

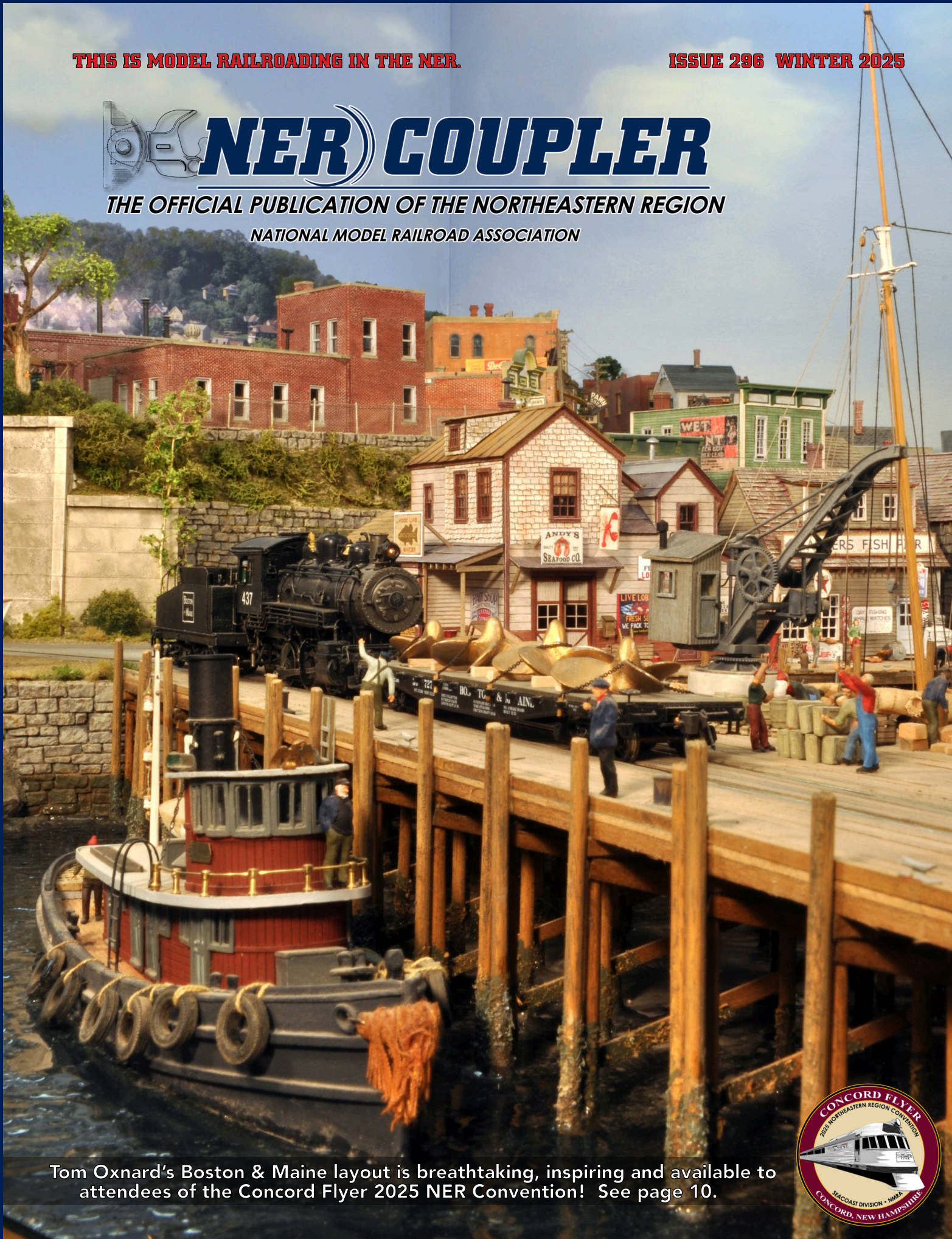
THIS IS MODEL RAILROADING IN THE NER.

ISSUE 296 WINTER 2025

NER COUPLER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION



Tom Oxnard's Boston & Maine layout is breathtaking, inspiring and available to attendees of the Concord Flyer 2025 NER Convention! See page 10.



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WWW.NERNMRA.ORG

NER COUPLER

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EDITOR

CHRISTOPHER S. CARFARO
editor@nernmra.org

ASSISTANT EDITOR

MAX BRISBEN
assteditor@nernmra.org

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

ERICH GOLSCHNEIDER, TOM OXNARD,
DENNIS DEANGELIS, WILLIAM DIGIUSEPPE
JAMES FAIRBANKS, DOUGLAS MARGISON
NICK SANTO

PROOF READERS

MAX BRISBEN, CHUCK DILJAK,
RICK MAZZOLA, DAN SHEPARD

FINAL COPY EDITOR

JEFF PASTON

CIRCULATION

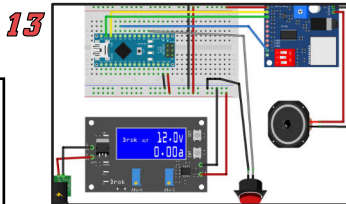
ERICH WHITNEY
nerofficemanager@verizon.net

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OUR COVER PHOTO

Tom Oxnard's stunning
Boston & Maine layout has
been featured many times
in the model railroad press.
The NER Coupler is
delighted to highlight it
again, not only as our
cover photo, but also as a
powerful introduction to
the 2025 NER convention,
the Concord Flyer.

Photo by Tom Oxnard



As I am writing this, we are in full
train show mode. Train shows are a
great place to show off our great
hobby and recruit new members.



The big show in my Division is at
the NYS Fairgrounds, hosted by
our local NRHS chapter. I hope to get
to the RIT show in Rochester and
maybe the Albany Great Train Extra-
vaganza of our Hudson Berkshire
Division. I hope your Division has a
table at shows in your area. If not,
why not volunteer to get it started? I've enclosed a photo from
the aforementioned show in my Division. It is of a young lady
switching cars on the CNY Division switching layout. She is
assisted by members Mark Withiam and Bob Verkuy. Who
knows, maybe she'll be a member someday?

Speaking of train shows, I hope you are making plans to
attend the Amherst Railway Society show in West Springfield.
At the show, the NMRA will be kicking off its 90th Anniversary
year! If you've never been there, I encourage you to spend a
day or two there. Where else will you find four big buildings
full of trains? I always go with a shopping list, but often find
something I didn't know I needed, but couldn't live without.
Mark your calendars for the last weekend in January and don't
forget to stop by the NMRA booth and say hello.

I want to thank Gerry Covino for his many years of service
to the NER as treasurer and convention registrar. And I want
to thank Bill Rutherford from the Green Mountain Division for
volunteering to take over the treasurer duties, and Cheryle
Insley of the HUB Division for taking on the role of
Convention Registrar and Treasurer.

Speaking of Conventions, make sure you have September
11 - 14, 2025, in your calendar for the NER Convention in
Concord, NH, hosted by the Seacoast Division. And don't
forget about NERx, coming to you March 17 - 20.

Judy and I have just returned from a trip to France. I got a
chance to ride the Train au Grande Vitesse (TGV) from Paris to
Lyon. TGV translates to "fast train," and boy is it ever. They
get up to 199 mph with a smooth, comfortable ride. Close-in
scenery and passing trains are just a blur. A great way to
travel.

By the time you read this, we will be past the holiday
season, so I will wish you a happy and productive New Year of
Model Railroading.

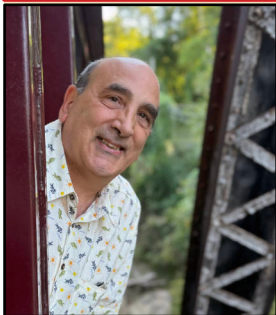
I Am The NMRA! 🚂





A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

CHRIS CARFARO, EDITOR



Let's start with a question. Do you remember when you got started in model railroading?

For me, it was when my brother Mark and I went to buy our younger brother, Andrew, a train set. Walking into the Model Railroad Shop in New Market, New Jersey, was so cool. However, the absolute hook was looking at the displays. I have never been the same since I was so blown away by the little scenes.

Exposure to model trains is huge and is sure to knock the socks off of a certain someone. The question is, "How to do we give people a glimpse into our incredible world?" In a word, *Tour de Chooch*.

Every year around December, a group of model railroaders in Massachusetts and New Hampshire open their layouts to the public. This year, I went to experience the *Tour de Chooch* to gather photos and video for the *NER Coupler* and for the Concord Flyer convention coming up this September. I visited eight of the THIRTY layouts and had a great time.

Exposing people to our hobby was highlighted to me at my last stop, Bob Gurley's Boston & Maine Railroad in Goffstown, NH. While enjoying the layout, a youngster approached me. "Excuse me, are you taking pictures for *Model Railroader*?" I chuckled, "no, I am with a small newsletter type magazine, here in the Northeast, called the *NER Coupler*." The kid seemed happy enough with that and began following me around the layout. It was sweet, so I decided to put him to work. I called to him, while catching his dad's eye. Dad smiled and gave me the 'okay' nod. "Yo, Sunshine! C'mere!" "Me?" "Yup. You. Today you can be my sunshine." He smiled and came up. "Can you hold this light for me?" "Sure!" came his reply. I shot some photos and showed him the effect of light and shadow. Specifically, how shadow can be your friend and bring realism to the picture. He was delighted and helped me with the photoshoot of the harbor section on Bob's layout.

I really think *Tour de Chooch*, and other groups with similar activities around the world are doing an immense service for our hobby. Can you imagine giving the public access to your layout? It is a very generous gift to the survival of the hobby. People love trains, and I want to give it to them; at museums, shows, and our homes. Here in the Green Mountain Division, we like to leave copies of train magazines in waiting rooms, along with a sticker stating who we are.

The world is stressed, and people need us. Let's open our homes and our hobby, and take notice when some little he/she/they is following you because they think this whole train thing is beyond cool. Who knows? For you, they held your sunshine for 10 minutes. For them, it just might blow their little minds and stir a passion for a lifetime. 🚂



▲ PHOTO BY CHRIS CARFARO W/ASSIST BY WILLIAM DIGIUSEPPE (AKA SUNSHINE)



FRESH AIR, STALE BASEMENT

MAX BRISBEN, ASST. EDITOR



Recently, I've taken up model railroading in the virtual sphere. Let me explain. There is a new computer game released within the last year called *Railroader*, which is a train simulator based in the transition era.

The game is still in early access, and while it has come a very long way, there is still so much incredible stuff

the small team of developers are working on. The game is based entirely on a single map, which models a slightly fictionalized version of the Southern Railway's Murphy Branch between Sylva and Andrews, North Carolina. If you're familiar with the Great Smoky Mountains Railway, this is the line they operate today.

I have a long history with using train simulators, and making content for them – both maps and models. I've previously been a texture artist for a small company that produced downloadable content for Microsoft *Train Simulator*, but I never took the time to learn how to use a 3D modeling software until *Railroader* inspired me to do so.

What makes *Railroader* so special to me is that it is the perfect combination of a realistic simulator and a tycoon game. The basic premise of *Railroader* is that you start off operating a 3-mile section of track on the Murphy Branch just after a major flood has cut off access to the rest of the line. You take on freight customers and run passenger trains to make money in order to buy more locomotives, company freight equipment, passenger cars, and materials to repair the railroad and expand service. I was pretty much immediately captivated by this concept, and after playing for a while, I wondered how can I contribute to this?

So, I learned how to use a 3D modeling software called *Blender* with the intention to make more freight equipment and locomotives for the game. In order to match the equipment that already exists, I had to learn how to make things as prototypically accurate as possible. This is where my HO scale modeling experience came into play because I know what things should look like and how they should be scaled. It also helps to have an accurate scale model of something in your hands when building a model in the virtual world. There's also the reverse benefit to this in terms of becoming more intimately familiar with a prototype. For instance, I now understand and can identify different boxcar ends, roofs, doors, and sides, which will be useful for building more accurate HO scale models.

Once I started building models in *Blender* and sharing progress on *Discord*, I found someone else in the community who was eager to help by taking care of the texturing and game implementation side of things because, honestly, I haven't the foggiest idea about how any of that works. Collaboration!

I hope to have my first publicly released piece of rolling stock available to download by Christmas – a pack of Pullman Standard 40 ft. PS-1 boxcars in three different unique flavors. I've also started working on other pieces of rolling stock, like a PS-2 2-bay covered hopper, a Borden's butterdish milk tank car, and a Rutland caboose.

If you are a fan of operating steam locomotives, running your own railroad, have a capable computer, and some spare time, I highly suggest checking out *Railroader*. It is available to purchase and download from – the coincidentally and unrelatedly named – "Steam" gaming platform. 🚂

TIMETABLE

Compiled by Jack Lutz: alton_house@yahoo.com

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

ALL POINTS NORTHEASTERN REGION NMRA USA & CANADA

DATES	EVENT	LOCATION / TRACK
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MOST EVENTS ARE MULTI DATE. ONLY THE FIRST DATE OF EVENT IS SHOWN.

Jan. 4	66th Annual Model Railroad Show	North Haledon, NJ
Jan. 5	The Fireman's Hall Train Show at Lindenhurst	Lindenhurst, NY
Jan. 25	Amherst Railway Society's Railroad Hobby Show	West Springfield, MA
Feb. 15	Maine 3-Railers Model Railroad & Doll House Show	Augusta, ME
Mar. 1	Rochester Model Railroad Club Annual Open House	Rochester, NY
Mar. 1	Bay State Model Railroad Museum Show	Rosindale, MA
Mar. 8	Vermont Rails Model Railroad Show	St Albans, VT
Mar. 16	The Fireman's Hall Train Show at Lindenhurst	Lindenhurst, NY
Mar. 17	NERx	ONLINE
Mar. 22	Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show	Wilmington, MA
Mar. 23	Kingston Model Train and Railroad Hobby Show	Kingston, NY
Mar. 29	Greenberg's Great Train & Toy Show	Edison, NJ
Apr. 25	The Great Northern New England Train Show	Dover, NH
Apr. 24	Annual Sn3 Symposium	Sandy, UT

NER COUPLER

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

February 20th for April issue
May 20th for July issue

NER Coupler Reminders

1. Submission of articles and photos are welcome.
2. Print edition subscriptions can now be purchased on the NER website. Visit: www.nernmra.com
3. The NER Coupler is also available online for viewing or downloading at no cost, on the NER website.

New Members

Provided by Erich Whitney
as of November 2024

CONNECTICUT

Bryan Ragaini, Carter Ragaini
Richard Huck

MASSACHUSETTS

David Patrick, Thomas Plancon
Lucia Cardace

MAINE

Greg Horan

NEW JERSEY

Derek Calderon

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Michael Sheehan

NEW YORK

Dale Flinn, David Dobson,
Kurt Zilles, Anthony Clarke,
Alex Bishop, Peter Diethelm,
Clarence Davis, Gary Hui

NEW BRUNSWICK

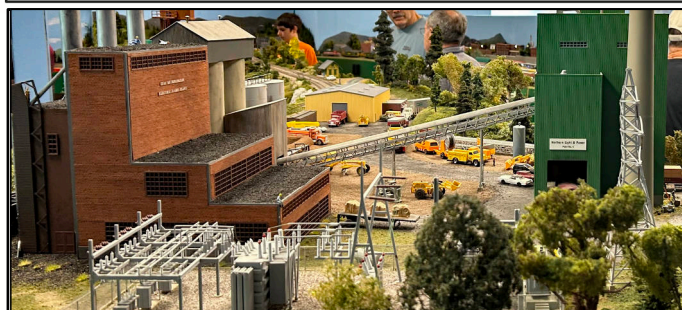
Gerry McCoy

QUEBEC

Christian Derosier

VERMONT

Donald Thompson,
Thompson Family, Paul Rogers



Friends of the Green Mountain Division, the NWV TRAIN SHOW, will take place in St. Albans Vermont. MARCH 8th, 2025. www.nwvrailroad.org

CONGRATULATIONS TO DAVE METAL

RECIPIENT OF THE NMRA PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR DIVISION SERVICE



DAVE METAL (RIGHT) PRESENTED NMRA PRESIDENT'S AWARD BY SUNRISE TRAIL PRESIDENT, DENNIS DEANGELIS.

The Sunrise Trail Division is proud that one of its members, Dave Metal MMR, has been awarded the NMRA President's Award for his contributions to the Division and hobby. Dave started in model railroading repairing Lionel® equipment and has continued to advance with it. He is very knowledgeable about DCC, Arduinos, and writing computer code.

Dave has been an extremely valuable member of the Division. He has

written countless articles for the Sunrise Trail newsletter, the *Cannon Ball*. He has presented numerous clinics at Division and Region level.

He served on the Sunrise Trail Division board for many years. In the true spirit of the Master Model Railroader designation, Dave has always been available to share his knowledge with others. Now in his 90s, he is as sharp as ever and continues to participate in Division activities.



March 17 - 20 6:30 - 10:30 PM EST

For more information, visit www.NERX.ORG



ANNOUNCING 11TH ANNUAL "OPS 'TIL YOU DROP"

APRIL 26 & 27, 2025

CENTRAL NEW YORK DIVISION

The Central New York Division has scheduled its 11th annual "Ops 'til You Drop" operations weekend for April 26 - 27, 2025. Anyone – novice or experienced in operations – is welcome to participate. Detailed information will come out shortly after the new year and will be emailed directly to past participants. Those that have never participated, but would like to be placed on that mailing list, should email Bill Brown MMR at larcproducts@yahoo.com.



July 14-19, 2025

The NCR and SE Michigan will be your host for the 2025 NMRA National Convention! This will be like no other convention you have ever attended!

Convention Highlights –

- ✓ One low price for everyone! includes layout tours & OPS!
- ✓ 90+ clinics - 65+ layout tours - 30+ OPS sessions
- ✓ 2 day National Train Show - 5 day Yard Sale Room
- ✓ RPM modeling displays - Full NMRA modeling Contest
- ✓ People's Choice Voting w/awards - Saturday night banquet
-and MUCH MORE!!

<https://nmra2025.com/>





In Memoriam - Ray Howard

At the recent NER convention, *Lakeshores '24*, the program book immediately opened to this smiling face with the message "*Lakeshores '24 is dedicated to the memory of Ray Howard.*"

Ray Howard, 77, passed away unexpectedly Thursday, June 13, 2024, at his home in Geneva, NY. Ray had several passions. First, was music; he graduated from the Eastman School of Music in the late 1960s, and found his calling in music education sharing his love for music with his students. Ray was also passionate about trains and model trains. He volunteered at the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum, and was also a member of the Lakeshores Division of the National Model Railroad Association. He was a model train aficionado, having scratch-built his own layout over decades in his basement. He was the Lakeshores Division superintendent from 2008 to 2018, was the editor of the *Lake Shores Limited* from 2016 to 2024, and was a recipient in 2019 of the NMRA President's Award for Division Service.

And as a friend of many in the Lakeshores Division, he will be missed.

PLANNING A LAYOUT TOUR DAY



BY ERICH GOLSCHNEIDER
SUPERINTENDENT, GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION

It was a cold Vermont January day a couple weeks before the Amherst Railway Society's show (aka "Springfield") when I opened up an email from Chris Carfaro, assistant superintendent of the Green Mountain Division (GMD) and editor of the *NER Coupler*. "Hi Board of Directors," he wrote. "I'm hoping we can cobble together a layout tour in May... below is a proof for the *NER Coupler* where the announcement will appear." Sure enough, there was a fully laid out ad promoting the tour, including a photo of the Barre, Chelsea, and Corinth Railroad, which I just happen to be president of! How can you resist that?

Green Mountain Division (GMD) meetings are typically held in a conference room at a local library in Essex Junction, Vermont. However, last year, Director-at-Large Lew White suggested that we start having some meetings in other places. Running with that idea, the division meeting that weekend was hosted by The Rutland Railway Association. The membership enjoyed our time in the Association's layout and museum. Afterwards, we commenced with our division business meeting and, I raised the question of combining a layout tour with a division meeting as Chris was suggesting for our Spring meeting. It was no surprise that the idea was received enthusiastically.

Now, we had to line up folks willing to host a bunch of model railroaders on a nice May day. The Springfield show provided an excellent opportunity for that. I had heard that Dave Myers, owner of Gatorfoam, had a great layout. I went over to his booth and asked Dave about hosting part of the tour. He said he absolutely would. One down!

Going through the Mallary building, I ran into Nick Santo, owner of Nix Trainz (Decoder Buddy) and member of the GMD. We walked along chatting for a bit when it struck me. "Hey, Nick, you have a layout I'd like to see... would you like it to be on a tour the Division is setting up?" He thought about it for about half a second and said "yes." Two down!

The next Wednesday at my club, the Northwestern Vermont Model Railroad Association (NWV), I asked Paul Allard, MMR, if he would be willing to have his railroad on the Division tour. I had heard much about Paul's layout, but hadn't seen it. Paul was more than willing! The NWV board of directors was also pleased to host the GMD on its club railroad. As a courtesy to the members of the club, they were also invited on the overall tour whether they were NMRA or not. The thought was this was a large group, some of whom were former GMD members. We wanted to encourage them to join or rejoin the Division. We also encouraged members to bring along guests.

Our tour was set! Emails were sent out to the membership asking them to hold the date. The initial tour plan was discussed at our March meeting and refined based on feedback from members and layout owners.

A typical layout tour set-up is often where the railroad's host sets aside several hours on a given day and waits to see who shows up. However, all of our hosts understandably wanted to go

on the tour as well. The solution was to borrow an idea from *Model Railroader* magazine staff. In times past, they had all gone from railroad to railroad in a caravan over the course of a day in what they called a "Progress." Problem solved. We'd do the same. Because of NMRA insurance requirements, the Division could not coordinate carpooling, but we encouraged members to do so among themselves.

The tour was planned to start at the northernmost layout and progress southward. Total travel time was calculated as an hour without stops, and the day would start at 9:00 and end at 3:30. Each railroad would be open for an hour, allowing for travel time, a lunch break, and the Division's annual business meeting built into the schedule. A map and itinerary were put together. All we needed was a one page write-up for each railroad providing some background on design, construction, and operations, as well as practical information on such things as parking and accessibility. I was thinking about putting a sample together when an email from Paul popped up with write-ups for his railroad and the NWV. These were quickly forwarded to Nick and Dave. We didn't ask hosts to provide any refreshments, but we appreciated it when there were some.


As a special thank you, Chris designed personalized "GMD Mountain Division Tour 2024" aprons for each of our hosts, which he presented at each stop.

The tour package was completed and sent off to Division members three weeks before the tour date. A reminder email was sent out a week before, asking folks to let me know if they were planning on coming so I could give the hosts an idea of how many would be showing up.

Part of the reason for wanting to know the number of people who would be on the tour was driven by the one hour time limit. We found that, except at the NWV club, we pretty much maxed out the number that could be accommodated at any one time at each location. We'll take this into account when planning the next layout tour, which members have already asked about! The day before the tour, I wrote to the hosts giving them the current count with the expectation a few more would attend.

Tour day went off without a hitch. The hardest part was getting folks to move along because they were having so much fun viewing these impressive layouts and talking to their creators. I took on the role of timekeeper and gave "time is almost up" warnings.

Looking back, I now have an even greater appreciation for all the unsung heroes who've organized layout, railfan, and factory tours for conventions and other events. Thank you!

Everyone on the tour had a terrific time and are looking forward to the next one! 





LAKESHORES '24 CONVENTION COVERAGE BEGINS HERE!

The Lakeshores Division hosted an outstanding convention this past September. What follows is a report on events, clinics and contests.

CLINICS & GUEST SPEAKERS



JORDAN DERLETH SHARING A MINI CLINIC ON WEATHERING



BERNARD HELLEN OF MINIPRINTS TALKS ABOUT PAINTING TECHNIQUES.



RMC EDITOR, OTTO VONDRAK, TALKS ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF ALLEN MCCLELLAND'S VIRGINIAN & OHIO MODEL RAILROAD.



ANDY REYNOLDS LEADS A BAR MILLS MAKE-AND-TAKE CLINIC. PHOTOS: CHUCK DILJAK



BILL BROWN MMR SHARES THE BEAUTY AND USES OF HIS LARC PRODUCTS.



ANDREAS WERDER PRESENTED CLINIC ON LASER ENGRAVING STRUCTURES AND ROLLING STOCK.

PHOTO OF MARK, LOCO AND BOOK COURTESY OF M. KLINGEL



MARK KLINGEL, PHOTOGRAPHER AND AUTHOR, PROVIDED AN OUTSTANDING KEYNOTE ADDRESS. ALSO OF NOTE, MARK'S NEW BOOK IS NOW AVAILABLE.



CHUCK DILJAK MMR HELPS US UNDERSTAND WHY DETAILS MATTER.

A rail excursion powered by Genesee Valley Transportation RS-32 and RS-11 along the former New York Central "Falls Road" trackage from Brockport to Medina.

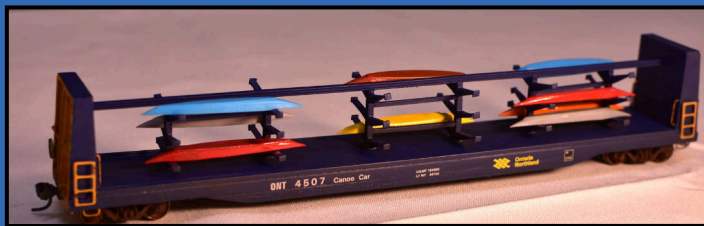


FREIGHT CARS: 1ST PLACE • ANDREAS WERDER

▼ PHOTO BY MALCOLM HOUCK



STEAM LOCO: 1ST PLACE • MALCOLM HOUCK, MMR



FREIGHT CARS: 2ND PLACE • PETER BACH



PASSENGER CARS: 1ST PLACE • MARK MORITZ



STRUCTURE: 1ST PLACE • TOM OXNARD, MMR



STRUCTURE: 3RD PLACE TOM OXNARD, MMR

ALL PHOTOS BY CHRIS CARFARO EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



▲ **STRUCTURE: 2ND PLACE DOUG DEDERICK**



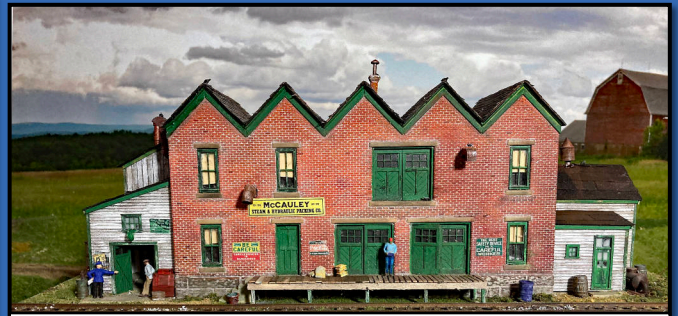
◀ **DIORAMA: 1ST PLACE JOHN BECKER**

◀ PHOTO BY JOHN BECKER

▼ PHOTO BY ANDY REYNOLDS



DIORAMA: 1ST PLACE • ANDY REYNOLDS



DIORAMA: 3RD PLACE • ANDY REYNOLDS

▲ ▼ PHOTOS BY ANDY REYNOLDS



KIT BUILT/DIORAMA: 2ND PLACE • ANDY REYNOLDS



STRUCTURES: 1ST PLACE • MARK MORITZ



**STRUCTURES: 3RD PLACE
KEVIN TULLY**



**STRUCTURES: 2ND PLACE
JOHN BECKER**



DIESEL LOCO: 1ST PLACE • DENNIS COLUCCI



FREIGHT CARS: 1ST PLACE • DENNIS COLUCCI



NON-REVENUE: 1ST PLACE • JEFF PASTON



FREIGHT CARS: 2ND PLACE • MARK MORITZ



NON-REVENUE: 2ND PLACE • JEFF PASTON

SPECIAL AWARDS PRESENTED AT LAKESHORES '24

HAROLD RUSSELL AWARD **TOM OXNARD, MMR**

Awarded to the modeler with the highest point totals in structures category.



PHOTO BY NICK SANTO

TOM OXNARD MMR ACCEPTING THE HAROLD RUSSELL AWARD FROM HAROLD'S SON MICHAEL RUSSELL

HUB DIVISION AWARD **TOM OXNARD MMR**

Awarded to the modeler with the second highest point total.

BALDWIN AWARD **MALCOLM HOUCK MMR**

Awarded as "Best in Show" to the modeler with the highest point total.

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS

The People's Choice is by popular vote. Convention attendees are the judges and they voted for their favorite model in four categories:

- Motive power
- Structure
- Rolling stock
- Display

MOTIVE POWER: MALCOLM HOUCK MMR - STEAM LOCO

ROLLING STOCK: GARY REYNOLDS - CIRCUS TRAIN

STRUCTURE: TOM OXNARD MMR - B&M BEAN PLANT

DISPLAY: HOWARD MILLER - HARPURSVILLE TRESTLE



GARY REYNOLDS' CIRCUS TRAIN



HOWARD MILLER'S HARPURSVILLE TRESTLE AND PROTOTYPE PHOTO

2024 ANNUAL REGION AWARDS

MASTER MODEL RAILROADER

Peter Eaton	Green Mountain
Drew James	Central New York
Victor Hand	Seacoast
Phil Monat	Sunrise Trail

NMRA PRESIDENT'S AWARD for Division Service

David Metal Sunrise Trail

The NMRA President's Award for Service to the Division is awarded by the NMRA President to one individual in a Division in each Region per year, recognizing that person for outstanding "beyond-the-call-of-duty" work to make his or her local Division effective, engaging, and welcoming to members.

NER PRESIDENT'S AWARDS

Richard C. Laube	Registered Agent representing NER
Erich Whitney	NER Office Manager
Gerry Covino	outgoing NER Treasurer

SPATE AWARD

Kimberly Lamb and the late Stephen Lamb

The Robert W. Spate Public Service Award was created by the Great Falls Model Railroad Club (of Lewiston and Auburn, Maine) in memory of Robert W. Spate. The award is to be presented annually to a member or organization of the NER best exemplifying the promotion of the model railroad hobby. Preference is given to service in a public forum open to young people and/or others who are not normally exposed to the hobby.

KEITH SHONEMAN AWARD

Ed O'Connell Lakeshores Division

The Keith Shoneman Award is presented by the HUB Division at the convention each year to an active member of the NER who has done an exemplary job in promoting prototypical operations.

Keith was a former NER Secretary who was best known for the operating sessions on his beloved Pennsylvania and New England Railroad. It was this dedication to prototypical operations that led the HUB Division to create an award in his honor.

▼ PHOTO BY NICK SANTO



DREW JAMES RECEIVES HIS MMR PLAQUE FROM NER PRESIDENT ED O'ROURKE

A CELEBRATION OF IMAGES

BY MIKE TYLICK
PHOTO CONTEST CHAIRMAN



Participation in the photo contest at Lakeshores'24 was high, and the contest was well visited and enjoyed by attendees of the convention. Below are some of the photos submitted. The spring issue of the NER Coupler will feature a more complete coverage of the event.



▲ BEST IN SHOW BY BILL BROWN



▲ ONTARIO EXPRESS BY MALCOLM HOUCK



▲ PENNSYLVANIA NOSES BY JAMES LAUSER

NER CONVENTION 2025



THE CONCORD FLYER



CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
SEPTEMBER 11- 14, 2025



PROTOTYPE TOURS • OPS SESSIONS
LAYOUT TOURS • NON-RAIL ACTIVITIES
CLINICS • BANQUET • RAFFLE
JURIED GUEST SPEAKERS & CLINICIANS
MODEL & PHOTO CONTESTS & DISPLAYS



WEBSITE:
[CONVENTIONS.NERNMRA.ORG](https://conventions.nernmra.org)
◀ OR... SCAN THIS CODE
FOR A DIRECT CONNECTION!



Drop Leaves, Lift Outs, and Lift Ups

MOVABLE AND REMOVABLE SECTIONS

by Jim Fairbanks, MMR

I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT I HAVE DONE TO SOLVE THE NEED FOR A MOVABLE SECTION TO AVOID THAT DUCK-UNDER, TRAVERSE A DOORWAY, OR CROSS AN EXIT WINDOW IN YOUR TRAIN ROOM.

When I was a young man, a duck-under on my railroad was not an issue. Now that I'm in my seventies, this is no longer the case. No surprise there. I bet many of you have the same concerns. I hope that you'll find this helpful, and an inspiration for your situation.

Crossing a doorway

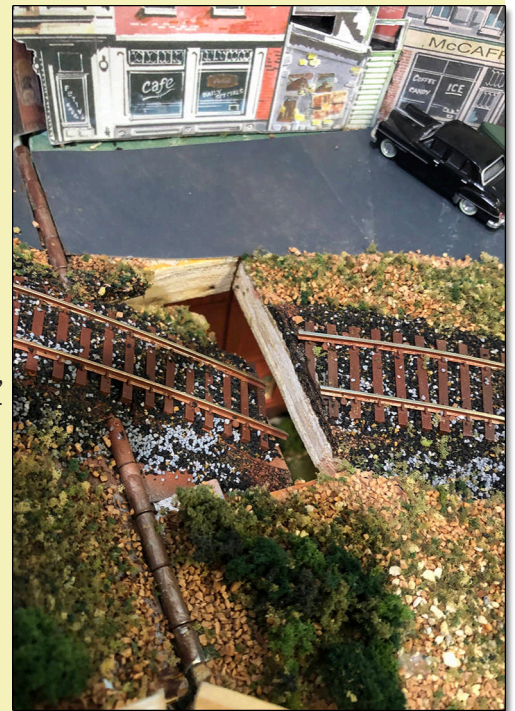
My railroad has a door that needs to be crossed with track at two levels, *left photo*. The bottom track is a switch-ing area, and the top allows trains from the east to enter the city.

On the bottom track, I used a drop leaf; on the top, a lift up section. They don't have to overlap each other. I used piano hinges, which provide a secure movement without any side to side slop, offering a simple way to move those sections of benchwork up or down while still maintaining track alignment.

The drop leaf and lift up sections are in the open position in the photo, and the door can move freely. That arrow points to a doorstop on the drop down section which protects my scenery. It is painted to blend in with the scenery underneath it, and yes, I scenic my movable sections.

Hinge technique saves track

At *right*, the 'lift up' works without disrupting the track. The track is above the level of the piano hinge. You can see that without this accommodation, the track would pinch and damage track sections adjacent to the hinge. Choosing not to use a removable section of track, I made the track drop down behind the hinge when the "lift up" is raised. By doing this, the track behind the hinge is not pinched at the track level. Also notice that I painted the hinge to make it less obvious and blend in with the scenery.



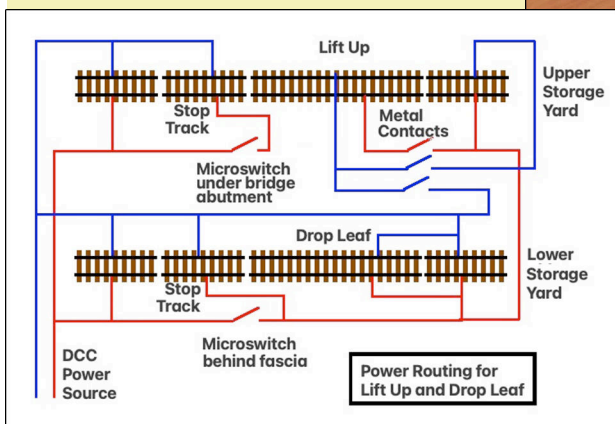
With drop leaf and lift up sections in place, *lower right photo*, the backdrop scenery already attached to the door fits right in. The support for the high bridge is removable; the base of it is located on the drop leaf below. That bridge support is set aside when the "lift up section is raised.



Powering the drop leaf and lift up sections

Electrical control of tracks approaching the drop leaf and lift up uses "Stop-ping Tracks" that need to be disconnected when the movable sections are open. I have controlled these through microswitches and electrical contacts placed at each opening, *drawing at left*.

A slide bolt holds the drop down section in place when it is up. That bolt extends through the layout fascia and contacts a microswitch powering the Stop-ping Tracks that approach the opening, along with controlling power to the lower staging yard. When the drop leaf is lowered, that connection is severed and stops any locomotive approaching the opening.



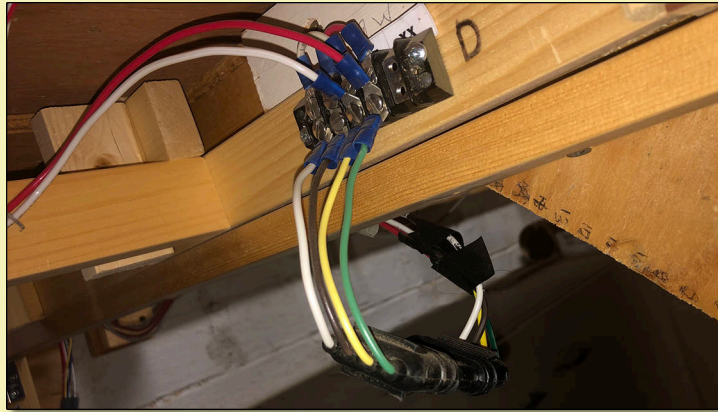
On the lift up section, a micro switch is under the high bridge abutment which controls the approaching track. Metal contacts between the lift up and the upper staging yard make contact when the lift up is dropped. These contacts also control power to the staging yard on the upper shelf.

Powering a removable section can be accomplished in a number of ways. One solution I used was a trailer plug available at any auto parts store. It is heavy duty, and plugs only one way. Two wires power the track, and two wires are routed back to power the tracks that approach the opening. Unplugging this assures that trains are stopped when the section is removed.

Drop leaf wye

Another reason for drop downs is a need to save space. This happened when the wye track extended too far into a walkway. I needed a way to allow people into my train space and still turn

locomotives and cars. A turntable wasn't an option, so I built a drop down with a piano hinge and cantilevered bracket



underneath. Electrical control is maintained by pushbuttons behind the fascia, *left photo*, controlled by two bolts extending from the drop leaf.

Making a window disappear

I had a situation where an emergency exit window opened into my train room. Normally this would limit my train space, but that adjacent bedroom from where this window exits is a rarely used guest room. I decided that I would just remove the section of layout when guests are in residence.

Since there are several tracks at different heights, I opted for a removable section instead of a drop down. The section is 2x3 feet in size, and includes an attached backdrop. The section slides in and is held in place with two slide bolts. 🚂

MAKING THE ROBOTS WORK FOR YOU!

HOW TO MAKE A BASIC DEFECT DETECTOR USING AN ARDUINO.

BY DOUG MARGISON



Animations on your layout can contribute significantly to realism and operational experience. One type is sound effects, which have been available commercially for some time. Another device is a microprocessor called an Arduino.

An Arduino is a common type of microprocessor that comes in a variety of sizes and types depending on their intended application. Arduino programs often tap into public libraries of user-made content for enhanced capability. Alternatively, one can use an MP3 Player Mini to play recorded files. Sound players have evolved from just the player to an electronic module incorporating an amplifier.

I will be using a DY-SV5W. Sound files are stored on a *micro SD* card. I used this approach earlier to play train announcements recorded using an online text-to-speech program to play scripts I had written. Various programs are available to edit and boost the volume of sound files. Personally, I use *Audacity*.

R&D

I recently came across several *YouTube* videos on track warrants and defect detectors, and I thought they might make an interesting project. This is the story of my journey; technical details are at the end.

Randomized track warrants (**TW**) could be used to randomly dispatch trains from staging. It would be triggered by a pushbutton.

Defect detectors (**DD**) would be linked to a specific milepost on the layout. A separate module would be needed for each additional milepost being monitored. They would be triggered by some form of train detection depending on the complexity of the setup. *Would I want to do axle counts?* If yes, then point detectors at each end of the “milepost block,” otherwise a short milepost current detection block should suffice.

In both cases, I would need a Text-to-Speech (TTS) capability. *Would my scripts be dynamic or fixed?* If fixed, I could use the Online Voice Generator that I had used in earlier projects. If dynamic, I would need to learn how to use the Arduino “Talkie” library.

A good reference to get me started is *Science4U* on *YouTube*. Following the clinician’s instructions, I installed the Talkie library, downloaded his example sketch, uploaded it to an Arduino Nano, and connected a speaker to Pins 3 and 11. As expected from past experience, I would need to get an amplifier. When it arrived, I connected it to the Arduino and speaker. While it did amplify the Talkie speech, it wasn’t enough to make this a viable approach.

PROGRAMMING

Back to focusing on a **basic module** with fixed scripts with both TW and DD running in the same program (referred to as a “sketch” in the Arduino world), the sketch would randomly select either the **TW category** or the **DD category** when triggered by a pushbutton. In a later project phase, the TW and DD sections could be split into *two* separate sketches run on *separate* Arduinos.

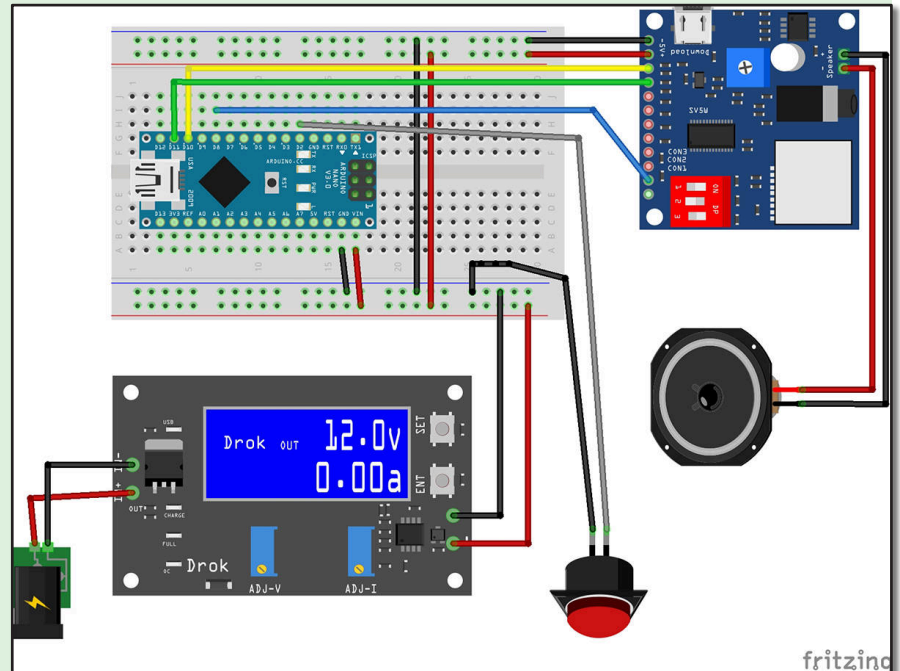
In the TW section, there are four track warrants to dispatch four trains. I used the Micro-Mark TW as the template for the TW scripts. The sketch would randomly select and play a track warrant then mark it unavailable for future selection — the train has departed! Subsequent random selection would check for TW availability. If it was available, the sketch would play that TW. If it was not available, the sketch would go back to the top and start over again — random selection of which section: TW or DD? Eventually only DD scripts would be played.

In the **DD section**, there are *four* DD scripts: *one* “no defects,” *two* “hot box,” and *one* “dragging equipment.” The *random* number generator would pick a number between 1 and 200. A threshold of greater than “80” resulted in “no defects” 60 percent of the time. If the number was between 1 and 80, another random number generation would select which of the remaining three scripts would be played.

In the **basic module**, scripts would be *fixed*. I copied the scripts into an online voice generator to record the playback. I used Audacity to trim and boost the volume on the downloaded MP3 files from the online voice generator.

The next step was to copy the MP3 files to a *micro SD* card. Then insert the card into the reader in the sound module and upload the sketch to the Arduino Nano. After some volume adjustment, the sketch played out as hoped. I now have the ability to play track warrant and defect detector messages using fixed scripts.

I had explored using the Arduino Talkie Library with the assistance of an audio amplifier. The maximum volume with the Amplifier was still too low to make dynamic scripts a viable option for me. After dropping the idea of trying out dynamic scripts, I came across a *YouTube* update for a DIY defect detector — *LRRTV “HO Scale Defect Detector Using Arduino.”* The clinician downloaded recordings of actual defect detector radio messages, using Audacity to massage the recordings so that the voices sounded similar. He then sliced the recordings into




individual words which he saved as individual sound files. Each word sound file was assigned a number. The files were uploaded to a *micro SD*. In the Arduino sketch, the message would be a combination of fixed and randomly selected words, played by sending filenames in sequence to the sound module.

HARDWARE

1. Arduino Lafvin Nano V3 ATmega 328P
2. DY-SV5W Sound Module
3. 12 volt power supply
4. Gikfun 1.5" 4 Ohm 3 W Full Range Audio Speaker Stereo Woofer Loudspeaker for Arduino
5. Breadboard to simplify connections
6. Pushbutton trigger
7. Verbatim Class 10 microSDHC 8GB card

TECHNICAL SPECS & WIRING

Breadboard connections; Left side pin from the top:

- 1st pin GND connected to Arduino GND via the Blue (-ve) Rail on the Breadboard
- 2nd pin VCC (+ve) connected to +ve Buck Converter output via the Breadboard
- 3rd pin Tx (I2C Transmit) connected pin 10 on the Nano — designated as Rx (I2C Receive) in the Sketch
- 4th pin Rx connected to pin 11 on the Nano — designated as Rx in the Sketch
- Left side 2nd pin up from bottom is the Busy Pin → connected to Pin 8 on the Arduino Nano
- Right side speaker pins — doesn't matter which one is +ve
- DIP switches set to UART command structure ← 1 & 2 Off; 3 On
- **Resource:** YouTube "Arduino C++ DY-SV5W MP3 Player with Uno or Mega 2560" — "Digital Town:" The clinician is a model rail-roader. His website provides useful information plus sketches: (<https://www.digitaltown.co.uk>.) I used his example #7 sketch for the UNO to guide me in creating my own sketch
- **File naming:** the filename must be or start with a 5-digit number; e.g. "00001.mp3" or "00001_DD01.mp3"
- Power supply is a fixed AC-DC 12V with barrel adapter to +ve & -ve screw terminals connected to a DROK or Stemedu LM2596 DC to DC Buck Converter 4-40V to 1.25-37V Adjustable Voltage Regulator. Output connected goes to both the Nano and the DY-SV5W sound module
- Powering the Sound module from the 5+ volt pin on the Nano doesn't work
- Set the Stemedu output to 5.1 - 5.7 volts
- Connect the Stemedu +ve output to VIN pin on the Nano and VCC pin on the Sound module
- **Voice recording** — I used Movavi's Screen Recorder 2023
- **Talkie Library amplifier** — LM386 5-12v Audio Amplifier 



A VISIT TO THE DENTIST

Like many people, I dread a trip to the dentist. I clearly remember childhood visits where whatever he did hurt like blazes. Dental appointments have gotten better since then, but I'd still rather spend a day doing some scale modeling, rather than having someone poke in my mouth.

My former dentist was a neighbor, and when he learned of my interest in model building, he saved a number of dental picks that he could no longer use. Despite all the aches and fillings, our teeth are much harder than we might think. When dental picks become too dull for medical use, they are still sharp enough for years of model building use. I'm sure your dentist or hygienist throws out a number of used tools every week. If you ask nicely and tell them why you want them, they would probably be happy to save some for you. When we do tell people about our hobby, most think what we do is quite interesting. Occasionally I meet another closet hobbyist. It never hurts to ask! And, the price is right!


The photo at right shows a close-up of some of my favorite tools.

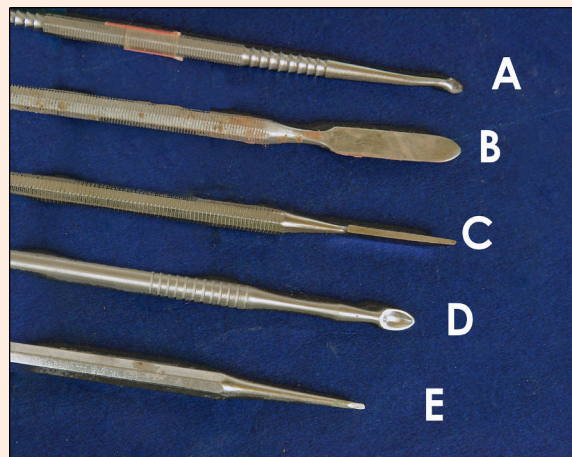
A- Most dental tools are double ended, and dentists usually discard tools with broken ends. However, we can grind these broken ends into miniature chisels handy for crowded or hard to reach spaces.

B- A small spatula is excellent for applying filler putty to models and also for fine scenery details and rock carving.

C- A pick for sorting out small parts and also useable as a tiny probe. It also works very well as a clean out for the dried glue in caps and nozzles.

D- This tiny spoon is quite useful for scooping out small quantities of weathering powders.

E- Although hard to see in the photo, this miniature spade is an excellent tool for scribing styrene. If held correctly, a tiny curl of material is removed from the scribe rather than merely pushing it to the side. Note this tool has a price tag. Sometimes inexpensive picks can be found in grab bins at dollar stores. I am not sure if they are second quality or are recycled from dentist's offices; likely both. 



MOVING A LAYOUT

In March, 2024, the time came. An occasion that most modelers dread; it was time to finally move my layout from Connecticut to Florida!



I had been preparing for this moment since I took a new job in April, 2022. Luckily for me, I had been a part of the Torrington Area Model Railroaders when I started building the 'East End' and had made it in modular style. About half of the layout had been in my first house in Connecticut from 2003-14. The larger and more complete 'East End' now required a much larger undertaking to disassemble and move.

DISASSEMBLY

I started by disconnecting the electrical connections. Each 6 to 8 foot section has its own bus wires to carry track power. Where the sections join, I had mounted a terminal block to create the electrical connectivity needed to run the layout. I also disconnected the under-layout lighting between the two levels. Lastly, I undid all of the wires to the powered switch motors. These too were mounted to terminal blocks, so it made for quick work. I made sure that each wire and terminal block was labeled before disconnecting.

The physical disassembly was fairly easy because I had built each section so that a 6 inch piece of straight track or a turnout bridged the joining sections. Each section was held to brackets in the wall with three or four screws per bracket. There were also a few screws holding the sections together. In no time, the layout was disassembled to 10 pieces, six that were fully scened and four that were in lesser stages of completion.

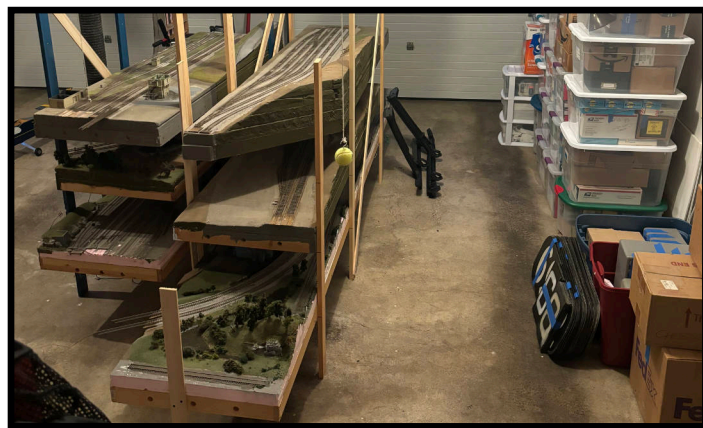


MY BIGGEST ERROR

I didn't think anything bad could come of it, but I placed a dog gate around the sections and stored them on their sides in my basement. I didn't want our energetic golden retriever to start picking trees off the sections. Unfortunately, when I was away on travel, the dog gate fell over and the six scened sections tumbled over like dominoes. They didn't fall far, but enough to break signals, light poles and bend some trees. The signals were the real loss, since they were over \$100 a piece. I didn't repair any of it, figuring the trip might damage the layout more, so why fix something twice.

PREPPING FOR SHIPMENT

My largest challenge was to get the six scened sections to Florida in the back of a U-Haul. I came up with the idea to use



my spare benchwork lumber to make two stacks of three pieces each. I used six-foot long 1x3s on each corner. I then put another piece of lumber as a cross brace on each side. The most difficult piece was the Martinsburg section that has the Fruit Exchange and 'NA' tower on it. The seam between the two sections goes right under the Fruit Exchange, so I had to move that as a double piece. It was so long, it barely fit in the U-Haul.

A MODEL RAILROADING FIRST?

With the two layout stacks – totaling six scened sections – loaded in the back of the U-Haul, along with dozens of bins and boxes of rolling stock, kits, structures, etc., I headed off to Florida from Connecticut.



Many of us have taken field trips to our prototype location to gather information, but how many of us can say we actually took our layout to our prototype location? I did just that. It sounds crazy, but I drove my layout to see its namesake!

The East End of the Cumberland Subdivision lies mostly in northern West Virginia. I took the scenic route to Florida, avoiding I-95 and New York City. That put me on I-81 which runs right through Martinsburg. I used the opportunity to stop at Hancock and Martinsburg while my layout of Hancock and Martinsburg were in the U-Haul! If my layout could talk, it would have said, "Oh, this is why you made me this way."

The layout and the other assorted hobby items made the rest of the trip to my rental house in Florida just fine. The layout spent several months in storage in the garage as we looked for a permanent home. Up next, was finding a train room.

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





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NORTHEASTERN REGION, NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT

ED O'ROURKE, MMR
Jamesville, NY 315-247-0494
nerprez@nmra.org

VICE PRESIDENT

DAVE INSLEY
Townsend, MA 978-855-4363
david.insley@comcast.net

PAST PRESIDENT

JOHN DOEHRING
Pepperell, MA 978-433-6337
john@jdoehring.com

NMRA EASTERN DIRECTOR

JOHN DOEHRING
Pepperell, MA 978-433-6337
john@jdoehring.com

AREA DIRECTORS

NORTHERN

TOM OXNARD, MMR
Exeter, NH 603-772-6265
tfoxnard@gmail.com

EASTERN

MIKE TYLICK, MMR
Marshfield, MA 413-262-1582
mtlick@hotmail.com

SOUTHERN

MARK MORITZ
docmwm51@gmail.com

WESTERN

ED OLSZEWSKI
Syracuse, NY 315-488-4193
eolszew1@gmail.com

DIVISION DIRECTORS

EASTERN CANADA

GREG WILLIAMS, President
Canterbury, NB 506-279-2232
gregw@gmail.com

GREEN MOUNTAIN

ERICH GOLSCHEIDER,
Superintendent
Chelsea, VT 802-751-5361
erichg60@aol.com

SEACOAST

GLENN MITCHELL, President
Concord, NH 603-856-4103
glenn.t.mitchell@comcast.net

METRO NORTH

SCOTT RUSSELL
upturbine@aol.com 203-426-1407

GARDEN STATE

JIM HOMOKI, President
Pittstown, NJ
heavyelectric@netscape.net

SUNRISE TRAIL

DENNIS DEANGELIS, President
Northport, NY 516-885-3901
rs31553@yahoo.com

HUB

MANNY ESCOBAR, President
president@hubdiv.org

LITTLE RHODY

SUE OSBERG, Superintendent
Coventry, RI 401-822-0956
sosberg1701@gmail.com

NUTMEG

ART DUTRA III, Superintendent
Meriden, CT
apdutra3@sbcglobal.net

HUDSON VALLEY

HENRY KRAMER, Superintendent
Walden, NY 973-600-0269
henry.hvnmra@gmail.com

CENTRAL NEW YORK

DREW JAMES, Superintendent
Clay, NY 315-430-3440
domerdrew@gmail.com

HUDSON-BERKSHIRE

ARTIE KRASS, President
Ballston Lake/Malta, NY 518-229-6080
ajkwings@yahoo.com

LAKESHORES

ED O'CONNELL, Superintendent
Rochester, NY 973-738-0372
superintendent@lakeshoresnmra.org

SOUTHERN TIER

Superintendent position is open.

REGION STAFF

SECRETARY

JEFF PASTON
Manilus, NY 315-682-8144
secretary@nernmra.org

TREASURER

BILL RUTHERFORD
Lunenburg, VT

treasurer@nernmra.org

OFFICE MANAGER

ERICH WHITNEY
Derry, NH 603-537-1120
nerofficemanager@nernmra.org

ASST. OFFICE MANAGER

STEVEN MILLS
smmills@comcast.net

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Open position

ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

BILL BROWN, MMR
Jamesville, NY
larcproducts@yahoo.com

OP-SIG COORDINATOR

ED O'CONNELL
ops@lakeshoresnmra.org

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR

Open position

WEBMASTER

JIM SEROSKIE
webmaster@nernmra.org

NER COUPLER, EDITOR

CHRIS CARFARO
Richmond, VT 802-999-6520
editor@nernmra.org