

# The Switch Tower

Seacoast Division, Northeastern Region, National Model Railroad Association

Rich Breton, *President* • Terrence P. King, *Secretary* • Tom Coulombe, *Treasurer*

Volume Eight

Fourth Quarter 2001

Number Four

*President's Message*

## Rich Breton looks for division member ideas, participation

As my first newsletter president's message, I would like to thank Larry Cannon for his past years of dedicated service as the Seacoast Division president. He has directly been responsible for the significant increase in membership and the abundance of interesting activities in this NMRA division. Larry is now focused on the spring NER convention to be held in Portland, Maine. The "Seacoast Special" is off and running, and will be a success with Larry as Convention Chairman. Please support Larry in this huge endeavor; we still need help with some detailed clinics and layout tours in the Portland area for Friday evening.

**Our next Seacoast Division meeting is scheduled for January 5, 2002, at 1:00 p.m. in Lewiston, Maine, at the Great Falls Model Railroad Club.** Our primary business will be to finalize the plans for the convention. Please try to attend. You can get a chance to visit an excellent club layout, share ideas and participate in planning our future. As suggested at the last meeting, we have started to look over our bylaws. Welcome to our newly elected director, Paul Lessard, and to reelected directors.

My plans as the new division president are to continue to solicit active participation in both Maine and New Hampshire. We have a large area to cover, with many excellent modelers. We have been alternating meeting locations primarily between Lewiston and Rochester, N.H. In past years, we have also held a spring meeting in Intervale, N.H., at the Hartmann's museum. I solicit any ideas members may have for alternate meeting locations or activities that you may be interested in.

With your active participation, we can continue the good progress made. I know my son and I have gotten to know more people, made new friends, shared ideas and learned new things. Division meetings with informal clinics, and NER regional conventions with more formal programs, are both key benefits of NMRA membership.

*Rich Breton*

## *Seacoast Special*

Seacoast Division's  
NER Portland Convention  
May 17-19, 2002

**Seacoast Division  
Meeting  
1:00 p.m., Jan. 5, 2002  
at the Great Falls  
Model Railroad Club  
Lewiston, Maine**

## Convention Update

Hello to you all, and Season's Greetings!

I wanted to let you all know that the preliminary convention information is out there on a web site, and will be included in the next issue of the NER *Coupler*. To get to the site, go to [www.nmra.org/convention/regional](http://www.nmra.org/convention/regional). After you get there, drill down to the Northeastern Region Convention page and click on the Portland preview at the bottom of the page.

I also am soliciting some good quality layout tours in the Portland area to go along with those we already have. I also could use some more hour-long quality clinics; I have 24-30 slots, with a little over one-third filled. Large scale and gender-neutral clinics are high on my needs list. Do we have a miniature plants expert in the house?

We have some excellent Sunday layout tours in Seacoast New Hampshire that the owners have my thanks; similar kudos to my Lewiston-Auburn volunteers, and those in the Portland area participating so far. We have some industry help with the clinics, programs and efforts, too: Sheepscot Model Products, Bar Mills Scale Model Works, Carstens Publications and Kalmbach Publishing Co. have all promised participation. We are not having a tradeshow — these are people doing clinics or presentations.

If you have thoughts on either a layout tour or clinic, please contact me. The format on the clinics is an hour with a half-hour for take down and setup between Friday afternoon and night, and Saturday morning and early afternoon.

My experience on layout tours is that if you do not have direct outside access to the home layout, you need someone to point the

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# The Switch Tower

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Information regarding regular meetings of the Seacoast Division, NMRA, is published in *The Switch Tower*. Submissions to the newsletter are most welcome, and should be sent to:

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## From the Editor's Desk



### Seacoast's New President

As you have read elsewhere in this issue, our Seacoast Division has a new president. He's Rich Breton who has been the division vice-president for the past year. A native of Lewiston, Maine, Rich has lived in Rochester, N.H., for the past 20 years. Professionally, he is a mechanical engineer designing and building high speed folders for web printing presses. He tells me he has been model railroading even longer than that, beginning about 30+ years ago at age 12. (I'll wait while you add it up and figure out Rich's age. - OK?)

Here's how he tells it: "My early interest was primarily dioramas, which I always admired in museums. I picked up an old book in the library, and quickly realized that model railroading could fit the bill; detail scenes, roads, etc. I made a couple of simple layouts as a teenager, which set the hook."

### Trivia

The first railway tunnel in the United States was built in 1833 near Johnstown, Pa. But, what was the first big railroad tunnel?

### Hello Amtrak!

Dec. 15, 2001 was a red, white and blue-letter day in Maine and New Hampshire. That was the day Amtrak Downeaster service — four round-trips a day — began between Boston and Portland. Supporters have been working for over 10 years to obtain regularly schedule passenger service on the line that last saw a passenger train some 36 years ago.

The final run happened on Sunday night, Jan. 3, 1965. It was a single B&M Buddliner. Ray F. Abbott, Wakefield, Mass., was flagman; Herbert Baldwin, Melrose, Mass., was the conductor; at the controls was Paul Como, also of Melrose, the engineer. On that last Sunday, there were two Portland-Boston round-trips: 8:05 a.m. and 4:20 p.m., and a one-way trip that departed at 7:50 p.m. The passengers on the final train had to find alternate transportation to return to Maine.

The Amtrak Downeaster has been so popular during its first few weeks of service that an extra coach has been added

to the train's consist to handle standing-room-only crowds of travelers. I was fortunate to obtain tickets for the first revenue run leaving Portland at 6:05 a.m. Dec. 15th. It was a smooth, comfortable, on-time ride to North Station, Boston, and return. So, congratulations to all and may 2002 bring success to Amtrak's Downeaster trains.

### Trivia Answer

New England boasts the first "big" or longest tunnel built in the U.S. It's the Hoosac Tunnel on the old Boston & Maine line in Western Massachusetts. The Hoosac Tunnel is four miles, 3,961 feet in length, and was completed on Feb. 9, 1875.

### Making Tracks

Two hikers were tramping through the woods, and found a set of tracks. The first says: "Those are deer tracks." The second one says, "No, those are bear tracks." Well, the argument got so heated that they didn't notice the oncoming train until too late.

## Modeling Corner

### Producing non-standard grab irons in quantity

by Paul G. Lessard

Nothing improves the appearance of rolling stock more than the addition of scale grab irons. Fortunately for modelers, there is a wide variety of grab irons, or hand-holds, available, particularly in HO made by companies such as Detail Associates.

Inevitably, however, there is always that car or locomotive project where commercial products just won't do. In such cases, I have devised a method to produce grab irons in quantity to a constant length. Those modelers working in scales other than HO can adjust their hole sizes and lengths accordingly.

Note: Use .010 or .012 inch brass wire for HO.

**FIRST STEP:** Cut a scrap piece of Evergreen .100 X .250 styrene several inches long. Drill two .0145 dia. holes right through and in line to represent the width or length of the grab iron.

**SECOND STEP:** Secure this template in a vise. Next, feed one end of a piece of wire through one hole and the other end through the second hole. Pull wire all the way through and tap down gently with a

(next page please)

## Convention Report

(Continued from page one)

way and, depending upon space, you are well-advised to have a person or two besides yourself to answer questions.

Our next meeting to work on planning the convention is Saturday, January 5, 2002, at 1 p.m. at the Great Falls Model Railroad Club in Lewiston, Maine.

Directions (how to get there): east on Main Street from the Androscoggin River bridge, take the right at the second light on to Canal St. (one-way). The third block on the left is a ground-level parking lot for the Kingfield-United bank - park there. Go to the end of the lot toward the second block (a two level parking garage) and you will see signage for the club on the low chain-link fence behind the parking lot.

Hope to see you there. We will talk about modeling - as well as the convention.

Sincerely,

Larry Cannon, MMR

Convention Chairman

(Rich Breton is now the president - Free at last!)

(Modeler's Corner - from previous page)  
small hammer to flatten it.

THIRD STEP: Remove template from vise, and snip off ends of the wire from opposite side. Repeat these steps to produce the desired quantity.

### Realistic trees . . . yet fairly simple

by Rich Breton

*There are many different techniques for making trees. The application dictates how much effort goes into this. Below is a technique I use for trees that can be used in the foreground or middle areas. I would select a much simpler method for background or fill-in trees.*

The most difficult part of tree-making is usually the trunk and branches, which are often referred to as the armature. Even kit trees require a fair amount of work to prepare a realistic trunk and branch assembly. You can save all this trouble (and expense) by looking for natural vegetation to fit the bill. You can usually find suitable weeds or plant prunings close to home. The fall is the best time of year to collect your raw material. I do not know the specific names of wild plants, but I

### Division Business

The October 6, 2001 meeting of the Seacoast Division opened at 1:18 p.m. in Rochester, N.H., with a quorum of 10 members and with President Larry Cannon presiding.

The minutes of the previous meeting and the treasurer's report were accepted without change.

The president discussed the upcoming regional convention. He has the Web information almost done. Early registration is important so we can decide whether we need vans or buses. Convention information stresses information that is important to spouses.

Food (convention banquet): We will have New England clam chowder, tossed salad, (entree?), potatoes, vegetable and dessert, including a sugar-free dessert. The banquet and happy hour start at 6:30 p.m.

The convention registration fee will be \$30. The Freeport tour will be \$12. The Seashore Trolley Museum tour with box lunch will be \$25. The WW&F and The Boothbay Railway Museum combined tour with box lunch will be \$30. The Sandy River Railroad Museum tour with

have found suitable varieties under power lines and around wet areas in fields. (Caution: Avoid hunting season, as the favorite spots for deer hunters are similar.) Some plants which make good trees are blueberries (wild or cultivated) and Spirea. Prunings or dead branches make the best trees. After collecting the specimens, use the following technique to transform them into model trees.

Trim the branches with nippers (side cutters) to get an attractive, realistic looking structure. Cut the ends at a sharp angle to avoid square branch ends. The bottom can be left square; some modelers add a small hole and a straight pin or wire to help hold the branch during construction and for mounting later. Prepare a batch and insert them in holes drilled on a large piece of foamboard or in a board. Your "trees" can be painted gray (dark primer) or left natural. If you want to put in some extra effort, they can be painted to match specific species; your model white birches are painted white with black markings. But, save this effort for foreground trees.

The next step is to add a finer branch structure; fiberfill stretched very thin, or I have tried ScotchBrite pads, usually used for auto bodywork. Already colored gray,

box lunch will be \$25.

Rich Breton reported he is well along with the layout tour book.

We need more Portland area layouts for tours.

We need to attract more members with possibly another mailing.

The nominations for the election were reopened and closed without any more nominations. Terrence King was reelected to the board and Paul Lessard was elected to fill the open slot that was held by Allan Thurston, who declined to run again.

Richard Breton was elected president of the division, and Terry King as secretary. Paul Lessard was nominated as vice-president, but declined the honor. That position will remain open until the president can find someone to fill the job.

Ron Palmquist, editor of *The Switch Tower*, stated that he needs articles about modeling.

The next meeting will be held January 5, 2002, at The Great Falls Model Railroad Club in Lewiston, Maine.

The meeting closed at 2:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Terrence King,  
secretary

the pads make great branch material when the fibers are picked-at using bent-nose tweezers. (I can better demonstrate this technique at our next Seacoast Division meeting on Jan. 5th. I learned this technique at a wonderful clinic I attended many years ago at Concord, N.H. Unfortunately, I do not remember the name of the gentleman who presented the clinic.) Then, the fibers, are glued onto your branches which have been coated with a spray adhesive, such as 3M Super 77 Spray Adhesive. If you use fiberfill, these should now be painted gray.

The final step is to add ground foam to the coarse and fine branch structure. Add more spray adhesive and sprinkle ground foam on the upper parts of the tree. Vary the shades of color for more realistic looking trees. For example, white birches should receive mostly light green ground foam with some yellow added to show leaves that have started to change color. Few trees have uniform leaf colors, mainly because of the various angles of reflected sunlight and shading within a tree. For fall-season modelers, many variations (reds, yellow, orange) are possible, but still do include some green colors.

**Happy New Year — 2002**

# The Switch Tower

## 2002 CALENDAR

*There are a number of upcoming events that may be of interest to model railroaders living in the Seacoast Division, NMRA territory. Please contact the editor if you know about an event to publicize in our Calendar.*

**January 5, 2002 -- Seacoast Division Meeting, 1:00 p.m., at the Great Falls Model Railroad Club Lewiston, Maine. Info: Terrence P. King, P.O. Box 188, E. Livermore, ME 04228-0188 Phone/Fax: 207/933-2477. E-mail: tking@megalink.net**

February 2-3, 2002 -- Amherst Railway Society's Big 2002 Railroad Hobby Show, Eastern States Exposition Grounds, W. Springfield, Mass.

February 16, 2002 -- Model Railroad & Doll House Show, Whitefield Lions Club, National Guard Armory, Western Ave., Augusta, Maine. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Adults: \$3, family \$8 max. Under 12 free.

**May 17-19, 2002 -- Spring NER Convention, Sheraton Tara Hotel, South Portland, Maine. Host: Seacoast Division/NER/NMRA. Info: Larry Cannon, MMR, 207/786-3929. E-mail: ruthcannon@ime.net**

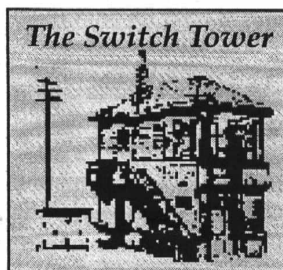
September 2002 -- Third Annual Southern Maine Train & Toy Show, Stevens Ave. Armory, Portland. Info: Bob Boyd, 883-7400.

September 27-29, 2002 -- Fall NER Convention, Syracuse, N.Y. Host: CNY Division/NER/NMRA. Info: Jim Heidt, P.O. Box 25, Clockville, NY 13043. E-mail: jimheidt@hotmail.com



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