



Vol. 18 No.1 First Quarter

January 2011

THE SEACOAST DIVISION OF THE N.M.R.A.

THE SWITCH TOWER

Chartered on November 17, 1968



Sheepscott Valley Model Railroad Club

A Brief History of the Sheepscott Valley Model Railroad Club

by

Bob Bennett

The Sheepscott Valley Model Railroad Club has been in existence for about fifteen years. The Club began as a group of modelers meeting at the Whitefield Lions Club in Coopers Mills, thanks to the late Dick Hagan, a member of both the Lions and our Club. In return for the meeting space, members of our Club worked at the Lions Club's food vending booth at the annual Windsor Fair. During these early years, the Club rostered 10-12 regular members. Membership has remained nearly constant, with some comings and goings, for the life of the organization. Just lately some young members have left for college.



Photo by Bob Bennett

The Club's original focus was on constructing modules in HO scale with the intent of assembling them in various configurations at local model railroad shows. Standards for benchwork, track and scenery were created and for a number of years the modules appeared at shows and other events. Eventually, the number of members willing and able to set up and take down the modules dwindled to the point that the Club began to look for a permanent

home. Fortunately, Harmon Harvey in Hallowell had basement space available, and a fixed layout was created.

At present, the layout measures about 8x20 feet, and we are gradually, (key word, "gradually"), moving toward a finished product. Track work has been improved and trains

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N.M.R.A. News

Some of your members who don't subscribe to *NMRA Magazine* may not know there's [a section on our website](#) devoted to reporting the same NMRA news found in *The Bulletin* section of the magazine every month. Direct them to www.nmra.org/membership/bulletin/bulletin.html.

We'd also like you to remind your editors about the ["Division Business Car" column](#) (also known as [NMRA@Home](#)) found in *NMRA*

Magazine every-other month. It's written by Jim Zinser, MMR, and features interesting summaries of articles he's found in Division newsletters from all around the world. Make sure your Division or Region's newsletter is getting seen by Jim -- contact him at divbiz-car@wowway.com. It's a great way for your Division and its newsletter to get some national recognition! John Stevens, our national Boy Scout coordinator, wanted me to

forward this to everyone: In order to create the most secure environment possible for its youth members, the [Boy Scouts of America \(BSA\) has developed numerous procedural and leadership selection policies](#) for its adult leaders. Effective June 1, 2010, those policies included Youth Protection Training. After that date, no adult may register with the BSA as an adult leader in any capacity without first completing this training. The



The folks at x2011, the Sacramento 2011 Convention, report that they've now implemented [RSS feeds from their website](#). Attendees and potential attendees can simply subscribe to the RSS feed and they'll receive email messages when items are added or changed on the website. Go to www.x2011west.org and click on the orange RSS box.



BAR in the "Good old days."

The World of Critters by Paul Lassard

THE WORLD OF CRITTERS

By Paul G. Lessard

The title of this article may suggest a modeling work on animals, perhaps critters in the woods or domestic pets. Nothing could be further from the truth. "Critters" refer to the group of industrial locomotives that usually perform their duties in an inconspicuous manner. The term "industrial" is somewhat ambiguous as some major companies use larger diesel units such as SW-1500's or RS-#'s as opposed to the four-wheel dinky that generally comes to mind in these operations. On the other hand industrial units have been used on short line railroads like the Wolfeboro Railroad, Warwick or Narragansett Pier just to name a few. Even the mighty Boston and Maine employed two Plymouths as shop switchers. These critters had endless variety in their size and configuration. They range from 4-wheel dinkies right up to rather large six-axle units. Among the manufactures were names such as General Electric, Plymouth, Brookville, Vulcan, Whitcomb and Davenport.

For model railroaders, there is a good assortment of these locos produced by various manufacturers. As expected, HO scale has the greatest diversity of these particular units. Perhaps the most famous is the Athearn "Hustler" introduced in the 1950's and still available at some second hand dealer tables. Another well-known model was the Penn Line Whitcomb diesel which would probably command a premium price. Some brass importers have also offered some distinctive examples to satisfy the limited market for these units. In the 1960's Tyco marketed the Plymouth CRF-4, a plastic diesel which is quite faithful to its prototype. One should be wary however of the Plymouth diesels produced by AHM and Model Power as they are grossly oversize and would look better on an S scale layout. A more recent entry in this market is the GE 45-tonner introduced by Bachmann. It is an excellent performer and it's fidelity to the prototype is remarkable.

More often than not, the space available for a layout is limited. This is particularly true for the apartment dweller that has the least amount of "real estate". In

this situation an abbreviated short line or industrial layout using these critters would allow these people to enjoy train operations. It also adds another opportunity for the traditional basement pike in supplementing mainline train activity.



N.M.R.A. Continued

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training is good for two years and can be accomplished online. The training can be found at www.scouting.org. Across the top of the page find and click My Scouting. You will be required to create an account which will then allow you access to the training. Upon completion of the training, you will be able to print a certificate of completion which should be included with your next Adult Leader Application. The whole process should take less than an hour. If you have any questions, contact John Stevens at scouts@hq.nmra.org.

- Trainfest, which takes place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and is operated by the WISE Division of the NMRA, set an [all-time attendance record](#) this November when 23,476 people walked through their doors. It's the highest attendance in the event's 39-year history.

- There are still a few shopping days before the holidays, so we want to remind you that giving [a gift of an NMRA membership](#) is a gift your recipient will treasure all year long. They make great gifts for birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day... even Valentine's Day, too!

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they've now implemented [RSS feeds from their website](#). Attendees and potential attendees can simply subscribe to the RSS feed and they'll receive email messages when items are added or changed on the website. Go to www.x2011west.org and click on the orange RSS box.

Incidentally, the [x2011 online registration system is up and running](#). Presently it's limited to convention registration, but once tour information is released, registrants will also be able to sign up for tours and extra fare events online. Not only will this be con-

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President's Corner

Moving Ahead and Making Progress

The Division is growing, slowly but significantly. By the end of the year we should meet our membership goal of 200. Membership Chairman Peter McKenney is doing an excellent job of updating members' contact information, and is putting a personal spin on each contact he makes. More members are now receiving e-mail notices than ever before. Members that do not have e-mail have been contacted by telephone or mail. If you are not receiving these notices, or know of members who aren't getting them, please contact Peter.

The Division officers are seeking ways to provide more member services. At their Board meeting in November they voted to submit a bid to host the Northeastern Region convention in 2013. That date is significant because the Division will celebrate its forty-fifth year in 2013. As the bid process begins there are key landmarks to be met. The first is to identify four chairmen to fill critical positions. The positions are: Local Convention Committee Chairman, Publicity Chairman, Inside Activities Chairman and Outside Activities Chairman. If

you are interested in becoming involved in the bid process as a candidate for one of these positions, contact me. I will provide you with the descriptions and responsibilities of these important positions. We need to get started on this as soon as possible in order to meet schedules and other commitments. There will be more discussion about this at the January Quarterly meeting. Please plan to attend.

Speaking of NER conventions, the recent Burlington, VT Convention proved to be a great event for all who attended. I urge you not to miss the next one, in the Providence, RI area in September 2011.

The Non-Stop Ops weekend that Mike Grahame and John Newick put together went very well. Fourteen members joined the action operating on five model railroads on a Friday night, and the following Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon. A very big **Thank You** goes to Mike and John for making this first operations weekend go so smoothly!

In April I presented a proposed re-organization of the Division's governing body. That plan is still in the works and the results will be presented to the membership when the BoD has the draft ready for open discussion.

The January meeting in South Portland will include the election of three Directors. Come to Portland to meet the candidates who have been selected by the Nominating Committee, and to cast your vote.

The next quarterly meeting will be in Rochester, NH in April. Plan to be there!

Share the fun of model railroading!

MEET BILL SOULE PROOFREADER

Bill Soule, who has been copy-editing material for The Switch Tower" lately, has played the part of "The Train Doctor" at the Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club (EMMRC) annual shows for about two decades. He has served as President, Treasurer and Secretary of EMMRC. He has been in the early stages of design and construction of a 10' x 13' home layout for many years.

Like so many modelers, Bill began with American Flyer and Lionel electric trains, and graduated to modeling in HO. A tinkerer in electricity and electronics from early days, Bill has a lot of knowledge and experience in pre-digital model railroading, but he's only a beginner with DCC.

Bill's qualification as an editor stems from his early days learning sentence-structure at a genuine "grammar school", through his secondary education at Brooklyn (NY) Technical High School, four years at Harvard College, and a rigorous apprenticeship under his boss in the Field Test Liaison Section at Boeing Airplane Company in

Seattle, WN. After a total of 13 years in various technical-writing jobs, in 1966 Bill joined the Mathematics Department at U of Maine to teach Statistics, retiring in 1996.

Bill still lives in Orono with Lois, his wife of 48 years. One of the Soules' daughters lives in Orono with her husband and three children; their other daughter lives in Vermont with her husband and a daughter.



N.M.R.A. Continued

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venient, but registrants will be able to see immediately if a tour is sold out.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the above, please send them directly to a Director or Officer. You'll find those addresses at www.nmra.org or in Scale Rails.

And if you're changing email addresses,

please let me know at this email address: NMRA-infonet@earthlink.net

I hope everyone has a safe and peaceful holiday season. See you next year!



**An anonymous
benefactor has
promised to donate
\$250,000**



Minutes

Division Fall Meeting
Saturday, Oct 9, 2010
Concord Model Railroad Club
Penacook, NH

Meeting Minutes

The Concord Model RR Club hosted the fall Seacoast division meeting on Oct 9, 2010 in Penacook NH. Twenty members were in attendance for the meeting, which was kicked off at 10AM with several clinics and presentations.

Bruce Stockdale started off with a presentation on DCC. He had several DDC components on display and discussed the important aspects of DCC including the importance of picking the right cab or throttle. He delved into the world of CVs (control variables), realistic control and programming and computer control. Bruce also talked about the importance of good wiring and the special considerations needed for wiring turnouts and reverse loops. He touched on advanced layout power requirements and "districting" and put a plug in for the NMRA conformance and testing program.

Following Bruce, Erich Whitney demonstrated the use of the Java Model Railroad Interface (JMRI). A free computer program, JMRI lets you easily program and more importantly "save" all of the settings you set up in your decoder so that if the Loco for some reason "misbehaves" or loses its memory you can regain your settings by simply downloading your saved file to the decoder. Erich also talked about and demonstrated the "Sprog II" which interfaces with JMRI and talks to the decoder, similar to the way a DCC system talks to a decoder while programming. The most eye opening part of the demonstration was showing how a smart phone, in this case Erich's iPhone could be connected through JMRI and act as a wireless throttle.

Moving away from the DCC discussions, Tom Jones gave a clinic on making "10 cent telephone poles". Using discarded inexpensive telephones; Tom demonstrated his 8-step process to make a realistic telephone pole. Although there are many ways to make telephone poles, Tom's process allows him to start and stop at any time in the process and cuts down on the monotony and tedium of this type of modeling project. He highlighted the Henry Ford assembly line process he uses. With an inexpensive carrying case of plastic boxes he moves the poles through a series of steps, first adding a pin base, then filling and filing mold deficiencies, roughing up the plastic then painting the pole primer gray. Chalk is Tom's coloring agent of choice to next bring the pole to a realistic color followed by a two-step painting process for the insulators. First he applies silver paint to the insulator from a paint pen and then paints the silver insulator with a mix of Tamiya clear Green & Blue paint. At the end of the clinic Tom showed a model of 3 telephone poles with Berkshire Junction elastic wire attached and briefly talked of how he uses white wire instead of black so you can see the wire when viewed on a layout and how to carefully attach the wire for those with masochistic tendencies.

Rich Breton followed with a PowerPoint presentation on making small line side signs. From actual pictures, Rich reduced the dimensions of a given sign to HO scale and then made a sample out of styrene. He then made a mold to cast the sign. Rich had an example of Railroad whistle sign he cast that he passed around the group. Almost any small line side sign can be mass-produced in this manner.

To end the show and tell portion of the meeting President Bruce Robinson made a PowerPoint presentation on his home layout,

the "Valley Junction". A fully scenic point-to-point layout, of particular note, Bruce discussed how the mainline turnouts of the Valley Junction are only controlled from a dispatcher panel and railroad crews had to be vigilant in watching the signal status as they proceeded through the layout. Bruce's layout will be one of the 5 layouts featured in the "Non-Stop Ops" program being put on by the Seacoast division later in the month.

After breaking for lunch a short business meeting concluded the day's activities. Treasurer and Secretary reports were approved. Upcoming dates and recent train events were discussed with the next show the Seacoast Division will have a display at the Auburn Maine show on 6 Nov.

Rich Breton gave a report on the NMRA meeting he attended with Larry Cannon. Rich was just elected a Director for the North East Region to the NMRA and was congratulated on his new position. Bruce Robinson followed with a rundown of the Board of Directors meeting he attended at the recent NER convention in Burlington.

The nominating committee of Larry Cannon, Rich Breton and Tom Jones reported back on the nominations for the January election of Directors and Officers. Erich Whitney was nominated to fill the director position being vacated by Terry King.

Peter Mckenney, the Membership Chairman, briefed the group on his ongoing efforts to update the email addresses of the members. Getting the Newsletter to, and having a viable means of communicating with, as many of the 180 Seacoast Division members as we can will benefit everyone in the division as we try to expand our programs and outreach.

Seacoast Division Membership

By Peter McKenney

Seacoast Division membership has started to rise noticeably in the past few months due to a renewed focus on 1) communications with members and prospective members and 2) demonstrating the benefits of belonging to the NMRA, NER, and Seacoast Division. For the first 11 months of 2010, the membership count had been hovering between 181 and 185 members. As of December 26, 2010, the membership count for the Seacoast Division had risen to 191. The Division's target is to have 200 members which would represent a 10% improvement over September's level of 181 members.

As part of an analysis to assess the past performance of the Division, and its future potential, Division leaders have considered how many NMRA members live in Maine and New Hampshire compared to the general population of those states. As the graph below indicates, Seacoast Division has the fourth best ratio in the Northeastern Region of members per population. Its ratio already is well-above the average of the NER and NMRA nationally. Yet, using other successful NER divisions as well as successful divisions with similarly large geographic territories in other regions as guidance, Seacoast Division should be able to grow further

and make enjoyment of the model railroad hobby even better.

Communications

Improving communications and the Seacoast Division's services are important elements of this campaign. The first step taken to improve communications has been to correct members' email addresses. Given the Division's modest amount of available cash, it is not practical to have frequent postal mailings to all of its members informing them of meetings and other activities. Over 70% of Seacoast Division members regularly use email and they can be reached at no cost, IF their email addresses are correct. As it turned out, 55 corrections had to be made to email accounts in the past 2 months.

In the future, the Division hopes to further improve communications by adding content to the Switch Tower and the Division's website. Representatives of the Division continue to attend train shows within the two states, plus shows in border states, to make themselves available to NMRA members and prospective members.

Benefits of Belonging to Seacoast Division

In new business a discussion of increasing revenue streams for the Division took place and the members authorized the expenditure of \$50 for the software required to produce Seacoast emblems for shirts and patches. The patches had sold well at previous train events and having a "Seacoast Division" shirt available for purchase by the members was thought to be a good idea. The Business meeting was adjourned shortly after 3 PM.

A list of benefits available to members of the Seacoast Division (see sidebar) is growing. The Board will continue to gather ideas and develop appropriate services in various parts of the Division. A major challenge is to adequately serve members throughout the two states. Seacoast Division consists of over 44,000 square miles, by far the largest territory of the 11 active divisions in the NER. Reference the bar graph showing division members per square mile. Finding practical programs that can be implemented in different sections of the Division represents a major challenge for the directors and officers.

What can members do to help improve communication and benefits, and grow membership?

1. Use email and always provide a current, working email address to the NMRA and Seacoast Division.
2. Encourage others to join NMRA, if they are not yet members.
3. Pass on to officers, directors or the Membership Chair the names of individuals who would be good candidates for membership.
4. Read the Switch Tower
 - a. If you do not have email or access to the internet, subscribe for a hard copy of the newsletter (\$8 per year)
 - b. If you have email, read the newsletter when it is sent to you
 - c. If you prefer, access all of the newsletters on the Division's website (www.seacoastdiv.net).
5. Visit the Division's website to stay informed.
6. Be aware that there is a chat group for the Division. "Seacoastdiv" in Yahoo Groups. It is an underused resource.
7. Suggest ways to improve benefits and services in the Division, especially in your area.
8. Suggest topics for future clinics, presentations, newsletter articles, and content for the website.
 - a. If you can, go beyond suggesting a topic; prepare the clinics, presentations, articles, and content, or share the load with another member.
9. Attend Division activities and get to know your fellow modelers better.

Minutes Continued

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Michael Grahame gave an update on the "Non-Stop Ops" program scheduled for the 22nd and 23rd of October. Mailing costs to get the information to all of the members was the biggest expense to date. Although this first year will not run in the black, future events will take advantage of earlier email notification to a greater number of members and significantly cut down on expenses.

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THE SEACOAST DIVISION OF THE N.M.R.A.

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The Switch Tower on Line
Seacoast Division Home Page
<http://www.seacoastdiv.net>

NMRA Home Page/Web Site
<http://www.nmra.org>

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now run pretty smoothly on the double track mainline. There are several areas where switching and yard work can take place, and every other Friday night, some members gather to show off their work, run trains, "chew the fat" and generally enjoy the congenial atmosphere. We have a display that is regularly featured at the Augusta model railroad show in February in an attempt to garner new members, and we have attracted a few converts in the past couple of years.

From the foregoing, you may guess that we are looking for more members. Indeed, if you live in the Augusta-Waterville area and enjoy model railroading and "chewing the fat," check us out! For further details, please call me at (207) 445-4508.

Seacoast Division Officers:

President: Bruce Robinson, 19 Hunt Pond Rd, Sandown, NH 03873 603-887-5922

Vice President: Paul Lessard, 74 Oakland Ave., Manchester, NH 03109 603-623-4093

Directors: Richard Breton, 9 Riverside Dr., Rochester NH 03867 603-332-8257. **Larry Cannon**, 516 Pond Rd, Lewiston ME 04240, 207-786-3929, **Terrence King**, P.O. Box 336, Monmouth ME 04259-0336, 207-933-2477. **Michael Grahame**, P.O. Box 163, Stratham, NH 03885-0163, 603-778-3099. **Neil Falby**, P.O. Box 7, Wells ME 04090, 207-646-1820. **Tom Coulombe**, 465 Pond Rd, Lewiston ME 04240, 207-784-5962. **Tom Jones**, 290 Simpson's Point Rd., Brunswick ME 04011, 207-725-0712.

CALENDER OF EVENTS

January 8 Seacoast Division Meeting, 10:00 □ 1:00, First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, 301 Cottage Rd, South Portland ME

February 19 Augusta, ME, Train & Doll House Show, Augusta Armory 10:00 □ 4:00, 207-582-1410

March 12 & 13 Milford N.H. Bedford Boomers/Garden Railway Soc., www.nhgrs.com

March 19 Augusta, ME., □O□gauge show, Elks Club, 207-443-3806

April 2, Gray, ME, Narrow Gauge Show, Gray/New Gloucester High School, 207-795-6476

April 10 W. Lebanon N.H., Train Show, Fireside Inn. <http://cvrr.railfan.net/cvmrr/>

April 30, Topsham, ME, Model Railroad Show, Mt Ararat High School 10:00 □ 3:00, 207-933-2477

Seacoast Division Membership Continued

(Continued from page 5)

Peter McKenney, Seacoast Division Membership Chair
207-776-2033
mckenp@maine.rr.com
36 Bruce Hill Road, Cumberland, ME 04021-3452

SIDEBAR

BENEFITS OF SEACOAST DIVISION MEMBERSHIP

- **Quarterly activities/meetings** (including How-To clinics, show-and-tell/ask, presentations, and special activities)
- **January in Portland, ME area**
- **April in Rochester, NH**
- **July in Auburn, ME**

October in Concord, NH area

- **Switch Tower Newsletter** (quarterly)
- **Fellowship with other modelers and their assistance**
- **Layout operating sessions**
- **Outreach: Presence at numerous train shows**
- **Pending development: modular layout sub-group formation, establishing local cells of Division**

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**Dead Line For April Issue:
March 1, 2011**