

THE NER COUPLER IS THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION OF THE NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION.

INSIDE NER COUPLER

ON THE COVER

A C & O ALLEGHENY COAL DRAG APPROACHING WHITON BRIDGE.

BY GLENN GLASSTETTER

GLENN'S PHOTO IS PRESENTED HERE AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A NEW GALLERY OF RANDOM PHOTOS FROM MEMBERS OF THE NER. SEE PAGE 10 AND LOOK FOR GLENN'S PHOTO.

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www.nernmra.org

NER) COUPLER

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C OPEN DOEHR

JOHN DOEHRING

PRESIDENT, NORTHEASTERN REGION, NMRA

THIS NEXT ONE ... IS MY TRAIN



T's been six years now since I received the call – from then NER President Scooter Youst. For personal reasons, Scooter was stepping aside from his position, and asking me to step in to the role of Region President. Unexpectedly, the job, the possibilities and potential – and all of the headaches - were mine. Didn't see that coming.

I'd run for the NER Board of Directors in the previous year with three main thoughts: 1) I'd learn more about the association, how it worked, and to serve our tribe of scale railroaders, 2) I'd participate and do more (my sense was that the Region had lots of untapped potential), and 3) the job would be more relaxed, with much less to do than in the division trenches.

I was wrong about the third one. In fact, the more I looked the more I saw – things we could (and should) do at the Region level. The convention pipeline was weak, the website old, governance structure disconnected, outreach and membership expansion absent, and our regional volunteer team just too small. So much to do.

The Region Board agreed, and further agreed to meet more often (six times per year instead of four), at least until we'd 'caught up.' That took three years. We have together accomplished a lot, but there is of course so much more do - to improve the experience and value for individual members - where steel meets the rail.

Serving as NER President was unexpected, but it's been a highlight of my hobby - and my life. I've enjoyed (almost) every minute of it. Candidly, I'm not really ready yet to go - but NMRA Association rules prevent me from continuing as a Region President, as I now to step into the role of Eastern District Director on the National Board of Directors. And so, we'll hand the reins of our team off to Bob Dennis for a while this summer and fall - and then to your new President Ed O'Rourke at this year's NER Convention.

I've received many thank yous — and lots of positive feedback - for our regional work these last six years. Truth is, I personally have done almost none of it — and certainly none of it alone. There are a dozen or more key folks on the Region team who deserve the real accolades — committee chairs and managers, area directors, and others who have taken meaningful action to move our initiatives and ideas forward. Beyond these, we've had a three or four dozen others who've served as division presidents or superintendents during this time — each of them doing the important work of serving local membership. I won't list them all here, but I am most grateful to all of these leaders -

for their contributions and their commitment. Finally (and at the risk of leaving someone important out) I can't miss a chance to thank deeply, a handful of very special individuals who have played a close and personal role with me during this time - in particular Peter McKenney, Chip Faulter, Bob Dennis, Dave Insley, and Chuck Diljak. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you for the phone calls, late night discussions, candid suggestions and critiques, emails and texts — all of it. (I especially miss the no-nonsense, 'what-the-heck-are-you thinking!' get-it-done voice of Chip Faulter). Without all of you, ... well you know.

To be fair, I'm not really going anywhere – I will still be here to ask, bug, pester, and cajole more of you into joining us in our volunteer and leadership journey - division, region, and beyond. But now my duties will shift, to looking out more broadly across our national and (indeed international) association, and the larger issues and opportunities that lie ahead.

So, let me leave you then with these two thoughts:

First, as you may have heard me say before, I believe the real magic of the NMRA is people. 'We come together through our shared love for trains - but stay together through our shared love for one another.' People that make this thing go – our association, our hobby, our world. People sharing, caring, and supporting one another. So, you - do that.

Second, and as our friend Andy MacVie, Superintendent of the Western New York Division reminds us so well, when you think of the Association, both its good stuff and not so good stuff, remember that 'we' are 'they,' and that 'them' is 'us.' 'I am the NMRA.' Repeat that in your head a few times — and over and over until you really get it. And then, you - go do something about it.

Hi Green! John





Hey Canadians, don't forget,

YOUR MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES THE PRINT

VERSION OF THE NER COUPLER

in your mailbox!

Email the NER Office Manger, Mark Harlow at nerofficemanager@verizon.net and say "Please put me on the mailing list for the NER Coupler"

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

CHRIS CARFARO EDITOR

The best tech support Is no tech support.

There are places in this world for challenges, and places where you want the challenge to be completed before you get there. For instance,



when I make a cell phone call I open my phone, punch in the numbers, press a button and say "hello", that's it. I don't need to know how it all works because I paid the great and glorious Wizard of Verizon to figure it out for me, before I even turn the phone on.

So why is it when we purchase an electronic device for model railroading we have to practically become an electrical engineer to understand how to use it. This drives me insane.

I work in the model railroad world. I do DCC installations, do phone tech support for model railroading products and build electronic devices (yup, I'm the guy who builds DCC Specialties' RRampmeter). You would think I have the workings of various DCC components down. Sure I do. Except for the times when I don't and usually it's because of incomprehensible instructions for a given product.

I sincerely believe that the person who designs the electronic device should not be the one to write the manual for it.

The designers should be required to explain the device to some other person not connected to the model train or electronics world. A person who does not know what the product is for or what it is supposed to do. I do not mean that the instructions should be written to a common mental denominator, and not as if you're explaining it to a child. NO, write your instructions like you're explaining it to an

intelligent adult who will notice that you've used the terms "steam" "vapor" and "exhaust" interchangeably when you mean only one of those things. I have to wonder if manufacturers rush through the development of the instructions so as to get the product to market quicker.



This is a wake up call to our glorious suppliers of electronics. I want your tech support barely necessary. I want your products to enhance our model railroading experience. I want your success; to be able to make an income for you and your employees. And to accomplish those goals, I want you to re-write your manuals. Make is so that we do not need a degree in engineering to understand your language and please, proof read the damn book. Wait, no, have someone else proof read it, not you.

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division spotlight

Compiled by Chuck Diljak



Planning. That is all it takes to get from where you are now to where you want to be in acquiring a modeling skill. Ed Olszewski lays bare the planning steps you should take in the February issue of Red Markers, the newsletter of the Central New York Division.

Also in the February issue, newly elected Superintendent of the division, Drew James, explores the abandoned Syracuse and Chenango Valley Railroad.

The May issue of Red Markers, the newsletter for the Central New York Division is dedicated to one of the division's great modelers, Brian Curry, MMR. Brian held many roles in the division over the years, including Superintendent and AP Chairman. Brian was also the division's first MMR. You will find touching tributes and photos of his outstanding work in this issue.



Richard Newmiller, a Master Model Railroader, shows us how he kitbashed the Micro Engineering city viaduct and deck plate girder bridge kits to resolve the complexity in finishing an area of his layout in the spring issue of the Whistle Post, the newsletter of the Garden State Division.

The division's resident Tool Man, Jim Walsh, focuses his attention on various rotary tools has found over the years in the same issue.

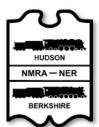


You may have noticed an East Broad Top engine house during the NERx Model Showcase in April. In the May-June issue of The HUB Headlight, Russell Norris, MMR takes you through the construction of his model in Part 1.

Also in this issue, Mike Dolan wraps up his 2 part article on the construction of the

Whitman-Southern Coal tipple by setting the model in place on the layout and building up the scenery around it.

Erich Whitney also wraps up a 2-part article on "Turnout Control with Signal LCC" in this issue.



Hopefully, most model railroaders know who John Allen was. Irwin Nathanson, President of the Hudson Berkshire Division provides an overview of the impact John had on this wonderful hobby in the March issue of Form 19.

John was so inspirational that a new member in the division has been building a reincarnation of

his famous Gorre & Daphetid layout. Randy Decker even has a Facebook page where you can follow along. Or, stay tuned to future division newsletters and events!

This issue also has Part 2 of Robert Mohowski's article on Lake Champlain's last railroad drawbridge. And, Ken Nelson continues with his tips for operations in Part 4, focusing on hand and whistle signals.

In the April issue of Form 19. Richard Smith has part 1 of an article on the Milwaukee Road's Sparta station in this issue, discussing the changes made to the prototype over the years.

Part 2, in the May issue of Form 19, focuses on the construction and painting of a model kit of the station from HRM Laser Models. Keep an eye out for part 3!

Also in the May issue of Form 19 is part 6 of a series tips for operations by Ken Nelson entitled "Working the Local Freight".



modelers are working on,

John Socha shares what is on the wall of his layout room in the Lakeshore Limited, the newsletter of the Lakeshore Division. John was inspired by what he saw during Gordon and Jeanne Spalty's layout tour during NERx, last December. To get ideas for your wall, you can read John's story in the March issue.

If you read the first two parts of Jim Fairbanks article on his AZER Railroad, you will find Part 3 in this same issue. Jim talks about handlaying track in his Bowie Yard. He did so because commercial track was unavailable for his needs and he can use it for the Achievement Program's Civil certificate.

The issue also starts another multi-part article. This article series covers Mike Pyszczek's HO scale B&O Buffalo Division layout. In Part 1, Mike covers the track planning and construction of his layout. You caqn find Part 2, entitled a "Move Toward Operations", in the May issue and covers operations and updates.

There have been a lot of layout tours during virtual events. And some feature video taken with a camera car. Dave Durr shows you how he built one in three evenings from a camera from Micro-Mark, an Athearn Blue Box gondola, and styrene shapes, also in the May issue.

There is one more article to note in this issue. Richard Senges, MMR published an article on "Improving Commercial Pine Trees."

> The April issue of The Switch Tower includes a couple stories of interest.

The first is a how-to article by Master Model Railroader, Tom Oxnard. Tom walks you through how to make

foreground trees using Super Trees, sage brush and leaf flock.

Also in this issue is a heart-warming story of two layouts finding a new home instead of being dismantled after the owner has passed away. Dave Sias tells the story.

On a personal note, I can't express my appreciation enough to Chuck Diljak for pulling together news and events across all the divisions AND providing the NER Coupler with all these reports in one column.

Chris Carfaro, Editor

The NER has two new Master Model Railroaders. Congratulations to



Jim DeMarco, MMR #678



Chuck Diljak, MMR #682

BECOMING A MASTER MODEL RAILROADER IS NO SMALL ACCOMPLISHMENT THE NER COUPLER WANTS TO CELEBRATE THESE MODELERS IN A MORE ROBUST MANNER.

WATCH FOR INTERVIEWS WITH BOTH OF THESE GENTLEMEN IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE NER COUPLER.

CONNECTICUT

Edward Rhys

MASSACHUSETTS

Michael Musen Brian Thomson Richard Carlson

MAINE

James T Boldway

NEW BRUNSWICK

Christopher Turnbull

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Raymond Derosiers Rick Xavier Thomas Ryan

NEW JERSEY

Stuart R Keil

NOVIA SCOTIA

Wayne Woodland

NEW YORK

Evelyn Meredith Sue E Peppers John E Lloyd

QUEBEC

Richard Larocque

RHODE ISLAND

David Guinther

VERMONT

Ben Elmore

NER Coupler Submission Deadline Dates:

NEXT: AUGUST 15TH FOR OCTOBER ISSUE (THIS IS A CHANGE)

NOVEMBER 20th FOR JANUARY 2022 ISSUE FEBRUARY 20, 2022 FOR APRIL 2022 ISSUE

TIMETABLE

as compiled by Jack Lutz alton_house@yahoo.com

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES
NORTHEASTERN REGION / NMRA ALL POINTS USA & CANADA

EVENT DATES	EVENT LO	CATION / TRACK
July 4,	CANCELLED: The NMRA 2021 National Convention	Santa Clara, CA
July 17, 2021	Seacoast Division NMRA 2021 Summer Event	virtual
August 1-8, 2021	National Convention	Lawrence, KS
August 3-7, 2021	2021 NASG National Convention	Amherst, NY
August 6-7, 2021	N-Scale Weekend	State College, PA
August 7, 2021	Summer Open House	Hingham, MA
August 13-15	Key Lock & Lantern 48th & 49th Annual Convention	Carbondale, PA
August 15, 2021	2021 Annual Concord Model Railroad Show	Concord, NH
August 16-21, 2021	Big Train Operator Club Convention, Cleveland, OH	Cleveland, OH
August 17-19, 2021	Annual Sn3 Symposium	Albuquerque, NM
September 1-4, 2021	41st Narrow Gauge Convention	Hickory, NC
September 19, 2021	21st Annual Train Show	Taunton, MA
October 2-3, 2021	Rochester Model Railroad Club Annual Open House	Rochester, NY
October 2-3, 2021	Railfair 2021	Boxborough, MA
October 2, 2021	Southern New England Model RR Club Fall Show	Gardner, MA
October 8-11, 2021	Mill City 2021, NMRA Northeastern Region Convention	Westford, MA
October 17, 2021	The Great Batavia Train Show!	Batavia, NY
October 19-22, 2021	2021 Members Meeting of The Railway & Locomotive His	College Station, TX
October 23, 2021	Seacoast Division NMRA 2021 Fall Event	TBA
October 30, 2021	The Great Northern New England Train Show	Dover, NH
October 30-31, 2021	Fall Model Railroad Show & Open House	Hingham, MA



MOVING OPERATIONS OUTDOORS by Stan Ames

The basic purpose of any railroad is to move cargo and/or people from one place to another, quickly and efficiently. The railroad gets paid for moving cars, so maximizing the number of cars moved over the line per hour results in a higher payoff. This concept forms the basis of operations done on most model railroads that perform operations.

Like the prototype, cars must be moved from a specific pick-up location to a specific drop-off location. To aid this procedure, cars are picked up from industries and taken to a yard where they are grouped into blocks going to distant places. Through trains pull these blocks of cars to some other location, where they may be put onto local trains for delivery.

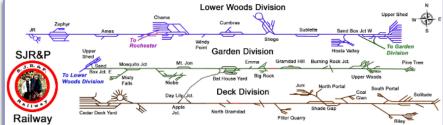
Operating outdoors allows for many concepts that are more difficult to achieve in indoor operations. First there is the large space, then there is prototype weather conditions to contend with and many owners remove their cars from the layout when it is not in use. Operations outdoors also often tend to combine social gatherings with railroad operations.

Garden Railways have evolved over the years. Typically they started out as a loop or two in the garden where trains ran in loops continuously. Over the past 30 years, although a large number of them may still have a loop hidden somewhere for these railroads, operation is the key concept.

Operations: Many different styles for operations exist. Some people use JMRI or other software based

operations. These programs generate switch lists at the beginning of an operating session for train movement that define where a given car is to be picked up or placed. Some railroads use the concept of car types as a method of operations. This is when strings of cars are moved to various industries. For example, put out 3 box cars at industry X and pick up 2 gons from industry Y. And, still others use a full waybill system. For example, on Al Pomeroy's Rio Grande Southern of New Hampshire. (photo on the right ▶) There are two major switching locations. One is in the basement and one in a barn. Between these two sections the











▲ VISITING MOTIVE POWER FROM AL POMEROY'S RIO GRANDE SOUTHERN



▲ ALL PHOTOS BY STAN AMES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

railroad is outdoors and traverses a number of iconic Rio Grande Southern bridges and contains a few additional switching locations.

The SJR&P is a relatively large layout that has evolved over 30 years of operation. On the SJR&P trains are prioritized as either a through freight with a few quick stops, or a local freight that may block the main line while they switch cars at the industries. Passenger trains have priority over all freight trains. A final consideration in the operation is dictated by the grade of the track. Uphill trains can lose traction and stall so they take priority over like trains heading downhill.

One unique feature of the SJR&P is that for the long distance trains, there is a lot of distance to travel between switching locations. It takes a lot of time to get from one point to another, which provides the crew with a sense of actually operating a train and eliminates the need for a fast clock.

Working on the Railroad: Because of its size the SJR&P has allowed job positions to evolve.

Agents: At the major yards Agents assign cars to various trains and assist the train crews in constructing switch

lists for their collection of waybills. Between train departures the Agents perform the function of switching the yard in preparation for the next arrival or departure. A train is operated by a crew of two, the engineer and another person who handles the waybills, the turnouts and communication with the dispatcher.

Train Crews: When a crew is ready they check in with the crew chief who assigns the crew a job and provides the necessary paperwork.

As with the prototype a train crew is provided a stack of waybills and then constructs a switch list to organize car movements. Before leaving the yard the train crew calls the dispatcher for clearance to leave. Along the way the crew will pick up or drop off cars at designated points as appropriate. Combining switch lists with waybills is an attempt to provide a more realistic operating environment. The crews have to think in advance about how to organize their train so that as they pick up and drop off cars along the way switching moves are minimized.

Dispatcher: All movement outside yard limits is controlled by the dispatcher. The dispatcher's job is to maximize the number of cars passing over the road while following the priority rules. Since the SJR&P is a single track main line with passing sidings, planning and coordination are needed for trains to meet and pass at specific places. A map helps the dispatcher predict where meets and passes will happen, and all the while keeping track of the clearance orders he issues to control train movements.

So what's it like to actually operate on the SJR&P

Narrow gauge steam rules on the SJR&P. The size of the scale and length of the mainline help to slow down the movement speeds. Whether you are running a passenger train, a through freight, or a local freight, you will find your size limited due to steep grades and sharp curves. All of which is prototypical for narrow gauge railroads.

Not to mention, very enjoyable.



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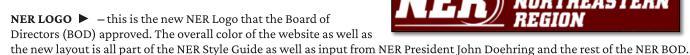


The New NER Website

The new NER Website has been released in time for the Triennial Election of Officers and Directors for the NER. This article will cover an over view of the website and some of the new features now available and those coming in the future.

THE HOME PAGE of the NER website has a new menu at the top, the new NER Logo, a picture slider featuring various images, a quick access button bar, an "Important Message" area and the latest message from the President of the NER.

THE MAIN MENU ► – This is a stand menu that responds to your mouse or point device by displaying submenus items if there are any. Submenu items go from NER red background to white background when you hover over the item. In this example we hovered over the "About Us" menu item that displays the sub menu and we are now hovering over the "Contact Us" submenu option. To select the option just click the menu item.









■ **PICTURE SLIDER** – This is a collection of various pictures that have been donated to the NER. If you have any pictures you wish to donate or share with the NER please make sure to add a short description as well as provide your name and contact information and send them to the NER Webmaster at webmaster@nernmra.org . Please include in your email that you are donating the pictures to the NER and we have your permission to display them on the website.

QUICK ACCESS BUTTON BAR ▶



displays various Icons to allow quick access to popular or high demand pages within the NER website. The Election button will always appear in years when there is an election and after the Election page has been updated for the Election.

One very interesting button ▶ is the User button. Notice that in the example there is an arrow pointing into the User, clicking this button will take you to the User Login page. Once you have logged in the button changes to the User Logout button and takes you to the Logout Page.



IMPORTANT MESSAGE - this area is reserved for important message for the membership, announcements or other information that is of interest to the NER Membership. If you have an announcement or message for all of the membership of the NER please let the NER Webmaster know and we will see about placing your information here.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - this last area is reserved for the current message from the NER President. Check back often for any updates.

Well that is all the space I have available but in the next Coupler I will be going through some of the new pages within the NER Website. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments, suggestions or ideas. A lot of people worked hard on this new website and we are very proud of the work we have done so far. Thank you



WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD



JEFF HANKE

To Hi-Rail or not to Hi-Rail

Most of our layouts have areas where railroad employees gather. Where there are employees, there are company vehicles.

Most of our layouts have areas where railroad employees gather. Areas like roundhouses, interlocking towers and freight stations have concentrations of them. Where there are employees, there are company vehicles. Many of these vehicles are used by maintenance of way crews to take care of the railroad's physical plant. Some are also used as mobile repair stations for rolling stock.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF HANKE

tool storage for the crews driving them, while the bed provided a place for larger equipment. These pickups could be seen in either a highway or Hi-Rail version. Surprisingly, regular highway vehicles prevailed over the Hi-Rail version. I think this is due to the fact that most of the Chessie main lines had enough width next to them for a truck to drive.

In addition to the most common full sized pick up truck,



To Hi-Rail or Not to Hi-Rail

Maintenance of way vehicles come in two main types. There are highway vehicles that run just on streets and others that can ride on both highways and the rails. These dual purpose ones are called Hi-Rail vehicles. .

These MofW vehicles come in all sizes and shapes, depending on the railroad and the era. On the Chessie System in the early 1980's, the vehicles were mostly full-size long-bed domestically produced pick up trucks. Chevy and Fords predominated, but the occasional Dodge was seen. Chessie vehicles came in three main colors. Bright yellow prevailed, used in about 75% of the photos I've seen. About 20% were dark blue and the last 10% were white. The white ones were seen mostly in the late Chessie Era, 1984-86. A good portion of these trucks had utility beds instead of normal truck beds. These utility beds had six or more cabinets accessible from the outside of the vehicle and a small bed in between. These cabinets provided places for

Chessie also rostered quite a few Chevy Suburbans for crew movements. Probably the third most common MofW vehicle was the large flat bed truck. Most of these were seen with stakes on the side, but some were just flat beds.

Beyond these three large classes of vehicles, there were quite a few random one-off ones. I have seen a few vans, box trucks, short bed pick up trucks and even a short school bus. One of my favorites is a Chessie Western Maryland hi-rail four door sedan from the 50's, which looks like a Checker Cab!

Most of the Chessie MofW vehicles were pretty basic. Today, MofW vehicles are much more specialized with cranes, specialized tools, extra storage boxes, etc. Most of them were decorated for company service and otherwise were stock.

Any model railroad needs a few of these MofW vehicles parked around the company buildings. In my era, 1982, the Trident pick up truck and utility truck are excellent models. Also, they



offer a Chevy Suburban. Trident vehicles are also modeled in plastic and can easily be disassembled for painting into your railroad's colors. They are pretty easy to come by at train shows or eBay. I have done several yellow and one blue truck with their models. Another nice feature of being able to disassemble them is that you can add a driver into the seat if you want to.

The feature that makes Trident such good kits to start with is that the Details West HR-918 Hi-Rail guide wheel set. This small metal detail set includes two new bumpers with rail guide wheels. It also is made to fit the Trident kits and can be put on in a few minutes.

Vehicle Markings

Probably the most difficult part of doing a maintenance of way vehicle is duplicating the railroad markings on the cars or trucks. I tried using N scale decals, but they weren't the right size. I made my own with Microscale Decal film, which worked ok. However, the Chessie System decal on the door was not offered commercially until Steel Valley Models recently started making a great set. It covers yellow, blue or white vehicles.

Also, don't overlook these vehicles as great opportunities to detail the bed area. I usually add a tool, cone or acetylene tanks in them. It makes them appear more ready for work, then just being empty.

If you model the modern era, check on Shapeways for some excellent MofW vehicle bed offerings. There are ones for all sizes of trucks in all scales.

Sprinkle around some of these vehicles, but don't go overboard. In the Chessie Era, there were rarely more than two next to each other at any time in any location. They make for quick projects and fun details for your road.

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



TAKING PHOTOS for PRINT PUBLICATIONS



It is 2021 and most of us view photographs with some type of digital device. So it is not uncommon for people submitting photos to the NER Coupler to find out that their pictures are not ready for print.

1. IMAGES MUST BE 300 DPI OR HIGHER

Computer monitors and mobile

devices have screens that only require 72 dpi (dots per inch) whereas a print magazine will need 300 dpi.

- **2. COMPOSITION:** Look your photo over. Does a shelf in the background bi-sect the person's head? Is the overall photograph balanced? Have you tried a low angle shot?
- **3. DEPTH OF FIELD:** You often have the ability to blur the background of your subject through "depth of field". What that does is it makes the subject pop. You'll need to look this up but for instance, with a Digital SLR, when you set your aperture to the widest opening, the depth of field of focus can become very shallow. And if you're not sure, call me or email me, I'll help

AND IF YOU ARE NEW TO SUBMITTING TO A MAGAZINE,

whether it's regional like the NER Coupler or a national publication, PLEASE do not submit an article that you have sent to another publication. Once you send it to the NER Coupler, we consider it "an exclusive", for us to hold and use, unless you request it to be released. We work multiple issues out and it's quite frustrating for us when an article we've slotted shows up in another magazine or newsletter.

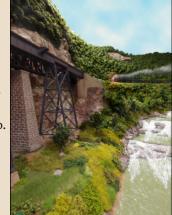
WRITE AND/OR PHOTOGRAPH FOR THE

Most content for the NER Coupler is

NER COUPLER

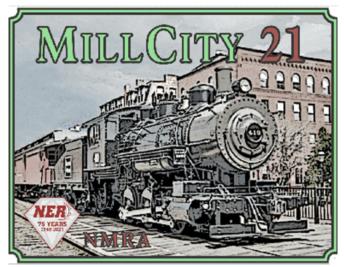
obtained from you, the membership of the NER. Right now we have the next four issues in layout form, ready to input articles and photos however, we are getting low on material for the September and December issues.

We would like to start a photo section, dedicated to inspiring scenes.
Thanks to Glenn
Glasstetter of the Green
Mountain Divison, for our cover this issue which showcases one such photo.
And, I'm sure there are more "Diamonds amoungst us" images out there to share. This is where you come in. Help us fill a page or two of



random photos. Gemstones, as it were, amoungst us.

Chris Carfaro, Editor



By Peter Watson

AS ONE OF THE FIRST POST-PANDEMIC IN-PERSON CONVENTIONS, WE ARE REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HOSTING YOU AND YOUR MODEL RAILROADING ASSOCIATES FOR WHAT IS SHAPING UP TO BE A GREAT CONVENTION.

By now, I expect that everyone reading this is looking forward to returning to a more normal lifestyle. This includes finally being able to get together with model railroading friends. In that vein, we are happy to report that planning for Mill City 21 is in full steam ahead mode. The committee is hard at work picking up where we left off a year ago when we had to postpone the convention due to the pandemic. The convention will be held at the Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center, located at 219 Littleton Road. in Westford, MA, over the Columbus Day weekend, October 8 to 11, 2021. As a plus, this also happens to be peak foliage time in this area. If you have never attended a region convention, now



PHOTOGRAPH BY AL POMEROY ON HIS RIO GRANDE SOUTHERN

would be a great time to try one out! You will experience a fun filled weekend of model railroading. There will be layouts to visit, operating sessions, clinics, visits to local historical sites, and of course the opportunity to make new friends who share an interest in trains and model railroading. For many of us, the annual convention is a highlight of the year. Try it, you'll like it! For those of you who have attended conventions in the past, you know how much there is to see and do. This one will be no different. Keep reading to discover what we have planned to keep you busy.

Operations

Operating sessions have become more and more popular at region conventions. The whole reason for trains is to move goods and people from one place to another. If we are going to model them, it makes sense to also model their raison d'être. There will be operating sessions at the layouts of local modelers as well as several modular layouts in the hotel that you can sign up for during the convention.

If you are new to operations and are hesitant about trying it, we are establishing an Operations Mentoring program. If you are a new operator, you can sign up for a session and indicate that you would like to be assigned a mentor. This will be someone to help guide you through the session and make you feel at ease. Are you an experienced operator and would like to be a mentor? Just check that box on the registration form and we will pair you up with someone new, and you can pass on your passion and excitement for operations!

We will also be offering several clinics dealing with operations. These will cover a range of topics, from an introduction to operations, to selecting industries to enhance your operations and learning how trains move from one place to another. All to help you understand this fascinating aspect of our hobby.

Clinics



Nearly 50 different clinics have already been scheduled. We just added more clinic space to offer an larger slate of clinics to keep your interest during the convention. A sampling of clinics on offer are as follows:

Fay Chin will discuss ideas and examples for layout animation. This will include building animation models (including some 3D printed models) and how to use Arduino and electronics to operate the animations.

Outgoing NMRA President Pete Magoun, MMR, will explain how to model a prototype scene. He will walk through the planning and execution processes involved in creating a prototypical scene.

Barbara Hoblit will show us how to weather our models using makeup. She will talk about how to replace expensive art and model

railroading tools and products with inexpensive substitutes found in the makeup aisle.

Malcolm Houck will take us through the process of building a model steam locomotive in brass. He will talk about soldering and the tips, tricks, and shortcuts of a Master Builder.

Other topics include making an analog fast clock, learning about the Ffestiniog Railway (grandfather to the American two foot railroads in Maine), DCC, JMRI, Signaling, etc. We will have clinics to appeal to every interest and need.

Several extra-fare participation clinics are also being offered. Bill Brown, MMR, will guide you through the process of making a High-End Oak Tree. Andy Reynolds will detail the process of building the Bar Mills model of Magee's Tire Repair. Mike Tylick, MMR, will show you how to make stone walls. The popular DCC University is back in a two-part clinic with your hosts Erich Whitney and Kaylee Zheng. Erich will also be doing a clinic on basic soldering where each participant will build a power supply.

For a complete listing of clinics visit the convention web site at www.millcity21.org and check back as we will continue to increase the slate of clinics as the convention approaches.

Layouts



Layout visits are a big part of any convention. This is where you get to see other modelers work and learn how they built their empires. You get to talk to them and appreciate how they solved problems encountered during construction. It is a great way to take home ideas to try out on your layout. The area around the convention site is fortunate to have dozens of quality layouts within driving distance of the hotel that have been featured during local events such as Tour de Chooch and RailRUN. Some are open for operating sessions as well as visiting. Operating sessions and layout tours are listed on the web site.

James VanBokkelen's B&M Eastern Route: James models the railroad he grew up with, riding commuter trains to Boston, watching the local freight switch industries in his hometown and getting cab rides, (two authorized). Half the layout is very urban, the other rural with a country town. Like the prototype, his Eastern Route lacks steep grades. Freight traffic is mostly terminating and originating. Prototype track arrangements at West Lynn and Newburyport let locals work around a busy passenger schedule. Motive power, passenger and freight

equipment follow B&M prototype.

Southern New England Model Railroad Club: This railroad is a fictitious line named after the ill-fated Southern New England RR (referred to as the "Titanic Railroad"), running loosely from eastern Pennsylvania to Massachusetts and Rhode Island. A double track main line accommodates through trains and generates freight traffic from many online industries. Locomotives are serviced and trains are switched in the "Roland Roberts" main yard and then dispersed to other locations throughout the rail system. The state-of-the-art design provides a linear walk-around model railroad using the "mushroom" techniques to greatly increase running length (850').

Bruce Robinson's Valley Junction Railroad: The Valley Junction Railroad lies in eastern New Hampshire, beginning at the east end in Portsmouth and running westward through the towns of Tiverton, Franklin, South Royalton, Canterbury and Northfield and terminating in Valley Junction on the west end.

The VJRR interchanges freight and passenger traffic at Tiverton (Boston & Maine RR), Franklin (Valley Branch Lines) and Valley Junction (Central Vermont Railway). The time frame that the VJRR occupies is the decade 1955-1965. All the locomotives and rolling stock is representative of the New England region during this time.

Tours



Lowell Massachusetts is nick named the Mill City and is home to the Lowell National Historical Park. Lowell is often called 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 and when accessed by the canals, offered a transportation route to Boston. Rail and Trolley activity continue to this day.

Planned construction of the Lowell trolley system in September means the trolleys will not be available to us in October. We are planning a ranger led walking tour of the National Park main museums. We will begin at the National Park Visitor's Center where there is ample, free parking. Friday's tour will start with the turbine exhibit at the Wannalancit Mill and proceed to the Boott Cotton Mills Museum. We will also have a special treat where we will be allowed into the National Park Car Barn, an old coal bin that was rail served in the early part of the last century. Paid parking is available near each of the mills so please reach out if you are interested in this tour but would have challenges with the distances. From the Visitor Center to the two mills is about a half mile, so anticipate the total tour will involve about a

HAROLD RUSSELL AWARD ANNOUNCED FOR MILL CITY 2021

Beginning with Mill City 2021, the First Place winner in the Structure Model Contest at the annual NER Convention will

receive the *Harold Russell Award*.

Harold is Master Model Railroader #14 and is currently the longest serving MMR in the NMRA. He has been a revered member of the Lakeshores Division since its inception in 1962. He has served in officer and committee chair positions for many of those years, both at the Division and Region levels. Since 1959 Harold has had numerous articles with detailed drawings of structures, locomotives, and rolling stock published in model railroad magazines. His most recent article, "Lehigh Valley Freight Depot, Naples, New York" appeared in the January 2021 NMRA Magazine.

To honor his contributions to the hobby and service to the Division, along with his mentoring and friendship to its members,

Northeastern Region - National Model Railroad Association

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▲ All photos courtesy of Otto Vondrak

the Lakeshores Division proudly announces its sponsorship of this award.

Models will be judged according to the criteria established by the NMRA for national contests. The highest point total will receive the Harold Russell Award provided the model receives enough points for a Merit Award.

The Harold Russell Award will consist of a plaque and a gift (TBD) from the Lakeshores Division. A member of the Lakeshores Division will present the award at the NER Convention.



Mill City 2021 continued from previous page

mile and a half of walking.

We are also offering a "Gallery Crawl" on Friday. Lowell with its converted mills is home to a rich artist community. Deb Ames, HUB member and Chair of the Arts League of Lowell, will guide us on a tour of three galleries near the Lowell National Park Visitors Center. Join us for lunch, some fellowship and an overview of the day before embarking on a tour of the galleries. Maps will be provided for those that want to venture out to other galleries in the region. The cost of lunch will be the responsibility of each attendee. See the website for complete details. We will also



have a list of activities to do in the area, our favorite rail fanning locations in the general area along with other museums and attractions. One place of note is the American Heritage Museum located in Hudson, MA, about 30-minutes from the hotel. The museum chronicles the history of conflicts dating back to the American Revolution. They will be featuring a WWII re-enactment entitled the Battle for the Airfield. Admission is \$35. See the website for more details.

Socialising and Recognition: We will be offering a Friday evening reception with appetizers and cash bar. It's finally time to see all those friends in person for the first time in quite some time. The buffet banquet will be on Sunday night and will feature a presentation by Bill Moll, a retired CSX dispatcher with years of experience in the railroad industry, including time at the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway. Finally, on Monday morning, we will have an Awards Breakfast, where the Photo and Model contest results will be presented and NMRA Achievement participants will be recognized.

NER COUPLER SUMMER 2021

Simple enough to complete in a reasonable time, but complex enough to be a fun challenge



This is my summary of building two NERX Refrigerator Cars, including lessons learned and comparing some materials. If you're not interested in the "how to", then perhaps the discussion of materials used at the end will catch you.

Thad a couple of goals with this build. One was fun – this was simple enough to complete in a reasonable time, but it was complex enough to be a fun challenge. My other goal was to have a couple of unique (well, maybe!) cars to run the next time I'm involved in a Free-mo layout.

When the "Virtual" car was announced, I ordered two undecorated Accurail wooden reefers (yeah, I missed the suggestion to buy "data only" cars). These come with a body molded in brown plastic and sides in yellow plastic. It's still necessary to paint them but it makes coverage much easier for the yellow sides. After washing and drying the plastic parts, the first car was painted. The sides were covered with paint from an old Testors rattle can (Gloss Yellow, part #1214), and the body was painted with Krylon Colormaster Primer Red Oxide Ultra Flat 51317. I can't remember where I read about using the Krylon primer, but it works well. It's an appropriate color, easily available, covers well, but doesn't overwhelm the detail.

The first step was to make the artwork for the various lettering that would have come on the "data only" car kit. For hints about the dimensional data, I

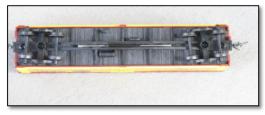
This is the template for aligning the decals on car 2022 – the side with six "boards" was used for "NER", and the side with two "boards" was used for "NORTHEASTERN



visited the Internet, including the NMRA Digital Archives, which has numerous pictures of cars similar to the Accurail wooden reefer. I looked at some pictures, including several Accurail models, and created graphics that looked right. I used a graphics editing program on my computer to enter the text, then used a drawing program to size it and print it. There was no formal measurement to the sizing – just a couple of test prints on regular copy paper, and then adjustments. After the test prints were to my liking, the dimensional data and Mike Tylick's decal sheet were printed on clear, half-page decal paper from Hobby Lobby. I taped the half-sheet of decal paper to a full sheet of copy paper. The "modern" car data at the bottom of Mike's decal sheet wasn't needed. Two coats of Rustoleum Matte Clear Enamel 285093 sealed the decals which was necessary because they were printed on an ink-jet printer. More on the decal paper later.

I assembled the body of car #1 first, then put the decals on. The first car is road #2110. While working on the second side, I damaged some of the decals on the first side. Fortunately, the decal sheet had extra copies of the NERX logo, so it wasn't a big deal to wipe off the damaged section and replace it. When things were dry, a coat of Rustoleum matte finish was sprayed on to protect everything.

I added the brake staff and brake wheel next. The brake wheel landed somewhere on my basement floor during that process, but it's offered as a spare part from Accurail and now I have five extras. I expect to need these, as these cars will be transported and handled for Free-mo layouts. I'm sure I'll knock several off. After adding the brake staff and wheel, I sprayed the red oxide primer onto a cotton swab and used that as a brush to paint these parts.



The underframe was built according to directions, except for substituting Kadee metal wheels and #5 couplers. Super Glue was used to attach the steel weight to the underframe; I hope it holds. A little extra weight was added between the fishbelly sills, using a piece of tungsten welding rod. This also lowers the center of gravity a bit. More weight helps when I manually uncouple cars – they're less likely to get knocked off the track.

For the second car, #2022, I added the brake staff and wheel before painting the body. Otherwise, painting was the same. On this car, I used MicroMark decal paper. I merged my dimensional data with Mike Tylick's onto a full-page decal sheet, also added a 2022 road number (maybe unique, if others build this too?), then printed and sealed the decals. These decals were applied the same way as on the first car, except that I used a jig to align the tops of the big decals. I also applied decals to the sides and sealed them before assembling the car.

I did not paint the area under the doors, leaving them the body color. Pictures of cars on the NMRA Archives site show many cars had this section painted black or the body color, but some did not, so I left mine unpainted.

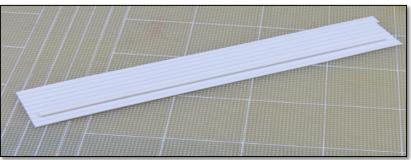
I added the reporting marks and road numbers on the ends of car #2 using some rather old Testors white background decal paper. Using the graphics program again, the information was entered in white letters on a red oxide background. The font was FreeSans, size 12, although it was later resized before printing. To match the background to the car color, I sprayed the red oxide car color onto a sheet of paper and scanned it. It wasn't a perfect match when it was printed on plain white paper, so I used another graphics manipulation program to darken it until the match was pretty close. Then, over the car color, I typed in "NERX" and "2022" using white "ink" in the graphics program. However, when this was printed on the glossy decal paper, the car color was off again. I went ahead anyhow since it was close enough. The paint used for the body is dead flat, so the area under the decals was painted with some very old DecoArt DuraClear gloss coat before the decals were applied. After putting on the decal, Delta Ceramcoat red iron oxide craft paint was applied around the edges to blend it in. It wasn't a perfect match, but this isn't a contest model either. It doesn't look too bad from a foot



away. I have ordered a rubber stamp with the reporting marks and several road numbers to try a different method. So that's how I built the two cars. Hopefully we'll have a Free-mo layout again someday to run them on!

The materials discussion I mentioned earlier will cover the decal paper, weight I added, and also a note about computer software.

I used three different sources for the decal paper – Micro-Mark, Hobby Lobby, and Testors. The first two were clear decal paper and can be compared. The other had a white



| Decal alignment guide, homemade |

background, was several years old, and really can't be compared to the others. The one thing I'll say about the Testors paper is that printing a color on regular copy paper and then on the white decal paper won't necessarily produce the same tint on both. With the clear decal paper (the black lettering), I expected there to be differences in the thickness of the decals and the ease of putting them on, but there wasn't any significant difference in those features. The car with the Hobby Lobby paper (2110) seemed to come out with slightly crisper lettering than the car with Micro-Mark paper. The same procedures were followed with both vendors' paper; printed on the same printer, sealed with the same clear-coat, decaled with water from the same tap, and finished with the same bottle of Micro-sol. There could have been variations in how long things dried between sealer coats, how much was sprayed on, and how much Micro-sol was used. So, it's a topic for further research someday.

When it comes to adding weight to cars, I like to use tungsten in various forms. Steel is cheap but some people use magnets in the track, and the steel can be attracted at the wrong time. Copper is slightly denser and easily purchased, but it usually comes on a roll and I haven't had great luck straightening it. Lead is toxic – I avoid it. Tungsten is not toxic, and it's the densest metal that's easily available – close to twice as dense as lead, according to various Internet sources. So, it's possible to put more weight in the same space on a model. There are many shapes available – Pine Car Derby weights, fishing weights (good for covered hoppers), welding rod, and probably other forms. Pure tungsten welding rods are also easy to mount on the bottoms of cars, keeping the center of gravity low. Tungsten is more expensive than the other metals but the cost is a small part of most cars.

A final note on computer software. I use a Linux computer operating system. My basic graphics editor is "KolourPaint", which is similar to Microsoft Paint on Windows systems. My drawing program, used for printing, is LibreOffice Draw. I don't know what Windows program might be similar to Draw, and I don't know what the analogs for a Mac system would be for either of these packages. The advanced graphics program, used to darken the background of the end reporting mark in this project is GIMP, which is available for Linux, Windows, and MacOS.

If you've built one of these cars, I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. Thanks to Mike Tylick for the decal sheet and to the NER for the idea!

NER COUPLER SUMMER 2021 15

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