



The Switch Tower

Vol. 28 No 3

July 2021

Seacoast Division NMRA www.seacoastnmra.org



Seacoast Division NMRA Zoom On-line Event
Saturday, April 17, 2021, 10:00am-12:00pm
On-line Zoom Event

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Private varnish on the East bound Lake Shore Limited . See Brandon Kulik's story about ridding Amtrak during the pandemic

Enjoy a trip through the [Seacoast Division's Web Site](http://www.seacoastnmra.org).

The President's Lantern by Tage Erickson

I hope this message finds you in good health and fully vaccinated from the pandemic. Model Railroading in our area still continues to be affected by the pandemic. There is more hope that train shows and operating sessions can resume this summer and certainly by the Fall. In the meantime, most of the pandemic restrictions have been lifted and I am certain that most of you are on target to get your lives back to as much of a normal level as possible.

According to my latest information, the Concord Model Railroad Club show on August 15, 2021 is on schedule to happen as advertised. Also, the Fall Model Railroad Show, sponsored by the Great Falls Model Railroad Club is likely to happen, as well. These are all good indications that our external modeling activities are slowly getting back to normal. Additionally, I have heard reports that operating sessions have resumed on a few of the local layouts. This is all great news, as long as we continue to do the things that we need to do, in order to stay safe and healthy.

Seacoast Division Virtual Summer Event

Within our Seacoast Division, we are preparing for our Virtual Summer Event, which will happen on Saturday, July 17, 2021, from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. Our Division Vice President, Glenn Mitchell, will be sending out his first Event Notice very soon. As in the past, I will send out the Zoom meeting information on the day before the Event. I will also plan a "practice" Zoom session meeting for either Wednesday or Thursday evening the week prior to the Event. These practice sessions are a great way to become familiar with the Zoom log-in procedures and also are a chance to see and catch up on the latest goings-on with your train buddies that you haven't seen for a while. We have a lot of fun at these practice sessions! Please think about joining us!

Board of Directors Meeting

The Seacoast Division Board of Directors continues to be active. We held our most recent BOD meeting via Zoom on May 18, 2021. One of the items that we discussed was the updating of email addresses and phone numbers. It is very important that each member keep his or her contact information up to date. The way that this is done is for the member to go into the NMRA website (nmra.org) and make the appropriate changes to your account on your personal profile. This is the only way to get this done correctly. Also, the NMRA and our Seacoast Division does not share your personal information with anyone. We respect your privacy, but we can't contact you unless we have your correct information.

We are also continuing our planning, so that we can resume In-person events with the Fall Event, scheduled for Saturday, October 23, 2021. We are working to confirm the availability of the Stratham, NH fire house meeting room. We are preparing to have the Fall Event broadcast via Zoom, in addition to in-person attendance. This will be a first for our Division. Our Board Member, Bob Kotsonis, is making the arrangements that will make this happen.

On July 13, 2021, the Seacoast Division Board of Directors will hold our next virtual meeting. As a reminder, Seacoast Division Board of Directors meetings are open to all Seacoast Division

The President's Lantern by Tage Erickson

members. If you have an issue or item where you feel the need to address the Board of Directors, or if you just want to listen in to one of the BOD meetings, please contact me and I will send you the meeting information.

NER Convention 2021

The Mill City 21 NER Convention will happen! If you had previously registered for attending this convention, you should have been contacted by now, by the convention registrar, Gerry Covino, with regard to your convention choices/preferences. Additionally, Gerry sent out the email message below, last week, and I thought it would be appropriate to include it in this message.

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
AS IT PERTAINS TO ATTENDING THE CONVENTION
COVID-19 POLICY APPROVED BY NER TRUSTEES**

All attendees at the Mill City 21 NER Regional Convention must agree to abide by all health and safety guidelines as specified by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Town of Westford, and the convention venues at the time of the convention as it relates to capacity limits, maintained distance, mask wearing, or other safety procedures. Further, all attendees of the convention and the convention events must be fully vaccinated by the start of the convention.

Members or guests that have a legitimate medical reason for not being able to vaccinate must submit such exceptions in writing to the NER Convention Chairperson. Waivers will be granted on a case-by-case basis. Any individual granted such a waiver must agree to be masked at all times during the convention events.

If you are not comfortable with adhering to this policy please email me that you choose not to follow this policy and your registration will be refunded.

Within the next few days, an announcement will be forthcoming with any program changes as final plans are completed. As a registered participant you will have the first opportunity to modify your registration taking advantage to alter your registration before we reopen the Convention Registration to all members.

As of this time, we continue to feel optimistic that the Convention will be held as planned.

Sincerely,

Gerald Covino, Convention Registrar

Convention Registrar/Treasurer

Northeastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association

email: convention_registrar@nernmra.org

The President's Lantern by Tage Erickson

continuing on

I am planning to attend the Mill City 21 NER convention, barring any unforeseen circumstances that may occur. Regarding the pandemic, at some point, we all have to get on with our lives. In order to do that, we have to learn to live and deal with Covid19. It is not going away anytime soon. There will always be a chance that we can catch this disease. But I feel with the measures that are in place, and with people being vaccinated, I think it is worth the risk. You may disagree with me and that is your right to do so. Your decision to attend the convention is just that. It is your decision.

There is one last item regarding the convention. You will not be asked to prove that you have been vaccinated. You will be on the honor system when you certify that you have been vaccinated.

Division Staff Openings

Our Division Webmaster would like to relinquish his duties. If you are the type of person that is very tech savvy and would be interested in running and maintaining our Division website, if you have those skills, please contact me. Thank you!

That is all I have for you at this time. We still need articles for the Switch Tower, and we would love to hear what you all have been doing to your layouts while this pandemic has been raging. Please join us at the upcoming Summer Event. I hope to see you all then.

Best regards,

Tage Erickson

Sea- Brooks Station on the Belfast and Moosehead Lake RR January 2020
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A New Kind of Event – On-Line with Zoom

Since Covid-19 continues to be a major health risk, especially to older people, the Seacoast Division Board of Directors has made the decision to cancel “in person” events for the foreseeable future. The BOD has also decided to help fill the void by holding on-line Zoom meetings. Many of you are already familiar with Zoom since other organizations are already starting to use it.

Zoom is one of several video conferencing applications available for use on your computer that is connected to the internet. For several years, lap top computers have been equipped with a camera that faces the user, a microphone, and speakers. The computer with the camera/microphone / speaker combination lets the user take advantage of the full capability of Zoom. If you don't have a computer with the camera/microphone /speaker you can still use your computer to view the event and you can communicate with everyone using a phone. Finally, a smart-phone can also be used to participate in a Zoom video conference.

New users will have to go to zoom.us and then download “Zoom Client for Meetings” if you use a computer, or download the Zoom Mobile apps for iPhone or Android from the APP store. You will not have to register for an account. The host of the Zoom Meeting, in our case Seacoast President Tage Erickson, will send out an email with a meeting invitation which includes a link to the meeting. The non-host attendees will click on the link a few minutes prior to the meeting to get connected to the Zoom meeting. The host will then accept you into the meeting and you will be able to see all the attendees that have cameras and you will be able to hear all the attendees that have microphones or have called in on the telephone.

President's Welcome by Tage Erickson

Tage will address the members of the Seacoast Division.

Presentations

The Sand Pond & Northern Railroad by Tage Erickson

Tage will go over the plans for his Conrail New England Division layout which will include preliminary layout design concept and the benchwork details for his 3 deck layout. He will show the progress that has been made with the layout and then he will go over the detailed design and progress of the helix construction.

Modeling Techniques by Jay Ehlen

This virtual clinic is a slide presentation of a technique for simulating stainless steel used in scratch built structures. Today's project is Mel's Diner – a mid-fifties roadside attraction. Both exterior and interior applications will be discussed. Also presented is a nearly finished much larger structure – The Midway Diner. The process involves constructing a polystyrene plastic building overlaid with adhesive backed foil

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that is used to seal ductwork. The simple technique can be used to scratch build rolling stock such as stainless steel passenger cars or Bud RDC's.

Video Layout Tours

Since we can't tour member's layouts in person, we'll be doing the next best thing – seeing layouts on video. Seacoast members Bob Kotsonis and Dave Kotsonis recorded a video tour of Dave's layout.

The Greenland Valley RR by Dave Kotsonis

The Greenland Valley RR was started in 1990 and is approximately 22" x 30' and is a freelanced layout modeling the B&M in the late 1940's to early 1950's. It is built using 1" x 4" pine boards using the open grid method with 3/4" plywood as a base. All track work is done and 97% of the scenery is finished. The layout is just about finished with only two small areas needing attention.

One main feature on the layout is the mountain range that is in the middle of the layout which acts as a room divider blocking your view of the back of the layout. The mountains are hand carved using 125 pounds of Plaster of Paris, with well over two hundred trees installed on the mountains with many of them being hand made. The also layout features a large granite quarry, logging camp, paper mill and a waterfront area, with a large coaling facility dominating the waterfront area. Many of the buildings are built right out of the box, kit bashed, or scratch built. While the predominant kits on the layout are manufactured by South River Model Works, Sheepscot Model Products, Fine Scale Miniatures, FOS Scale Models, and Rusty Stumps, many more kit manufactures have been used.

The layout is DCC and is powered by Digitrax, using Easy Model Railroad for inventory purposes and JMRI Panel Pro to print waybills to operate the layout.

The Greenland Valley RR was featured in the May 2004 Model Railroader.

What's On Your Workbench?

We invite members to show a few photos, PowerPoint slides, or even a short video of what you are working on or a layout tour etc. Send me an email to sign up and describe what you will be presenting. Please limit your presentation to about 5 minutes in length. If you have a longer presentation, let me know and I can schedule it in a future Zoom meeting.

Open Forum

Let's discuss what members would like to see in future Zoom Events.

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We Need Your Help!

Besides the usual need for clinicians and layouts for tours or videos, we need venues for Live Events in the future. Some of our usual venues have not yet opened or committed to allow group usage. If your city or town has a community center hall or your church has a meeting room, please check it out and inquire if it will be available in the future for use by the Seacoast Division. We would like to “go live” for the Fall Event.

Next Event: Fall Event October 23, 2021

Mark your calendar and save the date!!

www.seacoastnmra.org



COVID-ERA LONG DISTANCE Amtrak travel. A trip Report

By Brandon Kulik

As everyone is aware, the 2020 pandemic has caused many of us to re-arrange our routines for work, socializing, day to day living, and travel. In September a business trip from Maine to California gave me a chance to experience Amtrak long distance travel under these circumstances. It had been more than 20 years since I sampled overnight rail travel, so I wasn't sure what to expect in terms of service quality. I was curious to try it as well as a way to avoid Covid-19 risk.

My round trip included the Boston-Chicago Lake Shore Limited and the Chicago-Reno (NV) segment of the California Zephyr. For Covid safety reasons, I elected to travel in roomettes; this would involve three nights each way in a sleeper. It minimized random contact with other travelers, provided me with my own lavatory, meals optionally delivered to the compartment as well as access to the "Metropolitan Lounge" facilities at Boston and Chicago while waiting for trains. Thus, social-distancing was a snap.

I felt very Covid-safe. Trains and facilities were all spotlessly clean, passengers all cooperated with mask requirements (a trainman I chatted with told me that there has been very little mask-denial among passengers). Personnel were courteous but firm about Amtrak's policy: wearing masks while in shared areas such as coaches, dining cars or lounges. No mask required in your own compartment.



My roomette on the Lake Shore Limited

There were many positives to the experience. On board service personnel were professional, courteous, informative and attentive, other than one dining car steward on the westbound Zephyr. Everything worked! Even though some of the equipment (Superliners) is 40+ years old, they are clearly well-maintained. Gone are the days of dirty equipment, flickering lights, malfunctioning air-conditioning, dirty windows, and noisy-riding equipment. All the roadbeds (hosted by CSX and NS to Chicago, then BNSF and UP to Reno) were well maintained, so lurching, swaying and bouncing were minimal. Trains departed their city of origin promptly on time. I was especially concerned about the "Late-For Sure

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BNSF and UP to Reno) were well maintained, so lurching, swaying and bouncing were minimal. Trains departed their city of origin promptly on time. I was especially concerned about the “Late-For Sure Limited” based on its reputation, but it maintained schedule, even arriving in Chicago 10 minutes early. The westbound Zephyr departed on time, lost about two hours the second night, but made up an hour by Reno. Eastbound the Zephyr was 30 minutes late at Reno and almost an hour early into Chicago and the Lake Shore was about 20 minutes tardy into Boston.

The only real negatives were the poor quality of food and lack of amenities. Allegedly due to Covid (*but mostly due to the current administration’s scaling down of Amtrak –according to personnel I talked to*) the dining menu was restricted to only 4 or 5 entrée choices of pre-made airline-type meals reheated in a microwave. Breakfasts were especially grim. On a single overnight trip this might be tolerable, but this got very old on a pair of three-day trips. Although it was edible it was a far cry from the quality meals I have experienced on past Amtrak trips.



Typical meal. The complimentary alcoholic beverage was much appreciated.

Most first class amenities have been abolished, such as the 24/7 coffee, tea and fresh fruit/ cookies nook in each sleeper. The Metropolitan Lounges are no longer serving food or drink due to the pandemic. This was disappointing especially on my return leg where I had an 8-hour layover in Chicago from about 1:30 until around 9:30 PM.

From a rail fanning standpoint it was an interesting trip. I tracked our locations on Google Earth on my cell phone and iPad, so was able to anticipate points of interest such as railyards, junctions, river crossings, etc., my GPS unit informed me of our speed (80 MPH across Nevada!). I'm more of a vintage-classic era railfan, and was surprised at how much “old stuff” you can still see if you are alert. Needless Most first class amenities have been abolished, such as the 24/7 coffee, tea and fresh fruit/ cookies nook in each sleeper. The Metropolitan Lounges are no longer serving food or drink due to the pandemic. This was disappointing especially on my return leg where I

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Photo above Private varnish in Albany NY

Photos to right dome car action

Photo by the author



The Charles Street Roundhouse & Turntable

By Bruce Campbell

Recently I completed a roundhouse and turntable for the Charles Street engine terminal on my NYNH&H Shoreline HO layout. It is loosely based on the prototype in Providence, R.I. I have vague 60 year-old memories of the structures, but also some photos from the New Haven RR era and early 1970's (such as photo 1, dating from Penn Central ownership) to use as a guide. Rather than pursue a scratch-building project, I used commercially available kits in an attempt to capture the general appearance of the prototype.



Photo 1
Photos

From *Bob's*

The roundhouse is a Korber 3-stall roundhouse kit plus two extra Korber stall kits that I acquired at the Brewer show several years ago. I modified one of the stalls (photos 2 & 3) to roughly simulate prototype photos of what appears to be a shop (visible on the left in photo 1), using a door, steps and windows from previously modified Walthers kits. The windows above the left-most stall (in photo 3) were blocked with some rusty galvanized sheeting to match a feature visible on the prototype (photo 1). Additional interior framing was added using basswood strips to ensure the integrity of the model.

I assembled, painted and weathered all of the roundhouse wall units prior to assembly as I find it easier to work on a flat surface. The brickwork was painted in multiple steps. First, a petroleum-based white primer was applied from a commercial spray can. Then a stiff mixture of brown and red craft paint was applied with an artist's bright shader brush, attempting to put most of the paint

The Charles Street Roundhouse & Turntable

By Bruce Campbell

on the surface of the bricks rather than in the cracks between them. When this was dry a wash made from acrylic black paint was applied. An application of red and brown pan-pastel chalks completed the process for the brick.

The turntable is a Diamond Scale 120-foot turntable kit that I purchased at a Topsham show. I generally followed the directions for this, but painted and weathered the components prior to assembly. I added a walkway around a portion of the pit perimeter (visible but hard to see in photo 1) and an additional walkway between the rails on the turntable, also visible in photo 1. The turntable location is not adjacent to the edge of the layout, so to make installation easier I completed stub tracks and scenery around the pit on the workbench rather than on the layout. The surface of my layout is 2-inch thick blue construction foam, so rather than screw it in place from the underside of a plywood surface, I placed three tee-nuts and bolts vertically on new stringers attached to the existing L-girder and joist framework below the foam. This enabled me to level the turntable on this tripod of support once it had been dropped in from above through a large hole cut in the foam.

The engine-terminal area is far from complete, but I hoped that some of you might enjoy the photos and the story of my attempt to capture the feel of the prototype with a little kit-bashing, if not an exact copy.



The Charles Street Roundhouse & Turntable By Bruce Campbell



Speeder on old
right of way in
Brooks ME

January of 2020

Photo by the edi-
tor



Membership Siding by Lou Champagne

Help the Seacoast Division Grow:

In order to stay strong and vital, it is important that our Division grows ... and our current members are still the best potential source for that growth. We all have friends and acquaintances who are model railroaders, but not members of the NMRA. It's time to tell these folks about the benefits of membership and then invite them to check us out (or try us out with a RailPass membership). A timely opportunity exists to get them involved with our July Event on 7/17. If every member of the Division approached at least two people, the impact could be tremendous !!

Let me know if you have questions or if I can be of assistance in any way, including promotional materials.

New Seacoast NMRA Members:

Welcome Aboard !!!

Maine:

James Boldway, Jay: Michael Gorczynski, Ellsworth

New Hampshire:

Thomas Ryan, Meredith: Rick Xavier, Londonderry: Ray Desrosiers, Greenville
Lawton Read, Meredith

Returning Seacoast NMRA Members:

Maine;

Stan Jordan, So.Portland

New Hampshire:

Bill Kotzky, Atkinson;

A.P. Report

Larry Cannon Maine

Tom Oxnard New Hampshire

Timetable

You should check with the show presenter before traveling. Most shows have been canceled. Everybody please follow the CDC guidelines and stay safe so we can once again enjoy our hobby with our fellow model railroaders

No new certificates have been issued. Tom has stated that he has traveled to do some evaluation on models, so contact Tom or Larry if you have questions or models to be evaluated

Editor's Ramblings by Geoff Anthony

Hi All, As we move on from the pandemic restrictions I hope that we all survived. For me I have found that the zoom meetings that I have attended have been extremely well run and informative. I hope that they continue. For people such as myself who are geographically challenged its been great. I got to see and hear clinics that I never would have been able to get to or afford. My thanks to the NMRA X crew and others who gave their time and energy to these events.

My usual plea is that I need articles for the Switch Tower, I currently have nothing for the October Issue and I hope some members will come forward and change that. This is your newsletter and its only as good as the articles I get. Thanks All the best Geoff

Two mor pictures from Brandon's trip both in Chicago. The new Charger loco for Amtrak and an old bud hi level car still letterd for Burlington



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