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# THE COUPLER

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION • NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

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Brand new Alco Centuries lead a D&H freight past the connection to the former New York Central at Schenectady, circa 1969. This finely crafted scene was created by Dominic Bourgeois of Montreal, who will be displaying his modules at the upcoming NER Fall Convention. The scene was inspired by the interesting post-industrial environment that once existed here, and will be instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with the area. PHOTO BY DOMINIC BOURGEOIS

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## THE COUPLER

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Association.

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**SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR COUPLER #229 IS NOV. 16**

**Send us your stories—Contact Editor Phil Monat for more information**



BY KEN MAY NER President



This summer has been an eventful one both for me personally and for the Northeastern Region. On a personal note my newest model railroad is starting to take shape. The modules are completed, the legs constructed and the basic wiring is well under way. The track planning is about 80% completed, and at one end I am putting down roadbed with track to follow very shortly. The incentive to push forward is two-fold—we are to show the layout at the end of September and to properly show the layout trains should be running.

On the NER side, by the time you read this the new NER website should be up and running and helping to take a giant step forward as a communication and promotion tool for the Northeastern Region. Please take a moment and visit the new website out at [www.nernmra.org](http://www.nernmra.org). Then please thank the website committee, Mike

Roqué, 'Scooter' Youst, Tom Wortmann and Bill Brandt for their efforts.

Communication between the Region and the Divisions remains a challenge. Phil Monat indicates that he still does not receive news of division activities on a regular basis. I would suggest that it is more important that news of division activities be kept up-to-date on the website, since that can be updated without the long lead times of *The Coupler*. Contact any member of the web-site committee with your division activity information [and please also send your news items and long-term events to *The Coupler*—Ed.].

The NER Convention program continues at a one convention per year pace. This fall the Hudson-Berkshire Division will be hosting the NER at the Best Western Sovereign Inn in Albany, NY. The convention will be held the weekend of October 18 - 21 and will feature operating sessions on eight model railroads and layout visits to twenty-five layouts. There will be prototype tours to the Port of Albany and

Amtrak Rennselaer Shops. There will be an outstanding clinic program with a focus on prototype modeling. If you have not registered, do so immediately! This will be an excellent convention program at reasonable expense.

On a financial note, the NER closed out the year in the black. Treasurer Larry Cannon reports that even with the postage increase he expects that our income and expenses should remain in balance. Therefore, the NER Coupler subscription rate will remain unchanged.

Lastly, what's on your mind? How can the Board and the Officers make the NER better? While it is important to identify those areas that may be perceived as less satisfying, practical suggestions for alternatives would be appreciated. Please keep in mind that all NER Officers, Directors and staff are all volunteers. Suggestions are welcome.

See you in Albany!

—Ken May  
NER President

## FROM THE EDITORS

# The Model Showcase is for everyone

Much of the model contest program—from the judging and various levels of expectations on both the judge and the modeler to the Achievement Program and everything that goes along with it—has come up for discussion lately in these pages. Positions on all sides have been heard and all are valid to some degree. On the next page in our Railway Post Office you'll find yet another view on this important core activity of our organization.

No matter which way you lean, two facts are inescapable: the NMRA is dedicated to the art of model railroading and you need models even to begin that process (anybody up for only a 3-D video realization of your layout yet?). Wherever and whenever we gather, we are going to have models of vastly different levels of difficulty, detail, size and, most importantly, ambition. And while viewing them is one of the more rewarding programs at our conventions, sadly the number of entries is steadily falling.

Perhaps it's the daunting forms, or the level of skill on display, the lack of time to build contest-quality work or one of the many reasons discussed in those past pages. But what's a convention without models to see? To that end, in response to comments about the AP Contest program, our hard-working contest judge Bob Hamm has developed the Model Showcase, a non-competitive, display-only event designed to encourage members to share their model work. Folks who do not wish to enter the competitive-judging arena of the AP program can still participate as more than just a spectator in the educational and entertaining event that is the Contest Room.

Here's how it works: Bring in your model(s), either complete or in process. Any kind, size (up to 4 square feet), type (cars, structures, dioramas, etc.) or scale of model is welcome. The event is NOT competitive and your model will NOT be

judged. A small card naming and describing the model would be the only paperwork to have but it is not required. In fact, nothing is required except to bring a model and participate in the lively conversation and exchange of ideas that takes place when we all gather to look at our modeling.

The Model Showcase is held in the Contest Room, where entrants fill out a simple form so we know who it belongs to. The room opens early in the convention, so all models have the maximum display time, and it is open after the banquet for model pickup. Why not bring a favorite car, locomotive or structure? You don't have to worry about forms and judging, nitpickers or super authorities telling you what you did wrong. Just bring a model and enjoy displaying it for others. More often than not, I bet, you will learn something that improves your skills and increases your enjoyment of the hobby. Isn't that exactly why we go to these conventions?

—Phil Monat, Editor



# Railway Post Office

Letters with interesting information, corrections, or expressing your views on model railroading are welcome here. Mark them "To the Editor" and forward to Phil Monat, Editor.

COMPILED BY THE COUPLER STAFF

## Keep recognition at banquet

I am writing in response to Franklin Lang's editorial note in *Coupler* #227, presenting some conclusions drawn from the recent convention questionnaire. In particular, I am disturbed over the outlook expressed toward the presentation of the craftsmanship awards.

Franklin broaches the idea of dropping, or at best dramatically diminishing, the awards portion of the banquet to please a segment of the membership who can't be bothered seeing dedicated modelers recognized for their efforts. Might these, perhaps, be the same folks who also abhor the "judged" modeling contests and wish to see them go, too?

I was always of the opinion that the NMRA was supposed to be a cut above the general run of "clubs;" an organization which counted among its numbers a great

many truly talented hobbyists and a group within which accomplished modelers were recognized. In fact, that's the outlook that caused me to join the NMRA's Northeastern Region more than twenty years ago. Subsequently, from reading back issues of the region's newsletter, I learned that the NER indeed had a very long tradition of members proudly displaying their work. Most conventioners seemed enthralled to see what projects graced the contest rooms and waited with anticipation the awards presentation at the banquet to see who placed where in the standings.

Now, to read Franklin's evaluation of the replies to the questionnaires, we apparently see a segment of the membership surface who not only don't wish to participate in any contests but apparently don't even wish to hear about any awards won by others

who do. When did things change? Exactly how many folks with this opinion have actually attended more than one convention and just how many would attend if the more serious aspects of our little get-togethers were diluted or eliminated? Mr. Lang says this reflects the general tone of the 35 responses but that's out of an organization of 1,900 members. I'd be willing to bet that changing the convention's format would alter attendance very little, if at all.

I say leave what's worked well for the organization over so many years, alone. Let's not ruin what a significant portion of those who actually do participate in the NER conventions and contests honestly do enjoy, just to please a handful of folks who'll probably never attend another convention anyway.

—John Bortle

## ★ NER Model Showcase Photos



Jack Ellis' "A-OK Used Cars" was just one of the models displayed at a recent NER Model Showcase. The event is non-competitive, and is open to everyone. Why not bring your favorite model and join in the fun? It's a great way to show off your work.



## GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION

[www.greenmountainmra.com](http://www.greenmountainmra.com)

The Green Mountain Division has a full slate of officers are in place and plans are moving along. Meetings will begin on **September 16**, followed by **November 4**, and will occur every other month. September's clinic will be on weathering and colors, by Armand Premo. November's meeting will feature a clinic on "Cool Tools" by former NER President, Glenn Glasstetter. September's theme will encourage members and friends to bring in "A Work In Progress". The hope is that as the year progresses, an individual will get the help he or she needs and the Division will benefit by seeing the finished project later in the year. The Division is looking at bringing more exposure to the NMRA with a display in the local library in Richmond for October (as well as other public venues), free advertising, a dynamic website, building display modules for shows and public events, hosting model building clinics at elementary and middle schools, and more.

## GARDEN STATE DIVISION

[www.trainweb.org/nergds](http://www.trainweb.org/nergds)

**October 27, 2007**, 9am to 3pm. Every year the New York Society of Model Railroaders holds a scale sell and swap show in Carlstadt, New Jersey, one of the few all 'scale' shows around. This year the club will join with the GSD during their Fall Meet—your ticket will get you into both. The sale is on your right as you enter and the meet will be on your left. We already have planned two clinics and model judging. We are also working on having a few layouts open for you as well. Don't miss this way of seeing a division meet and a great scale show all at the same time. Located in the auditorium of St. Joseph's Church, 120 Hoboken Rd., E. Rutherford. NJ. 1 mile from Giants Stadium and 2 blocks from the Society's headquarters. Parking Available. Featuring O, HO, N, and G Scale model, kits, parts, tools, books, magazines and railroadiana.

**September 22, 2007**, 3 PM and 5 PM. - The members of GSD will conduct a "Model Railroad Day" for the children and parents of Lake Mohawk – Sleepy Lagoon Beach. The activities will include TimeSaver contest, running N, G and Lionel trains. The main event

will be building box cars, tool sheds and making trees with material donated by the NRMA, GSD members and Kenvil Hobby, in Kenvil, N.J., working with Dick Flock from NRMA Education committee. The Byram Township Boy Scout troop plans to use this program to earn their Railroad Merit Badges. Children 7 years of age or younger will be making train ornaments from Crayola Model Magic and non-toxic color pens. Additionally, each child will construct a 9" x 12" modular layout with Styrofoam with a single HO track. The group will construct mountains, trees, bushes, and figures to round out the modular piece. The final event will be to connect all of the modular pieces together to try to run a train.

Boy Scout and Cub Scout groups have expressed an interest in this program. Home Depot has been approached to build a 4' X 8' layout at the store. Final approval has not been given. The Home Depot project slated for **November** – Model Railroad Month. Judy and Anthony Piccirillo created this superb program back in 2000, starting with 9 children and 4 parents. In 2006, they had over 55 children and an equal number of parents and grandparents.

## METRO NORTH DIVISION

[www.metronorthnmra.org](http://www.metronorthnmra.org)

The Metro North Division is planning five meetings this year and welcomes all to participate. Our meetings include at least one clinic and a modeler show and tell, followed by a visit to one, two or three member or club layouts near the meeting site. Everyone is welcome, come on out and meet fellow model railroaders in your area!

Metro North Division Meetings:

**September 29, 2007**, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
Library in Pleasantville, NY

**December 8, 2007**, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM  
Library in North Stamford, CT

**February 2, 2008**, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Library in Westport, CT

**March 29, 2008**, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Wilton or New Caanan, CT

**May 3, 2008**, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM, seeking public space in Danbury, CT area.

## SEACOAST DIVISION

[www.trainweb.org/seacoastdiv](http://www.trainweb.org/seacoastdiv)

**September 15, 2007** Division meeting at Great Falls Model Railroad Club in Auburn, Maine at 1:00 PM, this will be at their new location at 144 Mill Street in Auburn.

**November 4, 2007**. Division meeting at Bedford Boomers Model Railroad Exhibition at McKelvie Middle School in Bedford New Hampshire. In addition to afternoon meeting we will have information table display. This is the Bedford Boomers 25th Anniversary show and has special events planned, including several new clinics.

**November 24-25, 2007**. "Tour-De-Chooch" annual model railroad layout open house at approximately 20 home/club layouts in NH and MA.

**January 12, 2008**. Seacoast Division Annual Meeting in South Portland Maine at 1:00 PM. Tentative location is First Congregational Church.

For more information, contact Rich Breton, Seacoast Division President.

## NUTMEG DIVISION

[www.nutmegdivision.com](http://www.nutmegdivision.com)

The Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum will sponsor a Model Train and Die Cast show on **November 4, 2007** at the Windham High School, 355 High Street, Willimantic, Ct. Show Hours Are 10:00AM to 3:00PM. Donations; Adults-\$5.00; Seniors (62 yrs+) \$4.00, Children (8-12) \$1.00; Children Under 8 FREE, Handicapped Accessible; Food On Site; Free Parking, Operating Layouts. Information: Joseph Sokol 1-860-872-2240 or email:joseph\_sokol@msn.com

Nutmeg Division Meetings:

**September 29 and 30** - Model Train Exhibition - Vernon Senior Center, Rockville, CT

**November 9, 2007** - Wethersfield Police Station - 7:30 PM - Regular Membership Meeting.

*continued...*

# News and Events - CONTINUED

## HUB DIVISION

<http://www.hubdiv.org/>

The Hub Division Inc. hosts New England Model Train EXPO at the Best Western Royal Plaza Trade Center, 181 Boston Post Road, West (Rte 20), Marlborough, MA, Saturday **December 1, 2007** - 10AM to 5PM and Sunday **December 2, 2007** - 10AM to 4PM. Admission: \$6.00 - Adults; \$5.00 Seniors (60+); Children 6 to 12 \$1.00; Children under 6 and Scouts in Uniform are FREE. Admission good for both days, Children under 12 FREE on Sunday with a paying adult. Includes over 200 dealer tables, Operating layouts ALL SCALES, manufacturer displays with new products, White Elephant tables, Boy Scout Merit Badge Clinic, FREE Parking, and door prizes. Come meet SANTA! For information contact Gerald at 781-862-0388, Mark at 508-528-8587, e-mail [info@hubdiv.org](mailto:info@hubdiv.org) or visit our website [www.hubdiv.org](http://www.hubdiv.org). For further information contact Gerry Covino, (617) 543-0298

## SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION

[www.sunrisetraildiv.com](http://www.sunrisetraildiv.com)

Baldwin, New York: **Sunrise Trail Division 40th Anniversary Convention**, Model Railroad Meet & Train Show, **November 3, 2007**, 10:00AM - 5:00PM at First Church Baldwin United Methodist, 881 Merrick Road, Baldwin, N.Y. Live clinics, Model

Contest with NMRA award judging, Photo Contest, White Elephant table, Many door prizes, Operating N, HO & O scale layouts, plus many 40th Anniversary Extras. Light refreshments will be available. Admission \$6.00. Children under 12 w/Adult Admitted Free. **40th Anniversary Smorgasbord Dinner** at 6:00PM. Noted railroad author and editor, Tony Koester, is Guest Speaker. Many 40th Anniversary Surprises. Advance Tickets \$25.00 or \$30.00 at Door if available. Contact Fernand Washington (719) 528-2308

Great South Bay Model Railroad Club is sponsoring their 18th Annual Winter Train Show and Exhibition on **January 6, 2008**, at the Freeport Recreation Center, 130 East Merrick Road, Freeport, NY. 10 to 4 pm, \$5, children under 12 free w/adult. Contact Kevin McKay 516-223-9357

## LITTLE RHODY DIVISION

[www.trainweb.org/lrdivision](http://www.trainweb.org/lrdivision)

The First Annual Craftsman Structure Show, will be held **November 2-3** at The Holiday Inn in Mansfield, MA. Over a dozen Clinics by reknown modelers led by special guest George Sellios of Fine Scale Miniatures. The show was conceived as a way to bring manufactures of craftsman structures together with modelers and collectors. Find out more about the show including contests, clinics, and panel discussions at [www.css07.com](http://www.css07.com).



## HARTFORD NATIONAL

**2009:** Only 22 months to go! The Hartford National convention planning committee has moved into high gear. Over fifty mem-

bers of the NER are presently engaged in sorting out logistical matters and planning layout tours, prototype tours, general tours, rail clinic and general interest clinics. At the recent Detroit National Convention, over 100 additional registrations were taken for HN2009. The HN2009 General Committee is scheduled to meet next on **December 1** at 10 AM in the Wethersfield, CT police station's public meeting room. Any NER member or friend is welcome to join us on the inside track. Each of the specific function committees has established its' own schedule but will be reporting to the general committee. If you have not already been contacted for consideration as a layout to be toured contact the layout chair. To participate in assuring a terrific convention please contact the committee chair for the area of your interest. Should you want to only volunteer for work at the convention or as a tour bus captain during the convention contact the "Volunteer chairman." All committee chairs and committee groups are listed at [www.hn2009.org](http://www.hn2009.org), the convention web site. We include e-mail address there. If you are not on the web and wish to join in one of our planning activities please send your info to Paul Mangini, 215 Sisk Street, Middletown, CT 06457. This convention will be great if you help in making it so. ■

## ★ NER Model Showcase Photos



Bill Brandt's "Trolley in a Gondola" was just one of the models displayed at a recent NER Model Showcase. The event is non-competitive, and is open to everyone. Why not bring your favorite model and join in the fun? It's a great way to show off your work.



Delaware & Hudson Alco C-628's pound their way through downtown Schenectady, New York, passing the venerable former New York Central station, sometime around 1969. The New York Central is no more, and the legendary Alco plant will close down by the end of the decade. Dominic Bourgeois has captured this moment in time on his HO scale modules, which will be on display during the convention. PHOTO BY DOMINIC BOURGEOIS

# NER Fall Convention Update

Make plans to attend the Fall Convention this October 18-21

By **Tony Steele**

Hudson Berkshire Division

If you have ever repainted three times the black/white part line on a restroom commode for a coach whose roof does not remove—You may be an Obsessive-Compulsive Modeler. If there is no corner of your basement that has not received the [Layout] Locating Engineer's measuring gaze—You may be an O-C Modeler. If there is no visible means of support beneath your layout, other than collections of kit boxes, scenery supplies, and detailing parts—You may be an O-C Modeler.

If you have ever attended an Extreme Clinic and concluded "This guy is only scratching the surface of a spectrum of infinite possibilities to which I could address the remainder of my declining lifetime's creative energies"—You may

be in need of serious professional help. And, while we can't offer that requisite aid, our Hosts and Clinicians may be just the ones to push you over that edge!

Convention Headquarters: By the time your read this, it is expected that 50% of the (minimum) room-reservation target (at the Best Western Sovereign Hotel) will have been met. **As an advisory: to receive the convention-package room rates, booking must be conducted WITH THE HOTEL, not on-line or with the Best Western reservation system by September 18 to take advantage of the offer.** Use the 518-489-2981 telephone or 518-489-8967 FAX numbers.

## Displays & Attendees

See the accompanying pictures of Dominic Bourgeois' fantastic downtown Schenectady modules, coming down from Montreal for both this and the

Bridge Line conventions. He and Ken Goslett also will give us the Clinical view from Canada of prototype and modeling. The insights and efforts of the "Eh"-Team should both amaze and inspire.

Also expected in attendance are some vendors doubling as Clinicians, modelers from the Niagara Frontier Region, the Mid-East Region, Germany, etc., and one or two hobby notables that we swear are only here to enjoy themselves [nudge-nudge, wink-wink].

Also, the Central New York Division will be representing the Fall 2008 NER Syracuse Convention. An informational table will be located in the Hospitality (Guilder) Room, along with those for other educational purposes.

## General Clinics

See the adjacent schedule. This list is still subject to change, since some repeats



**2007 NER FALL CONVENTION  
HUDSON BERKSHIRE NMRA**

# 2007 NER Fall Convention "The Commodore Limited"

**OCTOBER 18-21 • ALBANY, NEW YORK**

LAYOUT OPEN HOUSE TOUR			FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19								SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20							
<u>Zone/ Layout</u>	<u>Host</u>	<u>Layout</u>	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>A1</b>	Andy Clermont	Rutland O&LC	3							10								
<b>B2</b>	Jim Cesare	NYC Albany				6				10								
<b>B3</b>	Dick Davis	ATSF Cajon Pass	3							10								
<b>B4</b>	Bill McChesney	Lehigh Valley Jersey C. -Sayre				6				10								
<b>B5</b>	Ken Nelson	Poco Valley				6				10								
<b>B6</b>	Vic Roman	NYC Hudson Div.			5					10								
<b>C7</b>	John McBride	Crown Pt & Hammondville			5					10								
<b>C8</b>	Lou Sassi	West Hoosic Div., B&M			5					10								
<b>C10</b>	Henry R. Propst	NYC Mohawk Div.										12					5	
<b>D11</b>	Tony Bucca	Adirondack Branch										12					5	
<b>D12</b>	Bob Hamm	Iron Gorge & Western										12					5	
<b>D13</b>	Rich Smith	Milw Rd. (C. of Wauwatoga)										12					5	
<b>D14</b>	Kevin Surman	New York & Long Branch										12					5	
<b>E16</b>	Paul Hoffman	ATSF Albuquerque Div.										12						6
<b>E17</b>	The Steeles	D&H Albany to Rutland										12						6
<b>F18</b>	Frank Czubryt	Denver Union Terminal										12						6
<b>F19</b>	Paul Delasco	Boston & Albany										12					5	
<b>F20</b>	Bill Duffe	Boston & Maine										12					5	
<b>F21</b>	Dick Elwell	Hoosac Valley									11						5	
<b>X22</b>	Mike Ledley	A&LM									11			3				
<b>X24</b>	Glens Falls Club	Four Layouts											1				5	
<b>X25</b>	Jack Smolik	Not-So-Great-Eastern										12						6

[X = No Zone Map]



# 2007 NER Fall Convention - Albany, New York

## HUDSON BERKSHIRE DIVISION

CLINICS AND DISPLAYS		FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19				SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20			
		Early	Aft	Eve	Night	Morn	Noon	Aft	Post-Banquet
Clinician	Topic								
Dominic Bourgeois	Downtown Schenectady, NY, Module Display	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	
Dominic Bourgeois	D&H Locomotive and Car Modeling						L		
Dick Hosmer	Adirondack Live Steamers		P						
Gustav Verderber	Custom Layout & Backdrop Photography		P						
Jean Harra	Schoharie Valley Ry. Industries			P					
John Weigel	The Peterborough RR. (O-scale)			P					
Tom Wortman	Photo Contest			P					
Diane Steele	Banquet Floral Centerpieces - a "Hands-On" <b>Workshop</b>			L					
Eddie's Aquarium	Garden Layout - Water Features			L					
Jen Hathaway	Sports Massage			L					
Mike McNamara	Vermont/New Hampshire Layout Design		T						
Ken Goslett	D&H's Napierville Jct. Ry. - Prototype			T					
Bob Hamm	Helix Design & Construction			T					
Jeff English	NYC USRA Box Car - Prototype			T					
Jeff English	NYC Box Car Overview - Prototype					L			
Paul Hoffman	DCC Locomotive Fine-Tuning Software			S					
Jim Six	Modeling NYC Dual-Service GP-7's		T						
Jim Six	Digital Photo Editing			S					
Jim Six	Creating Realistic Structures for the Layout						T		
Jim Six	Modeling NYC's Michigan Branch in HO								S
Mike Rose	Weathering					T		T	
Mike Rose	[Northeast Prototype Modeling		T	S					
CA&B Club	All-Morning Module Construction Process >>					P			
Gardner Cross	Rubber Rocks - a "Hands-On" <b>Workshop</b> >>					P			
Tony Bucca	Digital Photography & Backdrops						P		
Jim Cesare	Architecture in Model Railroading							L	
Ken May	Basic Digital Command Control (DCC)							L	
Rich Smith	Urban Structure Modeling					T			

**KEY TO ROOM ABBREVIATIONS: P: Pool L: Loft T: Town S: Squire E: Executive**

of clinics may be offered and other clinics are being pursued. Should the advanced registration numbers indicate their need, early Friday Clinics may be provided, also.

### The Saturday Guided Bus and Car-Pool Tours

The Morning Port of Albany Tour, the Afternoon Amtrak Turbo Maintenance Facility Tour in Rensselaer, NY, the Morning Non-Rail Tour, and the Afternoon Erie Canal tour are still on our agenda. **For all of the above, it would be wise to have rain gear, sturdy shoes, and long pants.**

The Self-Guided Tours Map Book is just about ready for distribution in early to mid-September. See the adjacent schedule for hosts and layouts. [Unfortunately, Jack Wright's Schoharie Valley Railway, the Schoharie Valley Model RR Club, and Marcel Zucchini's Adirondack Northern had to be removed from the list, for personal reasons.]

Layout Operations are still as listed in the Registration Package. Except at Lou Sassi's Layout, operating positions are still available, as of this writing. ■

**Further Updates will be available at [www.nernmra.org/convention](http://www.nernmra.org/convention)**



HO MODELS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOMINIC BOURGEOIS

# The Robert W. Spate Public Service Award

**F**or several years now the NER has presented this award in honor and celebration of Mr. Robert W. Spate, a Life Member of the NMRA. The Award was created by the Great Falls Model Railroad Club and is presented annually to the member or organization of the NER who best exemplifies the promotion of the hobby of model railroading. Preference is that the service to the hobby be in a public forum open to young people and/or others who normally are not exposed to the hobby.

The first recipients of the Award were **The Bedford Boomers** of Bedford, New Hampshire, who hold a free public show on the first weekend of November each year with operating sessions, no commercial sales, numerous operating layouts, displays and clinics. They also have operating layouts at the Bedford library and area Veteran's Homes and travel to display their modular layout to various venues and to reach out and educate the public about our hobby.

The second organization honored was the **Amherst Society of Model Railroad Engineers**. Their annual Springfield, MA (nick-named "The Big E") show is one of the largest model railroad shows in the country. It is safe to say the vast majority of us have probably attended. They received the award not only this show, which opens the hobby to the public and creates an enjoyable event for modelers, but also for what they have done with the profits. The Society is a key supplier of historical preservation and reconstruction funds for railroad museums in the region.

The next recipient was **Emmons Lancaster**. Emmons, a professional engineer, worked for the Maine Central Railroad. Besides being an HO modeler, he has served the 470 Club (the MEC historical society), Edaville Railroad, Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad and Museum, Conway Scenic Railroad, Maine Operation Lifesaver, and the Tourist Railway Association. He has provided the knowledge and energy to them all. On top of those contributions, he always is willing to

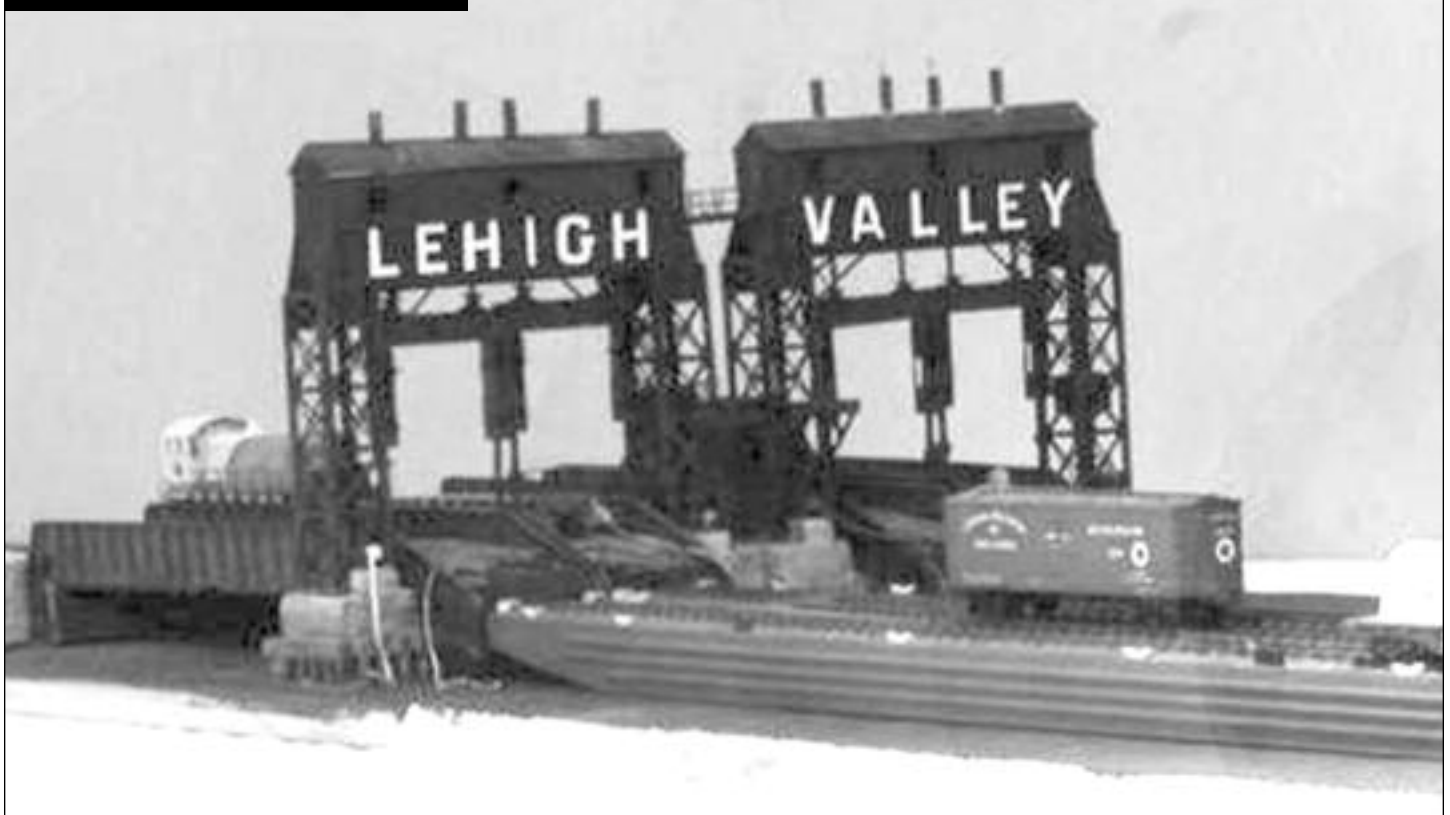
share his knowledge and archives of material on MEC and other area railroads.

The most recent addition was **Paul Allard**. His over ten years service as Achievement Program Chairman is not a small accomplishment. Paul also has a service record with the Northwestern Vermont model railroad club and years of time spent with the Boy Scout Railroading Merit Badge program and helping scouts build raffle layouts as fund raisers. Paul takes the time to explain the AP program well and is a key reason that several more members are now Master Model Railroaders.

The last issue of *The Coupler* contained a notice that nominations for The Robert W. Spate Public Service Award were being accepted. While time remains short, if you know of an individual or organization within the NER that is active in not only promoting the hobby but in outreach and education as well, please speak with any active Division staff member, trustee, your Area NER director, or any NER Board officer.

— Larry Cannon

## ★ NER Model Showcase Photos



Elliott Janofsky's beautiful and complex Lehigh Valley float bridge diorama was just one of the models displayed at a recent NER Model showcase. The event is non-competitive, and is open to everyone. Why not bring your favorite model and join in the fun? It's a great way to show off your work, and there are no minimum requirements! Contact coordinator Bob Hamm for more details (see Page 2).

# Layout details...



# ...made easier!

PHOTO BY LARRY CANNON

Use simple materials to detail your layout in an evening or two

**By Larry Cannon, MMR**  
Seacoast Division

**O**ne of the cheaper modeling materials for details is leftover pieces of rail. If you are a normal model railroader, you probably have plenty lying around, again, too good to throw away and too bad or short to use. The prototype has historically felt the same way and has had some inventive ways of putting used rail back in service.

### **Guard Rails**

If you have ever rail-fanned at places like Palmer, Massachusetts or White River Junction, Vermont, you know that rail often ends up as posts to separate autos and

trains. These posts keep autos from running down embankments, out of turntable pits, protecting train clearances at stations, or just are a way of saying, “stay out”. Most of the remnants of these barriers are now weathered (well past “new” rust), but in the past they were painted yellow, white or other colors. Local highway departments sometimes acquired rail for posts too, sometimes painting the exposed top half white and bottom half black. Sometimes they burned holes in the rail web and strung cable through the posts or drilled holes to bolt on plank railings.

### **Sign Posts**

Why buy signposts if you have pieces of rail that would serve just as well?

Railroads tended to use lighter rail that was no longer heavy enough for any service need for this purpose. Crossing signs, flanger signs, and whistle markers were some of the uses for old rail. In more modern times, “derails” were marked on short lengths of rail. I model these signs using styrene cut and shaped accordingly, painted and then lettered with black, computer generated, decals. In the case of the derail posts, just print them on heavy white paper and use a yellow highlighter to make the yellow signs to glue on the rail.

### **Replacement Rail**

For new modelers and those who don’t recall this fact, rail used to be manufactured in 39-foot lengths and railroads

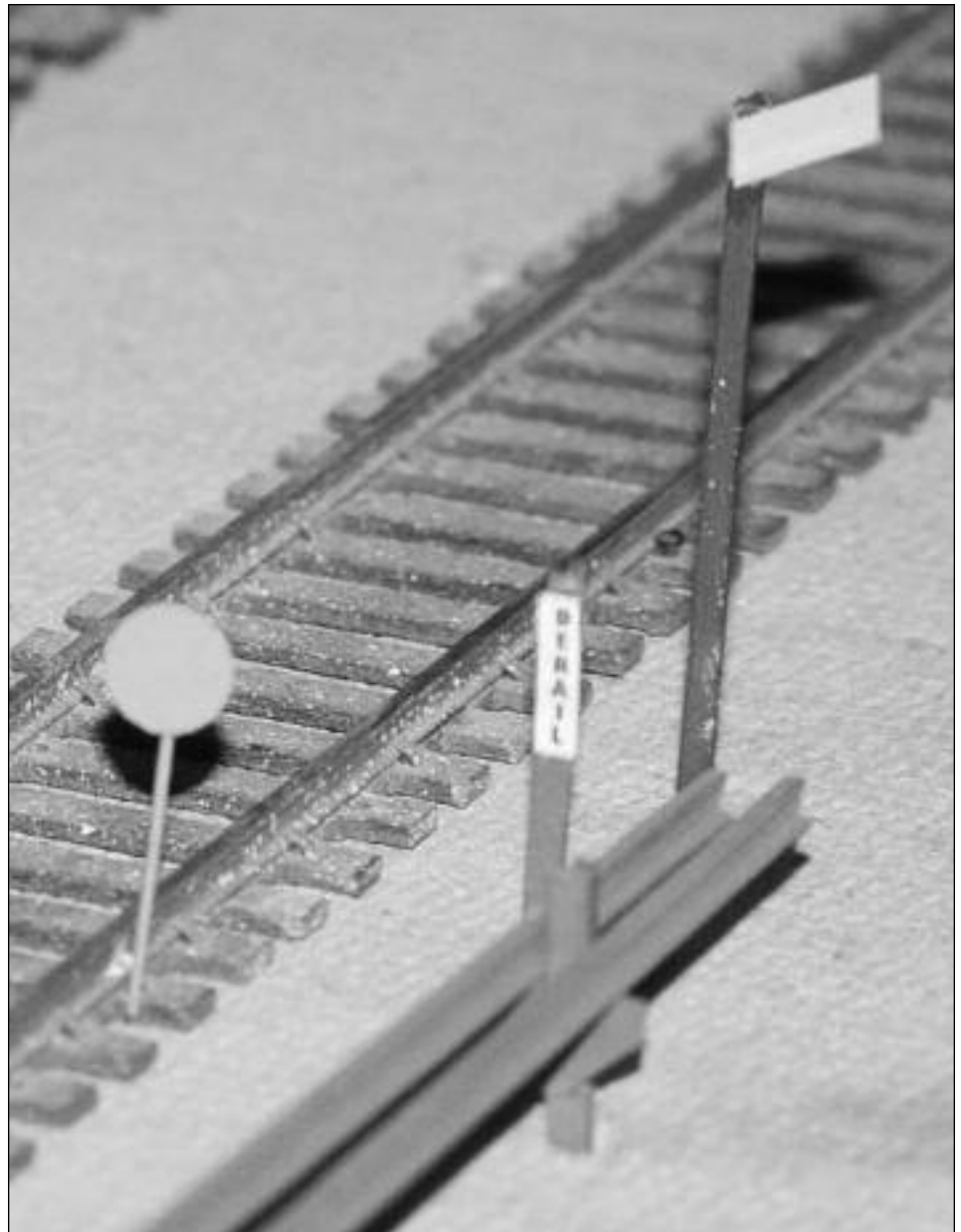
attempted to install rail with staggered joints so that on 40-foot cars, a truck wasn't on the rail joints of both rails at the same time. That happening wore out rail ends and broke rail bars sooner if they didn't stagger the joints. If you want to model those two or four rail replacement rail holders along the right of way before welded rail came along, 39 feet is the right length to model.

The horizontal "holders" were bolted or welded on to short lengths of rail. I use small pieces of styrene attached to the rail with ACC. The shape of these "holders" is dictated by personal preference or the railroad that you model. If you are a detail purist, get out the Dermel tool and drill the two or three holes in the ends of each rail. If you are safety orientated, paint the rail ends yellow or white to gain points with the company safety department or OSHA!

If you want to make a large pile of rail, here is a chance to use up all those odd length, small pieces of rail. Visualize a large pile of 39-foot long rail or look at a prototype photograph. You see all the rail ends, the top layer of rail, and no more than two rails into the pile from the side. Model only what you can see and you need far fewer pieces of rail 39 feet long. You might need to add more "stickers" (the pieces of wood that separate the layers of rail, but you will finally find a use for all those small pieces of rail you have been saving for the core of the pile.

### Construction Tips

Rail nippers are definitely the easiest way to cut rail. For 39-foot lengths cut one piece, double check that it is the right length, put a piece of tape to identify it as the master, and then cut the rest of the pieces you using it as your gauge or "stop." To cut posts, cut a slot in a piece of scrap lumber as deep as you want your posts tall. Insert the rail into the slot and the edge of the piece becomes your stop to make all the posts the same height. The rough end becomes the buried end of the post and only one cut per post is needed.



Seen here are just some of the simple wayside details you can create in an evening or two. From left to right, a blue flag, a derail sign, a replacement rail rack, and a flanger warning sign. PHOTO BY LARRY CANNON

### Painting Tips

Spray-painting rail is easier if you take a kit box and punch a number of holes with an awl or if you don't own an awl, an 8d nail. I try space and place the holes so I can spray two or three-dozen pieces at a time. Life is easier if the rail is placed

place in roughly the same alignment so that you air brush is painting all rail bottoms, sides or heads at the same time. The yellow or white safety marking for rail ends is easily done by dipping the ends in a shallow puddle of paint in something like a paint jar cover. ■



CHECK OUT THE ALL-NEW NER WEBSITE!

[www.nernmra.org](http://www.nernmra.org)

# Ride along the Worcester Central Lines

A venerable HO club takes a new look at New England regional railroading

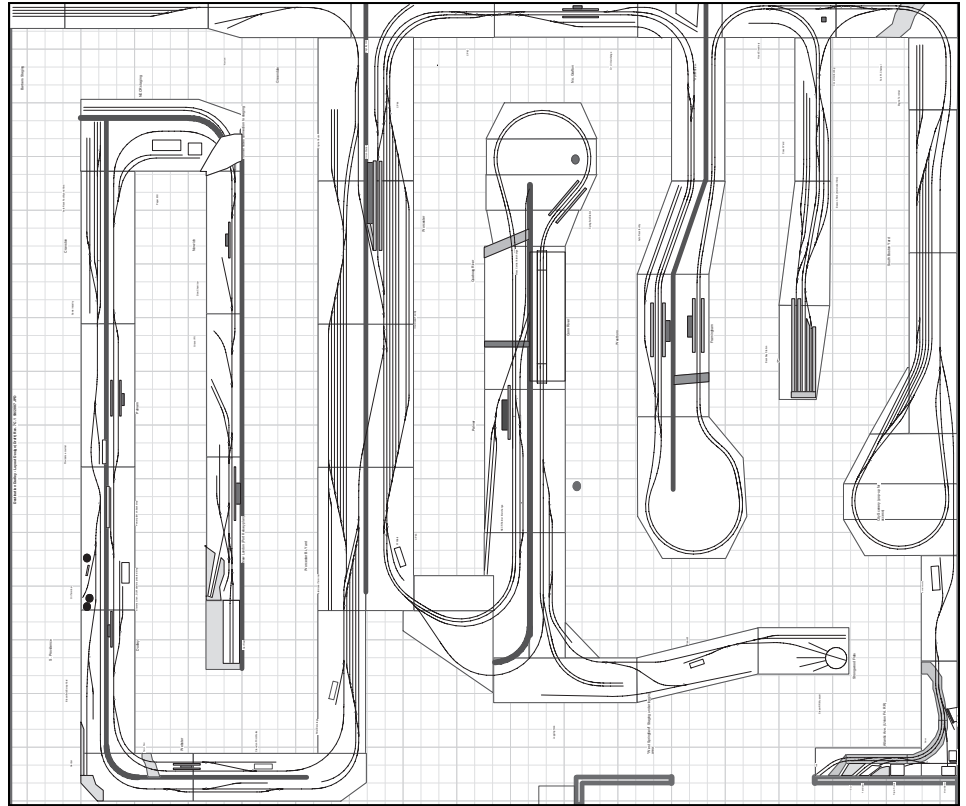
By Tom Bartley  
Metro North Division

Say “Dudley Webster” to most of the inhabitants of Worcester County, Mass., and they’ll likely identify them as neighboring towns near the Bay State’s border with Rhode Island. But to some 35 members of the venerable **Worcester Model Railroaders**, it’s more than two points on a map: it’s the name of the eccentric billionaire, Dudley O. Webster, who guides the fortunes of the Worcester Central Lines.

Dudley—the place, not the plutocrat—is also the latest home of the much-traveled club, which was founded in 1946 and which has now broken ground on its latest iteration of the WCL. In a ground-floor room of the Stevens Linen Mill, on a 43x53-foot HO layout, the WCL will operate over a folded dog bone mainline loop with a long passing siding from Boston to Albany (off the layout) via Worcester, Palmer and Springfield. In addition, single-track branchlines will run from Worcester to New London via Norwich (the Norwich & Worcester branch) and Worcester to Providence and Cranston (the Providence & Worcester branch).

The WCL is a regional passenger and freight railroad operating in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. The only interstate freight carrier serving the State of Rhode Island, the WCL has exclusive and perpetual right to conduct freight operations over the Northeast Corridor between New Haven and the Massachusetts/Rhode Island border. In Worcester, a strategic location for regional transportation and distribution enterprises, the railroad operates New England’s largest double-stack intermodal facility.

A variety of commodities rides these rails, including construction aggregate, iron and steel products, lumber, coal, chemicals, scrap metals, plastic resins, cement, processed foods and edible foodstuffs, such as frozen foods, corn syrup and animal and vegetable oils. WCL’s major customers include The Dow Chemical Co., Northeast Utilities, Exxon/Mobil, Frito-Lay Inc., General Dynamics Corp., International Paper Co. (to be renamed), Smurfit Stone Container Corp. and Tilcon Gravel & Quarry.



## AT A GLANCE: Worcester Central Lines

**Scale:** HO (1:87)

**Size:** 43 x 53 feet

**Prototype:** Boston & Albany, Providence & Worcester, Norwich & Worcester

**Locale:** Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island

**Era:** 1940s to present

**Season:** early fall

**Style:** walk-in

**Minimum radius:** 30 inches

**Turnout minimum:** mainline: #8

**Turnout minimum:** branch and sidings: #6

**Maximum grade:** 2 percent

**Benchwork support:** open grid, 1 x 4 #2 pine, 2x3 legs that also support backdrop

**Benchwork top:** Combination of spline, plywood and luan plywood over foam

**Benchwork height:** 48 inches

**Aisle width:** 48 inches

**Handicap-accessible**

**Backdrop height:** 60 inches from the floor

**Track:** Code 100 flex main line, Code 83 flex on sidings and secondary tracks

**Turnout control:** Mix of hand-thrown and Tortoise machines

**Control:** Digitrax DCC

The mainline is oriented to open house and “fun-run” mode but with switching areas for intermodal, auto-rack traffic and through freights. It can be operated via the existing switch list system used on the previous layout.

The modeled portion of the mainline extends from Boston (South Station) to Springfield Station. Beacon Park Yard (Boston) services the intermodal facility, while West Springfield Yard is hidden staging. The railroad's primary yards are at Worcester, which has a mainline yard and a separate branchline yard. There are small interchange yards at Palmer (Former Conrail, now CSX) and New London (P&W/New England Central Railroad). WCL also interchanges with the Grafton & Upton Railroad in Grafton.

Major on-line industries represented include the auto rack facility in Westborough (CP yard), Wyman-Gordon in Grafton and the International Paper Co. in Putnam, Conn. The N&W branch includes the Stevens Linen Mill in Dudley near the French River, and other major industries to be determined. The P&W branch accesses a coal unloading facility and a bulk oil terminal at the Port of Providence waterfront.

The mainline is oriented to open house and fun-run mode but with switching areas

for intermodal, auto-rack traffic and through freights. It can be operated via the existing switch list system used on the previous layout. The two branches are single-track with ample passing sidings. Centralized traffic control (CTC) will govern the N&W, with track warrant or Form D used for the P&W line.

The mainline starts in Boston at South Boston Yard with the loop and South Station as a four-track stub end station on the leg with Beacon Park. Urban scenery hides the back part of the loop to disguise the eastbound-to-westbound connection. Atlantic Avenue and the Union Freight Railway lie east of the station while to the west is Beacon Park yard with an intermodal terminal. The next towns are Framingham, with a station modeled as in the current layout. Next come Westborough, with a spur to the auto-rack facility; North Grafton, with a station; the G&U interchange; and Wyman Gordon.

Worcester, the next major area, has Union Station on the backdrop, with a passenger

track and platforms and the two main tracks, which are close to prototypical. South of these are the intermodal facility and mainline yard while to the west a branch runs up to Greendale. The track continues west to reach Barbers Staging. From the yard the N&W branch heads southwest and the P&W branch heads east, more or less paralleling the main.

Next on the main is Palmer and its prototypical New England Central Railroad track arrangement with the diamond. The station is reproduced as close to the prototype as possible. To the east, north of the main, is an interchange yard for NECR traffic. The modeled portion of the mainline ends at Springfield, where a passenger station and staging represent West Springfield Yard. Just west of Springfield is a small logging area in the foothills of the Berkshires.

The essence of New England railroading is alive and well amongst this talented group of HO modelers. The Worcester club has some ambitious plans for their new layout, and we look forward to seeing progress on the new Worcester Central Lines! ■



Just some of the 35 members of the club: FRONT ROW L-R: Steve Strong, Ted Jensen; Ralph Kimball. SECOND ROW L-R: Tom Harding; Jon Dandridge, Peter Smith, Joe Parker, Brian Landry. THIRD ROW L-R: Bob Michell; Greg LeBlanc. PHOTO COURTESY WORCESTER MODEL RAILROADERS

# NER AP Roundup

Twice a year The Coupler recognizes the accomplishments of our fellow NER Members in the NMRA Achievement Program, from Golden Spike to Master Model Railroader!

BY PAUL ALLARD, MMR Advancement Program Manager



It seems obvious that the Achievement Program falls under the control of the NMRA Education Department since the AP offers many excellent opportunities for members to learn and improve their skills. The AP addresses model building for Motive Power, Cars, Prototype Scenes, Structures and Scenery. It addresses engineering concepts for both Electrical and Civil Engineering projects. It addresses operations as a Chief Dispatcher and it addresses helping others as an Official, Volunteer and Author. By touching all aspects of model railroading, the Achievement Program offers great educational benefits for all NMRA members. Many NMRA members have told me that the AP is not for them. They are not rivet counters. They do not like criticism from a contest judge. They enjoy working on their models but don't want the stress of having their work judged or filling out stacks of paperwork. They are just not interested in the NMRA Achievement Program. I tell them that they are missing out on one of the greatest educational benefits of NMRA membership.

As I work my way through the Achievement Program certificates, I find that the regulations challenge me to try new things and develop new skills. Most likely, I would never have scratch built rolling stock out of styrene, if the Cars certificate did not require four scratch built models. I have completed two models with number three in progress. I find this type of model building to be very enjoyable. Each time you build a model and share your results with someone else both parties learn from the sharing. The modeler gets to explain what he or she did while the onlooker gets to learn how the model was built. I have had the honor of judging many models for AP Merit Awards. Each time, I learn something from the builder. I try to pass on a tip or two if the model does not measure up to a Merit Award but the intent of the AP is to educate and not criticize. I have seen

improved models come back for a second try at the Merit Awards. In 99% of those cases, the model receives the Merit Award and the model builder has increased his or her skill and knowledge base. Where else can you get one on one model railroading instructions? The Northeastern Region is blessed with a knowledgeable network of AP judges spread across the divisions. Each one is ready to help you improve your model building skills. If you don't like the idea of entering your work in the Contest Room, why not give a call to your Divisional AP Manager. You may have a Merit Award model or two running on your layout today. We would appreciate the opportunity to look it over and learn from your work. Don't forget to ask the AP Manager questions, you just might learn a new technique that will improve your skills.

Since my last AP Round Up, there have been many great models completed by our NER friends. Here is a list of the newest Merit Award winners. For Motive Power, **Alexander Conta** has three Merit Awards for his GE U50 UP # 51, GE U50C UP # 5007 and GE U50 SP #9950. **Hiram Graves** received one for his B&M BL 2. For Cars, **Andrew Wasowicz** has two Merit Awards for his 36' Wooden Flat Car and his 38' Flat Car. **Gail Pickett** also has two Merit Awards for an RB Log Car and RB Box Car. To round out the Merit Awards, **Phil Monat** received one for Scenery on his home layout. Congratulations go out to all for their outstanding modeling efforts and for sharing their work with others.

A Golden Spike Award was earned by **Richard Wolter**. He has demonstrated proficiency in building rolling stock, structures, scenery and trackage plus addressing electrical controls. How is your layout coming? Is it ready for a Golden Spike Award? To earn the award, the layout does not need to be finished, it needs to address each of the key elements as Richard did.

While no NER members have recently earned the Master Model Railroader distinction, many have advanced their

progress towards that goal by completing AP Certificates. **Alexander Conta** earned the Motive Power certificate. **Mike Evans** and **Andrew Wasowicz** earned the Cars Certificate. **Phil Monat** earned the Scenery and Author Certificates. **Dave Martini** earned the Electrical and Chief Dispatcher Certificates. **Kevin Feeney** earned the Official Certificate. There were four NER members who earned the Volunteer Certificate: **Andrew Wasowicz**, **Mike Martin**, **Brian O'Keeffe** and **Donald Straub**. I see the NER members who earn the Volunteer Certificate as key contributors to the long term health and well being of our organization. Without great volunteers, there would be no NMRA. There would be no NER. There would be no AP. There would be very limited educational opportunities for all of us.

If you do not already have the NMRA AP Volunteer Certificate, I ask you to seriously consider working for this award. Many times, members find that the volunteer work completed to date nearly qualifies them. Get involved in the NMRA. There are opportunities to help at each level. Why not become a Contest Judge? MMR Robert Hamm, our NER Contest Chairman, always welcomes new judges. Here is an opportunity to volunteer while learning from the work of many of the best model builders in the NER. Did you open your home or club layout for a NMRA sponsored event? If so, you have earned volunteer credit. Are you part of a modular group that set up at an NMRA event? Again, volunteer credits can be earned. Are you a Boy Scout Railroading Merit Badge Counselor? Here is a great way to earn volunteer credit while bringing the hobby to a new generation of modelers. I would like to see each and every NER member earn the AP Volunteer certificate. We would each have increased our model building skills and enjoyment while making the NMRA a stronger organization. Can I expect your Volunteer Certificate application to arrive in my mail soon? Thanks for Volunteering. The NMRA is a better organization because of your contributions. ■

BY FRANKLIN B. LANG Wordsmith

## GLENN GLASSETER'S C&O

Glenn Glasstetter who has been very active with the NER over the years has also been very active in building a beautifully designed and built 22 x 36 HO scale layout in his home in Vermont. He chose to go outside of New England for his prototype—to the hills of West Virginia and the transition era of big stream on the **Chesapeake & Ohio**.

Having never been to West Virginia, how did he decide on the C&O? Glenn always liked big steam and after receiving the book *C&O Power* as a gift, his journey began. What kicked him into high gear were Allen McClelland's articles about his legendary Virginian & Ohio Railroad in *Railroad Model Craftsman*. He then joined the C&O Society, signed a long-term lease from his supportive wife for the basement space and started building his empire in earnest.

Following McClelland's advice about finishing the basement before construction the railroad, Glenn put in sheet rock walls, covered corners around the layout, installed a suspended ceiling with drop-in fluorescent lights and painted the floor before starting the layout.

"The layout has undergone numerous changes in design during construction," Glenn explained, "The most extensive being the redesign of the stub end division yard to a run through yard, which has added 50' feet of mainline running." He has also added hidden staging for nine more trains in addition to the original ten, a dispatcher's office, telephone communication, and a fast clock. Operation with an NCE DCC system has begun on over 225 feet of single and double track mainline, with 32" minimum hidden and 36" visible radius curves. Track height is 43" to 55" and there is scenery up to 74". Benchwork is L-girder with five-ply plywood and Homasote topped with some Homabed. Track is both handlaid and commercial with code 100 for hidden trackage, mainline is Code 83, and yards and industries are Code 70. Turnouts for the mainline are #6 and #8 and #4-8 in yards and sidings.

Glenn still has some scenery to put in, but from the pictures you see here he has accomplished a great deal. He is surely a good example of a successful Empire Builder in the NER. ■



Glenn Glasstetter at work on his C&O empire. PHOTO BY CHRIS CARFARO



Endless strings of hoppers through the Appalachians signal that we're in the heart of coal country! PHOTO BY CHRIS CARFARO



An Allegheny-class leads a coal train over an impressive steel trestle. PHOTO BY CHRIS CARFARO





# Observations from a new member

By Bruce De Young  
Garden State Division

**A**s a new member of the NMRA and the NER, I can't tell you how pleased I have been with my first seven months of membership. Fellow NER member Chuck Diljak had been suggesting that I join for some time, so when the Garden State Comet (2006 Fall NER Convention) was to be held right near my home town, I finally took advantage of the special membership/Convention registration combo and signed up. At this point I can only wonder why I waited so long!

Other than Chuck, my first exposure to another member of the NER came when I attended my first clinic on the first evening of the Convention. I went to Bob Hamm's clinic on contest models. Here was a friendly, down-to-earth guy explaining the contest model judging process and sharing some of his own experiences as he began entering models for judging. I was intrigued by the thought of receiving detailed feedback on my modeling from a group of fellow modelers. Since I live close to the Convention location, I drove home that night and burned the midnight oil preparing the necessary paperwork to enter one of my structures for judging. That model, a little scratchbuilt brick welding shop, ended up taking third place in structures. More importantly, I received some great feedback as to how to make my modeling even better. I cannot compliment Bob and his group of judges enough on how pleasant and relaxing they made the entire process for a newcomer. The rest of the Convention was very enjoyable as well. Interesting clinics, layouts to view, examples of terrific modeling, and fellowship with some great people — what's not to like?

Since that time, I have attended meetings of the Garden State Division. Each meeting has had interesting clinics and has been held at some of the larger model railroad clubs in the area. The "behind the scenes" look at these club layouts has been an added bonus. Again, the fellow Garden State Division members that I have met at these meetings have been most welcoming.

What's next? Well, I have been busy all winter trying to finish up some scenery on my layout, and I am in the process of arranging a time for Norman Frowley, AP Chairman for the Garden State Division, to visit my layout to see if I qualify for the Golden Spike Award. While he is there, I



**Bruce De Young is one of the NER's newest members, and he has been bitten by the modelling bug hard. He assembled Model Tech Studio's Background Factory kit, and named it for his father, still an active model railroader at age 87! The large windows show off Bruce's detailed interior very nicely.** PHOTO BY BRUCE DE YOUNG

will ask him to evaluate my progress towards earning the Achievement Certificate for Scenery. After that, who knows!

Finally, there are the great publications that I've received as part of my membership in the NMRA and NER. From the Garden State Division's *Whistle Post*, to the NER's *Coupler*, to the NMRA's *Scale Rails*, I have been delighted with the articles and information I have received from each issue.

For instance, in the April-June issue of *The Coupler*, Barry Abisch had a great article featuring Model Tech Studios. I found the article particularly interesting and timely, since I had just finished assembling my first kit by them, their 3-D Background Factory #4 (Kit J-0093). As a follow-up to Barry's article, I thought that I would share some photos of my rendition of this kit.

For the most part, I assembled the kit according to Model Tech's instructions. I did use corrugated metal siding for the upper hallway instead of the tar paper that the kit recommended and made a slight peak to the roof of the hallway instead of the flat roof called for. I then made a billboard sign to announce the name of the factory. (I

named it after my 87-year-old father, who is still an active model railroader.)

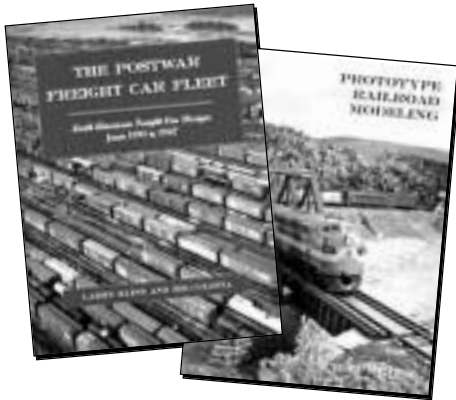
Those large factory windows were calling out for some interior details, so I added a floor just below the windows, installed working lighting (both interior and exterior), and put in some little figures and 'equipment' to give the feeling of a working establishment.

I had fun building this kit, and it has found a great home on my home layout—The Jersey Highlands Railroad.

In closing, I would just say this. When you join any organization, you evaluate the bang you get for your membership buck. I feel that I've been getting a great return on my dollar at every level—division, region, and national. So, when I recently got my renewal notice in the mail, I sent it back the same day! ■

**Have a story to tell about your experiences in the NER? We'd love to hear it. Contact the Editor at: phil@philmonat.com**

# MADE IN THE NER: Speedwitch Media



By Barry Abisch

Metro North Division

**T**ed Culotta says it is not exactly true that he has written 269 hardcover pages about a single prototype freight car design. After all, "The American Railway Association Standard Box Car of 1932," by Theodore Culotta, includes 285 photographs and 14 drawings. "So it is not all text that I wrote," he said. But that book explains a lot about Culotta and about his business, Connecticut-based Speedwitch Media. "It's all driven by interest in the prototype," Culotta said when asked to explain Speedwitch. "It's a desire to replicate thing in miniature and to provide information to allow other people to do it.

Culotta accepts that there is a place in the hobby for mass-produced injection molded styrene kits and ready-to-run rolling stock. His own business goals, targeting the smaller number of hobbyists who are dedicated prototype modelers, are more modest.

"I recognize that I will never be a household name," he said. "But the prototype community... has been very supportive and receptive." Speedwitch products begin with research. The company distributes books by Culotta and other authors. And Culotta publishes *The Prototype Railroad Modeling Journal*, which is not a typical model railroad magazine.

Culotta said he purposely decided on a journal to insulate himself from the constraints of magazine publishing. "I chose the journal format so I wouldn't be a slave to publishing deadlines," he said. "I am able to provide a medium for people to see articles in

much greater depth than in standard periodicals. Not that what they do is bad, but I can devote 20 or 30 pages to a subject if that's what it takes to cover a specific topic."

Culotta also offers clinics under the Speedwitch banner. The most recent, a seminar on steam freight cars, filled all 30 available seats at a cost of \$100 per person. To Culotta, clinics are an opportunity "to preach the gospel of the prototype."

It is a smooth transition from Culotta's own interest in the "gospel of the prototype" to the products Speedwitch designs, manufactures and sells. All of Speedwitch's modeling products spring from research and publication, and from Culotta's library of "thousands upon thousands" of photographs, diagram books and drawings. Most of the Speedwitch models are resin cast kits; some are cast conversion parts to modify the details of existing kits to match a specific prototype.

However, everything in the Speedwitch catalog is unique. "All of the full resin kits don't exist anywhere else," Culotta said. And the conversion kits allow modelers to tailor existing models to match a specific prototype. "Branchline makes a very fine postwar AAR 40-foot boxcar," Culotta said, offering an example. "Certain railroads had those cars with very distinctive details. Branchline can't offer all of the variations, such as doors or ends or underframes." That's where Speedwitch steps in.

Most of the resin kits begin with patterns Culotta makes by hand, using styrene. "I've done the patterns for about two-thirds of the kits," he said. "I also have people who have been kind enough to provide patterns to me." He described the process as a collaborative effort, but added, with pride of authorship, that "I have a hand in every model."

The cast resin parts are then made from the styrene patterns. Speedwitch also makes decals, again to fill gaps in the commercial market. "This was another area where there was room to improve," Culotta said.

The decals, too, begin with Culotta's handwork. Culotta does the artwork himself, using software tools such as Adobe Illustrator. "I match every character to exactly how it was on the prototype," he said. Often, he works from railroad drawings. Sometimes, he scans

sharp photos at high resolution.

Culotta's own railroad interest is the New Haven. In fact, the name of his company derives from The Speed Witch, the New Haven's premium freight service which ran from Portland, Maine to New York City. He began planning a model of the New Haven, but changed course when he could not devise a satisfactory track plan. Instead, he is building a 20x33-foot model of the Central Vermont between Palmer, Mass. and New London, Conn.—with New Haven interchanges.

Like many model railroaders, Culotta did not start of building trains. Some modelers began with plastic car kits; Culotta started with plastic airplanes. That's how he learned the basics of kit-building. "I had my first airbrush when I was 10," he said. By the 1980s, Culotta said, his interest had shifted to freight car modeling.

Over the years, Culotta also expanded his interest in the prototype. He got a big boost when California author and researcher Richard Hendrickson shared a trove of railroad photos. Culotta began doing his own research and writing, and offered clinics on prototypes and prototype modeling.

But it was a leap from railfan and modeler to manufacturer. Culotta studied economics in college and worked in logistics and supply before establishing Speedwitch some three years ago. Almost immediately, he realized there were skills he had to acquire to make the business work. He enrolled in classes at a local community college, and in about 10 weeks he had mastered software such as Adobe Illustrator and PhotoShop.

Although many small model railroad companies are part-time ventures, Culotta has left his "day job," as it were, and works full time at Speedwitch. His family, he said, has been supportive of his decision; he and his wife have two children, a 6-year-old son and a 4-year-old daughter.

Speedwitch has no employees, other than Culotta. He outsources the actual production of the resin castings from his patterns and the preparation of the decals from his designs. As long as there are prototypes to research, it does not seem likely that Culotta's in-laws will run out of kits to pack. He continues to find new details to bring to the attention of the prototype modeling community. "One of the things I am doing is trying to educate people," he said. ■

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# NER Northern Lights

A look across the border for news and updates from our NMRA friends in Division Alouette, and across Québec and the Canadian Maritimes.

BY/PAR DON HILLMAN Vice President, NMRA (Canada)

## To Our Canadian Members

As many of you know, the Alouette Division has been inactive for the last year, lacking a Superintendent. In the hope of encouraging our northern friends to step forward and help lead the Division back to activity, we are pleased to publish the following report from Don Hillman, VP NMRA Canada.—Ed.

## Report from NMRA (Canada)

Our efforts at the NMRA BOD meeting in Detroit have been successful. We have received permission to offer a Rail Pass program for Canadian residents. Pricing and method of processing the information are still being worked out with the NMRA HQ Office Manager.

The Canadian Rail Pass program will be based on the same conditions and benefits as the US program except for the 6 month subscription to *Scale Rails*. The following conditions and restrictions will be used for the Canadian program:

- Rail Pass membership will be ONE TIME USE ONLY
- Membership will be for a six (6) month period
- Available to new members and those who have not been NMRA members for two years or more
- Members can vote, attend conventions and participate in contests, but cannot hold office and will not receive a new member pack
- Membership will renew at the regular membership rate that may include a subscription to *Scale Rails*.

We were unable to reduce the cost of a

Canadian six (6) month subscription to economically fit into our goal to offer the Rail Pass at or about the same as the US program. We were, however, able to negotiate an arrangement to mail at least one copy of *Scale Rails* to any member joining NMRA under the Rail Pass program. We are also trying to work out details where a six (6) month subscription to the home region publication will be taken out. The theory here is to make the new member aware of the events and activities that are available closer to home.

Once the final pieces to the puzzle are put together, we will publish details on the NMRA (Canada) web site that explain the program and tell individuals how to apply for the Rail Pass membership.

The NMRA BOD at the Detroit meeting also voted to increase the subscription rate for *Scale Rails* effective January 1, 2008. The new US member rate will be US\$15.00 per year (up from US\$12.00). We are not sure, as yet, how this increase will affect the Canadian subscription rate. Most of the higher rate that Canadian members pay is directly related to the cost of mailing the magazine. The two main factors in the mailing costs are the postage and the transportation cost to get the issues from the publisher (in Omaha, Nebraska) and Canada Post (in Mississauga, Ontario). We are currently working with HQ Publication Department personnel to find a quicker and cheaper way of getting the *Scale Rails* into the Canada Post system. Whatever we achieve in this effort will certainly determine if we have to raise the

Canadian *Scale Rails* subscription rate in January when the US rate goes up. We will do our very best to keep the rate at or near the current rate of C\$24.00.

Another situation that HQ must deal with is the increased volume of missing *Scale Rails* issues and the postage cost to mail replacements out to the member. Recently, the US Postal Service raised the postage rates for mail going to international addresses (Canada is considered international). The present postage to mail a copy of *Scale Rails* to a Canadian address is about US\$2.90. It is our understanding that the reason for most of the missing issues is the renewal payments received and processed after the membership expire date. The subscription to *Scale Rails* terminates on the expire date of the NMRA membership and mailing of the magazine stops. On the other hand a member is allowed up to 90 days in which to make his/her renewal payment and have it posted to the record. Mailing labels are produced a month in advance (August issue labels are produced in the last week of June/first week of July). For those members who have subscribed to *Scale Rails* it is in your best interests to ensure that the renewal payment is made before the expire date of your membership. Our processing schedule for renewal notices is such that a notice is printed and mailed each month for the three months before the membership expire month.

**If you have any questions, send an e-mail to [registrar@nmracanada.ca](mailto:registrar@nmracanada.ca).**

# NER New Members

List of new members joining the Northeastern Region NMRA, compiled by the regional office manager. Please send corrections and additions to Don Irace, Office Manager.

COMPILED BY DON IRACE NER Office Manager

New Members as Of 6/18/07

## CONNECTICUT

Charles Sabia, Jr. - Manchester  
Michael Rohan - Windham

## MAINE

John O'Brien - Windham

## MASSACHUSETTS

Michael Fischer - Beverly  
Jim Beck - Needham  
William Duffe - Easthampton

## NEW YORK

Karen Miskell - Geneseo  
Victor Carmen - Albany  
Rita Sly - Elmira

William Moffett - Huntington  
Russell Fiero - S. Ozone Pk  
Edmund Donovan - New York  
Robert Dana - Liverpool

## PENNSYLVANIA

Carmelo Munao  
Wolfgang Wagner

## VERMONT

Joseph Patalano - Richmond

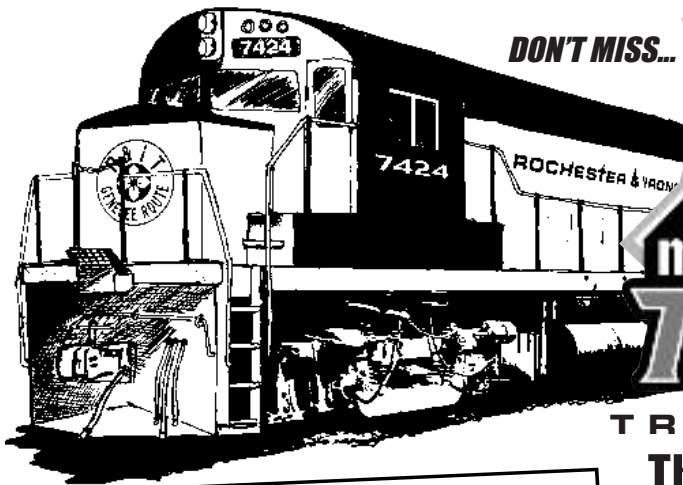
## WISCONSIN

Dean Kanugh

## IOWA

James Beranek

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