

# The Switch Tower



Seacoast Division of the Northeastern Region, National Model Railroad Assoc.



## FORTY YEARS OF HOBBY CHANGES—EVOLUTION

Rich Breton

Being the forty year anniversary of the Seacoast Division, it was suggested by our previous *Switch Tower* editor Ron Palmquist that we consider how the hobby has changed during that time. It was a most interesting idea for me, as I have been a model railroader for just over forty years. It is safe to say, I believe we have never had it as good as today, with the high quality and selection of products available to model railroad hobbyist.

Track quality has drastically improved, where brass sectional track was the norm 40 years ago, with flex track being relatively new allowing track planning flexibility. Today most everyone is using nickel silver track, with abundant choices in rail height such as code 70 and 83. These choices are even available in narrow gauge flex track. Some forty years ago and today some individuals still opt for hand laying track but can now use pre-weathered rails and a wide variety of precut ties.

Rolling stock has seen dramatic changes as well, with highly detailed reasonably priced ready to run cars now available. Forty years ago kits were the mainstay, being labeled “shake-the-box” kits which could be assembled in under an hour. At the time a revolutionary idea was when you could get a set of kits which had different reporting numbers. Weathering rolling stock was still considered a novelty, but today it is even possible to buy some factory weathered cars.

Forty years ago, locomotives were usually balky and difficult to operate, especially steam locomotives. When they ran they would only run at fairly high



Ron Palmquist and his wife Sandy, ready for the road.  
Photo provided by Ron Palmquist

speeds, and often needed a nudge to get them moving, especially with brass rails. There were exceptions if you possessed a well tuned brass locomotive. Today we have a wide variety of highly detailed smooth operating locomotives, diesels as well as steam. This availability has even developed new interest in layouts featuring steam locomotives.

Structure kits were limited and easily recognized. An alternative was to hand build structures out of cardstock and strip wood, using simple magazine plans. The details could be hand painted, scribed into the surface, or laminated using pre-printed building papers. Today we have an abundance of detailed prototype specific structures, made of laser-cut wood, easy

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Deadline for the next issue is

March 13, 2009

Send your article & photos to:

[tpking@roadrunner.com](mailto:tpking@roadrunner.com)



*“There is always the “bring it and show it” time, also. Members are encouraged to bring something they are working on or have built and share it with the rest of us.”*

## Seacoast Meeting

The next meeting of the Seacoast Division will be held on January 10, 2009 at he the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, 301 Cottage Road, South Portland Me. 04106. The time of the meeting is 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This is on the first floor meeting room with the entrance from the rear parking lot.

All Seacoast members, non-members and guests are invited to the meeting.

Clinics on model railroading will be part of the morn-

ing program. Clinics are a way of sharing skills and techniques. You always pick up something new to bring back to your home layout.

There is always the “bring it and show it” time, also. Members are encouraged to bring something they are working on or have built and share it with the rest of us.

The short quarterly business meeting will follow the clinics and social time.

By Bruce Robinson

# Along the R - O - W

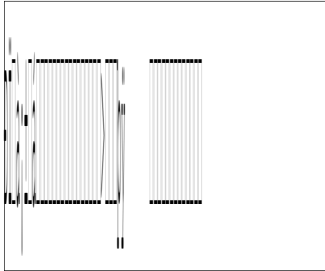


Photo provided by  
Ron Palmquist

By Ron Palmquist

## Bye-Bye

A little over 10 years ago, I was asked to fill in for ailing Seacoast President and newsletter editor Dave Collinge to edit the newsletter for the rejuvenated Seacoast Division, Northeastern Region, NMRA. I was not asked to stop. So, I have been doing what comes naturally for a former print and broadcast news reporter and editor – I reported and edited and, as they say, the rest in history.

Well, it has been a most gratifying experience. I have learned a lot,

and I have learned to know a group of talented model railroaders who have never turned me down when asked to submit material to be published for our membership in Maine and New Hampshire.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have participated in putting out *The Switch Tower*. You know who you are – I won't fall into the trap of naming names and forgetting someone. However, I must recognize the contributions of the division presidents – Dave Collinge, Sandy Roberts, Larry Cannon, Rich

Breton and Bruce Robinson for their encouragement and support. I also want to thank Terry King, our secretary, who has faithfully prepared meeting minutes and mailing labels, and worked with me early-on to find the best place to print the newsletter.

Pres. Bruce tells me I can continue to contribute, so, you probably will be hearing from me as I continue in my mission to receive the NMRA Achievement Program's Author certificate.

## FORTY YEARS OF HOBBY CHANGES— EVOLUTION - CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

to assemble plastic kits, or even modular building components.

The windows were made from acetate sheets where you drew mullions using a ruling pen with ink. Building signs were often hand drawn and inked. Commercial signs could also be cut from old magazines or telephone books. Today using computers, scanners, and the internet, accurate attractive signs can quickly be created and printed to the size you need, even a mirror image if necessary.

Commercial details, vehicles, and figures were extremely limited. Some vehicle kits existed, but were limited. I remember receiving a prized Ulrich die cast tractor trailer kit, which was quite pricey at the time at \$4.25. Today we have highly detailed ready to run vehicles from a variety of manufacturers, as well as period vehicle kits.

Scenery material availability has exploded making very realistic detailed scenes possible, including trees, water, and special effects. I remember making batches of dyed

sawdust, using clothing dyes with hot water, and then drying the mush for days before it was usable. A similar process was used by grinding up kitchen sponges with a mounted wire brush. This made quite a mess, but gave more realistic results. Today you have a wide variety of ground foams in all colors and textures, in prepackaged shaker top containers.

Paints are much safer, with a wide variety of newer acrylic paints. Adhesives are what I consider the revolution, allowing much nicer models with detailed features and materials which were impossible before. Plastic tube cement has given way to variety of liquid plastic cements allowing you to neatly weld plastic materials together. Cyanoacrylic adhesives, the "super glues" have allowed you to assemble dissimilar materials including metals with ease, especially when used with setting accelerators.

It is certainly the best of times for our hobby. Thanks Ron for the idea, it was fun to go down memory lane and see how much things have changed over the past forty years.

## When were railway dining cars were introduced

The first railway dining cars were operated by the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad (which became part of the Pennsylvania) between Philadelphia and Baltimore in 1863. There were two of these cars, remodeled day-coaches, 50 feet in length, each fitted with an eating bar, steam box and "other fixtures usually found in a first class restaurant." The food, however, was prepared at the terminal stations and placed on the trains. These primitive "dining cars" remained in operation for about three years. In 1867, George M. Pullman introduced "hotel cars" (sleeping cars equipped with kitchen and dining facilities) the first three of which were the "President," the "Western World" and the "Kalamazoo." The first Pullman-built car devoted entirely to restaurant purposes was the "Delmonico," operated on the Chicago & Alton Railroad in 1868.

From "450 questions on railroads and railroading", *The Great Falls Model Railroad Club Library*.

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## Presidents Corner by Bruce Robinson

### Seacoast Division in January

January 10<sup>th</sup> is the next Seacoast Division meeting and will be held on January 10, 2009 in Portland, Maine at The First Congregational Church, 301 Cottage Road, South Portland. This quarterly meeting is open to all Division members and you are encouraged to attend.

The quarterly meetings are based around sharing the hobby and there is always show-and-tell and clinics on every aspect of the hobby. Come to Portland, bring a model to showcase and join other modelers as they share their hobby.

The business meeting is also open to all members and your inputs and opinions are solicited and greatly appreciated. One of subjects to be discussed at the Portland meeting will be "Where is the Division is going?" The future activities of the Division need to be looked at and a solid plan of action worked up.

I spent two days with Ken May, NER president, at the HUB Division show held in Marlborough, Mass. this month helping out at the NER display for the NMRA National convention to be held in Hartford, Conn. next July. The convention package seems to be

coming together nicely and I hope many Seacoast members will be able to attend this once in a life time event. I was impressed with the "192 clinics that have been confirmed" by Ken and the rest of the convention committee. The list of home layout tours is really impressive as well. If you are unable to take in the whole convention try to get to the National Train Show that is open to the public on Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday to see the dealers, importers and manufactures that supply this great hobby with so many terrific items for our enjoyment.

The next event to be plugged is the Amherst Society show in Springfield, Mass. January 24-25, 2009. Be sure to stop by the NER booth in the Better Living Center building and say: "Hi, I'm a Seacoast Division member". I will be helping out at the booth over the weekend and would like to meet as members as possible. If you have some spare time there are shifts to man the display to be filled. Drop either Ken May or me an e-mail if you came spare an hour at the show.

**Until January 10<sup>th</sup>.....Share the fun of model railroading!**

### Development of Automatic Couplers

In the early days, when cars were small and light and the trains were short, a simple coupling known as the "link and-pin" was used to hold locomotive and cars together in a train. Trainmen had to go between the cars to couple them; this resulted in many accidents; it was also slow. Many inventors tried to develop automatic couplers.

The vertical plane coupler, invented by Colonel Ezra Miller, was introduced in the 1860's and gained widespread use on passenger equipment. As early as 1869 the Master Car Builders' Association, which later became the Mechanical Division of the Association of American Railroads, began a series of tests beginning at Buffalo, N.Y., in September, 1885, led in 1887 to the approval by the M.C.B.A. of a vertical plane automatic coupler invented by Major Eli H. Janney. From then on the Janney type automatic coupler rapidly replaced other types. By 1890 22,551 out of 26,820 passenger cars and 33,927 out of 918,491 freight had been equipped with automatic couplers. In 1918 came the Type "D" and in 1931 the Type "E" automatic coupler were adopted as standard. *From 450 questions on Railroads and railroading, Great Falls MRR Club Library.*

*"The quarterly meetings are based around sharing the hobby and there is always show-and-tell and clinics on every aspect of the hobby. Come to Portland, bring a model to showcase and join other modelers as they share their hobby."*

*"The vertical plane coupler, invented by Colonel Ezra Miller, was introduced in the 1860's and gained widespread use on passenger equipment."*

## Monteral, Maine and Atlantic Loco and remote control Caboose



Photo  
By  
Terry  
King



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## Model Railroading is fun!

### *The Switch Tower On Line*

Seacoast Division Home Page

[http://www.trainweb.org/seacoastdiv/NER  
Home Page](http://www.trainweb.org/seacoastdiv/NERHomePage)

[http://pages.cthome.net/kenmay/NERHOME.HT  
ML](http://pages.cthome.net/kenmay/NERHOME.HT<br/>ML)

NMRA Home Page/Web Site

<http://www.nmra.org>

Deadline for the next issues is March 13, 2009

## Seacoast Division, Northeastern Region, N.M.R.A.

~ Chartered Nov. 17, 1963~

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*Treasurer, Tom Coulombe*

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## The Switch Tower

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## Remember when?



This photo is from the Monmouth Museum.

This undated picture shows the mainline of the Maine Central Railroad in Monmouth. I would guess that this was taken in the early 1900's

## CALENDER OF EVENTS

1/10/09 Seacoast Division meeting 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.. At First Congregational Church, 301 Cottage Rd., South Portland ME

1/24 & 25/09 Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show, Big E grounds W. Springfield, MA FMI [www.amhetstrail.org](http://www.amhetstrail.org)

2/14/09 Train Show, National Guard Armory, Augusta Me. 04330 10 a.m.—4 p.m.

3/21/09—Maine All gauge Narrow gauge Show, Gray-New Gloucester High School Route 26, Gray Me 04039 9:00 a.m.—4: p.m.  
[mainenarrowgauge@yahoo.com](mailto:mainenarrowgauge@yahoo.com)

4/11/09 Train Show Sanford Me 10:00 to 3:00 p.m.

4/25/09 Spring Train Show,

Mount Ararat High School, 73 Eagles Way, Topsham, ME 04086

10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

5/16/09 Seacoast Division meeting, Rochester NH 1:00—4:00 p.m.

July 5 thru 11, 09 National N.M.R.A. convention Hartford CT.

7/18/09 Seacoast Division Meeting, Auburn ME 1:00—4:00 p.m.

10/ 3/09 Seacoast Division meeting , Concord NH 1:00—4:00 p.m.

11/7/09 Train Show, Auburn Me 10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.