pretty good ones and operated on them. John Lutz was that member.

He was always at the Hub Division's *RailRun*, *Tour De Chooch*, and even traveling to *Op's Till You Drop* in Central New York with Jeff Gerow. John shared his enthusiasm with many others in the Region and the Division.



John Lutz

In 2013, John approached HUB Division President Manny Escobar regarding the formation of the Operating Sessions for Beginners and that was the beginning of the OSFB Group. For many, John was that inspiration who initiated new members to their first operating sessions at one of his regular Friday or Saturday session spots.

First it was Carl Senftleben's *Atlantic Shoals Railway*, then Don Howd's *Dividing Creek RR*. Next was Keith's Shoneman's *Pennsylvania and New England*, Stan & Debbie Ames' *SJR&P Rwy.* and on to Bruce Robinson's *Valley Junction Railroad* in New Hampshire. At every Op Session the OSFB numbers grew, but that wasn't enough for John Lutz, so he reached out to area clubs. The three in particular that were large enough to accommodate the growing interest in operations were Pepperall Siding, Nashua Valley, and North Shore MRRC. Several of these were to be featured at October's NER Convention.

It was for the number of operators that John's enthusiasm created that we've recognized him for his contribution to Operations. We hoped to honor him for all of his work sharing his hobby with so many. Unfortunately, his health declined rather suddenly, but he still made an appearance here and there when he could, even attending a Zoom meeting. Quicker than we expected, we lost him... But, we will always remember him for what he did for so many to make this great hobby of ours a bit more enjoyable. "I wouldn't be surprised to find out one day John received the award from Keith himself."

reprinted courtesy of the HUB Headlight

NERx Virtual Convention Car MIKE TYLICK, MMR

As part of the 2020 Northeastern Regional convention, we are offering a virtual convention car kit. While looking at our "NERx" logo we decided the initials resembled the reporting marks for a private owner freight car. The name "Northeastern Refrigerator Express" followed very quickly. NERx never did own any full sized freight cars, but it certainly could have. *This kit exists only in cyberspace- it needs you to make this car a physical entity.*

In keeping with the spirit of sharing found on the internet and other virtual hobby get-togethers, there is no charge for the artwork. You are, however, on your own to acquire the necessary materials to build the car, a good project for the many socially distanced days and evenings to come. Please visit the NERx website at www.millcity2020.org for **downloadable decal artwork and instructions**.

Special model and photography contests categories to include the NERx car are under discussion. These one time events would be held during the in-person MillCity 21 NER convention.

We're hoping this is the first of many photos of the NERx virtual convention car that we will see on the pages of the Coupler. Please take a few minutes and send us a photo of your version. We're also planning special model and photo contest categories for models of this car. These will take place at our live MillCity 21 convention scheduled to be held next year. Details will appear when available on our convention website- www.millcity21.org.



NERX 1946 WAS BUILT BY JIM KERKAM, HUB DIVISION, FROM A ROUNDHOUSE BLUE BOX KIT. THE REEFER FEATURES THE NER CONVENTION DECALS REDUCED FOR THE 36' CAR LENGTH BY MIKE TYLICK OF RAIL DESIGN SERVICES. THE DIMENSIONAL AND WEIGHT DATA ARE CHAMP DECALS HD-18. THE CAR IS SUPPORTED BY KADEE 501 ARCH BAR TRUCKS. THE COUPLERS ARE A KADEE #5. PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM KERKAM AND TAKEN ON PAUL ST. MARTIN'S ATLANTIC & WHITE MOUNTAIN RAILWAY.- PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS BY JIM KERKAM



READERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO TRY OUT OTHER ROLLING STOCK AND SCALES. THE MODERN CAR LETTERING SCHEME IS SHOWN HERE ON CHRIS CARFARO'S "BAD ORDER" DETAILS WEST 50' INSULATED BOXCAR. CHRIS ADAPTED THE DOWNLOADABLE DECALS TO SUIT HIS FREELANCED RAILROAD, THE NORTHCOAST ELECTRIC. MANY SUITABLE MODELS ARE AVAILABLE.

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