



The Switch Tower

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July

2025

Seacoast Division NMRA

www.seacoastnmra.org



Seacoast Division Summer meeting

With Peter McKenney

July 26 10:00 A.M to 2:00 P.M.

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Peter McKenney's layout to the right

Peter's photo



The President's Lantern by Glenn Mitchell

It's almost June and summer is around the corner. We've had a lot of rain, but we've also had a surprising number of warm clear days that I took advantage of to get out on my bicycle and hit the road. I've ridden 150 miles so far which is a great start for my 32nd year. Much better than the last five years.

The Concord Flyer continues to be the major focus of the Seacoast Division. Tage, Peter and Will continue to do a great job leading the team in getting ready for the convention. There have been 77 primary registrations plus 24 spouse/family registrations so far. That's a great start. The hotels are getting filled up and we continue to add rooms. It is shaping up to be great convention and I hope to see many of you there.

The convention is in need of people to work it. We're talking about working one or two 4 hour shifts during the convention. For example we need members to work in the raffle room or to support the clinicians during their presentations. I'm sure there will be other tasks that need support as we go forward.

If you have already volunteered we have your name on our list, but if you haven't volunteered please contact me and I will add you to our volunteer list.

The Seacoast Division Spring 2025 Event was held on April 5, 2025 at the Stratham Firehouse from 10:00 to 2:00. Thanks again to Mike Grahame for providing the venue. There were two clinics at this event:

Tom Oxnard, MMR showed how Helicon Focus can improve your compositions and ability to get crisper images. Tom makes use of his Iphone as his camera and a downloaded app that takes a series of shots which progressively increase the focus distance with each step. The process of using Helicon Focus keeps getting easier. It was a great clinic and you can see it on the Seacoast Youtube site at www.youtube.com/@nmra-seacoast-division/videos

Glenn Mitchell presented the inspiration for the design of his C&NW Illinois Division layout and discussed the planning phase using XTrackCAD. His layout plan was the basis for his operational documentation which helped him earn his Chief Dispatcher AP Certificate.

Chris Carfaro gave a presentation on the photo contest for NMRA members. The winning photo will be on the cover of the summer edition of The Coupler. Chris will outlined the contest rules. Check out The Coupler to see the winning photo.

Bill Huebner opened his layout for the first time for the Seacoast Division. It's a great layout. Thanks again Bill for sharing your work with the Seacoast Division.

After several attempts to find a venue in southern Maine, in July or early August, for the Seacoast Summer Event failed, the board has decided to cancel the summer event. We kept having to look later and later in the summer and were getting too close to the Concord Flyer dates.

Instead of a traditional Summer Event, Peter McKenney has offered to host an open-house at his home layout on July 26, 2025 from 10:00 to 2:00 Peter will present the development of his layout from the inspiration through the planning and the construction. Peter models the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad in Maine and we will all get the opportunity to see his progress so far. Peter has

The President's Lantern by Glenn Mitchell

requested that those planning to attend RSVP as soon as possible. His contact information is listed below:

Peter McKenney

pmckenney36@gmail.com

207-776-2033

I'm looking forward to seeing Peter's layout and I hope to see you there.

Respectfully Submitted,

Glenn Mitchell

Seacoast Division NMRA President and Director



HANDS ON CLINICS AT CONCORD FLYER

By Peter McKenney

NER CONVENTION 2025

THE CONCORD FLYER
CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
SEPTEMBER 11 - 14 2025

• PROTOTYPE TOURS • OPS SESSIONS •
• LAYOUT TOURS • NON-RAIL ACTIVITIES •
• CLINICS • BANQUET •
• OUTSTANDING GUEST SPEAKERS & CLINICIANS •
• MODEL CONTESTS & DISPLAYS •
• PHOTOS • RAFFLE •

SCAN THIS CODE TO GET TRANSPORTED DIRECTLY TO THE CONVENTION WEBSITE!

nmra.org National Model Railroad Association

Three hands-on clinics are offered at Concord Flyer. Jim Gore, MMR, Carl Smeigh, MMR, and Andy Reynolds have given many such clinics at previous conventions and are well-suited to helping participants in their clinics with an appropriate level of guidance. Jim and Carl give 4-hour clinics on scratch-building and Andy gives a 2-hour clinic on building a craftsman kit from Bar Mills. In all clinics, instructors start with general directions and then give each participant guidance specific to their level of modeling experience. Beginner modelers will receive more basic suggestions and skilled modelers will benefit from practice and exposure to alternative techniques. The results will be models to take home that, when properly finished, may earn an Achievement Program Merit Award.

At Seacoast Division NMRA Quarterly Events, there is not sufficient time for such make and take sessions. Concord Flyer presents a unique opportunity for modelers to hone their skills with instantaneous mentoring by experienced modelers. Furthermore, participants often develop connections with fellow participants and the instructors and thereby develop a network of human resources for future modeling questions and projects. As Jim Gore says, "I have made thousands of mistakes in modeling over decades and I want to help modelers learn from my many past mistakes."

Other points about make and take clinics:

- The two MWTM clinics are intended to help modelers learn how to build wood-clad structure models.
- Using wood for this purpose has its advantages, but learning effective ways to measure, cut, glue, achieve tight joints, weather and paint wood is important. Jim mentioned that some participants in his clinics have been challenged just to measure precisely enough to cre-

HANDS ON CLINICS AT CONCORD FLYER

By Peter McKenney

ate a good model.

- The two MWTM clinics (coaling station and cattle chute) are great practice opportunities for modelers to learn and enhance skills for later scratch-building projects of their own or for building craftsman kits.
- Instructors in make and take clinics also explain many tools that are best suited for various purposes in making the structures out of wood and other materials.
- Jim has been teaching MWTM clinics since 2013 and Carl since 2022.
- Not all make and take instructors use the same techniques. Expect to hear alternative techniques from different instructors, then experiment on your own and decide which techniques work best for you.
- After Concord Flyer, the next MWTM clinics that Jim is aware of will be in Chattanooga in 2026, Tacoma, WA in 2027 and probably Rochester, NY in 2028. The Concord Flyer MWTM clinics offer the most convenient chance for a MWTM clinic for the next 3 years!



CONCORD FLYER OR BUST

By Peter McKenney

I am excited. As this issue of Switch Tower is published, only two months remain before Seacoast Division NMRA hosts one of the finest regional conventions in recent times. I have attended many regional and national conventions and I believe that the quality and quantity of the clinics and layouts for touring and operating scheduled for Concord Flyer are outstanding. If you have already decided to attend the convention, you are going to have a fabulous experience.

For those who have not decided yet to attend the convention, do not let this unique opportunity to enjoy our wonderful hobby so close to home slip away. Go immediately to the convention website, conventions.nernmra.org/ and learn about what this convention offers. Join the many fellow division members who have already registered for the convention that has so much to offer.

Clinics There will be 55 clinics to pick from! Three of these clinics are “make and take” clinics. Not only will you make a model to take home after the clinic, you will have gained new skills and techniques to use at home. Clinicians have been recruited to give new or substantially updated clinics over a wide range of topics. As some registrants have already noted, tough choices will be needed to pick from among the competing and highly interesting clinics. If you take a thoughtful look at the list of clinics on the convention website, you should be hooked into registering.

Layouts If the clinics do not convince you about attending the convention, surely the layouts open for touring will. Again, go down the list on the convention website of the 32 layouts that will be open for touring, some of them on multiple dates. Several of these layouts have been published in national publications and some are of museum quality. The Division is fortunate to have so many layout hosts willing to open their layouts for us. Plan on visiting them and being inspired and informed on how you might benefit from some of the layout features you see.

Operations Another staggering strength of Concord Flyer is the number of layouts that will be open for realistic operations, **12**. The layout owners are experienced hosts, too, so even if you are new to this fun activity you will find a friendly and relaxed opportunity to learn and develop your operating skills. The operating sessions are spread out over nine time slots on four days, too, so you can operate several times if you want to fill more than one of the 146 available operating slots. Again, look at the convention website and note that you can operate on small or large layouts of HO, N, or O scale plus a beautiful garden railroad.

You will not have to leave the convention facility to have a wonderful operating experience, either. New England Free-Mo, an association of HO-scale modular railroaders, will set up a modular layout and offer a special clinic on Introduction to Operations. These volunteers

CONCORD FLYER OR BUST

By Peter McKenney

set up their modules at various gatherings of model railroaders including the Amherst Railway Society's show in W. Springfield each year. Model railroaders and even their guests at past conventions have had fun operating on this attractive modular layout. So many operating options for you!

Models One of the most popular rooms at an NER convention is the Celebration Room where everyone views models and photos. A great crew has been assembled to display and manage registrants' models in various classes and categories. If you have something that you want to display, this is a great opportunity to show your progress. Some modelers will submit their models in the contest but if that is not your cup of tea then you can indicate that you want it to be in the unjudged "model showcase" portion of the Celebration Room. There is another option for everyone bringing a model, too, called the "People's Choice." Let the registrants cast their votes for the most popular of the models entered in a category. If you have models you want evaluated for the Achievement Program, this is a great opportunity for you, too. By bringing your models to the convention, you make the convention more interesting and rewarding for yourself and others. You undoubtedly will learn from the experience.

Photos Many of you are rail fans and take lots of photos of prototypes as well as of models. Bring along your images and enter them in the photo contest. Click on the Contest button on the convention website and learn more about what is in store for you.

Special Events and Other Features But wait, "there is more!" Yes, there are special events for you to choose from, too. One of the special events, a visit to a Blue Seal Feed Mill is already full. Also, the tour of the Vermont Railway System Railcar Repair Facility may be full by the time you read this. But there are some great excursions remaining for you to pick from through the convention registration process. See the website for details of these excursions:

Flying Yankee-Conway Scenic Railroad Excursion

M/V Mt. Washington Cruise on Lake Winnepesaukee

Winnepesaukee Scenic Railroad Excursion

The Concord Flyer schedule has numerous opportunities for gathering and sharing stories, ideas, techniques and information. On Thursday evening, there will be a welcome reception immediately following a special presentation on the post war history of the B&M Railroad in New Hampshire by **Rick Kfoury**, author and president of the B&M Railroad Historical Society. On Friday and part of Saturday, a hospitality room is available. Saturday evening features a social hour and banquet. We are thrilled to have as **banquet keynote speaker** this year **David Swirk**, the very busy and visionary president and general manager of Conway Scenic Railroad. He has been in the railroad industry for nearly 40 years and he has some amazing stories to share with us. Wouldn't it be nice if he could give us hopes that the Maine part of the former MEC Mountain Division could be returned to rail service someday? After the banquet, all can return to the Celebration Room to see all the

CONCORD FLYER OR BUST

By Peter McKenney

displayed models and photos, learn which ones earned recognition, and talk with their creators.

Sunday morning starts off with a delicious breakfast and the presentation of the many awards that have been earned. After the breakfast, the NER's Annual Meeting will be the final event at the convention center. Then everyone will have lots of layouts to tour on their way home and even some more operating session opportunities. Of course, we encourage you to "stay late" and enjoy some other railroad and vacation activities in the area.

Seacoast Division NMRA members should be extremely proud and grateful to the many fellow members who have volunteered lots of time to organize the remarkable Concord Flyer program. While our division's regular Quarterly Events are fantastic, too, one would have to go to many Quarterly Events to have access to the same number of clinics or layout tours at Concord Flyer. Join many of the division members who have already registered for the convention and take advantage of this concentration of enjoyable model railroading activities in our division's territory.

Act now:

Learn details about the convention at conventions.nernmra.org/

Register for the convention online or by mail. Fees go up July 31. Earlier registrants get more choices.

Reserve space on one of the extra fare excursions.

Sign up for one or more operating sessions.

Make a reservation at the Fairfield Inn in Concord. Consider inviting a friend to share the cost of the room as well as other travel expenses. Only a few rooms remain in the reserved block of rooms at this hotel so another overflow hotel may be identified in the future.

Work on some models and photos to bring to display in the Celebration Room.

The phrase "or bust" is an idiom that expresses a strong determination to achieve a goal. Failure is not an option. I feel the same way about this convention and I hope that you do, too. Concord Flyer or Bust! See you there!



Seacoast Division Summer Event July 26

AT Peter McKenney's Layout, Cumberland Foreside

Attention all model railroad enthusiasts:

Get ready to experience a tour of the Fort Fairfield Branch of the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad in miniature. You are invited to visit on **Saturday, July 26, 2025, between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm in Cumberland Foreside, Maine.**

The HO scale layout is designed for operations and depicts the BAR's railroad on the 13.3 mile branch-line as it existed in 1953-4. It is a work in progress and much work remains to be done.

The Fort Fairfield yard has 38 structures scratch-built by Tom Oxnard, MMR, to specifications found on ICC and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps.

Tom's modeling of the iconic Fort Fairfield brick passenger station was published in the June 2017 issue of Railroad Model Craftsman.

Benchwork has been built to include locations on the main line, too, such as yards in Houlton and Oakfield. The branch-line and mainline runs combined will be 260 feet.

A model of the combination station at the Fairmount siding was built by Chip Faulter and the interior is fully modeled.

The layout has been designed so that it can be expanded to include other major locations on the BAR including the Great Northern Paper Company Mill #1, Northern Maine Junction, Derby Shops, and even Searsport marine facilities.

During your visit, enjoy discussion of the history of the branch line, how the layout was designed, and its realistic operational opportunities. Hopefully, some visitors will also have their own stories about the BAR as well as modeling ideas and tips that they can share.

This tour is in lieu of a **Seacoast Division NMRA** Summer Event. Members and their guests will have opportunities to discuss upcoming activities such as the **Northeastern Region NMRA convention, the Concord Flyer, being held September 11-14, in New Hampshire.** Visitors, however, need not be NMRA members for this tour.

Visit on July 26 as long as you would like. Light refreshments will be offered and around noontime you can enjoy hot dogs, condiments, and desserts. Note that the layout is in a basement and not handicap accessible. Parking is available on the nearby streets. Aisles are 36 inches wide in most places. There will be limited seating available.

To learn the street address of the layout and help the hosts plan for refreshments, please call/text or

Seacoast Division Summer Event July 26 AT Peter McKenney's Layout, Cumberland Foreside

email your intent to visit and the number of guests who will be with you. We look forward to seeing you!

**Peter McKenney, Cumberland Foreside, Maine;
207-776-2033; pmckenney36@gmail.com**



AP Report

By Tom Oxnard MMR

I had the opportunity to do an evaluation for Master Builder Scenery. Bruce Robinson joined me at John McHugh's house to look at his layout.

The intent of this category is to demonstrate prototypical scenic effects in an urban, rural, or any landscape that you wish. You must finish and present at least 32 square feet of model railroad in HO scale and be evaluated on 5 points: Terrain, Structures, Background, Lighting, and Realism/Conformity. The scenes can be in more than one section.

The terrain may include rocks, hills, track, roadbed, cuts, fills, and ditches. The structures may include bridges, trestles, culverts, crossing gates, and turntables. Backgrounds should show depth and distance, and the transition should be smooth or hidden. The lighting can be on rail cars, signals, and streets. Realism evaluates how well you did what you were trying to do.

John presented more than 40 square feet of his lovely layout and earned his Scenery AP Certificate. He is well on his way to earning his MMR.

John also has us evaluated his last scratch built structure in that category. It was a large sand and gravel industry. It had over 1000 scratch built parts, and he passed with a good score.

In addition Will Everitt has earned his Chief Dispatcher Certificate.

Congratulations Will.

It's been a busy month doing more evaluations for AP Certificates. John McHugh and I evaluated Bruce Robinson's models for his Master Builders -Cars Certificate.

Both are scratch built: a wooden rail and tie car and a Styrene refrigerator car. Both are very well done and received Merit. Bruce already has received 7 AP Certificates, including his Association Official Certificate, that he earned 10 years ago and finally applied for. He hopes to finish up a few more cars."



AP Report

By Tom Oxnard MMR

I also met with Jay Ehlen to finish his Master Builders- Structures Certificate.

The Structures Certificate requires you to construct twelve scale structures. You must have six different types represented and that includes wood and brick buildings, factories, bridges, towers and ships. One of the six must be a bridge. At least six of the models must be scratch built. The remaining six must be superdetailed with scratch built or commercial parts. You must score at least 87 ½ points on six of the twelve models.

Jay has scratch built most of his models and already has six judged for Merit at prior NER Conventions and at his house. He has also had 5 superdetailed models presented. Today I evaluated his last structure, Furr's Burger Barn. It was scratchbuilt with a full interior and lighting. He had photographic documentation of the prototype structure and design plans.

Good job Jay. This will be Jay's third AP Certificate.

Taking your models to a convention is a great way to get them evaluated. The judges are knowledgeable and are able to give you constructive comments. You get to see how others create their models and train cars. So work on perfecting your models over the next several months and bring them to the NER Convention in Concord. You may catch the "bug" and want to build more.



AP Report

By Tom Oxnard MMR



Pictures of John McHugh's layout sections that were used in evaluating for the AP , photo's by Tom Oxnard

Next Stop, Concord!

By Mike Pedersen

Are you ready for the Northeastern Region 2025 convention, our Concord Flyer, September 11-14? If not,. Go to the Seacoast Division website and click on the conventions.nernmra.org link. That will take you to the current convention information and the registration and hotel links. Don't delay, as some of the events have limits on the number of participants and may fill up quickly, Also, check the convention website regularly. Clinics, model railroads and events may be added or deleted almost up to the last day.

I have already registered for the convention and the events I wanted to attend that require pre-registration. I have also gotten my hotel reservation. As this is my first model railroad convention, I am looking forward to participating as fully as possible. My wife is attending also, so I have tried to select events that she might also enjoy. At this point we are signed up for two railroad-related tours and a ride on the Winnepesaukee Railroad. We will also be attending the reception Thursday night, the banquet Saturday night and the awards breakfast Sunday morning. All that still leaves us lots of time to attend some clinics, view the modular railroad, raffle, displays and contest entries at the convention center and tour some model railroads.

Since this will be my first convention, I am jumping in with both feet! I mentioned that I found the negatives for the photos I want to enter in the photo contest. I am curious to see how these photos I took with what was at that time a top of the line film camera will compare to those taken with modern digital equipment. I also have three entries for the model building contest. I have a kitbashed structure, a kitbashed freight car and a scratch built freight car. The scratch built car has also given me fodder for a possible future clinic on lessons learned from my first rolling stock scratch building project.

I hope you have considered attending the convention. If you have seen any of the promos, you can tell from their outstanding quality what the quality of the convention will be like. Remember: This is a convention by us and for us! There has been an excellent level of Seacoast Division volunteering in over a year of planning and there are still many opportunities if you might want to help at the convention itself. From the registration table, to assisting in clinics, to answering questions, to being a guide or "gofer," we are still looking for people who may want to help for an hour or a day. Again, check the website frequently for opportunities.

The closer we get to the date, the greater my anticipation gets! I am really looking forward to meeting as many people from our Seacoast Division and the Northeast Region as I can. The stories I have heard from 'veteran' participants about the friendships made and the modeling information gained are inspiring. I hope you will attend and we can meet and be inspired together. See you in Concord in September!



Next Stop, Concord! By Mike Pedersen



Photo's by Mike Pederson



Editors Ramblings

Timetable

I have been pondering the impact of the tariffs on the hobby. It became very real to my club when we had to pay significant extra money that we were not counting on. It made our cars more expensive and it was an expense that we did not expect when we were budgeting our projects. It took some of the fun out of the hobby and put in some added anxiety which we did not need. There were some good podcasts on the impact on the hobby . We hope that things will settle out but the uncertainty of it makes ordering further car projects difficult.

I hope that people get to enjoy the convention in September, from the program put together so far it looks to very good. I wish I could tend but some personal issues preclude attending. I will be able to be at the shows late this summer and fall so will see everyone there.

Working on some BAR green chip cars for the show and hope to have some Maine Central chip cars done as well . Have a couple of small building kits I want to get to building as well. Never enough time to do what I want.

I hope everyone has a good summer and enjoys the hobby .

July 14-19 NMRA National Convention

Novi [Detroit] MI

July 26 Seacoast Summer Event

Peter McKenney Cumberland Forside

July 26 Great Falls Surplus sale

144 Mill St Auburn 9—1

Aug 16– 17 Great Falls open house

144 Mill ST Auburn 10-4

Aug 17 Concord Model RR club show Everett Arena Concord NH 10-3

Sept 10 –13 Great Falls at the Oxford Fair with modular layouts

Sept 11 –14 Concord NH NMRA Northeast Region convention Grappone Center / Courtyard Marriott

Sept 21 –27 Maine 3 railers at the Cumberland County fair

Sept 21-27 470 club at the Cumberland County fair

Oct 18 Great Falls Show Auburn details to follow

Oct 24-26 Seashore Trolley Museum closing celebration

Nov1 Southern Maine Club show Westbrook Community center Westbrook 9-2

Nov 22 Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club show Jeff's Catering Brewer 10-2

Seacoast Division NMRA Leaders



President, Director	Glenn Mitchell	Glenn.t.mitchell@comcast.net	603-856-8146
V. President, Director	Jay Ehlen	jayehlen@gmail.com	603-397-5611
Director	Jim Gore	igore@ut.edu	813-422-9827
Secretary , director	Will Everett	wm.a.everitt@gmail.com	
AP Chairman and director	Tom Oxnard	tfoxnard@gmail.com	603-770-1329
AP Associate Chairman	Peter McKenney	pmckenney36@gmail.com	207-776-2033
Director	John McHugh	hikerjohn111@gmail.com	
Membership Chair	Bruce Campbell	brc1805@yahoo.com	
Switch Tower Editor, Director	Geoff Anthony	editor@seacoastnmra.org	207-374-2786
Asst. Editor	open		
Webmaster	Dave Delorey	dave@delorey.com	
Faulter Fund Chairman	Tage Erickson	etage11@earthlink.net	207-635-2157
Director, NER Webmaster , Treasurer	Jim Seroskie	jseroskie@fastmail.com	
Director & Publicity Chair	Guy Mason	gampgamp@gmail.com	