

The Switch Tower

**Seacoast Division, Northeastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association**

Bruce Robinson, President -- Paul Lessard, Vice President
Terrence P. King, Secretary -- Tom Coulombe, Treasurer



Volume Fifteen

Third Quarter, 2008

Number Three

President's Message

Help Wanted: Part II



**by Bruce Robinson, President,
Seacoast Division,
Northeastern Region, NMRA**

IT'S WORKING

The last President's Message column was headed with the words "Help Wanted: Great Opportunity Awaits" and it looks like it may be having some effect in the Division. Mike Grahame from Stratham, N.H. mentioned to me at the Sanford, Maine Show that he wanted to put something back into his hobby. Joel Ditrolio from Hollis, N.H. mentioned at the May Division meeting that is willing to help out the Division, too.

A Division of the NMRA isn't what the Board of Directors says it is. It is what the members of the Division get from their membership. The efforts of a lot of people go into the Division's activities and more are needed.

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

I would like to recognize some of the members of the Division that answered the Help Wanted Ad recently. In order to put on the Introduction to Model Railroading course this spring at Timberlane High School in Plaistow, NH the following members served as instructors: Rich Breton, Paul Lessard, Steve and Mary-Lynn Belforti, Bruce Stockdale and Paul Kilian. Thank you for all the hours you put in to make this course a success. When the course resumes next spring there will be more openings that members could fill and enjoy.

PHOTO CONTEST CHAIR

The Division has an opening for the position of Photo Contest Chairman. If you are interested in filling this position please contact me.

WHAT IS A SEACOAST DIVISION MEETING?

The Division holds quarterly meetings that rotate around the area served by the Division. At the May meeting, the meeting dates were set for the second Saturday in the months of January, April, July and October. The meeting places will be Portland, Maine (January), Roch

-ester, NH (April), Auburn/Lewiston, Maine (July) and Manchester, NH (October). This schedule allows members from Maine and New Hampshire the opportunity to attend meetings that are a reasonable distance to travel.

Meetings are planned to include clinics, show-and-tell activities and a layout tour. Members are encouraged to bring models to share and talk about. At the May meeting the Division even provided lunch!

The clinics presented at the May meeting included Rich Breton describing techniques for building background structures, Paul Lessard showcased freight car models he had built, Neal Falby showed how he had solved a problem in providing good lighting for model making at the bench and Larry Cannon presented the requirements for the NMRA's Golden Spike Award.

WORKING LUNCH

During the lunch period the Board of Directors held their meeting. This meeting is open to all members and, again, members are encouraged to attend.

One of the topics of discussion at the May meeting of the Board of Directors was to investigate the possibility of the Seacoast Division hosting the Northeast Region convention in 2011 or 2012. With very positive comments from all present at the meeting (members as well as officers) the discussion phase may move into the action phase. Should the Division choose to be the host Division it will require a lot of Seacoast Division members answering that help wanted ad. If you would like to answer the ad let one of the officers know what you would like to do to help out.

LAYOUT TOUR

After the B-O-D meeting concluded, everyone went to Rich Breton's Baltimore and Ohio, Cumberland Division layout for some socializing and train running.

After the meeting, I received a couple of e-mails that I thought said it all. One said "The meeting last week was great and worth the trip" and the other simply stated "I'm going to work on my Golden Spike Award". Well, after those endorsements, will you be at the next Seacoast Division meeting? I hope to see you there.

Remember: Share the fun of model railroading.

Seacoast Division Meeting Planner

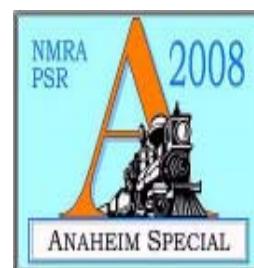
July 12, 2008. Seacoast Division Meeting, Great Falls Model Railroad Club building, Auburn, Maine. 10:00 am-12:00 noon.

October 4, 2008. Seacoast Division Meeting, Manchester, N.H.

January 10, 2009. Seacoast Division Meeting, Portland, Maine.

April 11, 2009. Seacoast Division Meeting, location tba.

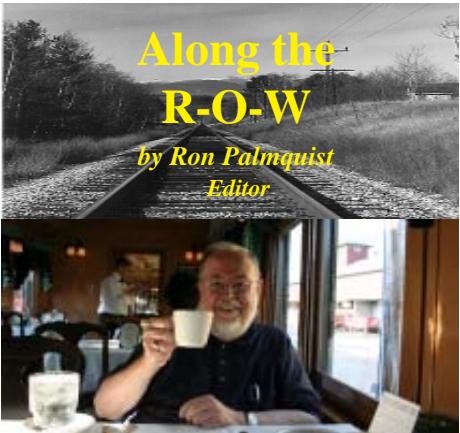
All Seacoast meetings are open to all members, who are encouraged to bring models for show-and-tell. FMI: Bruce Robinson, brobinson85@comcast.net



National NMRA Conventions

July 19, 2008. NMRA National Convention, Anaheim, California. For registration information, contact nmraconvreg@comcast.net

July 5 - 11, 2009 NMRA National Convention. Hartford, Conn. FMI: webmaster@hn2009.org



Along the R-O-W

by Ron Palmquist
Editor

BREAKING NEWS

Wayne Gebhardt, former operator of the Modeler's Junction hobby shop, is the manager of the new Northeastern Craftsman Structure Supply store at 99 Cross St. Methuen, MA 01844; telephone 978-683-NECS (6327). It's located within the factory of Northeastern Scale Lumber. According to Wayne, Mike Sarno, NESL owner, "has hired me to run it. It is only a part-time shop but we're hoping to serve the hobbyists in the Merrimack Valley and the surrounding area." Good luck, Wayne.

Norm's 'O' Scale Shop in Casco, Maine, has new hours. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with other days by appointment only. No HO scale models or kits.

SIGHTINGS

At the Portland Rail/Bus Depot, an Amtrak GP38H-3 on standby with an extra Amcoach.

A bluebird locomotive in Guilford Gray's backyard. Pan Am Railways has painted at least one of the wide-cab GP40s in an all-blue scheme reminiscent of the blue on the old Missouri Pacific. Everything on the Pan Am unit is blue – body, undercarriage, fuel tank, air tanks and trucks. Lettering is for Pan Am with a logo either on the side or on the nose – it depends upon which day it was

in service.

LISBON STATION

The Lisbon Station restoration project is nearing completion. The work remaining to be done is laying the oak flooring, hanging the interior doors and finishing the trimwork. The electrical contractor is installing the light fixtures and security and alarm systems. The final exterior painting is complete. The interior painting is ongoing as work progresses. The concrete platform will be done soon. We are hoping to have a grand opening within 8-weeks. The exciting news is the Lisbon Station has been listed on the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places. This designation will be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places.

Roger Robar, Clerk of the Works

NEXT ISSUE

Please keep in mind that the next issue will be ready for mailing on October first, so the deadline is September 1st to tell us about all of your summer modeling projects.

Thank You!
to the crew that contributed
to this issue of
The Switch Tower



Larry Cannon, Bruce Robinson, Terry
King, Bill Gaver, Roger Robar,
. Marie and Stan Jordan,

Minutes of Seacoast Division meeting in Rochester N. H. in May



Terry King, Secretary

There were 12 members present, seven of whom were officers.

The meeting started with a Show & Tell, that featured Rich Breton with Background Buildings, Paul Lessard with Improving Athearn and Roundhouse boxcars, Larry Cannon, explaining the NMRA's Golden Spike Award and Neil Falby showed a weighted box that holds his clamp-on magnifying light, so he can use it anywhere. Besides explaining how to obtain the Golden spike Award, Larry Cannon also showed some of his "G" scale super detailed cars and some HO craftsman cars. The rest of the NMRA's Achievement Program was also discussed.

After a lunch, the business meeting was opened.

As the Treasurer was absent, there was no report...

The minutes were approved as printed.

The Editors report was read and approved.

Bruce Robinson, the President of the Division re-appointed Terrence King as Secretary and Tom Coulombe as treasurer.

The Adult Ed model railroad course at Timberlane High School only had five students and ran into the red.

President Robinson said the last issue of the NER Coupler was very good. It had an article about Robinson and other information about the Seacoast Division. The Cou-

(Continued on last page)

The Switch Tower//online

Seacoast Division Home Page

<http://www.trainweb.org/seacoastdiv/>

NER Home Page

<http://pages.cthome.net/kenmay/>

[NERHOME.HTML](http://www.ner.org)

NMRA Home Page/Web Site

<http://www.nmra.org>

Deadline for articles and
other submissions for the
next issue of *The Switch Tower* is September 1, 2008.

Volume 15, Number Three, Third Quarter 2008

*Seacoast Division, Northeastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association*

- Chartered Nov. 17, 1968 -

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The Switch Tower

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GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD EXPLAINED

Seacoast Division NMRA May 03, 2008

by Larry Cannon, MMR

Division Achievement Program Chairman

The Golden Spike Award is an opportunity to sample your interest in the Achievement Program (AP). It is a straightforward analysis of your modeling efforts to date. Some of the results may be used for credit toward AP Merit Awards for Motive Power, Cars, Structures, Scenery, and Engineering: Civil and Electrical – six out of eleven of the possible AP Certificate areas.

The “Spike” focuses on three areas: Rolling Stock, Model Railroad Setting and Engineering. Most modelers have to come to grips with these areas to have a model railroad that runs and is something to share with other people: it looks good, it runs, and you don’t want to hide it in a closet! The Golden Spike is not as demanding as going after a Master Model Railroader Certificate that would likely force you to confront one or more of your model railroading weaknesses.

ROLLING STOCK

The requirement is that you have built six locomotives or cars that are scratchbuilt, craftsman kits or superdetailed kits. Scratchbuilt is a challenge; except for allowable commercial parts (trucks, couplers, motors, gears and the like) you’ve built it mostly yourself.

Craftsman kits are the easiest next step, supplying you most of the materials, but drilling, cutting, shaping, fitting, and usually painting and/or finishing are involved.

Superdetailed kits should be the easiest, but sometimes are not. If you pick a kit that requires you to hack away a large portion of what’s there before you start building back, you’ve done a lot of work. The point of superdetailing is that you’ve created something not readily available, and it has the pieces and parts not on the original model.

Any of these three techniques can produce a model fit for a magazine cover, but that is not the objective which is to demonstrate a level of skill and effort that might put your models in print someday.

MODEL RAILROAD SETTING

Constructing eight square feet of layout, including scenery, is not outside of most people’s ambitions unless you live on the space station or a prison cell. Constructing five scratchbuilt, craftsman kit or superdetailed kits is not that difficult either



since there is not a size requirement here. Please note that five out-houses do not cut the mustard. You are supposed to display skill and EFFORT! If you think about it, this requirement is the most flexible and allows for a great variety of artistic talents.

ENGINEERING

Three types of trackage are not that difficult when commercial trackage can be used. The test is can you make them look like the real thing and have them work properly.

Having two trains operate at the same time is a piece of cake if you have DCC. If not, you have to do a minor amount of block wiring so they can move over separate sections of track until they can swap track sections. There are lots of instructions on how to accomplish that.

Providing one additional electrical feature is also a minor requirement. Doing powered turnouts, signaling, turnout indication or lighted buildings requires equal or less effort than getting your track wired.

SUMMARY

The “Spike” requires you to display some modeling skill and effort plus display a basic understanding of scenery, trackwork and electrical skills. If you have a layout, module or operating display that is a crowd pleaser, and meets the modeling skills requirements, you have probably already earned the award.

The award is worthwhile recognition of your skills and efforts. The award means something to other NMRA members because it shows you made the effort. Finally, it is an opportunity for you to see if you have further interest in the AP Program.

There are five other areas in the AP Program to consider: 1) Dispatcher (train operation); 2) Prototype Modeler (modeling a historical scene); 3) Volunteer (service to the NMRA); 4) Official (NMRA service at a Regional or National level); and, 5) Author (publications or clinics about model railroading or prototype railroading). Personally, I have sampled all eleven areas. Some were “easy”, and some were a stretch. Those that were a stretch were at least or more rewarding than the “easy” ones. This because what is “easy” for you may not be so for me, and because once I had done what I considered “hard”, it was no longer so hard to do and I gained knowledge from the program.

The Northeast Prototype Modeler's Meet: A learning experience

by Paul G. Lessard



On May 30 and 31, I attended the Northeast Prototype Modeler's Meet in Collinsville, Conn. It's an annual event catering to prototype-oriented model railroaders, as opposed to those who are freelance modelers. The meet format resembles an NMRA convention, however the activities are more informal and the registration cost is cheap - only \$30 and \$25 if you prepay. The meeting was held at the Canton Community Center, located near U.S. Route 202 which was easily accessible. Clinics were presented by such well-known hobbyists as Mike Tylick, Scott Mason and George Barrett, just to name a few. Also, a two-part slide show on the history of EMD was presented by Preston Cook, in particular his many years working as an engineer for the locomotive-builder. The meet also included a train show with many vendors specializing in a particular interest or product. A display room was open to all attendees who were encouraged to bring some models to share with others. I want to emphasize that the meet display was not a contest, so one need not be afraid to show less than perfect work. Suffice it to say that I thoroughly enjoyed the event, and heartily recommend it to my fellow Seacoast Division Members.



Paul Lessard photo

Bill Gaver, whose detailed maintenance experience was outlined in our last issue, send us a Post Script (PS) dealing with track-laying. “I find that (a) micromark applicator is ideal for applying alcohol and glue formula to track ballast. It provides more control of alcohol and glue. Two applicators - one with alcohol, one with glue - makes for more rapid and less frustrating ballast work, too. Just clean the applicator after each use to remove glue so as to eliminate glue buildup within the applicator tube.” For more information, contact Micromark at www.micromark.com.

Photo Page



The new interchange agreement between Stan Jordan's Acadian Railway and the Maine Central Railroad is quite evident as shown by this action at the Acadian's yard at Grand Haven. MEC RS-11 802 and RS-3 557 have just arrived with boxcars of paper while F3A 672 leads a train of milk cars about to depart for the creamery at Stephenson.

Photo by Marie Jordan

A Norfolk Southern GP38-2 was spotted at Rigby Yard recently, trailing two Pan Am (Guilford Units) on an eastbound freight departing under the U.S. Route 1/Main Street overpass in South Portland.



Amtrak 520, a GP38H-3 and a spare Amcoach, rest at the Portland Railroad/Bus depot awaiting service on the Downeaster passenger train to Boston. Usual power westbound is an Amtrak Genesis unit pushing, and an Amtrak exF40PH power unit (Cabbage) leading. Operating power trails on the Downeaster to avoid exhaust fumes and smoke from entering the covered platforms of North Station, the Boston terminus for the train.

Providence and Worcester Railroad GP38 No. 2008 leads a southbound P&W Zoo train through Cumberland, Rhode Island on June 16th. The day-long trip to Roger Williams Zoo south of Providence benefits the scholarship program of the Worcester Kiwanis Club.



EMD GP38s, over 900 of them built by Electro-Motive Division of General Motors from 1966 to 1971. Some of are still active in New England. Many have been rebuilt, updated and kept in service by railroads, including Amtrak, N&W and P&W seen on this page. For model railroaders, Atlas has released Santa Fe and BNSF versions of the GP38 in conventional DC or in DC/DCC with QSI Sound.

Prototype photos by Ron Palmquist



The Pan Am Railways has the blues. The total-azure locomotive color scheme is the latest graphic representation of the railroad. Here, a wide-cab GP40 leads a freight in Portland as it is about ready to roll across Allen Avenue. The siding coming off the main is the Bishop Street spur, part of the old Boston & Maine line to Westbrook.

Photo by David Anderson, used with his permission.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2008

NMRA Patent Challenge Update: Real Rail Effects fails to respond to NMRA DCC-sound patent challenge

The deadline for Real Rail Effects, Ltd. (RRE) to respond to an NMRA patent challenge has passed, with no response from RRE.

RRE was granted a patent by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) based upon a claim that the technology for using sound with DCC was invented by RRE. The NMRA, with the technical and financial support of a number of DCC manufacturers and hobbyists around the world, filed a challenge to the RRE patent.

The NMRA filed the challenge because we believe that the claims in the RRE patent application were not supported by the facts. The NMRA was aware that prior art and other evidence existed which negated RRE's patent.

The NMRA felt that, should it remain in force, the RRE patent posed a threat to modelers and manufacturers of DCC equipment because it would both increase the costs to modelers and unfairly restrict manufacturers who provide decoders with sound. Therefore, the NMRA coordinated an industry- and hobby-wide effort to have the patent overturned. The NMRA submitted evidence from a number of sources raising substantial questions about the validity of the patent.

On February 11, 2008, the USPTO issued a ruling granting the NMRA's patent re-examination request. The examiner stated in the ruling that there was a substantial likelihood that a reasonable examiner would consider the prior art important in determining the patentability of the application of RRE.

After the examiner at the USPTO determined that the position of the NMRA had merit and compelled a new analysis of the patent, RRE had two months to respond to the re-examination request. The deadline for a response has come and gone, and RRE made no reply. The NMRA is now very hopeful that a favorable decision will be announced and that the position of the NMRA and its supporters will be vindicated.

The NMRA considers this a clear triumph for the modeler and the model railroad industry. We are proud to have led the challenge team that has made this victory possible.

www.NMRA.org

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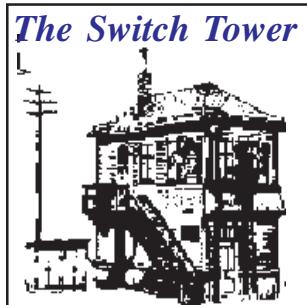
The [National Model Railroad Association](#) is the largest organization devoted to the development, promotion and enjoyment of the hobby of model railroading. The NMRA was founded in 1935 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, making this our 73rd year in service to the hobby of model railroading!

Share the Fun of Model Railroading Rich Breton
If you're not having fun, then you must not be playing with trains!



Seacoast Division, NER/NMRA

c/o Ron Palmquist
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Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107-1022



Address Service Requested

Share the Fun of Model Railroading

Minutes of May 3 Seacoast Division meeting

(Continued from page 2)

pler is the newsletter of the Northeastern Region of the N.M.R.A. and is running a series of articles on each division in the Region.

It was moved and approved to explore the possibility of the Division hosting a Region convention in 2011 or 2012.

The next meetings of the division will be held at The Great Falls Model Railroad Club in Auburn, Maine on July 12, 2008. After that will be Manchester N.H. on October 4, 2008, Portland, Maine, on January 10, 2009 and back in Rochester N.H. on April 11, 2009.

The meeting was closed at 2:08 p.m.



It's been a year since the Great Falls Model Railroad Club moved from a downtown building basement on an alleyway in Lewiston, Maine, to its own two-story building at 144 Mill St., in nearby Auburn. "Progress has been made, (but) much work remains to be done," writes Larry Cannon, club president, in the latest issue of the club newsletter, *The Signal*. "With most of the building code and Fire Marshall issues being addressed," he said, "it's time to start thinking about playing with trains."

Cannon hints that the club layout may feature a Code 83 layout standard for mainline operations, built to "maximize the effectiveness and use of modern technologies (i.e. DCC, Signaling, Computer Train Control, etc.)," and, he adds, "a limited DC operational capability for those not able or willing to get involved with DCC."

At left and at right are photos, provided by the club, to remind us of the dismantled GFM RRC layout in Lewiston.

