

THIS IS MODEL RAILROADING IN THE NER.

ISSUE 293 SPRING 2024

# **NER) COUPLER**

**THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION**

**NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION**



Mike Tylick, MMR shared this photo with the *NER Coupler* a few years ago. We've been saving it for an issue that lies between conventions. Thanks Mike for the inspiration. csc

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## NORTHEASTERN REGION - NMRA

[WWW.NERNMRA.ORG](http://WWW.NERNMRA.ORG)

# NER COUPLER

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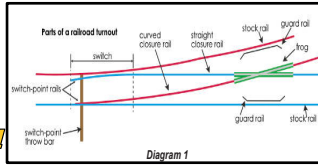
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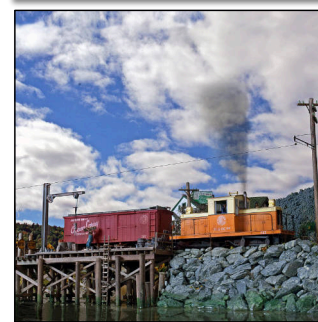
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### OUR COVER PHOTO

USUALLY THE COVER PHOTO SUPPORTS AN NER CONVENTION, OR RELATES TO AN ARTICLE WITHIN THE ISSUE. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES THE EDITORS TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HIGHLIGHT ONE-OFF PHOTOS BECAUSE THEY OFFER EXCELLENT EXAMPLES OF MODELING AND ARE ALWAYS INSPIRATIONAL.

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER MIKE TYLICK'S COVER PHOTO FROM HIS ON30 LAYOUT IS ONE OF THESE.

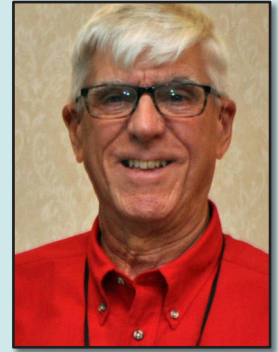
MIKE'S MARSHFIELD AND OLD COLONY RAILROAD IS A SWITCHING LAYOUT LOOSELY BASED ON THE FORMER STANDARD GAUGE GREENBUSH LINES ALONG THE MASSACHUSETTS SOUTH SHORE. THE FICTITIOUS LINE IS ESSENTIALLY COMPLETE AND FEATURES MANY SCRATCH BUILT PIECES.

# TRAIN ORDER #11

## ED O'ROURKE, MMR

PRESIDENT, NORTHEASTERN REGION, NMRA

The story goes that the pilots in the Pacific during World War II were given a case that they were to open only if they were stranded after ditching a plane in the sea.



The case contained a glass, ice, a vial of gin and another of vermouth, and an olive. They were instructed to put them all into the glass with the ice and immediately someone would appear and say, "That's not the way you make a Martini!", and they would be rescued. I can relate to this as a confirmed Martini drinker (4 parts Beefeaters, 1 part dry vermouth, and an olive, on the rocks). If you don't think this applies to model railroading, try mentioning the way you clean track in the lounge at a convention.

The problem arises when the abstract discussion turns into anger, name-calling, degradation, or worse. We tend to be very strong in our opinions. (Someone once asked me if there was a subject I didn't have an opinion about. I had to admit I hadn't met one yet.) We are all entitled to our opinions, but we must be careful about how we express them. We must remember that the other person is also entitled to his/her opinion, however wrong we may think it is. This is particularly true when we view other people's model work. Model Railroading is Fun! 90 years and counting, it still says so on the front cover of *Model Railroader*. We should never do something to interfere with another modeler's fun.

When Gordy spoke to us at the Cannonball convention, his speech was about "kindness." We must always keep kindness in the forefront of our interaction with other modelers. I'm a judge in school music festivals as well as at the National Convention Celebration of Models. When I judge, it is essential that I find something positive to begin and end the evaluation, no matter how difficult that may be. (I've heard versions of Weber's "Concertino for Clarinet" that poor Weber wouldn't have recognized.) That is the heart and soul of constructive criticism. "Here are some good points about your model. And here are some things you could do to make it even better."

The NMRA Board has adopted a Code of Conduct for Members. They have shared it with me and I have shared it with our Board and all Division leaders. It will be posted to our website and I have asked that it be shared with all members. I suspect that by the time you read this, it will have been printed in *NMRA Magazine*. You can view it in pdf format here:

[https://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/nmraorg/secy/2024\\_NMRA\\_Code\\_of\\_Conduct\\_0126.pdf](https://www.nmra.org/sites/default/files/nmraorg/secy/2024_NMRA_Code_of_Conduct_0126.pdf)

The statement within that I find to be the most important is:

***"Our collective goal is to enjoy and promote the hobby of model railroading, so we must strive to avoid "distractions" that interfere with or obstruct our common purpose. Collaboration and cooperation are vital for the success of our hobby and our enjoyment of model railroading and everything it has to offer."***

Every organized religion has some variant of "Love thy neighbor as Thyself." "Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto You." It's easy to do when your neighbor is your best friend, a lot more difficult when it's someone different than you, someone you don't like, someone you disagree with, or who scored ahead of you in the model contest. But try it. Be kind!

## A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

CHRIS CARFARO, EDITOR



What the hell is a “Love Language” anyway?

A number of years ago, I was returning to Vermont from a NER convention in the Albany, New York area. As convention activities go, I stopped and visited a layout enroute home. Henry Probst invited me and my traveling partners into his home and presented us to his layout. I was really impressed and when Henry came over to me (we hadn’t met before,) he asked what I thought. I looked at him and asked, “Can I bridge the float?” The grin that bloomed on his face was memorable.

More recently, again in Albany (is there magic there, or what!), I was invited to stay at Chuck Haley’s home while attending the GTE train show at the Empire State Convention Center. I was a casual acquaintance of Chuck’s. As we spoke, it became very clear we had a lot in common. In this case, a love of the Pennsy – its historical and technical society – and most importantly, the appreciation of the people around this hobby we enjoy. We had a great time discussing the use of places in our past that now occupy a place on our layouts. Chuck shared stories about the railroad-using-businesses of his childhood neighborhood, and how those places now have a scale home in his basement. I really enjoyed that. About that time, I was finishing up the edits of the January edition of the NER Coupler. When I gave him a preview of my “A View From the Bridge” column where I talked about the passing of Mark Harlow, he just about lost it (in a positive, heartfelt way.)

In January 2023, the NER hosted an informal dinner in Springfield, Massachusetts, during the enormous Amherst Hobby Show. I was seated next to Dennis DeAngelis, the president of the Sunrise Trail Division. I didn’t know Dennis very well, but soon we were talking. Who knew? We had some legal stuff in common. More specifically, we both did title work for real estate. I had been a title examiner for years in Atlanta before moving to Vermont. That opened one door between us. Later on, it was simply an appreciation and excitement about the hobby. That was enough to make Dennis more than happy to open another door and be my host when the Island Ops event in Long Island came around later that year, taking me on tour to layouts and hobby shops alike. (Dennis, I’m coming back, can we go to that bagel place again?)

I really enjoyed talking with Roger Oliver (Garden State Division.) We discovered we were like minded in our appreciation of traction railroading. We both really enjoy the elements of street track, overhead wire, urban industry and scenes around it. Roger sat me down for the first time at the Mill City convention, and then again at Connecticut Yankee just after attending my clinic on “Street Running.”

I’d also like to talk more with James Van Bokkelen. He was at that clinic too, and he too wanted to talk more. We still haven’t gotten to talk. (James, we need to meet!)

Henry Probst, Dennis DeAngelis, Roger Oliver, Chuck Haley and I were in the right place at the right time. More importantly, we listened to each other. Henry later said to me, “I knew you were into rail-marine modeling the moment you asked me to ‘bridge the float.’” Dennis and I had common experiences that led right into a comfortable groove, that later spread to electric guitars, 1970s Corvettes, and model trains. Roger? Geez that was too easy. Mention street track and we’re both moths to a flame. Chuck Haley wasn’t hard to get to know if you were willing to be curious. “That’s an unusual name for a passenger car...Oh, your dad?...” I can’t wait to see what jazzes James Van Bokkelen when we finally do have coffee.

All this is to say, be open to new people. These new folks may end up becoming your “peeps,” as my wife would say. The language we speak will sometimes draw us together, as we identify potential lost children of our tribes. Stop, look, listen! Then pay attention and listen again. You might hear your own kind of “love language” in the offhanded words of another. I can’t wait to see whose boat I float when the next time I ask someone if I can “bridge the float.”

## FRESH AIR, STALE BASEMENT

MAX BRISBEN, ASST. EDITOR



Some of my good friends, both in and out of the hobby, have recently expressed to me how difficult it is nowadays to meet new people and make meaningful connections.

In my opinion, it seems like there isn’t an easily accessible conduit to facilitate those kinds of interactions. A lot of us (I am talking about the under 35 crowd here) are burnt out, anxious, and depressed. Going out to a bar is overwhelming. If you do get there, what are you going to talk about? Of course, that is after you figure out how

to simply introduce yourself to someone. Many of us are single, but not interested in dating. Those who are in romantic relationships still feel this isolation, because a romantic partner cannot fulfill the type of camaraderie that good friendships provide.

This is where the NMRA could step in. I think we – as an organization – need to rethink the purpose of said organization. Previous generations had so-called “third spaces,” like Elks, Lions or Masonic clubs, or lodges, or places of worship, where people could gather and meet up on a regular basis. My generation does not have access to these spaces, as they don’t really exist anymore. We’re missing out on a key part of our socialization that is so important, and it is leading to these feelings of isolation.

I think the purpose of the NMRA going forward – if it wants to continue to be viable – is to market itself as an “inclusive third space,” where people can interact and build meaningful connections and not just have interest in scale modeling, but in electronics, trains, or anything else adjacent to the model railroading hobby. We could be a resource for scale modeling tips in general because of how much crossover in techniques and materials there is with military modelers and miniature modeling. We’re already there in terms of organizational structure. We have our usual meeting places and while the membership does cost money, meetings are free to attend! We should be publicizing our meetings and inviting anyone and everyone to come participate.

We are in a time period societally, where people are so isolated and divided, that people yearn for these third spaces to meet others, gain new perspectives, and have meaningful interactions. So, why isn’t the NMRA thinking sideways and meeting people where they are, and capitalizing on this moment? This is your organization. You – the individual reading this – have the power to make these moves.

### NER COUPLER SUBMISSION DEADLINES

May 20<sup>th</sup> for Summer issue (July release)

August 20<sup>th</sup> for Autumn issue (October release)

#### NER Coupler Reminders

1. Submission of articles and photos are welcome.
2. Most web links are omitted on the print edition of the NER Coupler due to their complexity
3. Website links are live on the web edition.



The Mid-Central Regional Convention

May 16th - 19th, 2024

Cleveland, Ohio

Early Registration and merchandise presale is now open.

# NEWS & EVENTS

## TIMETABLE

COMPILED BY JACK LUTZ - ALTON\_HOUSE@YAHOO.COM

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES POINTS NORTHEASTERN REGION NMRA USA & CANADA

DATES	EVENT	LOCATION / TRACK
<b>MOST EVENTS ARE MULTI DATES-ONLY THE FIRST DATE OF THE EVENT IS SHOWN</b>		
April 6	Lakeville Estates Civic Association Model Train Show	New Hyde Park, NY
April 6	Opening day for train rides	Danbury, CT
April 6	The Great Northern New England Train Show	Dover, NH
April 6	NVRRRA Open House	Shirley, MA
April 7	Rails Along the Mohawk Spring Model Train Show 2023	Amsterdam, NY
April 7	Model Railroad, Train & Toy Show	Ansonia, CT
April 13	North Shore Model Railroad Club Flea Market	Taunton, MA
April 13	Southern Maine Model Railroad Club Train Show	Westbrook, ME
April 14	The Great Batavia Train Show!	Batavia, NY
April 21	27th Annual Hooksett Lions Club Train Show	Hooksett, NH
April 26	New York Central Historical Society Convention & Mtg.	Indianapolis, IN
April 27	Northeast Large Scale Train Show	West Springfield, MA
April 27	Great Falls Model Railroad Club Spring Show	Topsham, ME
April 27	NMRA Central New York Division: Ops 'til You Drops	Syracuse area, NY
May 2	Annual Sn3 Symposium	Mesa, AZ
May 4	Opening Day for Biodiesel Trips to the Summit	Bretton Woods, NH
May 4	Annual Convention Rutland Railroad Historical Society	Bennington, VT
May 4	Opening Day at Seashore Trolley Museum	Kennebunkport, ME
May 9	Key Lock & Lantern Annual Convention	Carbondale, PA
May 11	Operating: Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington Rwy Museum	Alan, ME
May 15	Meeting- The Railway & Locomotive Historical Society	Pittsburg, PA
May 18	Massachusetts Bay Railroad Enthusiasts Granite State Special	Meredith, NH
May 18	Chester On Track	Chester, MA
May 24	Opening Day for Steam Trains to the Summit	Bretton Woods, NH
May 25	Opening Day at Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum	Shelburne Falls, MA
May 25	Opening Day at White Mountain Central Railroad	Lincoln, NH
May 25	Opening Day at Downeast Scenic Railroad	Ellsworth, ME
May 25	Opening Day at Cape Cod Central Railroad	Hyannis, MA
May 31	New England/Northeast Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet	Springfield, MA
June 11	46th Annual AARPCO Convention	Geneva, NY
June 15	Big Train Operator Club Convention	Bird in Hand, PA
June 15	Montreal Model Train Exposition	Montreal, QC
June 18	30th Annual National N Scale Convention	Bethlehem, PA
June 23	Opening Day for Trolley Rides and Museum Tours	East Haven, CT
July 8	54th Annual Lionel Collectors Club of America Convention	Omaha, NE
July 17	2024 NASG National Convention	Harrisburg, PA
July 21	Lionel Operating Train Society National Convention	Lawrence, KS

# NER DIVISION "OPERATIONS", LAYOUT TOURS & EVENTS

DIVISION OPERATION SESSIONS, LAYOUT TOURS AND OTHER NMRA EVENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CHECK WITH THE EVENT PROVIDER WEBSITES FOR UPDATES.



**CENTRAL NEW YORK DIVISION**  
**ANNOUNCES**  
**"OPS 'TIL YOU DROP" 2024**  
**APRIL 27 & 28TH, 2024**

The Central New York Division has set the dates for their 10th annual "Ops 'til You Drop" operations weekend for April 27 and 28, 2024. Anyone – novice or experienced in operations – is welcome to participate. Detailed info will be emailed directly to past participants. Those that never participated, but would like to be placed on that mailing list, should email directly to Bill Brown MMR at [LARCPRODUCTS@Yahoo.com](mailto:LARCPRODUCTS@Yahoo.com).



**SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION**  
**IN ASSOCIATION WITH**  
**THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**  
**"ISLAND OPS"**  
**INVITES YOU TO JOIN US**  
**APRIL 26<sup>TH</sup> - 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2024**

Sunrise Trail Division is delighted to put the word out in support of Island Ops 2024. With a great set of operating layouts this year, experience model railroads representing a single city block or several hundred feet long and everything in between. They range in era from the 1950s to today, from hectic urban canyons to the wide open west.

All layouts are within about an hour from central Nassau County on Long Island. There are four operating sessions scheduled on Friday evening, Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday morning.

We plan on having a special Saturday evening dinner to celebrate our 10th anniversary. For more information, email us at

[INFO@ISLANDOPS.ORG](mailto:INFO@ISLANDOPS.ORG) OR VISIT [WWW.ISLANDOPS.ORG](http://WWW.ISLANDOPS.ORG)

## New Members

Provided by Erich Whitney  
(62 new members since Nov. 2023!)

### CONNECTICUT

Richard Huck, Pat Temporale, Donald Ghostlaw, Alan Lagocki, Beverly Lagocki, Natalie Tegtmeier

### MASSACHUSETTS

Tom Beck, William Dix, Adrian Mendoza, Mateo Mendoza, David Mambro, Glenn Scudder, Al Daggett, Paul Marzilli, Eric Gouvin, Andrew Lizardi, Bruce Thatcher, Christopher Tonkin, David Rolle

### MAINE

Brian Libby, Paul Howard

### NEW BRUNSWICK

Brian Vroom

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Jerald Wood, Robert Prior, Robert Riotto

### NEW JERSEY

Phil, Zablocki, Jason Smith, Victor Schmitt, Gregory Rycharski, Eric Frohlich, Charles Frankel, Joseph Adamkiewicz, Edward Holder

### NEW YORK

Roger Miller, Richard Potter, Bradford Smith, James Murphy, Michael Frank, Joseph DiRocco, Karl Auerbach, Carolyn Withiam, Marie Albee, Suzanne Ackley-Perot, Dale Oswald, Phillip Brodgerski, James Evans, Eugene Zipprich, Michael Aikey, Mark Bachner, Paul Guarracini, Sean Wall

### NOVA SCOTIA

Jason Thompson

### QUEBEC

Yveric Patry, Marcelle Fortier, Patrice Larose

### RHODE ISLAND

Scott Converse, Thomas Lamoureux



**THE GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION**  
**ANNOUNCES THE FIRST EVER**

**"MT DIVISION LAYOUT TOUR"**  
**MAY 19<sup>TH</sup> 2024 • ONE DAY • FOUR LAYOUTS •**

**CONTACT ASST. SUPERINTENDENT CHRIS CARFARO IF YOU WANT TO ATTEND: [VERMONTCARFARO@GMAIL.COM](mailto:VERMONTCARFARO@GMAIL.COM)**

**NMRA National Convention**  
**Long Beach, California**  
**August 4<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>**



**LONG BEACH, CA 2024**

# USING YOUR EMERGENCY VEHICLES TO ADD CREDIBILITY TO A SCENE



BY CHRIS CARFARO  
(VERMONT AEMT #7)

A brick building constructed in the 1930s is going to look just as natural in either a steam or diesel era scene. The trick to establishing the era of that given scene doesn't always have to do with the buildings, but can also be tailored by two other factors.

The first factor is in the obvious choice of the locomotives and rolling stock. The second is not so obvious. Simply swap out the vehicles. And voila! You have time traveled from 1935 to 1976. This can work especially well with club layouts, when you have a "steam only," or "first generation diesels night." Ask the members to not only bring in their favorite locos and rolling stock – but make 'em bring in matching vehicles too!

In the January 2023 issue of the *NER Coupler*, Chuck Diljak shared a great model build of a Magnuson Models firehouse. I really enjoyed the article and ended up in discussions with other modelers about it. Several people were as inspired as I was, and we found ourselves asking where we might find not only the firehouse, but the details that made Chuck's station so extraordinary – details and vehicles that would add a time stamp to our own specific scenes.

To break it down, my layout lives in the northeastern USA during the summer of 1976. While looking for a small firehouse, I discovered a 3D printed version of Austin FD Station #4 on Etsy. A brick station like Austin #4 is perfect for any urban scene. However, 1970s era fire trucks and engines are a little more tricky to find. There are two Busch models available that are circa appropriate – an American LaFrance (ALF) pumper, and an ALF tractor drawn aerial ladder truck. However, I wanted a Hahn. What's a Hahn?



Photo courtesy of Deputy Chief Robert Beattie, North Plainfield FD.

Hahn was a major fire truck manufacturer out of Hamburg, Pennsylvania. When I was a Boy Scout in the 1970s, I'd often volunteer at the North Plainfield (New Jersey) Fire Department to wash and wax the "apparatus." My favorite was a white Hahn pumper, Engine Co. #3. With this engine as inspiration, plus some serious curiosity, I dove



Photo courtesy of Ralph Ratcliffe Models. An AMC Pacer Chief car? That's hilarious!

down a rather enjoyable "rabbit hole." It was one that led to some great discoveries.

## DISCOVERY #1 RALPH RATCLIFFE MODELS.

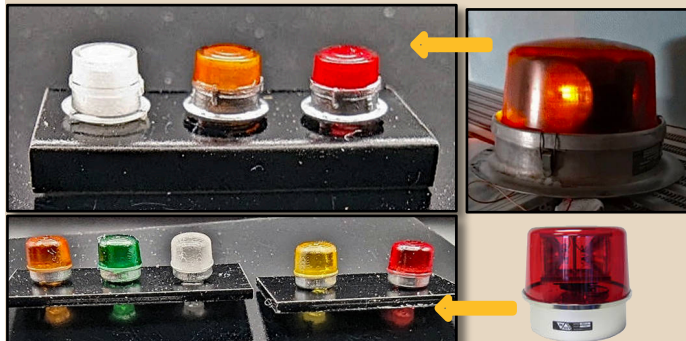
[Ralph Ratcliffe Models](#) specializes in HO scale cast resin trucks, parts, fire equipment, and accessory details. From Ratcliffe, I found a Hahn HCP-10 cab, body and a ton of detail parts. As a bonus find, they also carry details for the new station. The selection of building sirens alone is worth the visit to the website, not to mention quite a few late 1960s, '70s, and '80s vehicles that I'll be investigating soon.

## DISCOVERY #2 WARNING LIGHTS.

A great way to see 1970 era vehicles is through re-runs of the classic *Emergency* TV series from the 1970s. However, more recent is the new *Dark Winds* on the AMC+ streaming network. Someone at AMC+ did an excellent job sourcing and preparing the vehicles for the show. For my purposes, I took special note of the police, fire, and rescue vehicles selected, as well as their details. The main police vehicle appears to be an early 1970s GMC Suburban with a Federal brand roof bar (possibly a "VisiBar"). A second vehicle in the show is a late '60s Chevy Impala with either a Federal "twin beam" or a Tri-Lite brand "Mark 3" beacon. The vehicles you choose, along with the correct lights and sirens, will add serious "cred" to the "time stamp" of your scene.

Now here's the catch. Where can you find the beacons and sirens? A lot of details are at Ratcliffe Models, so don't skip them.

However, for rooftop beacons, I hit the jackpot with a web search and came upon [Fusion Scale Hobbies](#), in Cartersville, Georgia. I was also thrilled to discover a large selection of warning lights for rescue vehicles and locomotives from *Gotham Rail and*



Photos by Fusion Scale Hobbies. Model to the left, prototype to the right  
Top: Prime Stratolite, bottom: Tri-Lite Mark 3

### Marine.

In a future article, I plan to write about how I took these elements to create an amazing scene. But for now, I wanted to share the fun in sourcing the right parts and products, and show these enjoyable photos.

By the way, with my Hahn pumper secured, I'm thinking about a piece of equipment for the second bay: most likely a ladder company. Also, I recognize that my station lacks a hose drying tower. Perhaps I should give Fire Company #4 a means to training with a scratch-built hose rack that doubles as a repelling platform. Hmm, I'm really starting to enjoy this. 🚒



"Rescue 15" is an "Arrow Cab" kit with a rescue body by Ratcliffe Models.

The photo was taken by Chris Carfaro at the Big E train show in W. Springfield, Mass.



# LAKESHORES '24 - SEPTEMBER 19TH - 22ND

Lakeshores '24 is shaping up to be an outstanding experience for all model railroaders. From beginners to experts, to rail fans and non-rail activities, we've got it all. Within these next few pages is an exciting convention preview. We hope to inspire and encourage you. Plan now! Choose clinics, tours and other events to register, tailoring for yourself an unforgettable NER convention!

## RAIL EXCURSION



PHOTO BY MARK KLINGEL



PHOTO BY DAVE DURR

### Genesee Valley Transportation Rail Excursion to Medina RR Museum

Using ex-NYC RS-32 #2035 and ex-C&O and ex-DL&W coaches, the train will depart from the SUNY Brockport campus (27 miles, 31 minutes from hotel) and follow the former NYC Falls Road trackage to the Medina Railroad Museum and back. Included in the excursion package are at least one photo run-by, admission to the Museum, and a box lunch. In addition to the museum artifacts, there is a 14' x 204' HO scale train layout depicting Western New York (Hundred car trains are not uncommon).

## LAYOUTS

### Southern Pacific, Donner Pass Peter Darling ▶

This fantastic HO scale home layout will soon be featured in *Model Railroader* magazine. Peter Darling is recreating the Southern Pacific route through Donner Pass as it was in 1941. Almost all of the work was done by Pete himself. For additional information and images of the layout, please see Pete's description in the May 2022 issue of the Lakeshores Limited archived at the Lakeshores Division website <lakeshoresnmra.org>.

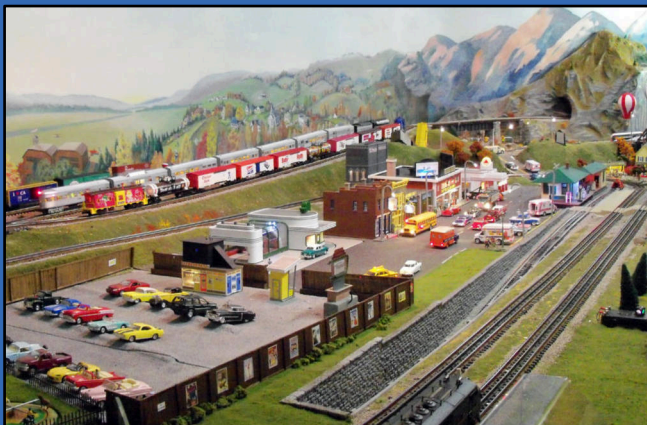


PHOTO BY PETER DARLING



### ◀ Four Seasons Layout Edgerton Model Railroad Club

This is a historic Lionel layout located in Rochester's Edgerton Recreation Center. It was started in 1950 as a project of the Police Athletic League. The layout was featured in the 1950s, along with the long-gone 1949 Lionel Showroom Layout, in several editions of *Model Railroading* (Bantam Books), and served as an inspiration for many of us young-at-the-time modelers. Now run by the Edgerton Model Railroad Club, the layout is owned by, and continues in space provided by, the City of Rochester. It is maintained through private donations. The club has maintained the historic flavor of the layout, while upgrading control systems, locomotives, rolling stock and scenery to current standards.

### Oil Creek Railroad Richard A. Senges, MMR

Layout Size—280 square feet; Track—100% Complete; Scenery—90% Complete; Control—NCE DCC

The Oil Creek Railroad is a free standing HO scale model railroad in Victor, NY. The layout is a series of museum quality dioramas, including the *Bath and Hammondsport RR* circa 1900 (grapes and tourists), the *Oil Creek RR* circa 1866 (oil), and late 1800s logging, lumber and coal industries. Track is Micro-Engineering Code 70; turnouts are hand-made using Fast Tracks jigs. All locos are sound equipped. Environmental sounds are by ITTC. The layout has been on national, regional and local tours.



Use your phone camera on this QR code for quick access to the Lakeshores '24 website!



PHOTO BY BRUCE SHEPARD

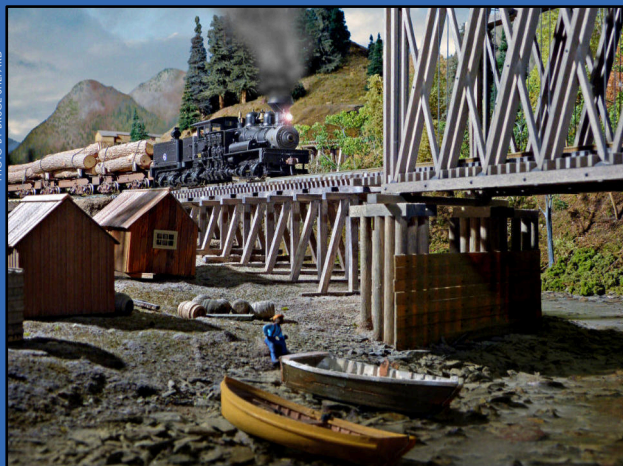


PHOTO BY BRUCE SHEPARD

**LOOK FOR MORE LAKESHORES '24 LAYOUTS, CLINICS, OTHER EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS, IN THE UPCOMING JULY ISSUE OF THE NER COUPLER**

**JUST IN... REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN! SIGN-UP AT [www.nernmra.org/conventions/](http://www.nernmra.org/conventions/)**

**CLINICS**

*AP Cars and the Benzini Circus by Gary Reynolds, MMR*

▶ This clinic discusses how to build a circa 1920s circus train and how to achieve an AP Cars certificate, while also discussing some of the history and stories about circus trains in



PHOTO BY GARY REYNOLDS

**Rails and Ringling by Dave Durr**

The Ringling Brothers “World’s Greatest Shows” and the Barnum and Bailey “Greatest Show on Earth” circuses were combined in 1919. For most of the next 98 years, the show traveled from town to town by rail. This clinic will look at the history of the shows, the development and evolution of the circus train, and modeling the RBBB train, from 1960 through the end of the line in 2017.



PHOTO BY DAVE DURR

**A CTC Machine for the CS&P by Drew James**

The Canada, Spokane & Pacific was designed and built to support operations. The CS&P uses a centralized traffic control (CTC) system to control train movement on the mainline. A replica Union Switch & Signal CTC machine was built and installed in the dispatcher’s office in 2020. This clinic provides an overview of:

1. Different traffic control systems, with a focus on CTC.
2. The functions of the machine and how the dispatcher uses it to route trains.
3. How the CS&P CTC machine was implemented.

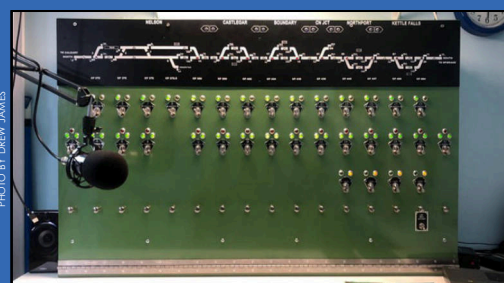
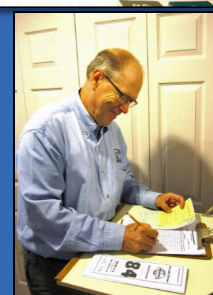


PHOTO BY DREW JAMES

**Timetable and Train Order Operations by Steve King**

Following high school, Steve spent a few years on the B&O and CB&Q as a train order operator and train dispatcher. After leaving the railroad industry, prototype-based model railroad operation has remained a hobby interest, and the building of five ever-larger Virginia Midland Railway layouts followed. Timetable and Train Order operation was a key component of each. Steve has also written numerous TT&TO articles, presented many TT&TO clinics and hosted more than 300 TT&TO operating sessions on his Virginia Midland layout. A move to Fayetteville, PA, has resulted in the fifth version of the Virginia Midland – an N-scale, 14-scale mile long version (35 miles with a 2.5:1 fast clock) that is operated regularly. This two-part clinic will cover the basics of TT&TO operation and conclude with several operating scenarios. There is enough to get you on your way to TT&TO operation.



**Bar Mills Make-and-Take by Andy Reynolds**

This clinic will teach the beginning modeler about the basics of working with HO craftsman model kits. This is also a refresher for more skilled hobbyists, giving them a chance to practice, and perhaps learn some new techniques. The goal is have you leave the clinic with a completed kit for your layout that is also suitable for AP judging.

Through a preview PowerPoint, we’ll review how the parts go together and in proper sequence. We’ll work on bracing, creating solid corners, painting and weathering techniques. We’ll also discuss how to finish off your diorama with the proper placement, forced perspective and scenery. You are encouraged to bring favorite kit building supplies. We will attempt to supplement your tool box. Bring along an X-Acto® knife or a similar cutting tool, some sort of square to hold walls at a 90-degree angle, mini plastic or metal clamps, and a variety of paint brushes and glue.

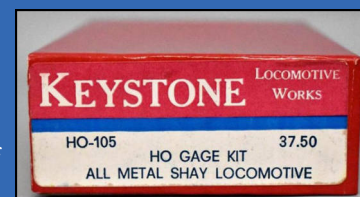
*There is an additional \$25 charge to participate, which includes the kit and materials.*



PHOTO BY ANDY REYNOLDS

**Inspiration to Reality: The Creation of a Model Railroad Kit by Linda Mortinsen**

Many of us old-timers, especially those modeling the logging industry, remember Keystone Locomotive Works as a premier supplier of locomotive, car and structure kits and parts. Linda Tompkins-Mortinsen of Keystone Locomotive Works plans to talk about what goes into making a kit or Ready-To-Run item. She will be bringing in examples of rubber molds and patterns, dies for plastic injection, and examples of laser cut wood and brass, while discussing the benefits of the various methods of fabrication.



**Modeling and Backdating an Existing Prototype Structure using Photography, Computer Printing and Foam Board by Jeff Paston**

This clinic is on how to backdate and build an existing structure, using photography, paper, and foam board. Jeff will use an O scale model of the 1936 Syracuse NYC station as his example... and show how He photographed the present structure, and turned those pictures into a model of the former station.

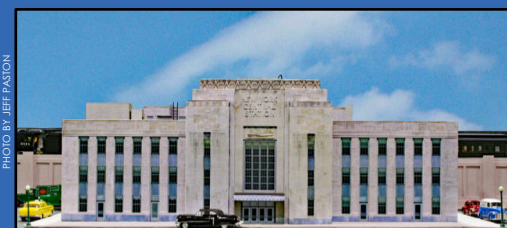


PHOTO BY JEFF PASTON



## LAKESHORES '24 Non-Rail and Model Industry Tour

### Genesee Brew House Tour – Friday 1- 3PM (Free, Limit 15)

The Genesee Brew House established in 2012, is a beer destination, featuring interactive exhibits, multimedia content, gift shop, pilot brewery, and pub-style restaurant. The Brew House was created to capture and share the long history of the Genesee Brewery – one of the largest and oldest continually operating breweries in America. The building itself was a packaging center on the original Genesee Brewery campus more than 100 years ago. It's been transformed into a special place that tells the story of brewing beer in Rochester, and is dedicated to the hardworking people who have brewed the iconic Genesee Beers for generations. After the 45 to 60 minute guided tour, consider enjoying a cold Genesee beer, perhaps a quick meal at the restaurant, and hitting the gift shop. There's a good chance you might even see a train on the nearby CSX/Amtrak mainline near the Rochester station.

Pre-registration on the LAKESHORES'24 Registration Form is highly recommended.



### Tours: NCE Corporation, Open House Friday 9AM to Noon

NCE, a well-known and premier supplier of DCC components, will host an open house at its suburban Webster headquarters. Meet the staff and see where product development, testing and distribution take place.



### WESTERN NEW YORK DIVISION, LAYOUT TOURS

Back in 2019, the Central New York Division hosted the NER annual convention in Syracuse. As part of that event, a Lakeshores Division (then new to the NER) self-guided tour of its layouts was organized. With this year's convention in Rochester, we're hoping that conventioners will take advantage of visiting layouts on Friday in our sister division to the west, the Buffalo area Western New York Division. Four fine layouts are on the schedule, including Frank Pastore's *Allegheny Central*, MMR Gary Reynold's *Grand Allegheny*, Steve Cotten's *North Central Oklahoma*, and Frank Battaglia's *All railroads*.



FRANK BATTAGLIA "ALL RAILROADS"



FRANK PASTORE ALLEGHENY CENTRAL



GARY REYNOLDS, MMR GRAND ALLEGHENY



STEVE COTTEN NORTH CENTRAL OKLAHOMA

PHOTO IN THIS PAGE BY LAYOUT OWNERS

### THURSDAY: SYRACUSE OPS SESSIONS

For those traveling from the east to Rochester for the convention, there will be opportunities for a stop in the Syracuse area for Op sessions on four fantastic layouts: *Drew James' Canada, Spokane & Pacific*; *Dave Martini's CSX Northeast*; *MMR Bill Brown's Denver & Rio Grande Southern*; and *Dick Hehir's Boston & Albany Central Division*. A short description of Dick's layout is included here; information on the other layouts plus scheduling details are listed on the convention website.



### Boston & Albany Central Division–Dick Hehir

94 miles, 1:35 from hotel. Operating Session–Thursday 12PM to 3PM (6 Operators). Layout Size–11' x 11' (plus staging); Track–100% complete; Scenery–80% complete; Control–Digitrax DCC with Sound.

The *B&A Central Division* is a freelanced layout representing a fictitious part of the Boston and Albany Railroad connecting the towns of Westfield and Millcreek. There are interchanges with both the *Boston and Maine* and *New Haven* railroads. Operators will have the opportunity to perform switching duties and to run trains over the main line during a low stress session on this finely detailed pike. This is a chance to see what a smaller layout can offer in the way of an operating session.

### THURSDAY: ROCHESTER OPS SESSIONS

If you happen to arrive in Rochester by late morning or early afternoon on Thursday, both MMR Jim DeMarco's *New York Central-Buffalo & Rochester* and Mike Pyszczek's *Baltimore & Ohio, Buffalo Division, 4th Sub* will be ready for operators. Here's information on the two layouts.



### New York Central-Buffalo & Rochester–Jim DeMarco, MMR

36 miles, 41 minutes from Hotel. Operating Session–Thursday Noon to 3PM (4 operators). Layout Size–40'x25'; Track–98% complete; Scenery–90% complete; Control–NCE Wireless.

A western NY-themed railroad set in the 1945-1955 timeframe, it was originally built as a roll-around layout for Jim's sons in the 70s. This layout has been raised to adult height and expanded multiple times into a basement-sized empire filled with highly detailed craftsman kit and scratch-built structures. Car forwarding is by switch lists and communication is face-to-face.

See Mike Pyszczek's information on the following page.

PHOTO IN THIS PAGE BY LAYOUT OWNERS





Mark Klingel is a 28 year old photographer and author now living in Buffalo. He has been interested in trains since his family took him to the Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. Once he saw one of its active steam locomotives in action – the Edison – Mark became fascinated with trains. Growing up in a quiet suburb outside of Detroit, Mark was active in the model railroad hobby with an O scale layout occupying his family’s basement. After graduating in 2019 from Albion College in Michigan with a bachelors degree in both Communication Studies and History, Mark began exploring the photographic side of his primary hobby.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Mark hit the road traveling around the State of Michigan photographing railroads, including a majority of the roads serving the Lower Peninsula. In 2021, he enlisted in the United States Coast Guard as an Operations Specialist. Between duty assignments, he began photographing America’s railroads in many parts of the country. After completing basic and specialized training in Cape May, New Jersey, and Petaluma, California, he was assigned to the Coast Guard command center in Buffalo in July 2021.

Since arriving in Buffalo, when not on duty coordinating search and rescue, pollution, marine safety, and law enforcement cases on the eastern Great Lakes, he can be found somewhere trackside. Mark has photographed the railroads of western and upstate New York extensively. Within the last few years, Mark has written three books about America’s railroads. One covers the tourist railroads of Northern California, another covers the short line railroads of Buffalo, and the third focuses on New York’s Finger Lakes region. All three books include high quality photos documenting operations

in the modern era as well as researched history on each featured railroad.

For *Lakeshores '24*, Mark will be speaking on Rochester area railroad stations, and more. Some of the stations and locations featured in his presentation can be seen in his newest book, *The Railroads That Built the Finger Lakes: From Fallen Flags to Modern Short Lines*.

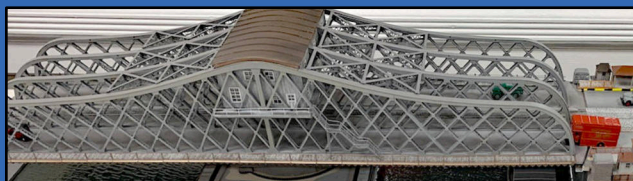
Outside of the Coast Guard and railfanning, Mark has remained active in the hobby through his membership with the Genesee Society of Model Engineers, the Western New York Division of the National Model Railroad Association, and the New York Chapter of

**THE CONTEST ROOM**

As usual, model and photo contests will be held. (Please see Mike Tylick’s article on the *Photo Showcase* on the following page.) For the past three years, the Lakeshores Division has sponsored the Harold Russell Award for the modeler scoring highest in the Structures category. Harold is MMR#14, a revered Lakeshores Division member and a recipient of both the NMRA President’s Award and the very prestigious NMRA Distinguished Service Award. Past winners of the Harold Russell Award were Tom Oxnard, MMR (2021, 2022) and Andreas Werder (2023). For a first time, the plaque will be awarded in 2024 on its home turf. Although Harold won’t be able to attend the convention, members of his family are expected for the presentation.



If contests are not your thing, *The Model and Photo Showcase* is a great opportunity to share your modeling and photographs without judging. This is a chance to offer a display of what is on your workbench and what is it that captures your interest and passion. For all you know, your work may be the inspiration that moves another modeler forward!



**THURSDAY: ROCHESTER OPS SESSIONS, CONTINUED**

**Baltimore & Ohio, Buffalo Division, 4th Sub–Mike Pyszczek**

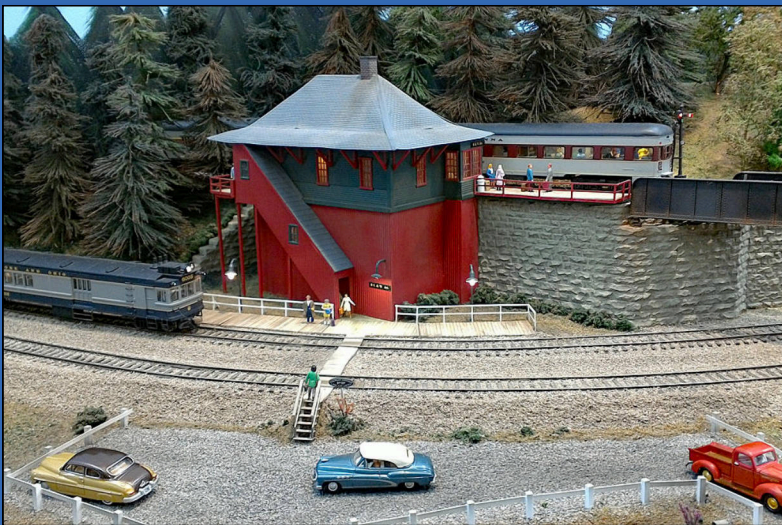


PHOTO BY MIKE PYSZCZEK

Operating Session–Thursday 2PM to 5PM (6 Operators).  
Layout Size–17’ x 25’;  
Track–100% complete; Scenery–90% complete;  
Control–Digitrax DCC/Wifi Throttle Server.

The *B&O Buffalo Division, 4th Sub* is an around the walls layout representing a part of the *Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railway* taken over by the B&O in 1932. Specifically, it focuses on the line from just south of Leroy, NY, through P&L Junction in Caledonia. This part of the railroad had three parallel roads within a few hundred feet of each other. The NYC “Peanut Line” converged with the *Erie Attica Branch* and the B&O in Leroy. The lines ran together until P&L Junction where they separated. Adding interest was the *Lehigh Valley* and *Genesee and Wyoming* presence at P&L Junction and the *DL&W* interchange just south of LeRoy.

*Lakeshores '24* has 12 layouts for which Op sessions are scheduled. See the convention website for information.

# A CELEBRATION OF IMAGES

By Mike Tylick  
Photo Contest  
Chairman



The Lakeshores '24 convention will feature a photo contest as part of the "Celebration" events. If the last few contests are any indication, the number and quality of the entries gets better with each convention. Even if you don't wish to participate, it's worth your time to visit the contest room to see the impressive submissions of both models and photographs on display in the contest room.

Digital and cell phone cameras have largely eliminated the technical skills once necessary to produce a fine photograph—it's now largely a matter of the photographer's vision and eye for composition.

Just about everyone has a few good ideas and a few good images inside them. If you don't feel the need to win a contest, our *People's Choice*

*Awards* are selected by attendees at large, rather than by the judges. There is a growing exhibition area where you can display your images for viewing without entering the contest. Please bring us your best work.

In addition to the four usual contest categories – B&W and color model and prototype photographs there are several unusual and interesting categories which seem to draw few entries:

**Panoramic images**- Simple to make now with modern equipment. Imagine the miniature and full sized locations you might photograph with a wide view.

**Working on the Railroad**- There are many unusual and traditional occupations that are



involved in the operation of today's railroads. And do they have to be of prototype workers?

**Fantasy**- one of my favorites. Feel free to let loose with elaborate image manipulations and subjects that could never exist in real life, in the distant past or perhaps even the distant future. Mixed media?

We look forward to seeing you at our Celebrations next autumn in the Lakeshore Region.

## NEW GATHERINGS: YOUNG MODELERS' LUNCHEON

Lakeshores '24 / Friday, Sept. 20, Noon to 1:30 –Hospitality Room

Any NMRA member who sees themselves as a *young modeler*\* is invited to join *NER Coupler* Editor Chris Carfaro for an informal discussion about NMRA membership. Chris is about to shoulder the NER Membership Committee and wants fresh ideas concerning member retention and new membership.

For instance, there is a thriving model railroad community on social media, which begs the questions, "What is it that brings people together online, but not in person?;" "Is it a "good ol' boys" perception of who the NMRA is? Or is it something else?;" "We had **62 new members** join the NER since November! Are we doing our best to make them feel welcome?;"

Let's talk frankly about what works to encourage new membership, while supporting our existing folks. How can we make a place for young minds at the "in-person" meetings and conventions of the NMRA?

**PIZZA** Pizza will be provided. Please RSVP to editor@nermmra.org, (so we know how much food to buy). And, if you forget to RSVP, no worries. Just come anyway. Questions and suggestions can be also sent to editor@nermmra.org.

\*You don't have to be a millennial to be considered a young modeler!

## THE HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION DISPLAY AT THE 2023 NER CONVENTION

BY HENRY KRAMER



The Hudson Valley Division developed a diorama building project to encourage and enhance members' enjoyment of the hobby.

Bob Yustein's diorama (Photo 1, below) represents the *Bath &*



*Hammondsport RR* in upstate New York. The Hammondsport station model is an old Muir Models "Wizards of Wood" kit. The HO scene was completed by adding track, scenery, and rolling stock.

While exploring the Erie Railroad Crawford Branch in Pine Bush, NY, Bob Earle found evidence of coal car unloading in the yard (Photo 2, below). He also found that two coal trestle dumps had existed nearby and met a man whose father unloaded coal cars "by hand" at



the same location.

Just after moving to the Hudson Valley, Henry Kramer started his diorama at a clinic held at the Catskill Society of Model Engineers in Liberty, NY. The participants were given a 12" x 12" foam

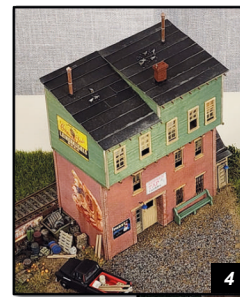
board, a piece of track, and a shed and handcar kit from Tichy Train Group (Photo 3, above right).

George Marshall's dioramas included the "Sidetrack Tap Tavern"

(Photo 4), which started as a Bar-Mills kit on a Gator-board® base. He enhanced the kit by adding scenic material, as well as various details, including pigeons on the building's roof. His "Stewart's Rods" (named after Rod Stewart) also started with a Bar-Mills kit (Photo 5).

John Noll built a replica of the Pennsylvania RR Freight Station in Linden, NJ, where he grew up (Photo 6). The model brought John many fond memories.

Dennis Colucci's diorama (Photo 7, below) is a 1' x 2' N-scale display that portrays a mid 1970s northeastern post-industrial city scene. His main goal was to practice techniques he wants to use when he gets around to constructing his own layout. All but one structure is scratch-built.



What is a turnout frog and why should we be concerned about powering them on our model railroad?

A railroad frog is a piece of a turnout that makes train wheels cross from one track to another. (See Diagram 1)

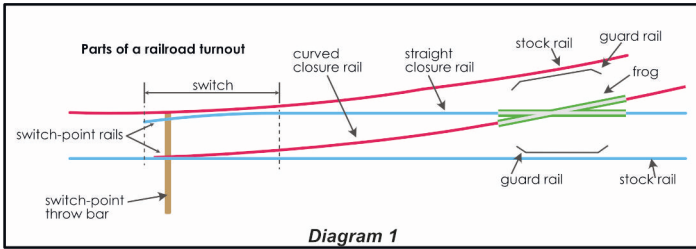
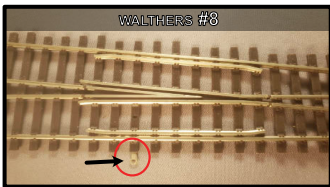
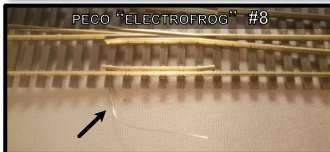
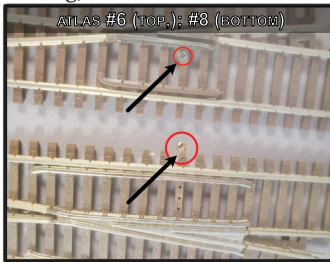


Diagram 1

The frog on a model railroad turnout typically has no power. So why is this an issue? It may not be an issue if you are running long wheelbase locomotives at high speed over short (low number) turnouts, or if all of your locos are equipped with *keep alive* circuits. However, if you run locomotives with short wheelbases at slower speeds over larger (high number) turnouts, or locomotives that don't have a "keep-alive" installed, you may find an unpowered frog affects smooth running of equipment, especially on sound equipped locos sensitive to power interruptions.

On my HO layout, my passenger station has ladders of Atlas #8 turnouts. The frogs on these turnouts are about 2 5/8" long. Moving slowly through the ladders, my engines show the effect of passing over unpowered frogs. The examples used in this article are for HO scale, code 83 track. But this information applies to other scales with minor alterations, as well as to both DCC and traditional DC wiring, except as noted.

So how do we solve this dilemma and power the turnout frogs? The four most popular brands of turnouts: Atlas, Peco, Micro Engineering, and the new Walthers all have provision for powering the frogs on their turnouts.



Atlas #6 has a tab that is integral to the frog. This tab does not take solder, so it must be tapped for a screw or have a wire wrapped around the tab. The Atlas #8 switch has a brass tab on its straight side. A wire can easily be soldered to this tab. (A note of caution: I have used many of these turnouts, and a good percentage don't have the tab connected to the frog. Since the connection point is embedded in plastic, this cannot be easily repaired. Test these before installing.)

The Peco turnouts have an approximately 2-1/2" 24g wire 'welded' (their term) to the frog. A wire can easily be attached to this wire. Note: there are three types of Peco turnouts: insulfrog, electrofrog, and the new unifrog, which is replaces the other two. The insulfrog cannot be powered.

Micro Engineering frogs have a pad on the bottom of the frog to which a wire can be soldered (not shown.)

The new Walthers turnout has a brass tab on the straight side to which a wire can be soldered.

Once we have decided to power the frogs, we need to be able to provide power that matches the polarity (DC) or phase (DCC) of the point and rail rails to the frog rails.

One of the simplest methods is to use a single pole double throw (SPDT) slide switch. This has the double advantage of controlling the points in addition to the frog power. This happens by connecting a wire from the appropriate side of the power bus to the outside terminals of the switch, and then a wire from the center terminal of the switch to the frog. Then mount the switch on the layout next to the point tie bar. A stiff wire (piano, brass or similar) can then be attached to the switch handle and turnout bar. When moving the switch handle, the points move, the slide switch is thrown, and the frog has the correct polarity. (See Diagram 2)

A variation of this method can be found in the Oct. 2023 issue of

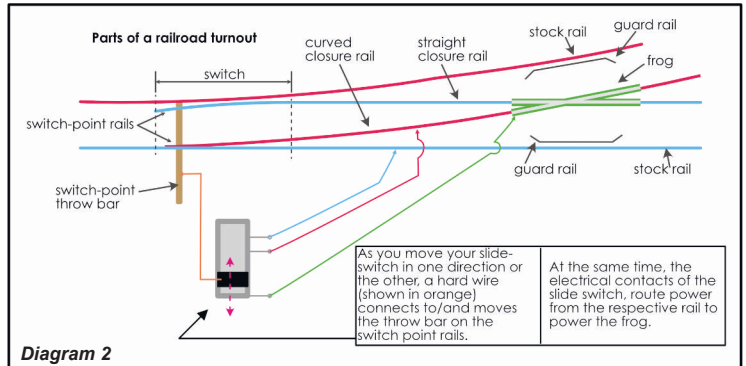
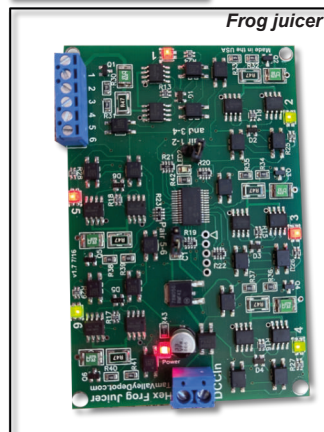
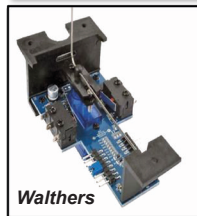


Diagram 2

Model Railroader. The author modifies a double pole, double throw (DPDT) switch and mounts it under the roadbed. His method takes quite a bit of work; but a DPDT switch can provide another pole for signals.



**COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS - Manual Throw:** An easy way is to power your frogs is to use manual switch throws, such as the popular Caboose Industries or Blue Point switch machines. These products, like a slide switch, change the polarity of the frog while moving the switch point

rails. The Blue Point switch machine is a bit more complicated, but has benefits. These are mounted below the roadbed and have the advantage of push/pull rods that can be operated from the aisle at some distance from the turnout.

**Powered Throw:** Moving up in complexity are powered switch machines. The most popular of these is the *Tortoise*™ by Circuitron. These are electrically powered and have two integrated SPDT switches with terminals on the bottom that can be used to power the frogs. The Walthers switch machines have similar capabilities. They have two single pole double throw switches, and also have an integrated DCC decoder, which can also be used with DC.

**Electronic Frog Control:** An issue to consider – regardless of which method you choose – is when an engine comes into the turnout from the end opposite the points when the points are not set correctly. As you might expect, a short circuit will occur and shut down the affected portion of the layout.

The solution is to use an electronic device that automatically changes the phase of the frog and/or moves the switch rail points into the correct position. These devices are only available for DCC layouts.

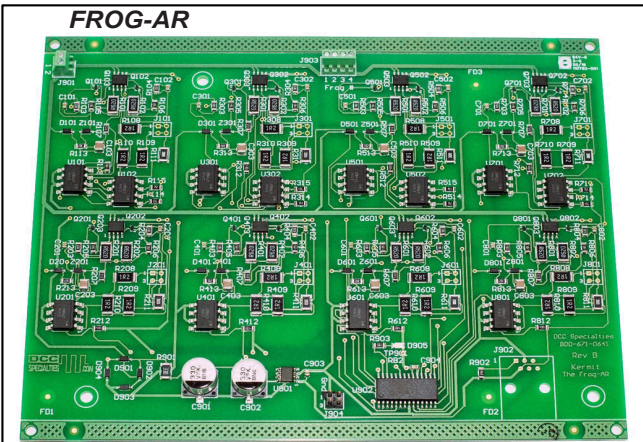
The one brand that set the standard is the *Frog Juicer*® by Tam Valley. These circuit boards are very easy to use. You connect them to the DCC power bus and then one wire to the frog and you are done! The device will detect if the electrical phase of the frog is wrong and will change it in microseconds. These come in single, dual (perfect for double crossovers), and six (hex) frogs per board. I have used these extensively and they work flawlessly.

One minor adjustment became apparent when first installing these. There was a conflict between the *Frog Juicer* and the DCC Specialties circuit breakers, *PSX*. The circuit breakers reacted faster to the short than the *Frog Juicer* did. This would cause a trip, shutting down the effected area. This was easily corrected by delaying the reaction time of the circuit breaker by changing a CV on

## Turnout Frogs, continued

the PSX. Even slowing them down, we are talking about microseconds.

DCC Specialties has released the FROG-AR®, its own version of this circuit. The FROG-AR is state of the art and has



capabilities I do not fully understand. But, I do not need to. It works perfectly using the default settings. The unit also has the ability to handle higher currents than the Frog Juicer, but in HO and N scales that is not an issue. It comes only as a four frog format and is substantially larger than the “hex” Frog Juicer.

There is an occasional question that arises over the use of electronic frog changers versus manual ones. Does the short circuit that activates the phase change in electronic frog devices (even being microseconds) bring a risk to DCC decoders or their programming? See editor’s note below. 🚂

Here is a quick look at the costs.

A 5 pack of SPDT switches are \$5.50 from Tony’s Train Exchange;

Linkage wire – nominal

Caboose Ground throw is \$4.95

Blue Point starting at \$15.95 at Micro-Mark (NMRA discount is available)

Tortoise lists at \$24.95

Walthers lists at \$20.98

Frog Juicer: mono \$16.49, dual \$39.95, hex \$89.95

FROG-AR \$79.95

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Given the question that Dennis raises about the effect of using electronic frog changers with DCC components, I felt due diligence was in order, so I brought this question to Erik Fisk of Tony’s Train Exchange, and owner of DCC Specialties.

To paraphrase, Erik stated that the FROG-AR has a built in circuit breaker that actually does more to protect the DCC components in your locomotive than risk damage. The real risk is when you rely solely on the main power system to shut down when a short occurs. For that, you really need zone protection at the track level like the DCC Specialties PSXX series. With the FROG-AR providing power to the frog and a PSXX unit protecting the overall zone, you have two levels of safety watching out for your DCC components. The FROG-AR and the PSXX are both current limiting devices which can be adjusted so that you can modulate the amount of current being used on the frog and the track zone.

You can learn more about this at the Tony’s Train Exchange website. Go to: News, Tips & Videos, click on “news” and type “frog” in the blog search field to find. <https://tonystrains.com/news/psxx-frog-ar-limit-current-save-lives/>

After talking with Erik, some of us in the office continued the discussion and decided that given the wide use of current keeper type devices, an unattended train is going to keep moving and shove right through the frog and the switch points whether they’re powered or not, and whether they are thrown correctly or not. So, yes! Protect your DCC components with zone circuit breakers and frog power units that are current limiting and back each other up. *Above all else...stay with your train and pay attention!*

by Chris Carfaro, Editor, NER Coupler 🚂



## LITTLE RHODY DIVISION AT THE ROGER WILLIAMS PARK BOTANICAL CENTER CHRISTMAS 2023

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY SUE OSBERG



▲ Christmas tree and poinsettias envelope the Little rhody trains



▲ custom button to “run trains” on demand  
▼ Little Rhody “Chowda” car



The Little Rhody Division partnered with the Roger Williams Park Botanical Center in Providence, Rhode Island, during the Christmas Holidays to set up two G scale model railroad layout displays.

In one conservatory, a Christmas train was set up around a Christmas Tree placed on a plywood base over a fountain. This was surrounded by white poinsettia plants.

In the next conservatory, we designed a ski/snow train layout that represented the old ski trains that ran from Boston to the ski areas in New Hampshire. This model included a flatcar with a ski rack that included skis and ski poles designed and built by Tom Emmett MMR. It also included the Little Rhody “Chowda” car, painted in Little Rhody Division colors. 🚂

# KIT-BASHING AN HO SCALE PULPWOOD TRUCK

BY MIKE WHEELER



As is true with most modelers, I enjoy building models of all types, not just train-specific models. I particularly enjoy building vehicles.

In the last decade, the range of available vehicle models has expanded greatly. This allows for modelers in all regions and eras to find and build suitable vehicles for their model railroads. However, there are still some gaps in what is needed to represent specific eras or regions.

In HO scale, manufacturers like Athearn, Atlas, Classic Metal Works, and others continue to close this gap. One way we modelers can fill our needs is to investigate the diecast toy market for suitable options.

Before you get ahead of me, I acknowledge that most diecast toy cars are not close to HO scale. Many cars and pickup trucks tend to be around 1:64 (S scale). But because all toy cars must fit in the same packaging, the heavy trucks tend to be on the smaller side with many near or exactly HO scale. And to top it off, many toy trucks represent makes and models not commonly available.

I recommend checking out the 1-87 Vehicle Club website ([1-87vehicles.org](http://1-87vehicles.org)). Its photo galleries offer great inspiration and are searchable. You can look to see what other modelers have done with Matchbox®, Hot Wheels®, and other toy car brands. Personally, I like to work with Majorette™ brand toy trucks. They are dead-on HO scale, and although they are no longer sold in the US, they are readily available at flea markets and yard sales for under \$1 (figure 1). Its GMC Brigadier (Chevy Bruin), Mack Superliner, and some of their other trucks and tractor-trailers make nice starting points.



Figure 1

For this article, we will be working with the Majorette GMC Brigadier. This truck was sold as a crane and tractor cab, in multiple colors. I will be building a pulpwood truck, but the construction techniques listed here are applicable to many types of trucks, and are very similar to building rolling stock.

## THE CAB:

To start our kitbash, we must first disassemble our donor toy (Figure 2). On the bottom, you will find one or two rivets to drill out. An 1/8" drill bit is appropriate. Once the rivet has been drilled out, remove the plastic chassis from the bottom of the truck and discard the plastic wheels and exhaust stacks. For this truck, the grill is molded as part of the chassis. You can either cut off the grill and re-use it, or make a new one from corrugated styrene sheet. Discard the rest of the plastic chassis. Some toys have an interior, so you can also keep that piece if



Figure 2

All photos by author

you'd like. My truck did not come with an interior, so I scratch built one.

With the truck disassembled, and using the rear part of the frame casting as a handle, I placed the model in a metal soup can filled with paint stripper overnight. You'll need something a little heavier duty than Isopropyl alcohol as a paint stripper. I used a citrus based stripper I found at Lowes.

The paint came off with a brass wire brush the next day. Any stubborn flecks of paint can be removed with a hobby knife or dental pick. With the paint stripped, our next step is to cut off the rear part of the casting. I carefully clamped the rear of the casting in my benchtop vise and cut behind the cab with a hacksaw. To ensure I did not damage the rear cab wall with the saw blade, I did not cut right next to the cab, leaving material to be filed off later. Note that some diecast cabs do not have rear walls, so you will have to be careful not to damage the cab sides.

With the cab cut free, I used a large flat mill file to remove the remaining material. When I was almost done, I switched to 120 grit sandpaper, then 220 grit to smooth the surface and remove any tool marks. You should now have a clean cab casting (Figure 3). For reference, Figure 4 shows our cleaned-up Majorette cab next to a newer style Boley (Walthers) GMC cab. Proportionally, they differ in the aero shape of newer vehicle styling.

With the cab separated, we need to add mirrors. I bent two pieces

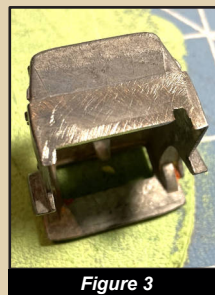


Figure 3



Figure 4

of .020" brass wire into a square U-shape, with .250" legs. I drilled corresponding holes in the cab: one at the top front corner of each door, and one .250" below that in the door. I glued one piece of wire on each side, being careful not to protrude into the inside of the cab. I cut two pieces of .015" x .125" styrene to represent mirrors and rounded all 4 corners of each piece, then glued them in place. I angled these pieces toward the cab, as is typical of truck mirrors.

Using CA, I glued two pieces of styrene to the inside of the cab to attach and support the grill. I also added a cross-member at the bottom of the grill even with the bottom of the cab's back wall. This ensures that the cab sits squarely on the frame.

My donor truck came with clear window glass, so I re-used it. If yours comes with another color, you can use it as a pattern to cut out window glass from clear styrene. For the interior, I used a piece of .040" styrene sheet as the base, and .040" x .125" to line the edges. I added two pieces of .040" x .250" as seat backs, and a piece of .100" x .100" as a center console, finishing with an



Figure 5

old freight car brake wheel as a steering wheel.

### **WHEELS:**

There are several model manufacturers who make suitable wheels for HO scale trucks. I used Herpa off-road wheels for my truck, but A-Line, Promotex, and others offer packs of wheels which can be found at multiple places online. Check that the axle diameter of your replacement wheels will slide into the 3/32" styrene tube we will use for axle housings.

### **FRAME:**

I decided to scratch build a frame from styrene bar stock, beams, and channel (Figure 6). This is much easier than it sounds, as the frame is just a rectangular box with a few cross members to stiffen it. The length is up to you. One thing I have found is that many available frames in HO scale are on the short side, so I tend to make my scratch-built frames longer to represent bigger, more prototypical trucks for the 1980s.

To start, I cut two lengths of .040" x .125" styrene strip to a scale 25 feet long for frame rails. I then cut five pieces 3 scale feet long for cross members. Use solvent adhesive to bond a cross member to each end of one of the frame rails, then bond the other frame rail to the other side of the cross members. Allow five minutes for the adhesive to set, then you can bond the remaining cross members in place.

With our basic frame box fashioned, we can now locate our front axle. I placed the frame under the cab casting and used a pencil to mark the center of the front fenders on the sides of the frame rails. Since I was planning on using bigger off-road wheels, I needed to add the illusion of suspension (figure 7, red circle). I did this by adding a second layer of .040" x .125" as shown. When this set, I filed a round notch in the center inline with my pencil marks. I cut a length of 3/32" styrene tube for the front axle and glued it in place in the notch. I did the same for the rear wheels.

Next, I made my fuel tanks (Figure 7, yellow circle). I placed the cab over the front section of the frame and butted it against the inside of the bumper. I marked where the front fender ended and where the back wall of the cab is located. I decided to make my fuel tanks as one piece matching width of the truck. This made the glue joints to the frame stronger with the tank serving as an extra cross member. I laminated a piece of .250" x .250" styrene to a piece of .125" x .250" making both pieces slightly longer than needed. Once the glue set, I sanded them to length, using my wheels as a reference for the vehicle width. I glued the tanks to the frame, using my pencil marks to guide their placement while keeping the tank centered on the frame. I also cut short lengths of 1/16" styrene rod, and glued one piece to each side of the tank to represent a fuel filler cap. With the tank in place, I added 1/16" styrene rod to represent drive shafts (Figure 9). I just cut the pieces by eye and trimmed them until they fit as shown. Since this is an off-road truck, I added a front drive shaft too.

### **PULPWOOD RACKS:**

With the frame done, we now move to making our utility body. I used styrene .080" I-beam and 3/16" channel to build the pulpwood racks. I added a length of I-beam to the top of the rear frame on each side, using the rear cab wall pencil mark as a guide. I measured between these pieces and noted the length. This will be the cross member length for our uprights. I then cut four pieces of I-beam a scale 8 feet long to make the uprights at each end, and cut six pieces of 3/16" channel to the length we measured above to make the cross members. I glued the cross members and uprights together to make the racks for the front and rear as shown in Figure 9, placing one cross member at

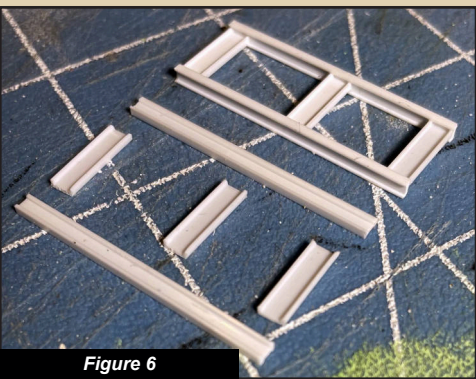


Figure 6

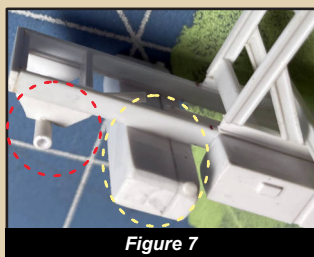


Figure 7

the top and bottom, and one in the middle. Once the joints on these set, I glued the racks to the frame (Figure 10). I also cut short lengths of I-beam, about 1/2" long, with 45 degree ends to use as braces for the front and rear racks. I cut 4 more pieces of I-beam, the same length as the axle width to make cross members and glued these to the top of the frame, spaced evenly between the racks. I also made a headache rack to go on the front rack behind the cab. This was two pieces of I-beam the width of the truck and two pieces of channel the height of the cab. Lastly, I glued a piece of .015" x .250" to the top as a shelf over the cab.

### **DETAILS:**

The remaining details were all made from styrene. I added two pieces of .015" x .250" over the rear wheels to represent fenders. Mud-flaps were made from two pieces of .015" x .250" styrene and a .020" x .060" crossbar. I cut two small discs of 1/16" rod to represent taillights. I added a toolbox (Figure 8) to the driver's side under the rack, using a piece of .250" x .250" as the base, two pieces of .015" x .250" as doors, and adding short lengths of .010" x .080" to represent door latches. For an open truck like this, the exhaust is usually routed under the frame as to not get damaged by any errant loads. On my model, this won't be seen, so I left it off. If I were building another type of truck like a van or flatbed, I would make a stack from brass tube, and install it just behind

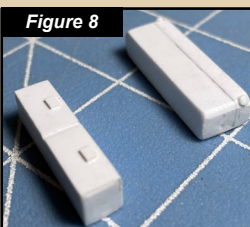


Figure 8

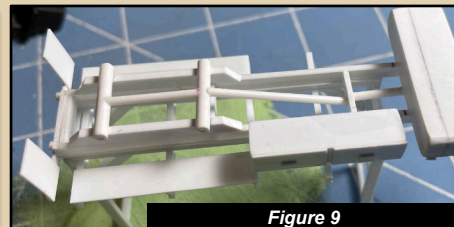


Figure 9

the cab on the driver's side.

### **PAINTING, ASSEMBLY, AND WEATHERING:**

At this point, we have a cab, frame, window glass, interior, and wheels. I cleaned all of these using warm water and dish soap and allowed them to air dry for a day.

Using Rust-Oleum® 2X series paints, I painted the cab gloss red, the frame flat black, and the cab interior camouflage flat tan. A day later, I painted the grill flat black and used a flat silver paint and small brush to paint mirrors, headlights, door handles, and hood emblems. One surprising aspect of many toy trucks is the amount of detail hidden by the thick garish factory paint.

Take your time highlighting the details to bring out a lot of prototypical character in your model. On the frame, I painted the fuel filler caps and toolbox handles silver, and the taillights red.

With the detailing complete, I began final assembly. I first glued the window glass into the cab, followed by the interior. I pressed all wheels firmly onto the axles and installed each axle into the frame. I then glued the cab in place and set the assembled truck aside to cure.

I kept the weathering light, working up in layers and building up the color in places that would normally collect mud. For this, acrylic craft paint was used to dry brush the frame, wheels, and lower cab. I applied a brownish mix to the tread of the wheels, then rolled the truck back and forth on a paper towel to remove the excess paint. This gave a nicely weathered finish without being too muddy.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS:**

While I did my build in HO, there are diecast trucks in all sizes for most scales and layouts. 1:43 and 1:64 are common scales for diecast cars, so O and S scalars should have many options. N scale is a bit trickier. Micro Machines made a few close-to-scale vehicles many years ago, which can be found at flea markets and tag sales. Whatever scale you are in, there are diecast vehicles you can use.

I think you'll find this is a fun, low-cost, and simple way to build some neat vehicles that make your layout stand out. While you evaluate a given model, keep in mind that even if the cab is out of scale, the body may be usable. Tankers, fire engines, ambulances, dump trucks, and more will all have some parts you can use.

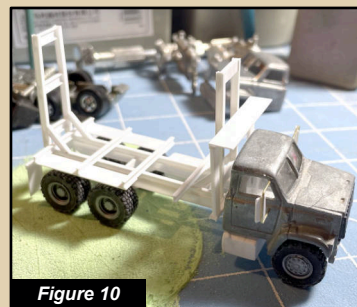


Figure 10

## WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD JEFF HANKE, MMR

Life is about changing. It's times like these that make me think of an old Patty Loveless song. Her lyrics go "Life's about changing, nothing ever stays the same..."



Some of you might have been wondering why my recent columns have been about doing small projects and not major news on the layout itself. Well, change came to our family in the form of a job offer in Florida that I couldn't refuse. Unfortunately for the railroad, it means a move to another state and a huge delay in its progress....or does it?

### PHASE I: PLANNING A MOVE

In early 2023, I started to prepare the Connecticut house to go on the market. I began in the basement with the removal of not only two rooms of dual level partially finished layout, but there was 80 feet or more of backdrop that needed to come down. Both rooms had the walls behind the layout and backdrops painted sky blue. I even had a hole between the two rooms connecting the sections. Taking down the layout seemed like a daunting task, but my planning from 20 years ago was about to pay dividends again.

When I started construction in 2004, I was a member of the Torrington Area Model Railroaders. They had a sectional layout that was designed to make transporting to shows easy. I used that same layout design concept at home. Each layout piece is 6 to 8 feet long and 2 feet wide. All of the wires underneath go through terminal blocks and could be easily disconnected. All trackwork that bridged two modules are either 6" Atlas track pieces or turnouts. There are three or four sections that already made a move from our original Connecticut house to this one in 2014. This construction technique is also speeding the layout's reconstruction now.

This sectional layout method not only saves hundreds of hours of work already invested in construction, but it makes transportation easy. I could move most sections myself and was amazed how quickly the layout came down. I constructed a horizontal rack for module sections to go in the truck, using spare lumber for the vertical pieces.

Next, I took every plastic bin and cardboard box I could find and packed up a staggering volume of completed roster, purchased kits, and associated tools.

### PHASE II: CLEANING UP THE LAYOUT ROOM

I spent the next few weeks patching and sanding holes in the Connecticut layout room. When I installed the backdrops, I had used two different methods. In the main room, I just glued Masonite or sheet plastic to the wall with Liquid Nails. This was a HUGE mistake! Although it sped up construction, taking it down was a mess to fix. In the other room, I had screwed strip wood pieces to the wall and screwed the backdrop to these wood pieces. Those sections of backdrop came down in less than a quarter of the time that it took in the main room.

After much wall repair and painting, and a month of weekends later, you couldn't even tell where the layout had been.

### PHASE III: MODELING IN THE INTERIM

To avoid losing too much time from the layout (while starting the new job), I set up a small hobby desk in Florida and brought some supplies. I used the time to complete my freight car and caboose rosters, adding some high quality vehicles, and building some needed structure kits.

For example, I built five pulpwood flat cars for the Berkeley Springs Westvaco facility, and I'm currently working on six carbon black covered hoppers for the Kelly Springfield Tire plant.

I plan on sharing the process of moving the layout, finding a new location for it, and getting it back up and running in a future column. Hopefully, this new version of the railroad – let's call it, *East End 3.0* – will be better than ever, and I will be hosting op sessions before too long.

I look forward to relating more on the newest East End going forward. Until then...keep on workin'.



## PROPORTIONAL DIVIDERS

Although, I've mostly tried to stick to either inexpensive or scrounged tools in this column, sometimes I just have to take out the wallet and spend a few dollars.



For working from photographs or drawings in oddball scales, proportional dividers are a godsend when you need to re-scale material. I can do this with only one measurement, usually a door<sup>1</sup> or a figure.

While it's possible to resize and distort most artwork to your modeling scale with a computer, one needs the software and the knowledge to do so. To be honest, the computer would often be my first choice. Proportional dividers may take a few minutes of trial and error to accurately set up for our small model building scales. But once the adjustments are locked, you are all set for the project. I would estimate that in the worst case my models are built to within a ten percent tolerance. As Steve Morrill would say, "Close enough for horseshoes and hand grenades." And certainly close enough for just about all of my modeling projects.

I purchased my pair from Micro-Mark (Part #14129) for under 30 dollars years ago during one of its sales. I was astounded to see they are now offering this well made tool for a reduced price of \$139.95! I know that may be pricey, since I found a number of proportional dividers available from Amazon at much lower prices. However, I keep in mind that I am sure you will get what you pay for.

<sup>1</sup> Doors are better. Most modern pedestrian doors are 6'8½" high (6'9" is close enough). The median height of an American male is 5'9" (close enough if this is all you have).

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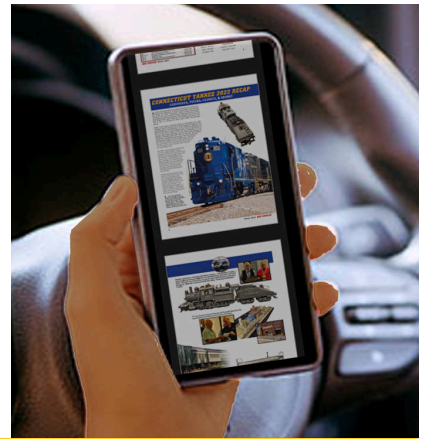
**CONNECTICUT YANKEE 2022 RECAP**  
CONTESTS, TOURS, CLINICS, & MORE!

A perfect combination of all of these has to give us a great year. As we look back on the year, we are proud of the many accomplishments of our members. There was a lot of creative ideas, lots of hard work, and the all-around great experience that we had. We hope you enjoyed the year, and we look forward to seeing you at the next one. We will continue to bring you the best news and information, and we will continue to bring you the best news and information.

Double awards for a Double Cab! Best in Show – the Eastern Trophy – went to Maurice Bouché (MMR) for his NY&W Class 5 Double Cab #118. This also won First Place in the Scratch-Built Steam Locomotive Category. Medalist in conjunction with Ken May receiving the Eastern Trophy.

Tom O'Connell received the Harold Board Award for his stunning Nicosia Chemical Company storeroom.

Winner 2022 NER COUPLER NER COUPLER Winter 2023



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(Erich Whitney is our interim NER Office Manager)

Coming up soon, Ben Maggi shares a great build of a service station. The interior details are not to be missed.



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