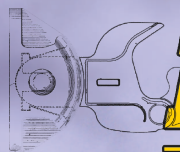


THIS IS MODEL RAILROADING IN THE NER.

ISSUE 297 SPRING 2025



# NER COUPLER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION

NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION



Eric Lalonde's Union Pacific Railroad with its stunning views of the Illinois midwest awaits visitors for the *Concord Flyer* 2025 NER Convention! Convention coverage starts on page 9.



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WWW.NERNMRA.ORG

## NER COUPLER

The official publication of the  
Northeastern Region of the  
National Model Railroad Association  
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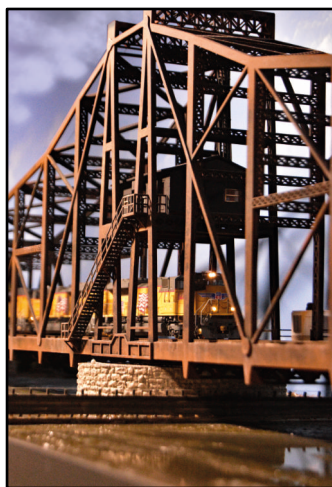
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7



9



### OUR COVER PHOTO

Eric LaLonde's Union Pacific Railroad, Geneva Sub, gave editor Chris Carfaro some serious model railroad eye candy during this year's Tour de Chooch. Chris' photo again reminds us that great modeling – coupled with a skilled photographer – equals a superb cover shot for us all. Nice job gents!



## TRAIN ORDER #15

ED O'ROURKE, MMR

PRESIDENT, NORTHEASTERN REGION, NMRA

## Happy Spring!

It seems odd to say that, considering I am writing this in mid-February with freezing rain, sleet, and snow alternating outside the window, and several inches of "lake effect" promised for the evening. Good thing the train room is warm, and I have plenty of projects to complete.



I'd like to make a pitch to you. If you've never done so, consider building a craftsman car kit. You can find them at most train shows or on eBay, usually for around \$10 or so. When COVID hit, I decided I needed something to keep me busy and that I needed to upgrade my rolling stock. So, I bought a bunch of car kits on eBay. This entire collection cost less than \$100, even with shipping factored in.

After building a couple of Accurail kits, I decided to try one of the Main Line Models cars. I discovered I really enjoyed the craftsmanship required to make a decent model out of what is essentially a box of wood sticks and shapes with instructions that pretty much say "build the car." This led to my decision to try scratch-building a car, which eventually led to my completing the "Cars" AP category. This was the last one I needed to achieve my MMR. Give it a try!

My new layout is now ready for operations, having survived two "shakedown cruises" with Central New York Division friends. Having eight operations "gurus" to critique the layout and operation scheme is another advantage of NMRA membership. I got a "punch list" from the first session and after completing that got a second (smaller) list from session number two. I believe we are now ready for prime time and look forward to some of you visiting during Ops 'til You Drop. You may also have had a look at it during NERx.

Looking further ahead, make sure you have September 11 – 14, 2025, in your calendar for the NER Convention in Concord, NH, hosted by the Seacoast Division. Read more about this on page 9 of this issue of the NER Coupler.

I Am The NMRA!







## A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

### CHRIS CARFARO, EDITOR

than 10 proof readers – the regular four plus an additional six looking specifically at this column. As editor, my job involves the technical acts of writing, editing and producing a 16 page magazine. Another part involves the editorial, where I see myself as both a cheerleader, providing guiding thoughts towards positive actions that move the NMRA forward, as well as a “lighthouse,” calling out harm that may trip us up.

So today, I’ve been asking myself, do I warn you about the harm coming to our relationship with Canadian members? Do I call out an American White House out of control? Or, a Congress too scared to do their job to restore the balance of power between the three branches of our government? Do I ignore the wrecking ball in American politics and give some vacuous *rah rah, go model trains!* empty editorial? I think I’ll do both, although I don’t do “vacuous” very well. First, the cheerleading.

I have seen NER conventions from the inside - for the past four and a half years. Some convention committees were easier to work with than others. However, one thing they all have in common is a desire to build a rewarding experience for the attendees.

The Concord Flyer coming up in September is no exception. Notably, I have been surprised at the number of people choosing to join in on the planning and development. This is a good thing for all of us. Many hands make light work, and also get a lot of things done – and done well.

This is the foundation, the GROUNDWORK executed by an amazing group of people dedicated to creating a really, really good experience for all of us. If you’ve never been to a region convention, please try this one on for size – especially, if you have friends or family you’re bringing along. The convention coverage begins on page 9 of this issue. I hope you feel inspired as I do.

Now the “lighthouse” warning of concern.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know many of our

Canadian members over the past four and a half years. I have enjoyed Greg Williams’ editorials, the Eastern Canada Division Thursday night zoom presentations, and the overall quality of articles and modeling passing by my editor’s desk.

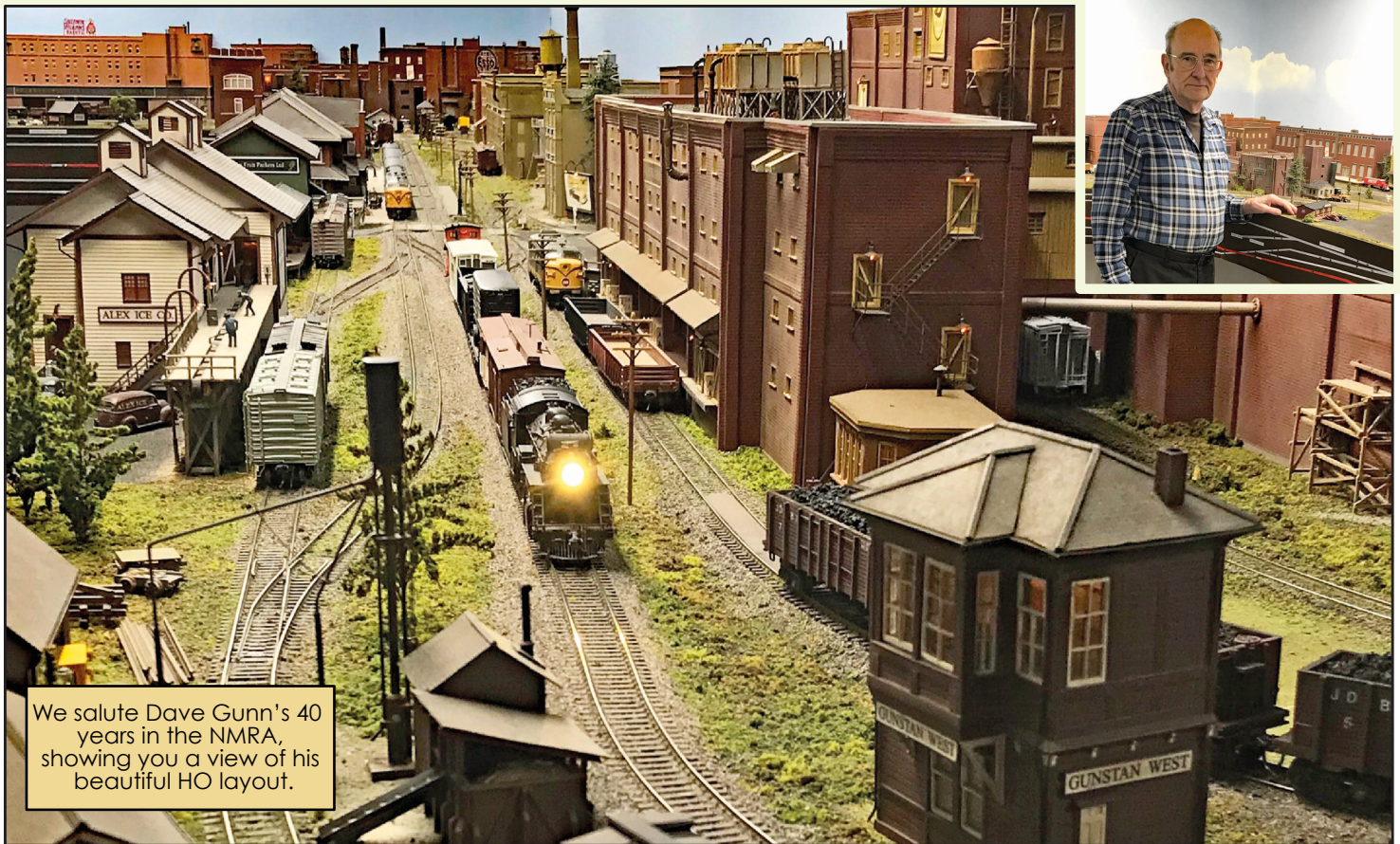
There are discussions among Canadian members about abstaining from U.S.-based NMRA activities. I regret this and I respect your decision either way.

Your country is under siege by a felon-led White House. Canada has always been a great neighbor, friend, and ally to the United States. Many Americans know this, and are fighting hard against our President as he insults you and tries to undermine your sovereignty.

I believe it is especially important now for us as individuals to maintain our friendship. Through our person-to-person relationships, we can strengthen the solidarity we’ve come to enjoy as members of the National Model Railroad Association.

Protect yourselves as you must, and when this storm system passes, a path forward will be evident. I will look forward to rebuilding any burned bridges together – both metaphorically and physically – in the shape of HO, N, S, O, G, and any other scale.

I now dedicate the rest of this page to Eastern Canada Division member, Dave Gunn, MMR, who is celebrating his 40th year in the NMRA! 🚂



We salute Dave Gunn's 40 years in the NMRA, showing you a view of his beautiful HO layout.



## TIMETABLE

Compiled by Jack Lutz: [alton\\_house@yahoo.com](mailto:alton_house@yahoo.com)

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES  
ALL POINTS NORTHEASTERN REGION NMRA USA & CANADA

DATES EVENT LOCATION/ TRACK

MOST EVENTS ARE MULTI DATE. ONLY THE FIRST DATE OF EVENT IS SHOWN.

April 5	The Great Northern New England Train Show	Dover, NH
April 6	Rails Along the Mohawk Spring Model Train Show	Amsterdam, NY
April 6	Classic Shows Model Railroad, Train & Toy Show	Ansonia, CT
April 12	Southern Maine Model Railroad Club Train Show	Westbrook, ME
April 13	8th Dartmouth/Lake Sunapee Region Model RR Show	North Sutton, NH
April 19	Moncton Model Railroad Show 2025	Riverview, NB
April 19	Opening Day at Rochester & Genesee Valley RR Museum	Rush, NY
April 24	Annual Sn3 Symposium	Sandy, UT
April 26	Great Falls Model Railroad Club Spring Show	Topsham, ME
April 27	27th Annual Hooksett Lions Club Train Show	Hooksett, NH
May 2	Island Ops	Long Island, NY
May 3	Opening Day at Seashore Trolley Museum	Kennebunkport, ME
May 3	HUB High Green	MA, NH
May 3	2025 Northeast Large Scale Train Show	West Springfield, MA
May 8	Key Lock & Lantern Annual Convention	Carbondale, PA
May 17	Chester On Track	Chester, MA
May 17	Opening Day at Cape Cod Central Railroad	Hyannis, MA
May 23	Truro Model Railroaders Association Annual Show	Brookfield, NS
May 23	Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders Convention	Sackville, NB
May 24	Opening Day at Downeast Scenic Railroad	Ellsworth, ME
May 24	Opening Day for Steam Trains to the Summit	Bretton Woods, NH
May 24	Opening Day at White Mountain Central Railroad	Lincoln, NH
May 24	Opening Day at Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum	Shelburne Falls, MA
May 30	New England/Northeast RR Prototype Modelers Meet	Springfield, MA

## NER DIVISIONS: "OPERATIONS", LAYOUT TOURS & OTHER NMRA EVENTS

Subject to change. Check w/Event provider for updates.



IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

NERX 2025 aired March 17<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> and was a rousing success. View the recorded event at [www.NERX.ORG](http://www.NERX.ORG)



## SAVE THE DATE! NMRA National Convention



JULY 14 – 19, 2025

[www.nmra2025.com](http://www.nmra2025.com)

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!

### 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 Choice voting w/awards • Saturday night banquet •
- And MUCH MORE**

## New Members

Provided by Erich Whitney  
as of date: January 2025

### CONNECTICUT

Jordon Brown, Edward Pineda

### MASSACHUSETTS

Marni Canterbury, Luke Canterbury, Michael Tallman, David Gilbert, Jim Woodward, William Ford, Tom Ogden

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

John Sokolwski

### NEW JERSEY

James Hofmann, William Shaffer

### NEW YORK

John Arnold, Joseph Buczek, Robert Wilson, Charles Gallo, Karen Kosydar

### RHODE ISLAND

Jonathan Pesce

## NER COUPLER SUBMISSION DEADLINES

May 20<sup>th</sup> for July issue

August 20<sup>th</sup> for October 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](http://www.nernmra.com)
3. The NER Coupler is also available online for viewing or downloading at no cost on the NER website.

## NER COUPLER SUBSCRIPTION UPDATE

by Chris Carfaro, Editor, NER Coupler

**This is important. If we don't get enough people renewing their subscriptions, the print copy could die.** To buy or renew a subscription is not hard. Go to the [NER web page](http://NER web page) and click on the Coupler subscription button, fill out the form, pay the \$18, and voila! The NER Coupler will arrive at your door four times a year. Please also note that the general public can now sign up to receive a print edition as well. A nice gift to a friend?

As always, you can still read and download the NER Coupler without charge online.



September 11-14, 2025  
Concord, New Hampshire

## In Memorium: Bob Bell



Bob Bell passed away on New Years Day, and his family held a memorial and Mass on February 8th.

For 40 years, Bob operated the Train Exchange/New England Hobby Supply (now known as Time Machine) in Manchester, CT. Opened in 1980 across the street from its current location in the Bon Ami Building, he built his business featuring model trains, miniatures, and doll houses.

Bob and the Silk City Model Railroad Club built a model railroad like no other in Connecticut on the second floor of the Bon Ami Building. Three different gauges are still represented there. Bob was also known as *Santa Bob* by the Connecticut Society of Santas, Conductor on the North Pole Express, and President of the Valley Railroad Company/Essex Steam Train.

He was much loved and will be missed by many.



Attendees of Lakeshores '24 were privileged to view a fantastic group of photos on exhibition in the contest room. As you enjoy the following images, let me encourage you to create your own entries for the upcoming *Concord Flyer*. There is plenty of time if you get started now. Thanks to all of the judges and photographers who made the convention that much more interesting and enjoyable. - Mike

## A CELEBRATION OF IMAGES

BY MIKE TYLICK, MMR  
PHOTO CONTEST CHAIRMAN



Best in Show: Bill Brown



2nd Place/proto:  
James Lauser

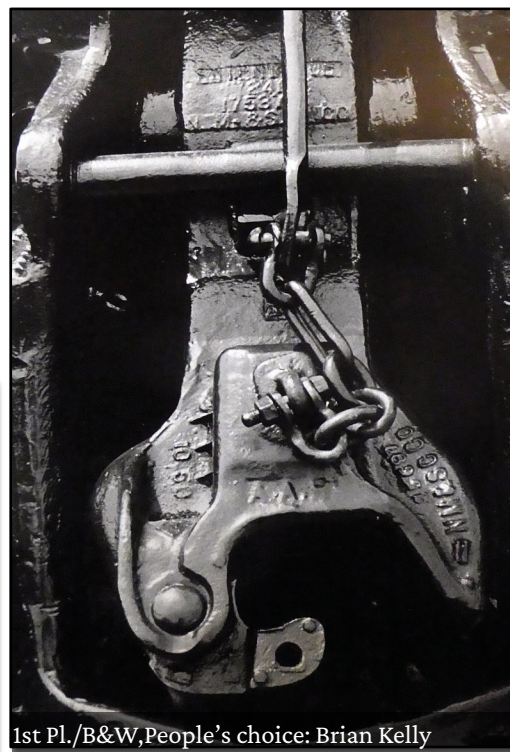


2nd Place/model:  
Malcolm Houck

▲ WE PREVIEWED THESE WINNING PHOTOS IN OUR LAST NER COUPLER.



1st Place/prototype: James Lauser



1st Pl./B&W, People's choice: Brian Kelly



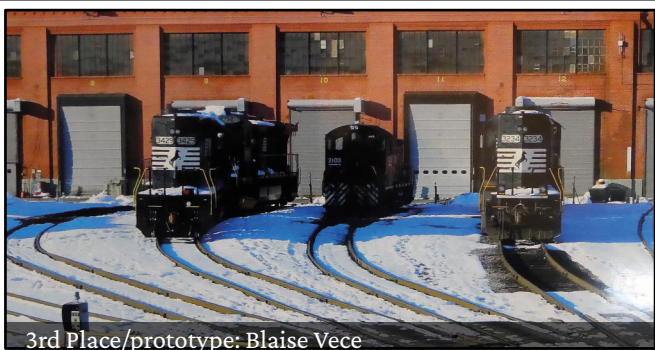
1st Place/model: James Lauser



Hon. Mention/model: James Lauser



Hon. Mention/Proto: Robert Welk



3rd Place/prototype: Blaise Vece



3rd Place/model: Malcolm Hauck, MMR



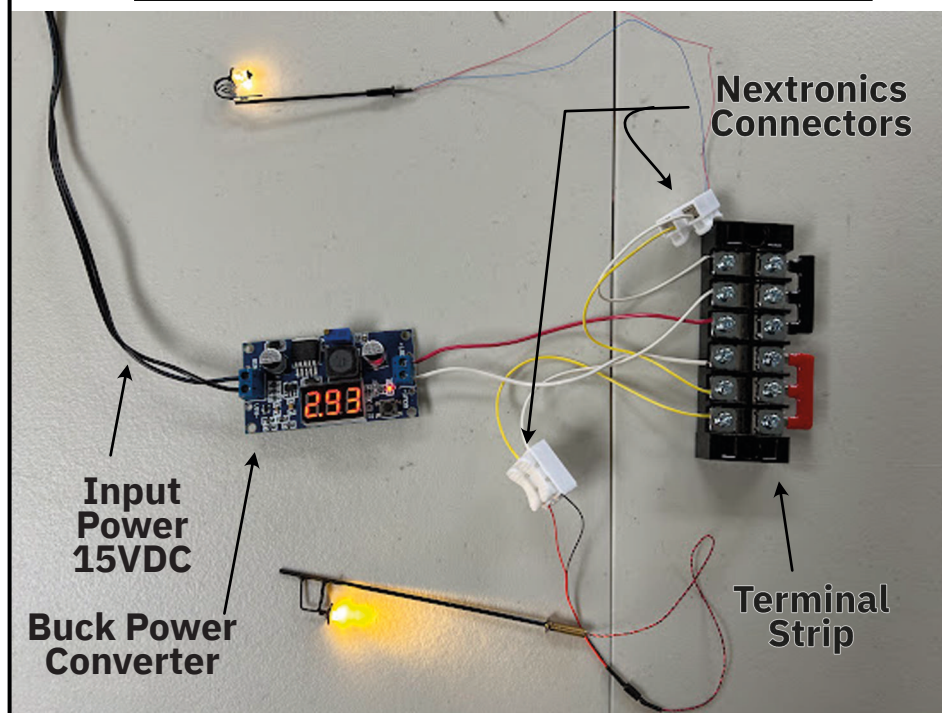
As I was building my HO scale Canada Spokane & Pacific layout, I knew that “someday” I’d want to have working lights on the railroad. Working lights bring a scene to life. However, getting the layout built and operating was a higher priority than wiring all those lights, and I continued to push this task into the future. I decided that this was the year the future finally arrived, and it was time to get at least a few lights working. I needed an approach that was both simple and economical.



I first started in a small section, using the Woodland Scenics *Just Plug* system. While this is a good system, and there are a variety of lights available, *Just Plug* lights cost about \$8 to \$12 or more each. I estimated the CS&P would need around 150-200 lights. There are additional costs for the wiring and power components as well. Walther's *Cornerstone* lights cost about the same as Woodland Scenics. This led me to search for an economical, but simple approach for adding lights.

**Figure 1** shows the basic approach I arrived at for the CS&P. The lights are powered by a “DC-DC Buck Converter Reduced Voltage Regulator Power Module,” which I was able to purchase from Amazon for about \$3.50 each. This voltage regulator takes a DC input and converts it to a lower DC output. On the CS&P, I have a 15V DC bus running under the layout which powers sound modules, LEDs, and other accessories. I now also use this as the input for the lighting power converters. 12VDC power would also work well as an input to the converter.

**FIGURE 1: General approach to powering lights.**



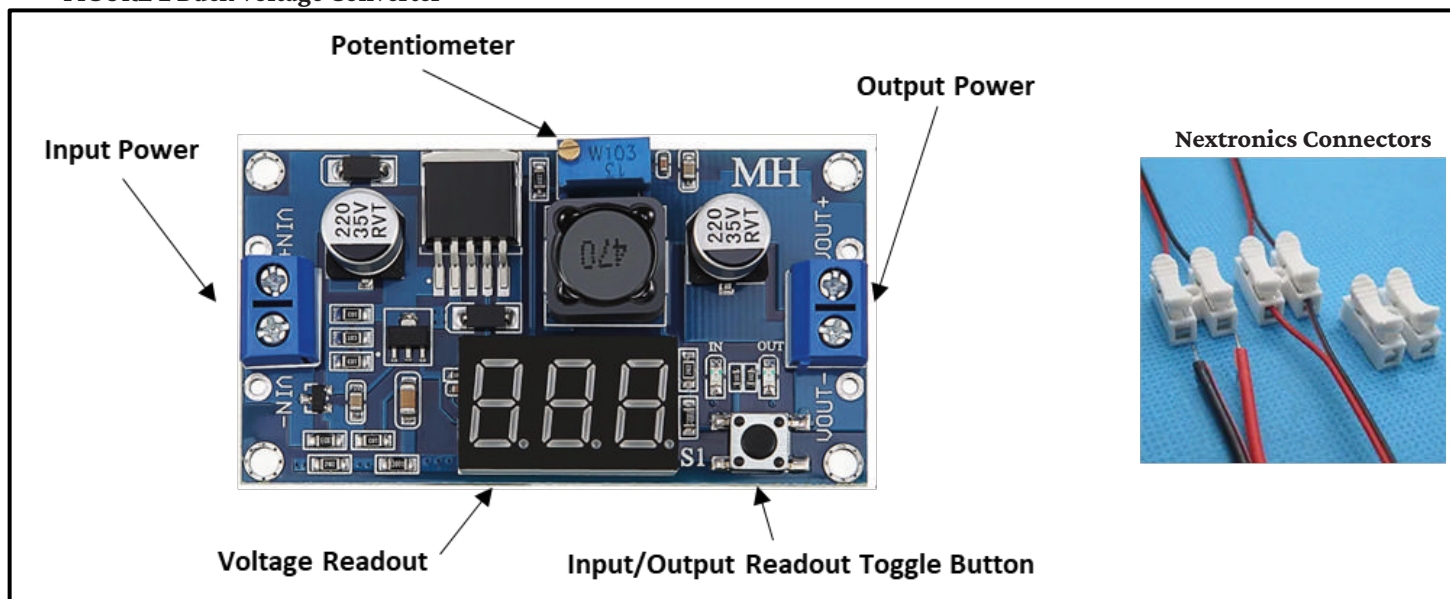
The converter can be **set to any output voltage less than the input voltage**. LED lights typically use 3 volts DC, while grain of wheat bulbs may require 9 volts. Rather than having to use resistors at each light, the voltage can be adjusted to change the brightness of the lights. As shown in **Figure 2**, the output voltage is adjusted via a screw on the converter's potentiometer. I typically adjust the voltage to be about **10% lower than specified** – i.e. for my 3V LEDs, I set the converter at 2.7V to 2.8V while my 9V bulbs are set closer to 8V. An on-board voltage reading makes it easy to adjust to the desired voltage, and the reading may be toggled between the input and output voltage via a small button on the board.

There are many ways to wire the lights into the output of the converter. I typically wire the output into one or more terminal strips, and then run wires from each light to the terminal strips.

To connect the wires from the lights to the wires running to the terminal strips I use *Nextronics Splice Connectors*, also purchased from Amazon. A bag of 25 costs just a little over \$5, and I use one per light. These connectors require no soldering or crimping, so they are great to use when working under the layout. When the lights don't power up the first time, it is simple to reverse the polarity of the leads by swapping



FIGURE 2 Buck Voltage Converter




the wires at these connectors. Where lights are close together, it is possible to wire multiple lights into one connector to save on running wires back to the terminal strip.

Now that we have the power system in place, it is time to address the lights themselves. While I have some Woodland Scenics and Walthers lights, most of my lights have been purchased from ebay. A seller from China, *WEHONEST*, has a wide variety of inexpensive LED lights, including multiple varieties of street lights, yard lights, gooseneck lamps, etc. Most of the lights sell for around a dollar each. The lights have always been shipped promptly and arrive a couple of weeks after I place an order. While I have re-painted some lights, the majority have been installed after a simple

spray of clear matte, to dull the shine. Installation consists of drilling a proper sized hole into which the light wires are threaded. I usually use a plastic coffee stirring straw to make it easier to push the wires through the hole. Bare LEDs can be purchased for a less than a dollar each and used to light up the interior of buildings.

You probably will want a method to turn the lights on and off. The simplest way is to wire a fascia mounted toggle switch to the input to the power converter. On the CS&P we use inexpensive relay modules which can be triggered through the LCC network from the computer running JMRI.

This is an inexpensive method for bringing your layout to life, with lights. It is easy to install and simple to debug. 

## A "MINI" STORY

BY CHUCK DILJAK, MMR



There was a lull during a recent operating session when I heard voices emanating from a dark corner of the layout room. The unmistakable smell of donuts and coffee was wafting in the air. It was at that moment when I overheard one model railroader say to another, "I'll trade you a MacVie for a DeMarco."

Did I hear right? Are these guys hustling baseball cards when there is freight to be moved on the layout? More curious, I leaned in, hoping to learn more. "I don't know," said the second model railroader, "I think I can get a Dave and Midge for a DeMarco." Midge? Who is Midge? I wondered. I never heard of a Major League baseball player named Midge. I should have known better than to jump into the middle of a conversation, especially during an operating session where trains have a schedule to keep. But, overcome by the sweet smell of donuts, I reached for a choco-

late glazed and asked, "Who are MacVie, DeMarco, Dave, and Midge?" Oh, you know "the look." It's the same look I got when I poured myself a cup of decaf coffee in the crew lounge at the start of the operating session.

With his eyes narrowing as he spoke, the second model railroader held up a tiny HO figure between his index finger and thumb saying with a voice dripping with disgust, "This is a DeMarco." I returned his look. But I'm not sure if I had the look of surprise in seeing the HO scale figure or if it was the tepid decaf coffee I was drinking. "So, you are trading figures, not baseball cards?" I asked.

"That's right," said the first modeler.

*Suddenly, there was the unmistakable sound of a phonograph's needle being pulled violently across the surface of a vinyl record, the background music stopped, and the above story screeched to a halt.*

That's because that story is not what really happened! And perhaps I poured myself a cup of regular coffee instead of decaf. So, let me tell you the real story.

During the *Lakeshores*'24 NER Convention, Bernard Hellen of Miniprints, also known as *Dr. Mini*, attended as a vendor. Bernard didn't bring his product line of animals, figures, and other 3D printed items for sale at the convention. Rather, Bernard brought the equipment he uses to scan convention attendees.

*(Continued on next page)*



(Continued from Page 7)

The scanning process involves standing or sitting, while slowly rotating on a small turntable for three minutes. During the three minutes, you cannot move while Bernard uses a scanner attached to a boom. Once the scan is finished, his computer renders the image, and he checks it to see if it is good enough to use. Bernard finishes cleaning up the image for 3D printing after he returns home, and emails a proof for the scanned individual to approve. After approval, the image is added to the Miniprints website for anyone to purchase, provided you gave permission to

Bernard to do so. Bernard then prints five copies of your figure in N, HO, S, or O scale and mails them to you.

Knowing Bernard was going to be at the convention, a group of friends decided to get scanned. All of us thought it would be a fun way to personalize our layouts with 3D figures of each other.

For myself, my Wilkes-Barre station is a focal point of my layout. Plus, it is a favorite structure of mine. Since the Preiser figures on the station platform were tacked down using Woodland Scenics Scenic Accents Glue, it was an easy task to swap some of them out for the 3D printings of my friends. Now, all of my friends are waiting for the next train on the Wilkes-Barre platform. That includes a DeMarco, Dave and Midge, and MacVie.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Author's note:** To see the figures scanned during Lakeshores '24, go to <https://www.miniprints.com/product-tag/rochester/>. Bernard has also been a sponsor of NERx, the Northeastern Region's annual virtual convention for many years. In addition to sponsoring NERx2025, he offered a Tips & Tricks mini-clinic and participated in a roundtable discussion on 3D printing. You can still view these online at the "past events" page at [www.nerx.org](http://www.nerx.org).

If you or your group of friends are interested in getting scanned, follow the Miniprints Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/miniprints3D> and look for posts announcing shows Bernard will be attending. 🚂



▲ Jim DeMarco being scanned at the Lakeshores '24 NER Convention in Rochester, NY by Bernard Hellen of Miniprints.

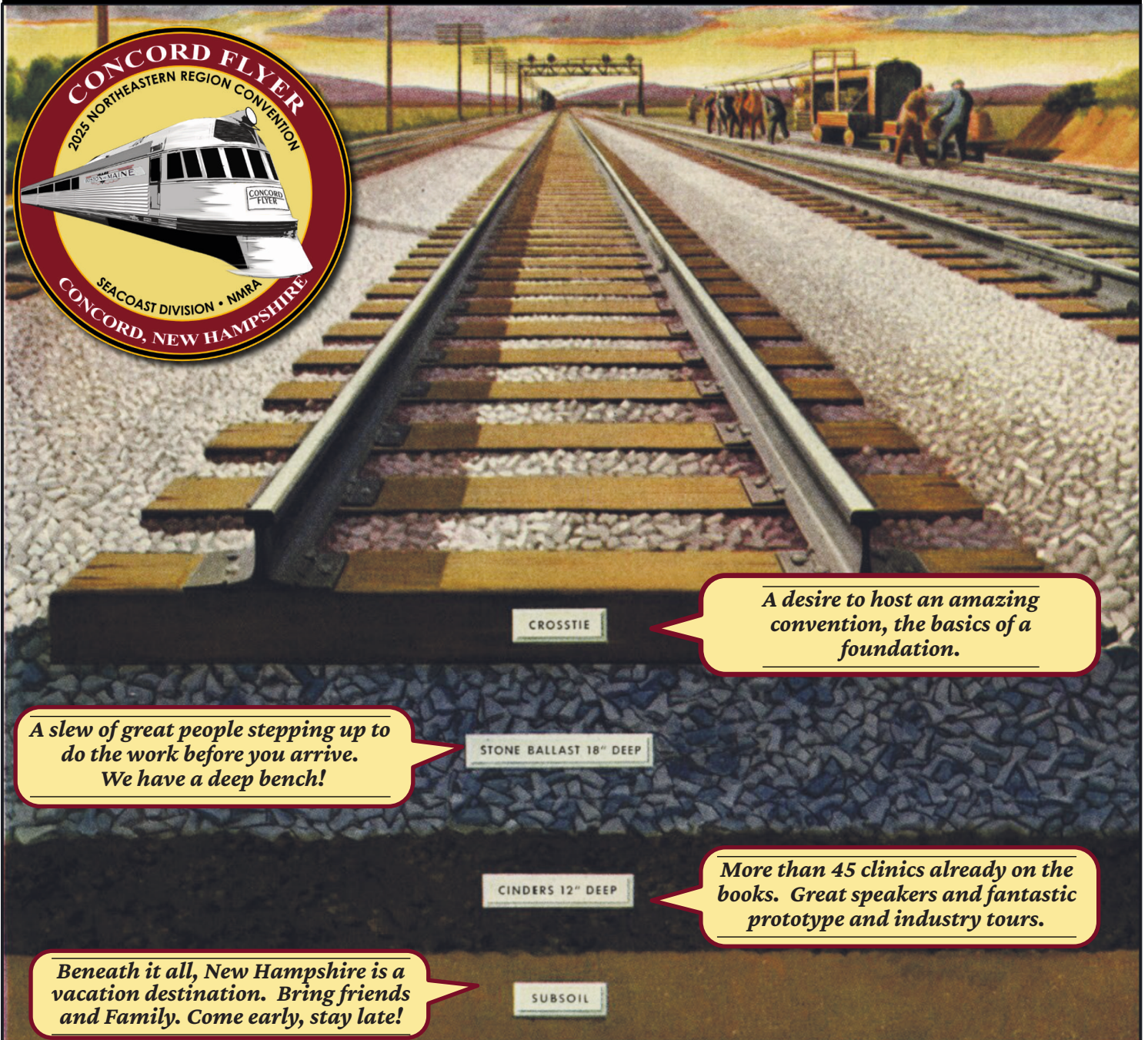


▼ Wilkes-Barre station has been updated with mini-me figures of Chris Carfaro, Gary Reynolds, Andy Reynolds, Ron Stacy, Nancy DeRycke, Andreas Werder, George Sellios, Tony Koester, Andy MacVie, Dave Insley, Midge Durr, Dave Durr, and the author. The remaining figures are from Preiser and Woodland Scenics.





# GROUNDWORK



Every year, the Northeastern Region hosts a convention. This year, it is in Concord, New Hampshire. Beneath these conventions is a lot of time, hard work, and dedication.

In other words, the *GROUNDWORK* is laid down to support an amazing experience. This year's convention, the *Concord Flyer* is Crosstie, Stone Ballast, Cinders, and Subsoil deep in support and planning. All of which is to create a stellar convention for all of us. We hope the pages that follow will excite, illuminate and encourage your attendance.

The track is **stable, strong, and ready** for the "trains" (your arrival.)

Grab your bags! High Ball!







## TOP 10 REASONS TO ATTEND THE CONCORD FLYER

A CONVENTION UPDATE BY WILL EVERITT

### DON'T MISS OUT ON THE 2025 NORTHEASTERN REGION CONVENTION!

The Concord Flyer pulls into the station. Out from a silver, streamlined train set, the conductor steps out. His voice booms, "All aboard, next stop inspiration!"

Make sure the next stop on your model railroading journey is registering for the *Concord Flyer* – NER's 2025 convention hosted by Seacoast Division, September 11-14, 2025, in Concord, NH. You can register by using this QR code. ▶ If you're on the fence about attending this event, here are the top 10 reasons to get your ticket to ride the *Concord Flyer*. . .



▲ BOB GURLEY'S BOSTON & MAINE

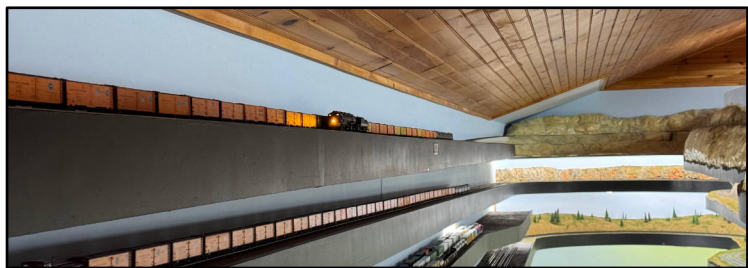
#### REASON #1: INSPIRATIONAL LAYOUTS

Prepare to be inspired! The Seacoast Division is home to some of our Region's most impressive modelers. As you arrive, attend, and depart the *Concord Flyer*, you'll have an opportunity to tour and operate on stunning layouts, many of which have been featured in the model railroad press. The convention will feature nearly every scale – N, HO, HO<sub>N3</sub>, 1:20.3, S, 'O' two-rail, and 1.5".

##### *Railfan Donner Pass in HO*

Have your camera ready when you visit Chris Oliver's Donner Pass layout. This 36' by 48' HO layout is housed in a post and beam barn (which is impressive in its own right). Watch as Southern Pacific trains operate over 50 scale miles of track through the Sierra Nevada mountains just as they did in the 1950s. Follow 10 simultaneously operating trains through five levels of jaw-dropping floor-to-ceiling track. The scenery and prototypical operations are breathtaking. During your visit, you'll learn how computer automation – using Train Controller software – makes this immersive experience possible. Chris' layout will soon be featured in the national NMRA magazine.

◀ ▼ DONNER PASS LAYOUT IN HO — PHOTOS BY CHRIS OLIVER



**Central Maine & Aroostook in N** John Newick's Central Maine & Aroostook layout is an operator's dream. Set in the 1960s and '70s, this layout has long runs between stations and three levels of tracks. It is proof that N scale's selling point is in its realistic operations. John started out in HO, but switched to N when he saw what was possible in this second-most-popular scale. The layout looks like it was perfectly designed to fit the 15' by 25' train room. Indeed, when John remodeled his house, the room was purpose-built for model railroading, including having a sink and spray booth installed. The Central Maine & Aroostook is computer controlled and automated on the mainlines. As many as eight operators have the ability to plug in and take control of the train for action in the yards and for switching. When you visit, be sure to check out the complex helix, which is set in a room separate from the main action.



▲ CENTRAL MAINE & AROOSTOOK — PHOTOS BY JOHN NEWICK ▲

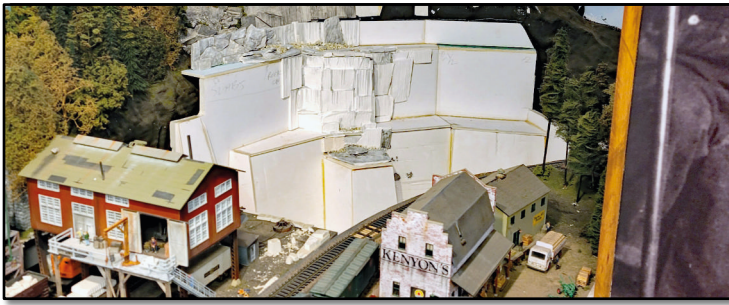
#### REASON #2: NEW ENGLAND RAILROADING AT ITS BEST

This convention taps into Concord, New Hampshire's remarkable history of intense railroading. Concord Flyer's clinics and workshops will feature northern New England railroading and industries served by railroads. Thinking about adding a gravel mine to your layout? Wondering how operations at a paper mill happen? What does a prototypical logging operation look like? Want to learn more about New England's rich railroading history? You'll learn about all this and more.

◀ MOUNT WASHINGTON COG RAILWAY — PHOTO COURTESY, STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE ARCHIVES







▲ DAVE MYERS' QUARRY SCENE, IN PROGRESS ON HIS MID-ATLANTIC & NEW ENGLAND RR. IS THE SUBJECT OF HIS CLINIC "VERMONT GRANITE QUARRIES"

### REASON #3: FRESH CLINICS

Concord Flyer will feature 50 clinics and workshops. On the opening day of the convention, a series of 15-minute mini-clinics will give you a quick overview of handy techniques and tips. Several clinics will be related to northern New England railroads and the industries they served, such as lumber, paper, textiles, and potatoes. Special attention will be given to the Boston and Maine Railroad, which was, by far, the dominant railroad in the state during the 1900s. The convention will also offer a full range of traditional topics, including building structures, cars, scenery, operations, electronics, photography, weathering, and overall layout design & construction.

*Partial list of clinics, check convention site for updates.*

- ◆ The Boston & Maine Railroad
  - ◆ Beginners Guide to 3D Model Design
- ◆ Building a Portable Layout
  - ◆ Boston Waterfront Rail Industry
- ◆ Car Tipping, or Tips on Building Cars
  - ◆ Creating an N Scale Layout
- ◆ Detailing Railroad Cars
  - ◆ The Flying Yankee
- ◆ The Granite Industry
  - ◆ Vermont Granite Quarries
- ◆ Introduction to Operations
  - ◆ Introduction to Modular Railroading
- ◆ Bar Mills – Make & Take Clinic
  - ◆ Making Trees and Ladders
- ◆ Making Your Own Shrubbery
  - ◆ Model Railroad Tips
- ◆ Modeling Dover, NH, Historic Architecture
- ◆ Modeling the Paper Industry
  - ◆ Not Way Freight...It's Weighing Freight!
- ◆ Planning & Constructing a Scene – Research to Execution
  - ◆ Using JMRI Operations Pro
- ◆ The Railroad Potatoes Built
  - ◆ Riding VIA Rail Across Canada
- ◆ Scratch-building a Diesel Locomotive
  - ◆ Scratch-building a Gondola for Merit
- ◆ Scratch-building the Fisher Covered Bridge
  - ◆ Bringing Electricity to Your Model Railroad
- ◆ Super-detailing Steam Locomotives
  - ◆ Track Laying
- ◆ Trees and Forests of the Northeast
  - ◆ Lighting your Railroad Like a Ballerina
- ◆ 2 Years, 2 Weeks – Building the Stratton Valley RR
  - ◆ Sound dynamics for your locos and scenes



### REASON #4: PROTOTYPE AND INDUSTRY VISITS!

The reason we love modeling railroads is because, well, we love the real thing. Concord Flyer will provide more than a few prototypes to visit for 1:1 inspiration.

#### Blue Seal Feed Mill

What goes on in a feed mill? Many of our model railroads have feed mills. Now, we have a chance to see the inner workings of the Blue Seal Feed Mill in Bow, NH. We will tour the mill while it is in full operation on the Friday morning of the convention. This mill receives grain and other feed components by both rail car and semi truck. CSX provides the rail service. Besides farm animal feed, the mill also processes and bags bird seed and grass seed. The mill's outgoing products are delivered by truck in bulk and bagged goods. [For HO modelers, Herpa makes a model of a Walinga feed trailer.]

#### Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad

The convention will give you the opportunity to get a discounted ticket to ride this excursion train through the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. The two-hour round-trip will take you along the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee, the largest lake in the Granite State. The Winnepesaukee Scenic operates on rails that were once home to the renowned Boston, Concord & Montreal line, dating back to 1848. September is the perfect time to ride, as you'll experience the Lakes Region's rich history and natural wonders.

**Northern New England is Chock-Full of Railfanning, Prototypes, and Rail Museums.** On your way to the convention, and on your way home, there are numerous museums and railroad activities to check out. The convention is an excuse to build a vacation around railroading. Ride the Conway Scenic Railroad through historic Crawford Notch, or take the Cog Railway up Mount Washington, the tallest peak in the East. This is your chance to see the Flying Yankee or visit the Seashore Trolley Museum. But why choose? Do them all!







▲ MIKE PYSZCZEK, MAL HOUCK, AND  
CHUCK DILJAK AT LAKESHORES '24.  
— PHOTO BY ELLEN PYSZCZEK

### REASON #5: MAKE NEW FRIENDS

▲ PHOTO COURTESY OF BRIAN SOLOMON

As *Concord Flyer* Co-Chair Tage Erickson says, “Regional conventions give you opportunities to meet other modelers. It’s great, hanging out with other people that you share common interests with. I truly enjoy the fellowship that we share at the regional conventions. This is one of the primary reasons that I attend.”

Our other convention Co-Chair, Peter McKenney, remembers meeting his now longtime friend, David McMullian from Waterville, Ohio, at an NMRA convention in St. Louis in 2001. “I was waiting to board a bus for a layout tour,” Peter remembers. “As it happened, this guy sat down next to me, so I of course asked him, ‘What do you model?’ ‘The Bangor & Aroostook,’ he answered, which is what I model. Somehow, I met probably the only guy in Ohio, modeling the BAR!” Over the years, Peter and David kept in touch. They and their families have even gone on vacation together.

As it turns out, David is going to be a clinician at the *Concord Flyer*! He will be giving workshops on 3D modeling for beginners, and on super detailing locomotives.



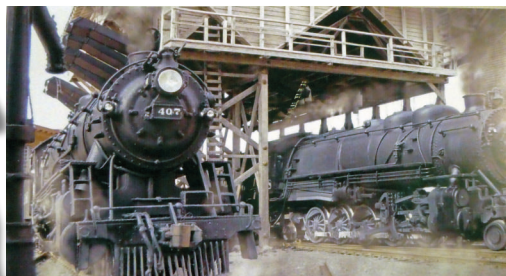
### REASON #6: MODELING WITH THE MASTERS®

Come to *Concord Flyer* and learn from the best! Master Model Railroaders®, Jim Gore (#525) and Carl Smeigh, Jr. (#726), will help you expand your modeling skills. Jim joined the NMRA in Vietnam as a diversion from the *pleasantries* of the day. Having grown up in New Mexico, he models the narrow gauge Chili Line in On30. His layout, the Jemez & Rio Grande, has appeared in *Model Railroader*, the *NMRA Journal*, and *Railroad Model Hobbyist*. Carl served as a submarine captain in the Navy. His various deployments created a winding model railroading journey. He ultimately earned his MMR while working on the Rio Grande Southern in HOn3. Jim and Carl will give you hands-on instruction and guide you through a project, which you can take home and add to your layout. Jim will show you how to build a branch line coaling station. Carl will help you model a cattle loading chute to get animals onto your stock-cars.



### REASON #7: MODEL CONTEST AND MODEL SHOWCASE

Use the convention to put the spotlight on your best modeling projects! Bring a building or rail car that you built to be technically evaluated for Achievement Program certificates. Categories include scratch built, kit built, structures, steam, diesel locomotives, passenger cars, freight cars, cabooses, and more. There will also be a photo contest for both prototype and model photos. Or, simply bring a project you are proud of, to take part in the Model Showcase (non-judged.) The Celebration Room is a “must see” opportunity for excitement and inspiration. Bruce Robinson’s Fisher Covered Bridge, shown below, along with Malcolm Houck’s steam facility photograph, and Andy Reynolds’ Polar Cold Storage, are all great examples of stunning modeling and photography that will be on display in the Celebration Room.







▲ JOHN FERACA AND BILL BROWN ATTENDING SOCIAL HOUR AT LAKESHORES '24.

## REASON #8: SOCIAL HOURS, BANQUET, AND AWARDS BREAKFAST

Enjoy New England brews with fellow model railroaders. Each evening of the convention, there will be social hours to connect and unwind. At the Thursday evening welcome reception, Rick Kfoury, the President of the Boston & Maine Historical Society, will be our guest speaker. On Saturday evening, there will be a banquet and a keynote speaker. Sunday morning, there will be an awards breakfast as we recognize our newest Achievement Program recipients and others.



▲ RICK KFOURY

## REASON #9: WIN AWESOME PRIZES

Model railroad manufacturers and suppliers have stepped up to support the *Concord Flyer*. Together, they have donated scores of prizes for the raffle room. For a few dollars, you could walk away with that locomotive, some new rolling stock, or a craftsman kit that you've always wanted. Every raffle ticket you buy supports our organization and the hobby you love.

## REASON #10 VACATION IN PARADISE IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT MODEL RAILROADS!

Bring your family! There is so much to do in New Hampshire in autumn. Come to Concord early, and stay after the convention is over. The *Courtyard by Marriott & Grappone Conference Center* in Concord is accessible, affordable, and comfortable. It offers complimentary parking, an on-site fitness center, an indoor swimming pool, a hot tub, and a business center.

Take your spouse on a cruise around beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee aboard the M/S Mt. Washington. Do some tax-free shopping. Visit museums, ride a rail-bike, and take a kayak tour. Travel along picturesque auto routes, such as the Kancamagus Highway and Sandwich Notch Road. Fill out your day with visits to quaint country stores and covered bridges.

The Seacoast Division has laid the *GROUNDWORK*, and looks forward to hosting you. So hop aboard the *Concord Flyer*! Registration is open. This will be *railroading at its finest*! Come early, stay late. 🚂

MILKY WAY STARS SHINE ABOVE THE FRANKENSTEIN TRESTLE AT CRAWFORD NOTCH IN THE WHITE MOUNTAINS OF NH. ►  
— PHOTO USED BY PERMISSION; EVAN LEITH/UNSPLASH



SIMPLY RUNNING TRAINS IS ONE OF THE JOYS OF ATTENDING A CONVENTION, AS EVIDENCED BY ED O'CONNELL OPERATING ON THE WEST ISLAND CLUB LAYOUT DURING THE CANNONBALL EXPRESS ON LONG ISLAND TWO YEARS AGO. ▼



▲ THE SEACOAST DIVISION'S GLENN MITCHELL FOCUSES ON SOME MODELING IDEAS DURING HIS VISIT TO WEST ISLAND.



## A LOCAL BOY DOES GOOD

For those who have not yet tuned into the *Around the Layout Podcast* (ATLP), you are missing out on some seriously good model railroad content. The Northeastern Region's own, Ray Arnott, created and hosts the podcast... "Where Model Railroaders Come To Tell Their Stories." Ray puts out excellent material, and I don't miss an episode.

To expand the connection among his listeners, Ray has decorated an HO boxcar in his podcast's paint scheme and created an "interchange tour," where the car gets routed from layout to layout around the world. Of course, it is a 50' hi-cube. Anyone listening knows, Ray has an obsession with the 50' hi-cube.

On his *aroundthelayout.com* website, Ray not only explains how to make your layout a stop on the "interchange tour", but he also challenges you to "Make Your Own ATLP Hi-Cube." Well, Ray....challenge accepted!

## STRETCHING MY MODELING SKILLS

I model 1982, so I looked at this project as a good excuse to try my hand at creating a modern-day freight car, while supporting the podcast. Freight cars today have many different features than ones from the early 80s. Not only are the markings different, but boxcar roofs have seam sealer and the presence of graffiti has spread to almost every car on the rails.

I ordered the Highball Graphics decal set (FL-57) and went looking for an HO Scale Walther's Gunderson single door 50' hi-cube boxcar. The only ones I could find were a two-car set decorated for the Southern Pacific. So, one car quickly turned into two. This presented the first challenge of how to stretch a single decal set to cover two cars. I decided that instead of matching Ray's scheme with two logo placards per side of the car, I would have one on each side. To make up for the lack of two car's worth of "ATLP" road letters, I decided to depict patched and re-stenciled road letters and numbers over graffiti. This is a very common look today.

I'm also a fan of the *DansRailroad2011* YouTube channel, and have long admired his hand-painted graffiti. There was no freight car graffiti in 1982, so these ATLP boxcars gave me my first opportunity to try Dan's techniques. I have also never applied FRA yellow reflective safety striping, depicted roof seam sealing, modeled end splatter, or made logo placards on a rib-sided boxcar. These cars would be a stretch of my modeling skills.

## MAKING ATLP 2024 AND 2025

I started by disassembling the cars and stripping the SP lettering with *Scalecoat II Wash Away*. It quickly removes the white and yellow lettering while leaving the red oxide base paint. I washed each car with soap and water to remove any leftover debris



and set them aside for a day to dry. Next, I masked off the white part of each end, to save time. I also masked off one freight door, to look like a replacement.

I'm not sure if these Walther's cars normally come with side

grab irons, but my two didn't have any. I drilled holes for each (16 per side) and attached Tichy 24" straight grab irons (#3053).

To speed the project, I painted the trucks and the bottom of each car with Rust-Oleum® flat black spray paint. I didn't prime



the models, but went straight to airbrush painting the sides of the cars with Tamiya NATO Black (XF-69). Ray used a pure black on his 2022 car, but I wanted to make the cars look more worn, so I chose this dark grey shade instead of pure flat black.

I carefully measured the circular and rectangular ATLP logos, then made logo placards for the cars out of .005 sheet styrene. I painted both sides of the styrene with the Rust-Oleum® flat black, and when dry, one side NATO Black.



## THE ROOFS

The Walther's cars come with separate roof pieces that just snap into the car body. I decided to model a replaced roof panel, so I kept all of the rust effects off one panel.

Weathering started with a coat of Testors® Dullcoat. Once dry, I used Tamiya flat brown (XF-10) and red brown (XF-64) paints to depict rust on the roof panels. I went slowly dabbing

the paint so as to not go overboard with the rust. I then applied black, dark brown, and bright rust-colored AIM weathering chalks. I sealed the roofs with another coat of Dullcoat. The last step was to use Tamiya light grey (XF-19) paint to depict the seam sealer. New seam sealer is almost white, but it quickly weathers to a grey color. I took a small brush, and by hand, just applied grey paint as I saw it on a prototype photo. I used white paint around the one replacement roof panel to show it was newly applied.

## TIME FOR GRAFFITI

The really fun part of this project was learning about freight car graffiti. I am definitely not a fan of anyone vandalizing someone else's property, and think all of these guys are criminals, not artists. However, I wanted to depict these cars as typical of modern freight, so that meant graffiti.

I discovered several graffiti examples online that I wanted to replicate. *ICHABOD* is a well-known vandal and his "ICH" tag with the skull was a must. I started my first piece with his "ICH" bubble style lettering. It is a simpler font used when he is more rushed to complete it.

Like Dan suggested, I used full strength craft paints from Michaels and a very small brush. I was surprised that it took three coats of paint to make an opaque letter on the black car. Not only was it frustrating to do each one three times, but it made the paint thicker than I would have liked, affecting the weathering in the last step. If I had to do it over again, I'd create a mask of the graffiti shape and airbrush light grey or white on the car first before drawing the letters.

Dan explains on his channel how to hand draw graffiti, and it starts with drawing the letters using a mechanical pencil. I simply went slow, one dab of paint at a time. Each letter was outlined first and then filled in. I found that the more colors I used, the better they looked. The "ASRT" one on 2025 has seven total colors. The "ICH" with the skull has six. I also made sure that "ASRT" and "SPOT" were large enough to justify a patch for the road letters and numbers once I decaled the cars.

I added random small graffiti "scribble" tags around the larger pieces on each side of both cars. I used a combination of craft paint in white, blue, and grey. I also used Gelly Roll® pens in white and yellow. Both worked well, but the pens were much quicker.





## DECALS

The ATLP Highball Graphics decals (FL-57) are excellent. They go on easily and dry smooth. I had a little problem with silvering on the placards, but using a sharp X-ACTO® blade to poke holes in the decals and reapplying Micro-Sol decal setting solution removed it.

Ray's interchange car is road number 2022, the year he started the podcast. I chose 2024 and 2025, the years I started and finished this project. I also split the "ATLP" road letters on the two cars.

Over the graffiti, I added Microscale black decal trim film (TF-2) to depict patches for reapplied road letters, road numbers, and high visibility reflective striping. I used Microscale White Stencil Lettering set (87-1284) for the "ATLP" and "2024" or "2025" numbers over the patches. The data was from Microscale freight car data set (87-193). Modern data doesn't have a CAPY line under the road number anymore, so I left that off on the patch.

To depict newer graffiti that hasn't yet had the striping reapplied, I didn't patch the "SPEK" or the "ICH" with the skull pieces. The decal sheet doesn't come with enough striping to do two cars anyway. I used the Highball ones for the original stripes and cut new ones out of a Chessie decal sheet I had on hand for reapplied stripes.

There are not enough small data stencil decals to do two cars. I concentrated on ATLP 2025 first, applying any data and end markings not covered over by graffiti. I used whatever was left on ATLP 2024. I didn't find evidence of a railroad reapplying these small data stencils over graffiti, so they aren't patched. These give the car a good modern appearance.

## FINISHING TOUCHES

I finished the models by replacing the wheels with a 33" set from Intermountain. I weathered the trucks by drybrushing Tamiya light grey (XF-19) and flat brown (XF-10) on the side frames. The wheel faces and couplers were painted flat brown. I even went so far as to paint the Kaydee trip pins black with silver at the end to simulate hose connectors.

Finally, I tried Dan's splatter technique. Rail cars kick up dirt and mud when the rails are wet, leaving tell-tale splatter marks on the ends. I first applied flat brown in vertical streaks in line with the width of the wheels. Dan has a way of using a wet brush and a metal straight edge to flick specks of paint on the car depicting random dirt. I used Tamiya Buff (XF-57) for this and it came out great. It was very easy, very quick, and very realistic. I'll be using this technique going forward.

That's it! This was a great little project to support the NER's most famous podcaster and experiment with lots of new ways to model. These were fun to create, and I'll likely donate them to Don Irace for use on his modern P&W layout. I'm going back to clean cars and Chessie paint schemes!

I look forward to sharing more on the East End 3.0 going forward, but until then...keep on workin'. 🚂



## EASY AIRBRUSHING

I've always shied away from airbrushing. I could never tolerate the smell of Floquil paints. Learning later that they could cause health problems only reinforced my decision. So early on, I switched to using water-soluble paints – first Polly-S, and later the small bottles of craft store acrylics.

The paints level well with brush painting, have a good flat finish, a very long shelf life, and were available in a myriad of colors. I rarely had to mix colors on my own. But they didn't work well in an airbrush. Even when thinned with alcohol, they beaded up on my model. If the paint was thick enough to cover well, they clogged the airbrush.

The compressor and its hose were big and bulky and it seemed to take me 10 times as long to set up and clean as it did to paint the model in question. I even tried using a spare tire for an air supply but that was even worse. I was very happy using "rattle can" spray primers and brush-painted acrylics.

There may have been new airbrush paint products available, but I paid little attention to them, until one day, I saw Paul St. Martin quickly airbrushing some castings for his latest project. Paul was powering his airbrush with a tiny compressor that easily fit into his hand. Cleanup was simple too! He just ran some paint thinner and alcohol through the brush and he was done.

Although I was still planning to brush paint most of my projects, I was becoming increasingly unhappy with my "rattle can" primers. The cans had become quite expensive, and were getting clogged up after only a few uses. So, I ordered the same model airbrush Paul had used.

Against advice, I tried to spray acrylic craft paint and quickly clogged the airbrush. When I disassembled the unit and tried cleaning, I lost several of the small valve parts. I sent an email to the *Imyds* airbrush company to replace the parts. To my surprise, I received a reply in less than 24 hours. Rather than selling me the replacement parts, they generously sent along a new airbrush free of charge, and even included a nice note wishing me luck and offering to help me in the future. This is a good company to do business with!

I've since had good luck using acrylic paints that are made for airbrushing. I've added some new painting tools to my repertoire and I am happy I did. You're never too old to learn new skills. 🚂



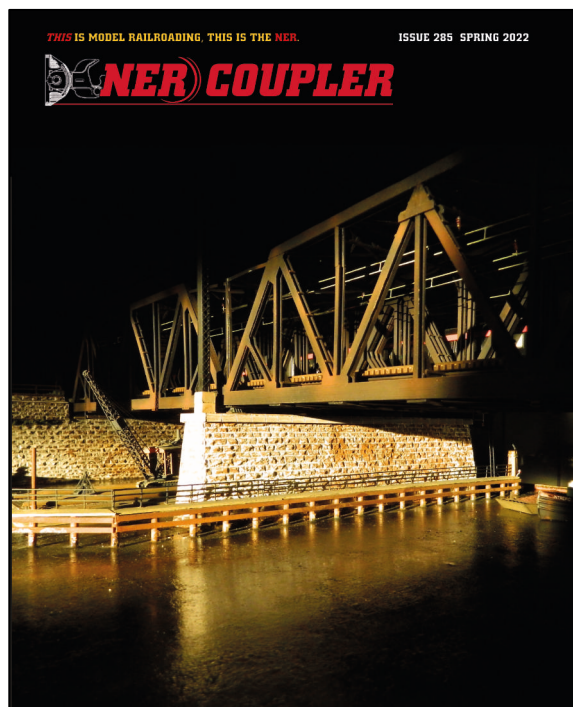


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We are glad you are enjoying the online version of the *NER Coupler*. Look at this amazing cover to the right! Imagine holding this magazine in your hands – shoot, I framed my copy because of this photo. You can read the *Coupler* in print, as it was meant to be viewed. It's even easier now to have a printed copy delivered to your door! Subscribe by simply visiting the NER website or simply click on the link here.

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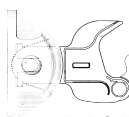
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## NER COUPLER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION  
NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

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Hi Friends, I am loathed to include anything different in the online version of the *NER Coupler* than is already in the print edition. However, this month I must make a small exception.



▲ RMC'S EDITOR, OTTO VONDRAK AND WILLIAM DIGIUSEPPE AT THE 2025 AMHERST HOBBY SHOW



In the *NER News*, coming out in early April, 2025, the *NER Coupler* is announcing a contest, to obtain a cover photo for the July issue. In the description, I mention a “*NER Coupler Press Pass*.”

The *NER Coupler* is in the process of creating a program to introduce model railroading to young adults, called the **Press Pass Initiative**. This program will be open to persons, age 10 through 18. Whereby the *Coupler* will issue a press pass to help facilitate access to layouts and train shows, for these budding reporters and photographers. The idea is to give them a view of the hobby through the lens of a camera or with a pen, by interviewing modelers, layout owners or even manufactures and magazine editors.

This plan is currently under development, and we will save some space in the July issue to talk more about it. Currently, we've issued one press pass and have interest for a half dozen more. The program was introduced to the NER Board of Directors a few months ago. A team of us are working on a handbook and a means to publish and/or display the work of these photographers & authors.

Erik White with *Model Railroader*, and Otto Vondrak of *Railroad Model Craftsman* have expressed interest and a willingness to assist these young folks in this creative endeavour.

If you are interested in participating or have someone in mind, please do not hesitate in contacting me at [editor@nernmra.org](mailto:editor@nernmra.org) -csc