

THE COUPLER

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION • NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

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New York, Susquehanna & Western SD40-2T 3010 (which started out life as Rio Grande “tunnel motor” 5397) mingles with vintage Budd RDC's at Syracuse's Armory Square station. Great model railroading and fun railfan activities await convention visitors! See page 7 for the latest updates on the upcoming Empire Junction 2008, hosted by the Central New York Division from September 11 through 14. PHOTO BY DAVE SCHIEDERICH

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THE COUPLER

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★ MARITIMES DIVISION

★ DIVISION ALOUETTE

SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR COUPLER #231 IS MAY 16

We want to hear from you—Contact Editor Phil Monat for more information



BY KEN MAY NER President



I would like to thank all those who took the time to staff the NMRA/NER Booth at the Amherst Train Show in January. As many of you know, this annual show is the largest in our area with excellent attendance and it is important for the NMRA and our NER to have a presence amongst so many modelers. I hope the booth and volunteers provided a positive impression to the general public.

The package of revised By-Laws and the ballot have been delayed, but should be available this spring. I urge your support of

this streamlining of our organization.

Continuing with a successful plan, there is only one NER Convention again this year. It is sponsored by the Central New York Division and will be held in Syracuse, NY on the weekend of September 11 - 14, 2008. The members of the committee have been working on this program for over a year, as you can see by the publicity in this issue. I expect an outstanding convention program from the talented modelers in the CNY Division - I hope that many of you will take advantage of the program and come to Syracuse to enjoy the fun.

Here in Connecticut, the local committee working on the 2009 Hartford National

Convention is right in the middle of a most busy time - trying to get our convention program established. It is our goal to have the program 90% defined in time for the 2008 National Convention in Anaheim, CA. We are working hard to accomplish that goal.

Support the program of your local Division. Invite someone you know who might be interested in the hobby to a meeting. If there are no meetings in your local area, why not try to organize one? Look over the new members lists - perhaps there is somebody nearby whom you could share ideas, efforts, and learn from? Happy model Railroading!

—Ken May, NER President

FROM THE EDITORS

Our National Convention Needs You!

A national convention celebrates this hobby's accomplishments. It honors individual and group achievements, it further enriches those of us already "running trains" and it warmly beckons others to join in the experience. It's model railroading's biggest stage, and we light it up but once during each loop 'round the sun.

The Northeastern Region, of course, has its turn in the spotlight even less frequently, making it all the more imperative that we—all of us in the region—pull together to mount the best possible show. We need your time, your skills, your energy and your passion for the hobby as the NER prepares to step into that merciless glare next year. The eyes of the nation's—indeed, the world's—model railroaders will be focused squarely on the Hartford National 2009, and only an all-hands turnout by the NER will guarantee a convention of which we can all be proud. But that's not the best reason to volunteer.

For most, HN 2009 lies in some far-away future, an event seen only in vague shadows and misty outlines, important, to be sure, but still more than a year away. Yet, like that speeding train greeting the hapless Road Runner after he's looked left and right down a seemingly empty track, it

arrives with breathtaking suddenness. *Meep-Meep!* Your help is truly needed now. You'll join a core group of 50 fellow NER members that has already begun the heavy lifting and they will gratefully welcome your service. But that's not the best reason to volunteer.

By joining the National Model Railroad Association we were introduced to countless numbers of like-minded modelers, fellow members with whom we've forged



lasting friendships. The NMRA has also provided us with industry standards, pioneering concepts and an overarching sense of community. It has educated us, elevated our skills and transported our minds, bodies and imaginations to realms we might well have never visited. It has done all this with dues that amount to less than a buck a week. Adequately repaying an organization that has done so much requires more than writing our annual check. It requires a commitment of our time and abilities, it calls for our service, as a fitting way to say

thanks for all that's been done for us. But that's still not the best reason to volunteer.

Volunteers at a national convention are privy to a world unknown to the average conventioneer. They are the ultimate insiders, working side by side with world-class clinicians, shepherding busloads of visitors to world-famous layouts and prototype rail sites, helping to organize—day by day—the myriad activities that will ultimately determine the success or failure of HN 2009. Ask anyone who has ever worked a convention. It's unquestionably the best way to get the most out of the event, to go behind the scenes, to rub shoulders with the icons of the hobby and know you're all part of the same big show. It is, quite simply, the best reason to volunteer. It's just not the only reason.

Do it now. Shoot an e-mail to Don Straub, the coordinator of volunteers, at dancingbear20@sbcglobal.net or call (203) 698-1689. Many of you already know Don, a Metro North Division director and chair of its achievement program. For those who don't, here's an opportunity to add this fellow to the growing number of lasting friendships you've made in model railroading, courtesy of the NMRA.

—The HN 2009 Team



Schedule of model railroading events from around the Northeastern Region. To have your event listed here (space permitting), please contact Phil Monat, Editor.

COMPILED BY THE COUPLER STAFF

FOR THE LATEST NEWS VISIT
www.nernmra.org

GARDEN STATE DIVISION

May 4th, 2008. Spring Meet hosted by The Model Railroad Club, Inc., Union, New Jersey. Route 22 behind the Home Depot. White elephant table, model judging, clinics, and videos plus operating session on the club layout afterwards. \$5 admission. Visit www.tmrcl.org.

August 24th, 2008. Summer Rolling Meet and BBQ, hosted by the Garden State model Railway Club, 575 High Mountain Road, North Haledon, New Jersey. Donations accepted, for more information visit www.gsmrrclub.org.

October 25th, 2008. Fall meet held in conjunction with the New York Society Model Engineers (NYSME), Sale and Swap Meet at St. Josephs school, Carlstadt, new Jersey. Clinics, model judging and a white elephant table. Donations only accepted as there is a \$5 fee for the Sale & Swap Show. For more information visit www.ModelEngineers.org.

Kids Day At Lake Mohawk is coming up soon, watch the website for details, www.train.com.nergdsd. No computer? Call the president at (718) 494-0388.

METRO NORTH DIVISION

March 29, 2008, Division Meeting 10:00 AM - New Canaan Public Library, 151 Main Street, New Canaan, CT. Clinics will include: How to prepare/present a clinic. Next, Joe Kavanagh presents the construction of his back yard railroad. Layout visits to follow afterward.

May 3, 2008. Division Meeting 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM, at the Danbury Railroad Museum, Danbury, CT. Clinics and Layout visits.

SEACOAST DIVISION

Saturday, May 3, 2008. Our next Seacoast Division meeting is planned for Saturday May 3, at the Rochester Community Center in Rochester, NH at 10:00 am. In the morning, from 10 to 12, we will have an open house at Rich Breton's home layout, The Potomac Valley Railroad, an HO scale layout based on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in 1953. Located in Rochester, NH, at 9 Riverside Drive, and only about 5 minutes from the Community Center.

April 17, 2008: Great Falls Model Railroad Club Meeting. 7:00pm. Work Session, April 10th, 9am. Sanford Show, April 19, 10am April 20, 2008. Hooksett Lions Club Annual Model Railroad Show, Hooksett, N.H. 10am-3pm

April 26, 2008. Spring Model Railroad Show – Mr. Ararat High School, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Operating Trains, model supplies, photos and timetables, continuous movies

and great food. Tickets: Adults \$4, Under 15 \$2. For more information 207-933-2477. www.greatfallsmodelrrclub.org

NUTMEG DIVISION

April 13, 2008. The Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum will sponsor a Model Train and Die Cast show at the Windham High School. 355 High Street, Willimantic, Ct. 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; Free Parking; Food On Site; For Information Contact: Joseph Sokol 1-860-872-2240 or e-mail: joseph-sokol@msn.com

June 8, 2008. The Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum will hold a "Armstrong' 60' Turntable dedication at 1:30pm. Public welcome. Donation Possible.

June 14, 2008. The Museum will hold a "Night Photo Shoot" at 5:00PM. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Contact: Tom Nanos at 860-423-4544 or contact by e-mail: tomnanos@sbcglobal.net

May 9, 2008 - Wethersfield Police Station - 7:30 PM. We will be doing a 'Make and Take' Clinic. Cost per kit of \$6. Bring basic modeling tools and enjoy the fellowship while improving your modeling skills.

IN MEMORIAM



JOSEPH T. POPECKI, 1924-2008

Joe Popecki, a longtime member of the Northeastern Region and editor of THE COUPLER for 13 years, died Jan. 14. He was 83. A native of Saginaw, Mich., Joe and his wife, Jeanne, lived in Burlington, Vt., where he was the library director at nearby St. Michael's College for 30 years. An interest in transportation and trains lead Joe to the NMRA. He served as editor of the NER's Coupler from 1992 to 2005, attending nearly all the region's conventions and making a strong effort to record the accomplishments of NER members. For those contributions, Joe was given the Volunteer Achievement Program Certificate in 1997. He received the NER Presidents Award for his service as COUPLER editor. Joe was also a member of the Northwestern Vermont Model Railroading Society, serving as secretary from May 1991 to May 2001. Beyond the model railroading world, Joe helped create the Chittenden County Transportation Authority in 1973, bringing bus service to the greater Burlington area. He was a founding member and first president in 1968 of the Vermont Archaeological Society and served on the boards of the Vermont Historical Preservation Advisory Council and Council of Vermont Elders. He also helped start and develop Burlington College and served on its board as secretary for 30 years. In addition to his wife, Joe is survived by three sons and a daughter, seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Contributions can be made in Joe's memory to the Joseph T. Popecki Scholarship Fund at Burlington College, 95 North Ave., Burlington, VT 05401.

HUDSON-BERKSHIRE DIVISION

April 18, 2008. Division Meeting, Henry Propst's house. Directions TBA.

May 16, 2008. RailFun Meeting, Colonie Youth Bureau, Colonie, NY.

HUB DIVISION

April 12, 2008. SPRING TRAINING 2008, 10am to 4pm. As part of the HUB's 50th anniversary celebration, the HUB is presenting a admission free Spring Training Meet, at the Sheraton Milford Hotel, 11 Beaver Street, Milford, MA (off I495, exit 19, & route 1009). All-star clinicians on fundamentals and advanced modeling techniques, rookies and seasoned pros with lots of ideas for projects and layouts, a layout to try the new hands on digital hand-held throttles. Dealers, food, free parking, handicapped accessible. Contact by e-mail Springtraining@hubdiv.org, or visit us online at www.hubdiv.org.

May 16, 2008. HUB Railfun Meeting 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA

June, 2008 – Railfan trip TBA!

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION

April 12, 2008. Model Railroad Spring Meet St. David's Lutheran Church, 20 Clark Blvd., Massapequa Park, NY, 10:00AM to 4:00PM. Modeling Clinics, White Elephant Table, Model and Photo Contests, NMRA Merit Award Judging and Modular Layouts \$2.00 for NMRA/STDiv. Members. Others \$3.00 Contact : Fernand Washington, 179-65 Selover Road, Jamaica NY 11434-3411 Phone (718) 528-2308 or contact by e-mail: buzzyfernand@aol.com

CENTRAL NEW YORK

May 3, 2008. Joint Division Meeting with Hudson/Berkshire in Utica, NY. Possible ride on the Adirondack Scenic TBA.

June 8, 2008. Division Meeting at Central New York Model Railroad Club, Hartlot, NY. 2:00pm-4:00pm. Clinics, layout visits.

August 16, 2008. Divison Meeting and Annual Picnic, 1 to 4pm, Brian and Denise Curry in Weedsport, NY. Contact Brian at (315) 689-1303

MARITIME DIVISION

Although on the NER website the Maritime division is listed as "inactive," it might be more correct to say that at this time it is "unorganized." Members of the NMRA who live in the Maritime provinces are very active in their local clubs and in the Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders (MFMR), whose annual convention will be held in Amherst, NS in May 2008. Right now, the club in Saint John, NB (the Saint John Society of Model Railroaders) is organizing the 2010 MFMR convention and is proposing that the NER join us for a joint convention in May 2010. The last time the NER held a convention in Saint John was in the late 1980's and it was a great success. There is a lot of model railroading in the Saint John area, including some large operating layouts. The club hopes to organize an event of exceptional quality by hosting both groups in a joint convention.

—Steve McMullin

HARTFORD NATIONAL 2009



Only 18 months to go! The Hartford National convention planning committee has moved into high gear. Over fifty members 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

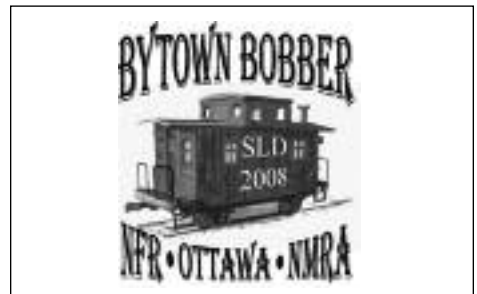
track. Each of the specific function committees has established its' own schedule but will be reporting to the general committee.

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 committees are listed at 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.

—The HN2009 Committee

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

April 25-27, 2008. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. "The Bytown Bobber," the 2008 Niagara Frontier Regional convention hosted by the St. Lawrence Division, NMRA. 12 to 16 clinics presented over three days, participant limited hands on backdrop painting workshop, 25 layout tours covering a full range of scales, subjects and style, NMRA judged and NFR appearance model contests, awards banquet with speaker, NFR raffle and fellowship spread over three days. For further information, registration forms and teasers please visit the web site, www.bytownbobber.org or contact Chair Grant Knowles gd.knowles@sympatico.ca or Registrar Greg Montague by e-mail at gm.montague@rogers.com



IN MEMORIAM

JAMES E. ODELL, 1948–2008

Jim Odell, 60, a long-time member and skilled modeler in the Central New York Albany area, passed away suddenly in January at his home. Jim was very active in the Division and in the D&H Historical Society, a railroad he was very fond of. He was also a Vietnam War Vet and continued to serve his country for over a 20-plus year career with the US Army before retiring at the rank of Lt. Colonel. He was the recipient of many awards during his service, including the Meritorious Service Medal. Jim wrote frequently for the Division Newsletter – I always enjoyed reading his columns that were entertaining and delightfully informative. At almost 6'5" tall, Jim stood out in a crowd but that was always a good thing – you could find him quickly for he was a kind and gracious man who eagerly shared his love of railroading with everyone. —Phil Monat, Editor

News and Events - CONTINUED

Two active NER members recruited by National

Two members of NER have been called upon to help administer model contests at the national level. **Bob Hamm, MMR** of Saratoga Springs, NY (Hudson-Berkshire Division) and **Mike Evans**, of Plattsburgh, NY. A name well-known in our region, we all know Bob as the enthusiastic NER Contest Chair, now he will be applying his talents as national Contest Chairman. Mike Evans will serve as Assistant Contest Chairman.

Bob Hamm is a mechanical engineer, working in heavy industry ranging from North Sea oil rigs to nuclear submarines to steam turbines. Bob earned his MMR in 2003 (No. 322) while focusing on construction of his HO narrow gauge layout

based on the D&RGW and the Rio Grande Southern. Aside from Contest Manager, Bob has also been active at the Division and Region level holding many offices.

Mike Evans is no stranger to a NMRA, and has been a member of the NER since 1988. Mike operated Plattsburgh Hobbies for many years before switching to a career in law enforcement. Currently a fraud investigator for the Department of Social Services, Mike also serves as NER Regional Director for New York State, and is working towards completing his MMR while constructing an HO scale layout based on the Delaware & Hudson's Rutland Branch. —*O.M.V.*

Five Handy Modeling Tips You Can Use

By Steve Parry Sunrise Trail Division

- 1.** These first three items are uses for adhesive mounting putty. It is available at the office supply super stores. My last batch came from Staples...
Hold drawings, notes, reference charts, etc. over your work bench. I have a small spring paper clip (with my to do list) fastened to the wall with a gob of mounting putty.
You want to see how plaster castings will look on a mountain side? Put a couple of gobs of mounting putty where you want the casting and rest the casting on it. I have not been able to make the putty stick to the backs of hydrocal castings. It might if the back of the casting was sprayed with Krylon first.
How will that new plastic building fit on the layout? Stick the walls together with mounting putty. This great too if you are kitbashing a building.
- 2.** Machinists use patternmakers ink to make a scored line in metal stand out. It contains organic solvents, smells awful, and takes a few minutes to dry, and isn't readily available. I now use a fine or medium point Sharpie. While it still doesn't smell great, I don't have to use it in my spray booth, and it dries in seconds. Alcohol or acetone will remove it. Have plenty of ventilation if you use acetone.
- 3.** Have you ever had something that would not stay glued together? Glue the parts with ACC (I use the gap filling type exclusively) then sprinkle on a pinch or two of baking powder on the joint with the still wet ACC. The ACC will dry rock hard. ACC and baking powder is good for filling small gaps e.g. where two walls don't perfectly meet. It can be painted.
- 4.** Wheel faces of sets used with solid journals have a lot of crud on them, caused by the grease leaking from the bearings and dirt kicked up from the roadbed. You can easily simulate this on your solid journal trucks. Paint the wheel backs and faces with a mix of rust and rail brown. Pour a half dozen drops of gloss black and a few pinches of baking powder on your pallet. Dip your brush (I use a 2-0 or 3-0 liner) in the gloss black and then in the baking powder. Paint the wheel face with this mix. Clean off the big lumps. This technique can also be used with rust colored paint to simulate heavy rust.
- 5.** I save a few empty toilet paper and paper towel rolls and keep them near my paint booth. The rolls make great holders while I am airbrushing body shells.



FOR THE LATEST NER INFORMATION, VISIT
www.nernmra.org



The New York Central-inspired lightning stripe paint scheme on the Finger Lakes Railway is a fan favorite. Shortline action is just one of the attractions the Syracuse area has to offer convention visitors. PHOTO BY DAVE SCHIEDERICH

Empire Junction Update

By Ed Olszewski

Central New York Division

September is coming fast, are we ready? That is the thought on the mind of every member of the Empire Junction '08 planning committee and every member of the Central New York Division as we continue to plan for this year's annual NER convention September 11–14 in Syracuse, New York. A great deal of planning has already been done and we continue to plow ahead into the final phases leading up to the convention.

If you have a valid e-mail address listed on the NER roster you should have received at least three e-mail newsletters about the convention highlighting the various tours and operating sessions. For those of you without an e-mail address listed, here are some of those highlights and new events we are planning. By the way, if you are not receiving our regular

convention update e-mails, please visit www.empirejunction.org and sign up.

LAYOUT TOURS

Art Fahie, Owner of Bar Mills Models, is quoted in a 2003 *Model Railroading* magazine article saying "...there are more outstanding home layouts in the Central New York area than anywhere I have trav-

eled." This will be evident to visitors at Empire Junction '08. Your biggest problem will be figuring out which layouts to visit first!

During the convention we will feature more than 50 permanent and modular layouts built in a variety of scales, gauges, and eras, as well as a number of beautiful garden layouts. We have considered the fact that we are planning a lot of activities and clinics for the four days. Because of so many venues, we are planning to have a number of layouts open at various times from Thursday afternoon through Sunday evening. The only planned "down time" will be during the Saturday night banquet.

Polish up your camera lens, gas up the car, grab your friends and head to Syracuse in September. Choosing layouts may be a "problem," but getting there will be made easier since the map book will include GPS coordinates for all travelers with dashboard direction devices or an



onboard laptop computer. We are also going to have a staffed “Help Center,” allowing you to call in for specific directions from “Point A” to “Point B.”

OPERATIONS

Linn Westcott once described model railroad operations as one of the world’s most magnificent board games. As one of our guests at Empire Junction ‘08, you will not be disappointed. Along with more than 50 layouts on tour, there will be more than 70 opportunities to operate some of these fabulous railroads.

Our featured layouts have a full range of operating styles: local freights, through freights, mine runs, sweeper trains, unit auto racks, stack and TOFC trains, passenger operations, and local or yard switching. Whatever style of layout operation you enjoy—TTTO, CTC, track warrants or switch lists—we have something to satisfy your interests. These layouts are part of the Operations Special Interest Group (OPSIG) and you must pre-register early to reserve your slot.

MODELING WITH THE MASTERS

If you have ever wanted to build a craftsman-style kit, we have the event for you! Sign up for the Central New York Division’s version of “Modeling With The Masters”. Our local Master Model Railroaders, Brian Curry and Bill Brown,

will spend Thursday night and Friday morning taking you through the steps of building a Bar Mills Basics “Twin Utility Shacks” HO Scale craftsman kit (#702).

You will spend Thursday night learning and building a craftsman structure kit. Then on Friday morning, you place your structure in a scene and add the scenery around it. You will complete your model by building a small diorama to show off your handy work. Now ask yourself, “How much would I be willing to pay for eight hours of help from two Master Model Railroaders, plus get a kit and a diorama to boot?”

We asked ourselves the same question, then decided that the experience would be priceless. So, that is what you will pay – NOTHING! Not one thin dime of your hard-earned modeling funds will have to go towards this event. Your hosts have worked with Art Fahie from Bar Mills Scale Models to get the structure kit donated to the NER Region specifically for this convention and workshop. All of the scenery materials are going to be donated by members of the Central New York Division. All you will have to bring is your modeling tools and a few supplies.

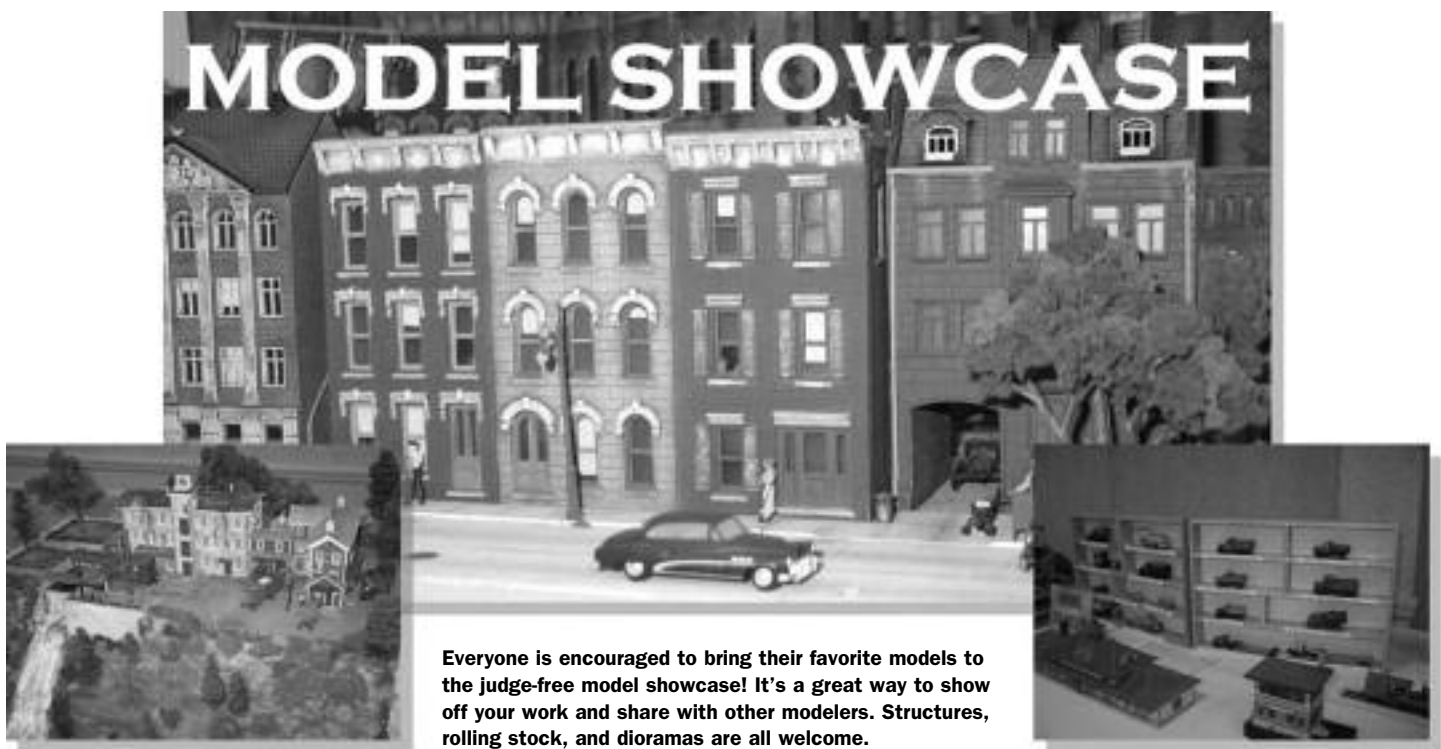
The event will be limited to the first 20 people who register and fully pay for the convention. The next 10 people registering will be placed on a waiting list, and should come to the convention on

Thursday night ready to go on a moment’s notice. There are a few stipulations. All participants MUST be current NMRA members, and this offer is not available to members of the Central New York Division (We want to give all Region members a “fair shot” at this workshop, so we’ll provide it to our Division members at another time).

The first 20 NER members to register will receive a letter providing them with the details of the workshop and what tools and supplies to bring with them. The 10 members on the waiting list will receive a letter letting them know they are “Wait Listed,” and provide them with the same list of tools and supplies so that they can step in to fill an empty slot on Thursday night with as little as five minutes notice. The skills you learn during this workshop will be useful for any size craftsman kit and for your scratch building projects.

CLINICS

We are planning a full slate of clinics for you during Empire Junction ‘08 and have already lined up a number of well known clinicians. You can expect to see clinics from nationally-renowned modeler Earl Smallshaw, railroad historian and NYO&W expert John Taibi, and others. We will be offering clinics on a wide variety of topics covering locomotives, rolling stock, vehicles, scenery, structures,



MODEL SHOWCASE

Everyone is encouraged to bring their favorite models to the judge-free model showcase! It's a great way to show off your work and share with other modelers. Structures, rolling stock, and dioramas are all welcome.



A short CSX freight rumbles by Lehigh Cement in Solvay, New York (just outside Syracuse). The cement plant will be one of the featured rail tours at this year's Empire Junction convention. PHOTO BY DAVE SCHIEDERICH

bridges and more!

If there is a special topic you would like to see covered, please let one of the committee members know so we can attempt to find a clinician to present what you want (contact information for all committee chairs is listed on empirejunction.org). If you have a clinic you would like to present, drop us a line giving us the details of your clinic. Remember, clinic presenters earn AP credit.

MODEL CONTEST AND MODELER'S SHOWCASE

You've spent hours building your structure model or detailing your locomotive or rolling stock. Why not have it judged for Achievement Program (AP) Credit in the Model Contest! The NMRA has established the Achievement Program as an avenue for you to work toward the title of Master Model Railroader (MMR). At this time there are less than 400 MMR's worldwide. Whether you want to go all the way for the MMR or not, the AP enables recognition for your talents and efforts in the hobby. The MMR program is meant for every modeler to have the opportunity for success. Imagine a certificate hanging on your train room wall recognizing you!

This is one of the NMRA's ways of recognizing and congratulating you on a job well done.

But, if you would rather just show off your models, display them in the Modeler's Showcase. We encourage you to share your talents by displaying as many models as you would like during Empire Junction '08. You probably have models that you are proud of just sitting on your layout and waiting for someone to see them. The Modeler's Showcase offers an opportunity to share your models and techniques with others with similar interest, and help them improve their modeling skill. The showcase area is a "Judge Free Zone!" Step up and be recognized for your interest in the hobby and enjoy the fellowship.

PROTOTYPE AND NON-RAIL TOURS

The polling is complete, and you have voted your choices. Our Prototype Tour committee is preparing a program that responds to the poll results. The Prototype tour poll indicated that you want to tour a major steel industry that is a railroad customer, and a regional railroad. In addition, there will be opportunities to travel around Central New York photographing various railroad-related structures and trains.

The Non-Rail tour poll's top vote getters are the cruise on Skaneateles Lake and a tour of wineries in the Finger Lakes region. There are a number of other non-rail activities planned, including in-hotel clinics on quilting, looming, fabric origami, cooking, and make-overs. Around Syracuse, there will be opportunities to visit museums, go shopping at Carousel Center, take in a play, or see a SU Orangemen Football game at the Carrier Dome.

We have begun to work on the details of these tours and will have more information to report in the coming months. The convention committee thanks everyone who voted, and we will do what is possible to meet your desires.

EMPIRE JUNCTION 2008

You can preview many of the fine layouts mentioned by going to the convention website. You will get all your up-to-date convention information, including registration materials (when available for distribution), and hotel reservations at empirejunction.org. See you in Syracuse September 11-14 at the NER Empire Junction 2008 Convention! ■

WWW.EMPIREJUNCTION.ORG



MER members Jim Dalberg and Dick Foley visited the Albany area to partake in the operating sessions offered at the recent NER convention. The Operations Special Interest Group (OPSIG) continues to have success in organizing sessions at our conventions. PHOTO COURTESY OPSIG

Operations Growing in the NER

By Al Oneto

NER OPSIG Coordinator

While model railroad operation has been happening within the NER (Northeastern Region of the NMRA), it has finally come of age as a regular feature of the NER conventions in the past few years. Not too many years ago I, as regional OPSIG Coordinator, had to contact division convention planners in the early stages and ask them to find and plan to include some layouts for operation. Now it is recognized that operation sessions are an expected part of a convention and a drawing card to get operation minded folks to attend.

The most recent NER convention was at Albany, NY from October 18-21, 2007. Thanks to the organizational efforts of division OPSIG member Greg Whittle, there were five layouts operating on Thursday evening and four opened for operation during the day on Friday. The host layouts were mostly HO scale, but there was one O scale layout and one basement G scale layout in the group. A special thanks goes to Henry Propst (HO), who ran

two back to back operating sessions. Other hosts included Frank Czubyrt (O), Bill Duffe (HO), Dick Elwell (HO), John McBride (G), Bill McChesney (HO), Ken Nelson (HO) and Lou Sassi (HO). All of the operation hosts were also included on the layout tour open house for either Friday night or Sunday.

In total there were twenty-seven persons operating on Thursday night and thirty-six operating during the day on Friday. Everyone who registered before the Sept. 18 cutoff date was assigned to at least one operating session. Everyone requesting a

Thursday slot was assigned to operate, but ten registrants were wait-listed for crew slots on Friday. Nineteen who registered before the lottery cutoff date were selected by the drawing to operate on both days. Of the ten wait-listed for Friday, three registered before the lottery deadline and the other seven were later registrants. We are pleased to report that there apparently were zero no-shows and no one came to a session to which he was not assigned.

Because all of the operating sessions were scheduled before the registration desk opened at the hotel, none of the fifty or so walk-in registrants were able to choose to operate. This is something that future convention planners should consider when scheduling their operation sessions. For example, at the Stamford convention in 2005 some operation sessions with many crew slots were scheduled on Sunday afternoon. While many of these slots were assigned to early registrants, there were still some left for members who registered at the hotel on Friday and Saturday. ■

— Visit www.opsig.org for more info.



National Narrow Gauge Convention

NER members prove you don't have to be "narrow minded" to enjoy this well-attended event

By Larry Cannon
Seacoast Division

This past summer, the 27th annual National Narrow Gauge Convention chose Portland, Maine as its host city. I was involved in the convention primarily because I offered my layout for the layout tours and to display my large scale models that include Maine two-foot narrow gauge models. Other than my large scale interests, I'm pretty much an early 1980's HO Alco diesel modeler. Tom Coulombe, (another NER member who lives nearby) and I decided to open our layouts despite the fact that other than some of my large scale models, we model standard gauge. At forty miles from the convention, we thought we were on the outer reaches. Actually, we were two of the five closest layouts. There were at least eight NER members spread over three states offered their layouts in the fifteen tours offered.

The National Narrow Gauge Conventions are far more like Regional conventions than NMRA National Conventions. The go-to

people numbered less than a dozen. The dealers and modular exhibits were the core of the convention. The model contest was strictly popular vote. The attendance matched the Detroit NMRA National (Because of a minor foul-up, I wasn't pre-registered and became #1311. I have been told attendance topped 1,600.

The organization of the convention was different because the on-site activities, including clinics, ran from 9 AM until noon and from 6 to 9 PM. The convention started Wednesday evening and ended Saturday noon with an awards and highlights session in the ballroom Saturday night. There wasn't a "train show," but the dealers, modular exhibits and contest models were on display six hours a day. The rest of the time you signed up for activities or did self-guided prototype and layout tours. Tours were available for at least four Maine railroad museums.

There was a lot of elective time to socialize, which most people did.

The clinics were not as plentiful as at a

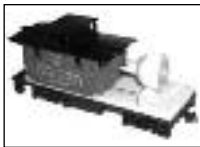
NMRA National, but I did not hear complaints. There were four clinic rooms, two of which were doubled up for larger presentations. There were just under sixty clinics scheduled with a few duplications for "name" clinicians. Although I didn't attend a clinic, there was good variety and there were a number of names I recognized as excellent presenters.

Because the convention attracted as many people as it did, the overflow hotel was convinced to give more display space instead of complimentary rooms – space enough for a half dozen or more modular layouts. The cost was impressive: \$75 for full registration and \$35 for a "day pass."

I only was able to spend one morning at the convention site and display my layout. My impression was the convention model is well worth comparison to what we do now for region (and national) conventions. One factor that made this convention highly successful was the dealer/manufacture participation. This is hard to achieve at a Regional convention level. ■



You don't have to be a slim gauge fan to appreciate good modeling. The popular Sunshine Central Sn3 modules were transported to and from the convention in two 20' containers! The beautifully detailed modules featured floor to ceiling scenery. PHOTO BY LARRY CANNON



Seacoast overcomes distance to serve members



The Seacoast Division of the NER serves almost 300 NMRA members living in the states of Maine and New Hampshire. The Division was

founded in 1968 and derives its name from the "seacoast area" of the two states as most of the population here follows the coastline. Our Division newsletter is called the Switch Tower and is published four times a year under the editorship of Ron Palmquist, who has been at the helm for more than ten years.

The Division's activities consist of the usual quarterly gatherings that include clinics, show-and-tell, layout visits and a business meeting. The meetings move around the two state areas on a rotational basis so members have the chance to attend when it falls near to where they live. Seacoast Division has a very diverse and spread out membership that makes bringing the activities of the NMRA to its members a challenge. There are large areas of the two states that have very low population density. Distances between population centers are usually in the range of a two-hour drive. Because the population is spread out over such a large area, the members-per-square-mile is a very, very small number! That is why we try to move the quarterly meetings around. Currently, division meetings are held in Portland and Auburn/Lewiston, Maine; and Rochester and Manchester, New Hampshire. Even with moving the meeting location around the region, some members are still required to drive 1-2 hours or more to attend.

The last NER Convention hosted by Seacoast Division was in Nashua, NH in 2005. The Division also has lent support to the annual "Tour de Chooch" Open House that has been running for the last fifteen years. Half of the 20+ layouts that are open during this tour are located in the



Active in community outreach, the Division hosted a class in kit building, part of the "Intro to Model Railroading" at Timberlane Regional High School, in Plaistow, NH. Pictured are Paul Lessard, Vice President and Rich Breton, past President. PHOTO BY STEVE BELFORTE

"seacoast" area of New Hampshire.

In the Outreach department, each year the Division has had an information booth at eight or nine local model railroad shows that showcases what the NMRA is and the benefits of belonging to the organization. In addition, last fall the Division began to offer an eight-week course for beginning model railroaders as part of the Timberlane Regional High School Adult Education program. The course is being run again during the spring 2008 semester. The Timberlane Regional school system serves residents in four towns and is located in Plaistow, NH. Flyers for this program were on display at the recent Big E show, where many visitors asked about it – a very popular program and a great idea!

The Seacoast Division is home to several model railroad clubs, with some of their members being very active in the

Division and Region. The clubs are: The Great Falls MRRC, Bedford Boomers, Pepperell Siding MRRC and the Eastern Maine MRRC. In the prototype department, The Conway Scenic Railroad, Maine Narrow Gauge Museum, Mt. Washington Cog Railway and the Hobo Railroad all reside in the two-state region.

The warm and friendly folks who run Seacoast are firm believers that the Division is the "face of the NMRA" to local members and should be at the forefront of NMRA activities. There has to be more done to attract new members and keep the ones we have. The Divisions bring the hobby to the individual modeler, and they work hard to serve our entire membership.

—By Otto M. Vondrak,
with special thanks to Bruce Robinson,
Seacoast Division President



SEACOAST DIVISION - serving New Hampshire and Maine
Bruce Robinson, President - brobinson85@comcast.net
<http://web.mac.com/rcarignani/iWeb/NMRASeacoast>

BY PHIL MONAT Editor

TOM SCIBETTA

We rarely write in these pages about a Hi-Rail layout. Most of us are so deep into scale model railroading that the Hi-Rail and Lionel world seems foreign and remote. Still, modelers working in that format can be as skilled and talented as their fine-scale brethren and nurture Empire dreams of their own.

The Central New York Division's **Tom Scibetta**, for one, is well on his way to realizing his. Like many of us, Tom was raised on Lionel three-rail trains chugging around the Christmas tree. Then, 23 years ago, he graduated to a 15-x-35-foot layout. After enlarging his Syracuse home, effectively doubling the size of his basement, he ended up with a 24-x-40-foot expanse.

That added space was needed, for Tom's No. 1 modeling priority has always been scenery. And his scenery is breathtaking. Soaring mountains flank floor-to-ceiling canyons, spectacular bridges carry trains over running water and HO, N and Z scale materials add depth to scenes. Tom's use of rock castings and perspective rivals that of any top-shelf "scale" model railroad.

After scenery, Tom focuses next on motorized accessories, with the trains themselves last. Lionel hi-rail is unequaled in its animated accessory choices and Tom operates virtually every motorized structure and accessory made.

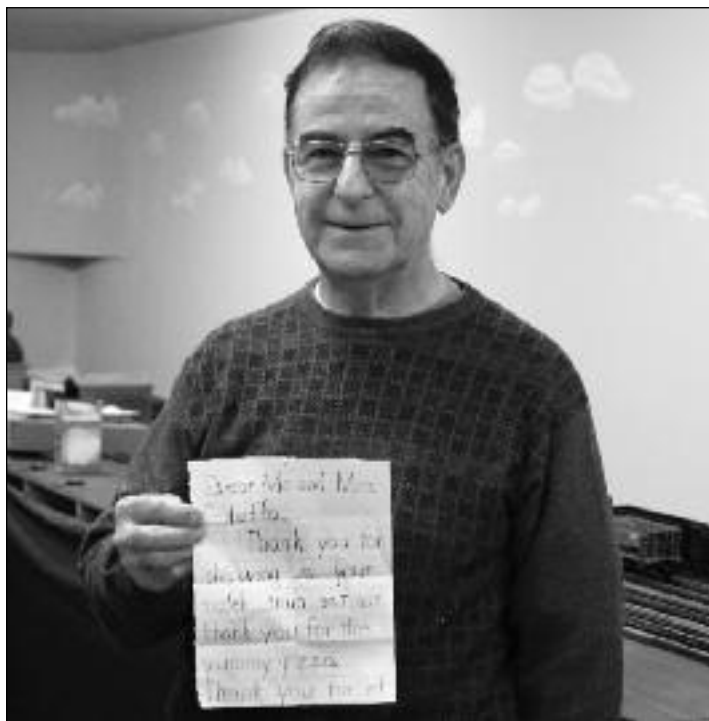
The trains, running with that additional third rail, are not in the same "scale-modeling" ballpark. But that lets Tom to do something most of us would never dream of doing with our carefully crafted scale model railroad empires: operate the layout as hands-on entertainment for family and friends, especially children.

The enjoyment, fascination and sheer delight youngsters get while operating this layout is phenomenal. Lionel's heavy, rock-solid equipment is built to be run and handled by kids and non-modelers alike. Similarly, the log dumper, saw mill, barrel loader and a dozen other animated accessories keep everybody enthralled.

Using the Lionel Command Control, with full sound and smoke, Tom can welcome anyone to his basement empire to enjoy running some trains regardless of their age, interest or skill level. And they can do that amid the magic of that truly spectacular scenery while not worrying about fragile equipment.

Only one section remains to be completed on Tom's Empire. But he already has built something that straddles two worlds of model railroading. His layout offers the most in entertainment and fun for all ages without sacrificing beautiful scenery and it introduces the younger generation to model railroading in a way that makes any videogame seem boring.

I'm sure that every time one of his eight grandchildren or many of his younger guests visit and insist on running the layout, Tom is glad his Empire turned out the way it did. Family entertainment at its finest and growing the hobby with today's children. Isn't that part of modeling a dream? ■



Tom Scibetta with a letter from a VERY young future NER member that visited his amazing layout. PHOTOS BY PHIL MONAT



A high-hood SP Alco RS-11 leans into the superelevated curves as it hustles a short freight through the valley.



Tom uses traditional scenery methods on his gorgeous hi-rail layout.

MADE IN THE NER: Scale University

By Barry Abisch
Metro North Division

For many years, Dennis Clark was a traveling banker, making his rounds in the state of Maine, until a five-car pileup on the Interstate set him thinking about the future -- a future which did not require so much regular highway travel. But while he was ready to give up an established career, he still needed a way to support his family. The solution was a model railroader's dream: Clark turned his O-scale hobby into a livelihood.

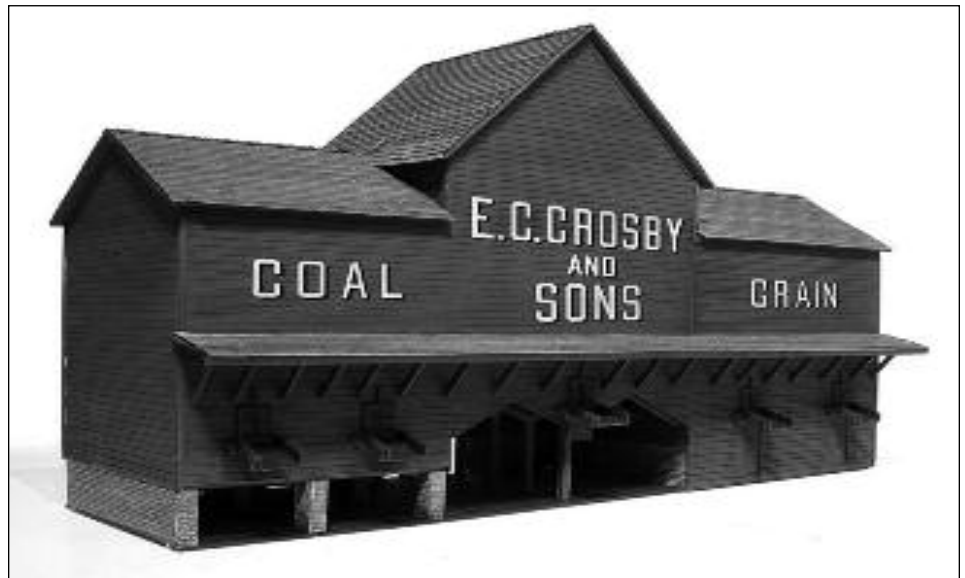
Now, Clark is a stay-at-home entrepreneur. His daily commute need be no farther than the distance from his spare-bedroom office, where he runs a company called Scale University, to the basement mail-room in his home in the south-central Maine town of Exeter.

When Clark acquired Scale University in the year 2000, the company manufactured scale ballast, coal and grasses. It had only enough business to give Clark part-time work, but it was a start. Next stop: Woodville.

If the word evokes images of Plasticville, the line of snap-together O-scale structures introduced by Bachman in 1947 and now coveted by collectors, you get the idea. And while Clark does not actually call his product line "Woodville," that's the word he used light-heartedly to describe his first original basswood kit for Scale University. "I had an idea for a little O-scale kit, Hazels' Boarding House," he said. "It's a rinky dink little thing. The pre-painted kit is so simple, he said, "it doesn't even come with instructions."

Today, Scale University has grown to become full-time employment for Clark. And Hazel's Boarding House is in the catalogue, joined now by structures from Branchline, Blair Line and others. Scale University also sells diecast O-scale vehicles and O-scale figures and accessories, and Clark is the exclusive distributor in Maine for Marklin and Trix. Along with some HO products, Clark continues to make landscaping materials as well. But, clearly, the focus of the business is O scale.

"You do what you know," Clark said. "I'm more familiar with O scale because that's what I play with." Clark's own 12-by-49 foot layout shares space in the basement with his business. "The room has been kicked out twice," he said. "But now it's



Just one of the laser-cut wood structures available from Scale University.

against a cement wall, so it isn't going to grow any more."

Clark returned to his boyhood hobby in the mid-90s. "I kind of got the bug again, from my childhood," he said. He thinks his customers can tell similar stories. "They grew up in the '50s and had their Lionel sets," he said. "Now the kids are gone, the room is there and they have a little disposable income." Clark and his wife of 41 years also are empty-nesters; his office is in a bedroom vacated by one of his three grown children, none of whom share an interest in model railroading.

Although the focus on O scale in a largely HO world may set it somewhat apart, Scale University is similar to several of the businesses previously profiled in the "Made in the NER" series in that the company is both a manufacturer and a reseller. Scale University blurs the line between the two roles, however, since most of the company's O-scale structures are available either as kits or as finished structures, painted and assembled by Clark or the occasional part-time employee.

After making "Hazel's," and looking to build his business, Clark began contacting "the laser guys," seeking companies willing to make O scale kits for Scale University. "Most were uninterested," he said. But, at the time, Dale Rush of Blair Line was considering adding O scale to his own product

line, and he agreed to make O kits exclusively for Clark. Some Blair Line structures are made specifically for Clark, but mostly the company has scaled up its HO kits to O dimensions and relies on Scale University as the lone distributor of the O-scale versions.

Clark also sells the scenic materials which launched Scale University. "That's the product I started with and I still sell enough to make it worth keeping around," he said. Scenic materials are handmade. Ballast and coal are manufactured from granite which has been crushed, screened and dyed. Birch sawdust is screened and stained to make grass and soil.

Working somewhat off the main line in a rural New England town, Clark relies heavily on advertising to keep his business going. "I spend a lot of money on advertising," he said, regularly promoting Scale University in the major hobby magazines. As one measure of success, Clark has shipped to customers in 21 foreign countries, most recently adding Turkey to the list. Scale University has grown to what Clark describes as "a comfortable level," and he's satisfied making a living without letting Scale University grow so big "that the fun goes out of it."

Not that running your own business is not without its perils. "One day it's chicken, next day feathers," he said. "Get a couple of feather days in a row, and it's scary." ■

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www.scaleuniversity.com



Everything lights up at night on Tom Scibetta's large and well-scenicked hi-rail layout, currently under construction. The busy nighttime scene never fails to delight visitors young and old alike. Read more about this interesting layout on page 13. PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT

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

CONNECTICUT

Lynn Scull-Hartford
David Abrames-Windsor
Donald Sierakowski-Vernon
Alan Williams-West Grandy
Nicholas Geti-Redding

INDIANA

William Wemhoff

MAINE

Daryl Mcclure-Baileyville

MARYLAND

Kenneth Shiotani
John Weigel
E. Louis Karmasek Jr
Henry Anderson

MASSACHUSETTS

David Richardson-Shrewsbury
John Brenner-Reading
Bob Hesse-Centerville
Colleen Taylor-Fall River
Neil Schofield-Seekonk
Preston Miller Jr-Boston
J.P. Kelly-Florence

Donna Mitchelson-Lowell

MINNESOTA

David Jasper

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Ronald Hutchins-Londonderry
Dennis Dellagrecia-Nelson

NEW JERSEY

John Kilbride-East Windsor
Bert Edwards-Hillsborough
Bob Meszar-Basking Ridge
Donald White-Pequannock
Msgr Joseph Marjanczyk-Union

NEW YORK

Todd Foster-Owego
Garrett Ewald-New
Jim Cesare-Niskayuna
Erinie Netz-Delmar
Mark Sklar-Albany
Jack Cutler-Clifton Park
Michael Spaulding-Cobleskill
Theodore Nugent-Greenville
Paul Krekeler-Albany
Terry O'neill-Duanesburg

Stephen Bulter-Saratoga Springs
David Bulman-Clifton Park
Philip Lord-Averill
Nick Lamboy-Clifton Park
Joseph Spinetti-Jewett
Karl Butler-Duanesbury
Mellanie Sembrat-Voorheesville
Glenn Olf-Castleton
Randy King-Watervliet
Vic Roman-Schenectady
Richard Davis-Schenectady
Bob Walsh-Lagrangeville
Chris Stirlins-Pleasant Valley
Chris Welty-Lagrangeville
James Mangles-Oxford
Brain Curry Mmr-Weedsport
Gail Pickett-Forest Hills
George Loy Jr.-West Babylon
William Lee-Middleburgh
Thomas Rhodes-Saratoga Springs
Douglas Alber-Ft Edward
James Bulgey-Saratoga Springs
Bob Price-Schoharie
Joe Parks-Dover
Ss Hobby Products-Lisbon
Richard Hehir-Fayetteville
Drew James-Baldwinsville

John Powell-Fayetteville
James Andrews-Binghamton
Brian Mulraney-Staten Island
Kevin O'toole-Voorheesville
Robert Comly-Castleton

PENNSYLVANIA

Ed Gotwals
Dr. John Erdmann
Robert Bisaccio
Frederick Alston

RHODE ISLAND

Joanne Pierce-West Warwick

SOUTH CAROLINA

Jasper Knabb

VIRGINIA

Neil Humphreys

CANADA

Ken Goslett-Pointe Claire

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★ NCE PowerPro \$129.95, Radio \$68.95
★ NCE PowerCab \$148.65
★ Lenz Set-90 \$228.95, Set-100 \$279.95
★ MRC Prodigy Arkavos2 \$185.95
★ Soundtraxx DSD-101LC \$51.35
★ HO Trainzr1 595.95 / Micro \$111.95

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