

THE COUPLER

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National and NER Contest Chair Bob Hamm (at right) and five of his volunteer judges hard at work during the AP Judging session at the recent NER convention in Albany. See long time modeler Charlie Getz's article on the contest program in this issue. PHOTO TONY BUCCA

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THE COUPLER

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SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR COUPLER #233 IS NOV. 14

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



BY KEN MAY NER President



Fall is here once again, the traditional time for vacations to be completed, our children to return to school and the rest of us to return to the layout room. The Mays had a good (but very long) drive to upper Michigan to visit our son who is in the US Coast Guard. The weather was very cooperative and pleasant and we enjoyed our visit greatly. Our second adventure is about to begin as I write this, so I will have to fill you in on that at another time.

We just had our end-of-year Board of Directors meeting. At that meeting Treasurer Larry Cannon reported that the NER is in good financial condition, and the Board decided that expenditures were sufficiently under control and that there was no need to consider raising the subscription fee for *The Coupler*. I mention this because the NMRA has raised the sub-

scription fee for *Scale Rails* and many other Regions have raised their subscription fees due to rising costs.

I would like to formally “Welcome Aboard” our new office manager Mark Harlow, who takes over an important NER function from Don Irace. Don performed this important job for six years and did an excellent job - Thank you, Don! Mark will be the ongoing interface between the NER and its Divisions and NMRA headquarters in Chattanooga. Please refer all questions of membership, dues, *Scale Rails* subscriptions and so forth to Mark. He will also be forwarding the monthly updates to Division membership people.

Volunteers: In the last issue of the *Coupler* I mentioned that the NER was in need of a couple of volunteers. There are two specific areas where we need help. The first is the **Nominations Committee**. This committee consists of a Chair and a representative from each of the Director areas - seven in all. This committee will

present the candidates for officer and director for the next election which will take place in 2010. The second area where we need help is on the **Permanent Convention Committee**. This committee currently consists of a Chair and a Registrar/Treasurer. It has been recommended that additional volunteers be added to the committee to add depth and to offer more input to developing top notch convention programs. If you have an interest in one of these positions, please contact me.

I also wish to thank the members of the Empire Junction '08 committee and the Central New York Division for their sustained efforts to present an outstanding convention program in Syracuse in September. It was a substantial effort and they did a great job! Thanks to you all!

Now get back to modeling!

—Ken May,
NER President

FROM THE EDITORS

What do we get for our dues?

I received the NMRA dues envelope the other day and I found myself thinking about a recent notice I saw in *Scale Rails*. Certainly the debate has raged about the usefulness and efficacy of our national organization. Why pay the \$51 per year since times are tough and you most likely want to spend the money somewhere else? People live to complain about some part of the NMRA, saying what does it really do for me? I still meet good, dedicated and intelligent modelers who ask the question, “Why should I join and just what does it do for me?”

When I've been asked it, I used to point to equipment standards, the DCC development and control standardization that made it possible, the achievement programs and education outreach efforts — things like that. But most often I found myself describing a shadow; a soft nebulous sort

of activity, with no clear smoking gun to say my \$51 was worth something. The NMRA helps and promotes, yes but I could not really put my finger on that hard reason, that direct fact.

Well, that notice I referred to above in *Scale Rails* (from NMRA General Counsel Robert Amsler and reprinted in this issue for your edification) was my direct fact! It seems one of the small companies working on DCC in the early years (Real Rail Effects) filed a patent trying to claim they owned exclusive rights to the sound technology used in our digital command control systems today. This patent was granted, but the NMRA (your organization using your dues money) filed a challenge before it could go into effect. If the patent were allowed to stand it would have greatly increase the costs on the market and restricted the products and manufacturers

of those using sound. The NMRA, along with help from others, was successful in challenging the claim and we can move ahead now with what is the fastest growing (and I might guess most profitable?) section of the model railroad business.

If the NMRA weren't there, who would have done this? Or are you OK paying \$175 for a sound decoder and only have one manufacturer to choose from? Do you really want to go back to having ten different command control systems that are not interchangeable and do not share a common system architecture? I am proud of what the NMRA did, and I hope the rest of you are too. I wrote that check for \$51 bucks in a heartbeat. Yes, the NMRA is not perfect, but it is us, you and me and my reason to belong you can find on page 8 of this issue.

—Phil Monat, Editor



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

GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION

2010 NER Regional Convention in Burlington, Vermont, Sept. 9-12, 2010. This will be the first NER convention in Vermont in over ten years – don't miss it! More details to follow.

GARDEN STATE DIVISION

October 25th: Fall Meet at 10 AM held in conjunction with the New York Society's Sell and Swap show, No fee for meet, \$5.00 fee for show.

January 18, 2009: Winter Meet at the Ramapo Valley Model Railroad Club, HoHoKus, NJ. For more information see www.trainweb.com/nergds or contact Tom Wortmann.

SEACOAST DIVISION

November 1 - Auburn, Maine: 35th Annual Model Railroad Show held at the Auburn Middle School, 610 Court St., Auburn ME. 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission: Adults \$4.00, children under 15, \$2.00. Vendors, operating layouts, movies and food. Sponsored by The Great Falls Model Railroad Club. For more information, call Terrence P. King 207-933-2477

NUTMEG DIVISION

September 21: Dudley, Ma.: Worcester Model Railroaders Open House 10 AM to 3 PM, 137 Schofield Ave., new, Digitrax DCC 43' by 51' club layout. Donations accepted. Info: Peter J. Smith, www.wmrr.org, pjsmithross@aol.com, (508) 987 -0313

September 21: Webster, MA: the Providence & Worcester Rail Fan Club & Museum is conducting a train show from 10 AM to 3 PM and only a mile from the WMRR Open House. See <http://www.pwrfc.net> for more details.

September 12: Next membership meeting will be at the Wethersfield Police Station, Wethersfield, CT. Start time will be 7:30PM Hands on clinic: "Building Bar Mills Fencing" in all scales. A small donation is requested.

October 5: Durham, CT - 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM – The New Haven Society of Model Engineers, Inc. will host a Train Show at the Durham Fair Grounds on Route 17 in

Durham, CT. The Society will have their O-Scale layout featuring the Operating Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge on display. Several local modular groups, as well as a large number of dealers will be present. Admission is \$6.00 for adults, Seniors (62+) \$5.00, Children 5 – 12 \$1.00 and under 5 Free. There is free parking and the site is wheelchair accessible. For more information call (860) 269-4940 or visit <http://www.nhsme.org>.

NUTMEG DIVISION

November 2: The Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum will sponsor a Model Train & Die Cast Show at the Windham High School, 355 High Street, Williamantic, Ct. 10:00AM to 3:00PM. Donations: Adults:\$6.00; Children (8-12)-\$1.00; Children (Under 8)-Free. Handicapped Accessible; Free Parking; Food On Site; Wide Aisles; Operating Layouts, Vendors. Contact: Joseph Sokol 860-872-2240 or email joseph_sokol@msn.com

HUDSON BERKSHIRE DIVISION

October 10: Colonie, New York: Meeting at Colonie Youth Bureau

Novemeber 11: – John McBride's

HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION

November 9: Poughkeepsie, New York. Hudson Valley Railroad Society 37th Annual Railroad Exposition. Mid-Hudson Civic Center, 10:00am to 3:00pm. Adults: \$5, Students/Seniors: \$4, Under 12, \$2. For more information, contact Denny Evaul at 845-297-0901

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION

November 8: Baldwin, New York: Long Island Sunrise Trail Division "Fall Convention" 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Baldwin United Methodist Church, 881 Merrick Road (1 block east of Grand Avenue). Clinics, Model & Photo Contests, White Elephant Table, Modular Layouts, Door Prizes. Admission \$7.00. Boy Scouts in uniform FREE with paid adult. Awards Ceremony, Banquet at 6:00 PM with Guest Speaker, Steve Ford of Willis Hobbies, \$25.00 in advance. \$30.00 at door (limited availability). For additional information, contact: John Mac Gown, 32 Liberty Blvd. Valley Stream, NY 11580,

burlyjohn@verizon.net Phone: 516-285-0876

CENTRAL NEW YORK DIVISION

September 11-14: Fall NER Convention – Holiday Inn, Syracuse.

September 27-28: Finger Lakes Live Steamers Open House. Please visit <http://www.fingerlakeslivesteamers.org> for more information.

November 9: Cy Diamond, Ovid, NY. Cy's N scale layout depicts the Finger Lakes region. Get a full convention report as we begin to prepare for our bi-annual auction.

December 9: Bi-Annual Auction, Fayetteville, NY. Bring your auction items and a wallet full of cash because you never know what will turn up on the auction block. For more info on all of the above contact Brian Curry, banddcurry@peoplepc.com.

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION

October 18-19: Smithfield, RI - Greater Rhode Island Model Train Show, Sponsored by the Little Rhody Division. Hours: 10am till 3:00pm each day. Location: Smithfield Elk's Lodge #2359, 326 Farnum Pike, Smithfield, RI. Dealer Tables & Operating layouts by: (On30) Narragansett Bay Railway & Navigation Co., (HO) Rhode Island Central, (HO) Coastal Mountain Railroad, Admission: \$5.00 Adults \$3.00 Seniors and Children, Children under 6 free.

HUB DIVISION

October 11-13: HUB Modular Railroad display at the Cranberry Days festival, Edaville Railroad, Rt. 58, Carver.

October 17: HUB Railfun Meeting 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston.

October 25-26: HUB Modular Railroad display at St. Brigid's Church, Lexington

November 21: HUB Railfun Meeting 8:00

FOR THE LATEST NEWS VISIT
www.nernmra.org



PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston.
November 22-23: HUB Modular Railroad display at the Greenburg Show, Shriner's Auditorium, Wilmington.

December 6-7: HUB-sponsored New England Model Train EXPO at the Best Western Royal Plaza Trade Center, Marlborough.

December 13-14: HUB Modular Railroad display at the National Heritage Museum, 33 Marrett Road, Lexington.

OTHER EVENTS

November 8-9: Hartford, CT. Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, Connecticut Expo Center. 10 to 4pm, \$7 adults, kids under 12 free. www.GreenbergShows.com

January 17-18, 2009: Manchester, NH. Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, The Center of New Hampshire, 700 Elm Street. 10 to 4pm, \$7 adults, kids under 12 free. Visit www.GreenbergShows.com for more info.

January 24-25, 2009: Springfield, Massachusetts. Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show. For more information visit www.railroadhobbyshow.com.

February 14-15, 2009: Middletown, NY. Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, Orange County Fair Arena, 100 Carpenter Avenue. 10 to 4pm, \$7 adults, kids under 12 free. www.GreenbergShows.com

March 28-29, 2009: Wilmington, Mass. Greenberg's Train & Toy Show, Shriners Auditorium, 99 Fordham Road. 10 to 4pm, \$7 adults, kids under 12 free. www.GreenbergShows.com

The Worcester Model Railroaders are pleased to offer a car kit decorated for their home road, the Worcester Central Lines. The 40' Boxcar is decorated in the blue and white "Serving the Heart of New England" scheme, with black ends and roof. The Branchline Yardmaster kits are available in 6 different road numbers. Unbuilt kits are \$15.00 each or 6 for \$85.00. Assembled cars are \$22 each or 6 for \$120.00. Shipping is \$5.95 for the first car and \$0.50 for each additional car. Massachusetts residents must include 5% sales tax. Send check or money order to: Club Car, c/o Joe Parker, 10 Paige Lane, Oxford, MA 01540. For more information, see www.wmrr.org or clubcars@wmrr.org.

HARTFORD NATIONAL 2009

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 Anaheim National Convention, over 70 additional registrations were taken for HN2009. The total registered as of August 18 is 304 and climbing.

If you're a layout owner, you should have already received the tentative layout tour information. Work is now underway to streamline some of the layout tours and adjust them to fit into the overall very tight convention schedule.

Volunteer help is needed at home layouts, as tour guides, at the tour desk, registration, servicing the clinics, and within the silent auction to name a few. Why not give HN 2009 one day and use the rest of the convention days for yourself? Your one volunteer day will help assure a great time

for all and make the convention a success for everybody. Our convention activities will run from 7:00 AM until 11:00 PM Monday July 6 until Thursday July 9 and fewer hours on July 5, 10 and 11. It is our intent that the long days work be split among volunteers.

We have over 1,800 NMRA members within our Region - if half of our members volunteer, then no one person will need to work more than a few hours. Over 125 Regional members have already said yes. These are the members who will be opening their layouts, or are working on the Host committee and still others are providing needed expert help. Join us at the Convention Center to allow full staffing and smooth running.

Should you want to volunteer for work at the convention or as a tour bus captain during the convention contact the "Volunteer chairman." You can e-mail Don Straub at dancingbear20@aol.com. All committee chairs and committees are listed at www.hn2009.org, the convention web site. We include e-mail addresses 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 only be as great as we in the Northeastern Region make it - please step



ABOVE: Contest Judges work hard to give each entry a fair assessment and useful feedback.

GUEST ESSAY: Whither goest the NMRA Model Contest?

The NMRA Model Contest has always been inspiring, one of the oldest functions of this organization. Many years ago, the contest was actually administered by Kalmbach in conjunction with the NMRA, and this is the forum in which John Allen first came to prominence. He won best structure award back in 1948 for his innovative engine house which featured unheard of realism and something called “weathering.” It was a sensation. Since then, the NMRA contest has set the standard for model building. But lately, the NMRA Contest has lost some of its luster in the opinion of many. Some cite the rules which require very careful and almost scientific judging standards. Others cite the application process and the multiple forms which must be filled out successfully and still others claim that there are “tricks” which seasoned contest entrants utilize to gain an advantage over their competitors. Of course, many of these points frankly are urban legend and simply not true, but what is unfortunately true is that over the years the NMRA Convention has slowly diminished in number of entries and some would argue, in overall quality.

Under the innovative leadership of our new Contest Chair, Bob Hamm, two new contests were unveiled in Anaheim to try to bring the fun back to the NMRA Contest. The direct entry People’s Choice Awards along with the Model Showcase allowed persons to enter their models for one of three different kinds of

evaluation. They can be judged using the NMRA’s point system which may qualify the models for achievement program usage. If the model receives 87 points in the judged contest, it will be qualified for an AP award.

The model can also be entered into the People’s Choice Awards where attendees of the convention will be able to vote for the best model in each category. The model can also be entered in the Model Showcase which is non-competitive, and simply allows attendees to admire and examine the talented work of their fellow modelers.

Although the NMRA has seen a decline in the number of entries, that is not true in alternative conventions such as the Narrow Gauge Convention or the Prototype Modelers Conventions. Further, we have learned from the popular vote contest at these conventions that the experienced modeler can often be as discerning a judge as the seasoned professional within the NMRA ranks. Thus, the People’s Choice Awards present a unique opportunity to test the theory that attendees at NMRA Conventions, themselves experienced modelers, are just as good as the NMRA judges at picking out a winning entry. Whether you choose to enter your model in the NMRA contest, the People’s Choice Awards contest or just the Modelers Showcase, you will be participating in a time honored event. Your will be sharing

your work with those attending the Convention and inspiring those who view your entry. More importantly, you will be demonstrating that the “model” in National Model Railroad Association does have a significant meaning. Whether for fun — for points — or just because you’re proud of your work, I urge you to enter a model in an upcoming NMRA Convention. You’ll be glad you did.

— Charlie Getz

The preceding essay was written recently by my friend Charlie Getz, NMRA National Director and well known columnist and narrow gauger. The comments are directed at the National Contest, though they also apply directly to the NER Contest as we have the same structure and have made the same changes premiered at Anaheim this summer. Most notable among these is the direct entry into the People’s Choice Awards, a popular vote contest. Entrants need only fill out a short form to tell us who you are and what the model is. And we of course continue to enjoy the Model Showcase, a non-competitive display-only event, started incidentally by the Central New York Division. We sincerely hope you participate and enjoy the full menu of choices in the contest room.

—Bob Hamm, MMR
NER and National Contest Chairman

Progress report from your NMRA Board of Directors

By Kevin Feeney

NMRA Eastern Director

I've had the pleasure of serving on the NMRA's Board of Directors since 2005. The editor of *The Coupler* asked me to write this column to not only tell you what we have been up to the last year, but to also help you understand how your BOD works.

There are nine directors elected on staggered terms from various constituencies around the world. I'm elected from the Eastern District which includes all the states on the east coast plus Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Washington, DC. Under Ohio (where the NMRA is incorporated) non-for-profit law, directors are obligated to represent the interests of the entire organization. The BOD meets twice a year and our most recent meeting was on July 11-13, preceding the 2008 Anaheim Special national convention. We have a mid-year meeting and this year it was held in January in "snowy" Atlanta. That meeting included a bus tour to our headquarters in Chattanooga and you may have seen the picture of our group published in the March issue of *Scale Rails*. Because I'm a CPA, I was selected to serve as the BOD's representative to the Budget Committee. That group will meet on Oct. 10-11 in Phoenix to prepare our 2009 budget.

For years, the NMRA's fiscal year ended on August 31st, a short time after our annual convention and the National Train Show. The work necessary to close the books for these events delayed the whole year-end process. Also, good governance would not

schedule our two biggest events (in terms of their financial impact) near end of our financial year. Accordingly, a motion I introduced was passed in 2006 to change to a calendar year basis. At the Anaheim meeting, our treasurer reported the preliminary results of the year from 9/1 to 12/31/2006 stub year, and for calendar year 2007. These results are being audited now, but your organization seems to be good financial condition. However, due to higher printing cost and postage rates, there will be small increase in the subscription fee for *Scale Rails*.

After a several years of declining membership, the trend leveled out and recently started to increase. As of the end of July, there were 19,722 members, an increase of 209 (1.06%) from July 2006. The RAILPASS program and active recruitment at the division and regional levels have brought in many new members in the last three years. We sold 121 memberships at the NTS in Anaheim, which was a record! Unfortunately, because of the average age of our members, we lose 200-300 members to mortality.

A major topic at the Anaheim BOD meeting was the annual convention itself. The attendance for Anaheim was 1,139; less than the last few years. But over 23,500 attended the National Train Show (NTS) at the end of the convention and that was better than the last few years. Since being on the BOD, I and several other directors have pushed for changes in how we hold our annual convention. Currently we're holding them in major business hotels or convention centers that are very

expensive. The convention (including the NTS) is over a weeklong and that adds to the cost to attend. We run bus tours to the layouts when some attendees clearly want self-drive tours. And each year the attendance is lower! What's wrong with this picture?

Last year, the BOD appointed a special committee, of which I was one of the members, to study this issue. The committee reported its results in Anaheim to make the convention more attractive to our members and to reduce the cost to attend. We recommended surveying the membership to find out what they want in terms of the convention. We've already surveyed the Anaheim attendees and will be conducting a survey of the membership at-large and other constituencies (such as O, S, N, Z scale groups etc.) In this light, we approved Atlanta to host the 2013 convention but at a NW suburban location.

Speaking of conventions, I've been attending the meetings of HN2009 committee for the last year and can tell you that Vin and the gang are putting together a varied and interesting program for next July. Given Hartford's almost central location in terms of the NER, I would expect to see a very good turnout there from our region. If you drive to the convention, they'll even have a special parking deal for the whole week that includes in and out privileges.

I will be attending our Empire Junction Convention in Syracuse in a few weeks and would welcome the opportunity to hear your thoughts, recommendations and concerns. ■

How our NMRA liability insurance coverage works



"Insurance" has become a big discussion topic within the NMRA lately. There seems to be as many versions of how it works and where it applies as there are people discussing it! In order to clear up any misconceptions or misunderstandings, the NMRA has posted a memo on their website, courtesy of NMRA President Mike Brestel:

We have been getting an increasing number of questions lately about our Liability Insurance... Who can use it, who it protects, when does it go into effect, etc. In order to help answer these

questions, we have just posted a new memo along with other documents to the nmra.org website. We have tried to supply plain language answers to many of the questions we've been asked.

To access all the insurance information and forms, just go to www.nmra.org and click the "insurance" link that is under the "Resources" heading on the left side of the web page. Or you can go directly to this URL:

www.nmra.org/national/insurance/insurance.html

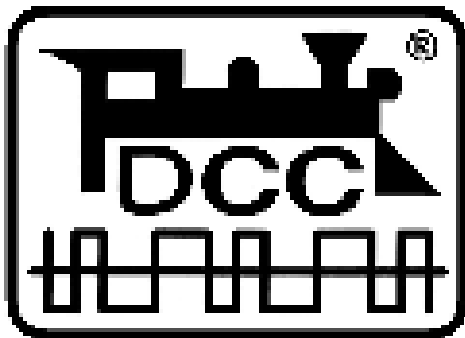
—Mike Brestel, NMRA President

NMRA triumphs in troubling DCC patent challenge

The deadline for Real Rail Effects, Ltd. (RRE) to respond to an NMRA patent challenge has passed, with no response from RRE. RRE was granted a patent by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) based upon a claim that the technology for using sound with DCC was invented by RRE. The NMRA, with the technical and financial support of a number of DCC manufacturers and hobbyists around the world, filed a challenge to the RRE patent.

The NMRA filed the challenge because we believe that the claims in the RRE patent application were not supported by the facts. The NMRA was aware that prior art and other evidence existed which negated RRE's patent.

The NMRA felt that, should it remain in force, the RRE patent posed a threat to modelers and manufacturers of DCC equipment because it would both increase the costs to modelers and unfairly restrict manufacturers who provide



decoders with sound. Therefore, the NMRA coordinated an industry- and hobby-wide effort to have the patent overturned. The NMRA submitted evidence from a number of sources raising substantial questions about the validity of the patent.

On February 11, 2008, the USPTO issued a ruling granting the NMRA's patent re-examination request. The examiner stated in the ruling that there was a substantial likelihood that a rea-

sonable examiner would consider the prior art important in determining the patentability of the application of RRE.

After the examiner at the USPTO determined that the position of the NMRA had merit and compelled a new analysis of the patent, RRE had two months to respond to the re-examination request. The deadline for a response has come and gone, and RRE made no reply. The NMRA is now very hopeful that a favorable decision will be announced and that the position of the NMRA and its supporters will be vindicated.

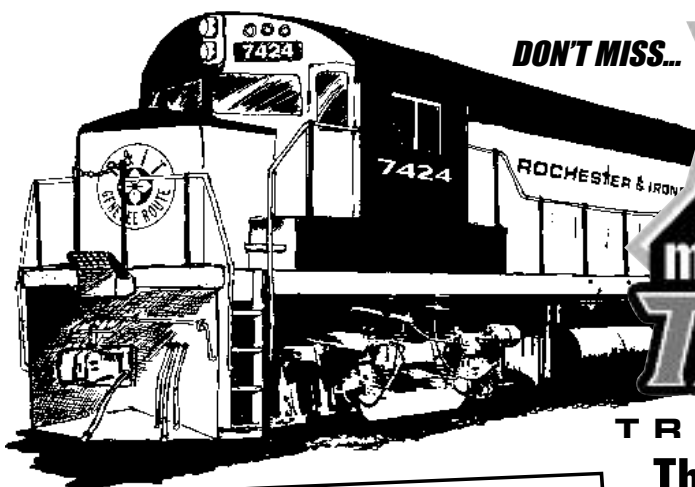
The NMRA considers this a clear triumph for the modeler and the model railroad industry. We are proud to have led the challenge team that has made this victory possible.

—Robert J. Amsler, Jr.
General Counsel,

National Model Railroad Association

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The Connecticut Convention Center will be home to the 2009 NMRA Hartford National, to be held next July 5 through 11.

HARTFORD IS NEXT!

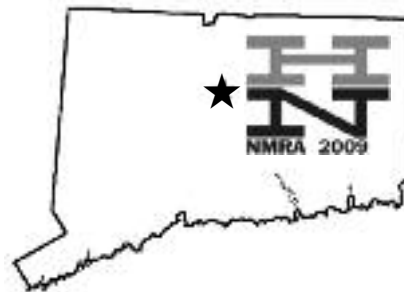
The NMRA national convention in your own backyard...

By Vin Gallogly

Convention Chairman

Many of you may have heard that our region is sponsoring a national convention, to be held in Hartford, Connecticut in July of 2009. Members of the HN2009 committee have been working on this for several years now, holding countless meetings and planning sessions with much preliminary work being accomplished. You may even have seen the pleas for volunteers, layouts, operating sessions and clinicians the committee has sent out; I hope you might be able to step up and help, if you haven't already. But what I want to tell you now is this — we are up next and it's showtime!

My name is Vin Gallogly (pronounced Gallo-gee, but Vin serves just as well and



is a whole lot easier to say). I am general chairman of next year's conclave, HN2009. I am also a trustee of our region and proprietor of the Westport Shore & Harbor Line in my basement. Mostly, I am, like you, a model railroader. It's my privilege to lead a team of talented and dedicated fellow model railroaders from throughout the Northeast. Like all great productions, there comes a time when things

move into high gear and this is it for us working on HN2009. Schedules, pricing, clinics and tours all need to be locked down in the next two months. Advance publicity is being produced, layouts photographed, articles written — you will start seeing it next month in our wonderful magazine, *Scale Rails*. Together we have focused for more than four years now on the single goal of bringing all who attend a spectacular convention next July, the kind of convention that makes memories. This year is when all of our planning and hard work will pay off and I want to share with you what we have been working on.

Let's start, as any convention does, with our venue, Hartford, Connecticut. A vibrant city in its own right, it is also geographically centered, putting so many of the Northeast's attractive destinations—

from the urban sophistication of New York City and Boston to the legendary lure of the New England coast and countryside—within easy reach. Still, we're convening in Hartford principally to celebrate the hobby of model railroading, and our headquarters will be the beautiful Connecticut Convention Center and the adjacent Hartford Marriott Downtown. Both overlooking the Connecticut River, they provide all the facilities needed for a convenient, comfortable, first-class convention experience.

Seven of the Convention Center's fourteen fully appointed meeting rooms, for example, will be devoted to rail clinics. To maximize their effectiveness and minimize your schlep, we plan to schedule clinic sequences, three to six of them in a row, all in the same room, all focused on the same theme. Those themes include specific railroads, motive power, industries served by rail, layout design, railroad operations and how they translate to operating layouts, and DCC user forums. As an example let me mention The New Haven (anybody in the NER every heard of that railroad?!) - Its sessions will run the gamut of prototype photo tours, kitbashing, modeling the road in HO and in N scales, operational aspects, motive power over the years and so forth.

When we leave the Center's comfortable confines we'll travel by luxury motor

coach or van. Among the trips sure to fill up fast are the layout tours, particularly the day-long excursions we plan to offer to legendary roads in and around Boston and Albany and the visits to some of Model Railroader's Great Model Railroads. We also expect to offer some ticketed self-drive layout tours. With some 70 layouts throwing open their doors to visiting conventioners, you can expect to see more than two dozen that you've come to know on glossy magazine pages and discover many more that are qualified to leap into that national spotlight.

Nothing says railroading, of course, quite so much as riding the rails. So we plan a prototype rail trip each day, Monday through Thursday and again on Saturday, traveling over storied trackage aboard the Providence & Worcester, Amtrak Acela (at speeds up to 150 miles per hour), Central New England Railroad, Naugatuck Railroad and Essex Steam Train dinner train (twice).

Those same luxury motor coaches carrying conventioners to rail-oriented destinations will also transport their traveling companions to sites of more-general interest. Tours will leave from the Convention Center, with visits planned to the Mystic Aquarium, Mystic Seaport and the Groton submarine base, home of the USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear-powered

vessel. New York City's Broadway shows will be available on "matinee Wednesday" by bus from Hartford. Tours to historic buildings in and around Hartford will include Mark Twain's home and the Goodspeed Opera house.

For all that running around—and, given everything this area has to offer, it's both understandable and expected—the center of HN2009 activity remains firmly based in the Convention Center and Marriott. You'll find enough activity to fill a week without ever boarding a bus. Beyond that daunting schedule of clinics (no conventioner, no matter how dedicated, could take in all that we'll offer) consider the special-interest groups. Both the Operations and Layout Design SIGs have plans under way, including having the Operations Road Show's Wabash layout on site for operations every day of the convention. For the computer fan, the Java Model Railroad Interface user group is expected. The Rail Marine and other groups have been invited to participate, and we're open to more SIGs. Space and clinic rooms can be made available. If your group hasn't heard from us, please let us know.

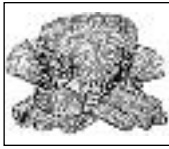
You'll wake each day to an optional grab-and-go breakfast and guest speaker before a full day of activities leaves you ready in the evening to swap tales with fellow model railroaders from across this land and beyond our shores. Veterans of past national conventions know the special camaraderie that builds through a week-long convention; for those who have never enjoyed the experience, HN2009 promises to be an excellent place to start.

By week's end you'll be ready for the National Train Show, sprawling across 141,000 square feet of exhibition space in the Convention Center. Showcasing high-quality operating layouts and featuring national and regional manufacturers and vendors, the show will have private openings for the HN2009 attendees and their families before it opens to the public.

I hope you find all of the above exciting, since we certainly do. If you have any suggestions or can help in anyway, now is the time to step up. As we enter this critical phase in our production of our group's national event, we need every NER member who can help to do so. Contact me at railvin@charter.net or (203) 268-0437 if you can spare us some help. I would also like to extend a personal invitation to all of you to attend – it's going to be a GREAT show! ■



The fishing is so good below the dam that locals don't even notice the steam engine crossing upriver on Jack Ellwood's beautiful HO scale layout. This layout and many others await National Convention attendees. PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT



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



I hope that you have been busy working on your model railroad projects. While you enjoy the world's greatest hobby, don't forget to take a look at the current series running

in the NMRA's national publication, *Scale Rails*. Each month, Master Model Railroaders review the requirements for one of the Achievement Program Certificates. The series started in January and will run throughout 2008. It will cover all eleven AP certificates as well as Master Model Railroad. The articles published to date have been well written and informative. They have included pictures of the models that these MMR's have completed to earn their AP certificates. If you have questions not addressed in the articles, be sure to contact the NER AP Staff. These volunteers are listed at the front of each issue of the NER *Coupler*

Since my last AP Round Up, there have been many great models completed by your NER friends. To be exact, twenty six Merit Awards were issued. At least one Merit Award was issued in each of the AP Judging categories. Here is a list of the latest Merit Award winners. For Motive Power, **Thomas Piccirillo** earned three Merit Awards for his O scale models: traction crane, traction line car and steeple cab electric. For Cars, **Paul Allard** earned two for his set of CNR single sheathed box cars, **Steve Perry** earned two for his CB&L flat car and his NKP tool car and Gail Picket earned two for a RB hopper car and a RB cement car. For Structures, **Glenn Glasstetter** earned one for his model of Andy's house, **Dominic**

Bourgeois earned two for his Cobleskill Station and his Cobleskill Coal Co., **Frank Lamanto** earned one for his Bascule Bridge, **Andy Wasowicz** earned one for his freight station and **Bruce DeYoung** earned six for Devin Dill Picket Plant, three attached sheds, Kersyen & Mace Supply Co, a two story storage building, a King Post bridge and Hap Hazard's Hardware. Scenery Merit Awards were earned by: **David Martini**, **Bruce DeYoung**, **Bernard Messenger**, **Andy Clermont** and **Kevin Surman**. A Prototype Modeler Merit Award was earned by **Andy Clermont**.

Congratulations go out to all for their outstanding modeling efforts and for sharing their work with others.

Five Golden Spike Awards were earned. The recipients were **Kevin Surman**, **Bruce DeYoung**, **Dr. George Elkowitz**, **Thomas Piccirillo** and **Frank Russo**. Each of these NMRA members has demonstrated proficiency in building rolling stock, structures, scenery and track- age plus addressing electrical controls. Are you ready for a Golden Spike Award? To earn the award, the layout does not need to be finished. It just needs to address each of these five key elements.

While no NER members have earned the Civil Engineering AP Certificate, they did address the other ten categories. The Motive Power certificate was earned by **Thomas Piccirillo**. A Car certificate was earned by **Andy Clermont**. A Scenery certificate was earned by **Bruce DeYoung**. Five NER members earned the Scenery certificate. They are **David Martini**, **Bruce DeYoung**, **Bernard Messenger**, **Andy Clermont** and **Kevin Surman**. The Prototype Modeler certificate was earned

by **Andy Clermont**. Five NER members earned the Electrical certificate. They are **Richard Lautenslager**, **Kevin Surman**, **Vincent Gallogly**, **Howard Dwyer** and **Don Irace**. Four NER members earned the Chief Dispatcher certificate. They are: **Edward O'Rourke**, **David Metal**, **Richard Martini** and **Thomas Piccirillo**. The Official certificate was earned by **Vincent Gallogly**. The Volunteer certificate was earned by: **Chris Carfaro**, **Roger Oliver**, **Chuck Diljak** and **Vincent Gallogly**. The Author certificate was earned by both **Thomas Piccirillo** and **Ed Olszewski**. No NER members earned the Achievement Program's highest award, Master Model Railroader but given this long list of accomplishments I can see a new MMR in our company in the not too distant future.

You may have noticed that many members have earned multiple certificates and awards. They have been enjoying their hobby while documenting their work for the Achievement Program. I am sure that you have been working hard on your model railroad projects. Why not take a few minutes to consider participating in the NMRA Achievement Program? You have already taken the first step by being an NMRA member. Talk to your local AP Staff member about how to get started. If you know any of the modelers listed above, ask them how they got started in the AP. Ask to see their work. One of the great benefits of the model railroading hobby is that folks like to talk about their projects and share them with others. It's a great way to see some outstanding work while increasing your personal knowledge. Join in and get a stronger return on your NMRA Membership. ■



VISIT ONLINE FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS

www.nernmra.org

BY FRANKLIN LANG Wordsmith

New England's Little Rhody Division



This issue we take a closer look at the Little Rhody Division in Rhode Island, though there is nothing “little” about them. Encompassing the state of Rhode Island as well as Bristol County in Massachusetts, it is very active in the hobby beyond just meetings, clinics and the like. It is 46 years new with about 75 members and like other divisions in the country, has a hard core of 30 or so who fill a calendar of events throughout the year.

They hold monthly meetings between September and June with speakers, clinics and layout visits. They also have not just one, but two modular layouts of considerable size which appear at three or four events each year, like the recently completed O Scale National Convention in Worcester. The Rhode Island Central is a 40' long HO layout and the Narragansett Bay Railway & Navigation Co. is On30 depicting a fictional narrow gauge railroad in south eastern New England in the 1930-40's. If you look at the pictures, both layouts look quite real and not fictional as a result of the workmanship the members of Little Rhody put into each. Once a year the Division rents a hall, sets up both layouts and invites the public to see “the trains run.” I thought to myself, What a great way to promote the hobby. My hats off to all members who participate! Might this be an idea for other divisions?

A hard core of members even extends their love of the hobby in the “off” months and get together during the summer, like the picnic they recently held at a nearby CSX mainline. As one member said, “they’re a great bunch of guys.”

If anyone is interested in seeing these modular layouts make note of the Greater Rhode Island Model Train Show on October 18-19, 2008. It is sponsored by the Little Rhody Division, and also features dealer tables and the HO Coastal Mountain Railroad. It’s held at the Smithfield Elk Lodge, 326 Farum Pike in Smithfield, RI.



Members of Little Rhody Division are very active in our region, displaying the HO scale Rhode Island Central and the On30 Narragansett Bay Railway & Navigation Co. at various local train shows and events. Members remain active in the “off-months” thanks to social events encouraged by the Division throughout the year.



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Henry Pierce, Superintendent - jhp341@cox.net
www.trainweb.org/lrdivision/



Occasional news and photos of layout construction progress, showcasing the work of NER members as they go about building their empires—large or small.

BY FRANKLIN LANG Wordsmith

CHARLESTOWN & PATTIVILLE



Charlie Bettinger of Vernon, CT moved from HO to S scale in 1988 and is on his third iteration of the Charlestown & Pattiville Railroad. After Charlie retired, he and his wife decided to sell their house and move into a condo taking down the first C&P and rebuilding it into a modular layout to accommodate condo living. They both found condo living

not to their liking and moved layout and all into a new home with a basement where the C&P could bloom into a full fledged S scale empire. The current layout is in the early stages of construction in a 24x16 space where Charlie is both hooking up the existing modules and building new right of ways for a bigger and better C&P.

I asked Charlie where the name C&P came from. Charlestown is for Charlie, but the Pattiville and other towns on his layout are for the other women in his life. Pattiville was named after his first wife, while the town of Lynnville is named for his second wife Lynn and Jennifer Junction for his daughter. The C&P, although a continuous-running design, is mainly a switching layout—which is what Charlie likes most about model railroading. He has a switcher in each town and has trains originating at all points on the layout. He also favors express reefers and milk cars and has, for example, a loco and caboose go from town to town for local pick up of farmer's canned milk for processing at the main dairy on the C&P Railroad.

Although the layout is freelance by design, he has NH, B&M and CV power handle interchange traffic to points beyond the C&P. As part of his freelance thinking, Charlie says his time frame for equipment is between 1937 and 1968, thereby giving him a wide choice of steam and diesel to operate. He uses Lenz DCC, has sound in a number of engines and because he is in S scale, his steamers generate their own smoke when the fireman stokes the coals.

Charlie belongs to the National S Scalers, the NMRA, and was a past officer of the NER. and participates in a round robin S scalers group of 20 members. He is working hard to have full operation by next July when the NMRA Hartford National 2009 comes to Hartford, CT where his layout will be open for visitors and for the OPSIG. Seeing all this in S scale is a treat to look forward to. ■



Scenes from Charlie Bettinger's interesting S scale Charlestown & Pattiville Railroad. Charlie's layout will be open for the HN2009 convention next July. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

MADE IN THE NER: Models by Ed Fulasz

By Barry Abisch

Metro North Division

A funny thing happened to Ed Fulasz on the way to his model railroad. Contemplating a home layout, Fulasz ordered a structure kit from South River Modelworks. When the kit arrived he opened the box, saw what was inside and said to himself “I can do this.”

He could. He did. He does.

Operating as Models by Ed Fulasz, he designs and makes craftsman kits for other model railroaders. Like the South River kit that first caught his attention, Fulasz models are made with Hydrocal® castings. Many modelers-turned-manufacturers make laser cut kits, but Fulasz argues for the superiority of Hydrocal. “You can’t get any more detail than casting,” he says. “And Hydrocal takes paint very nicely.”

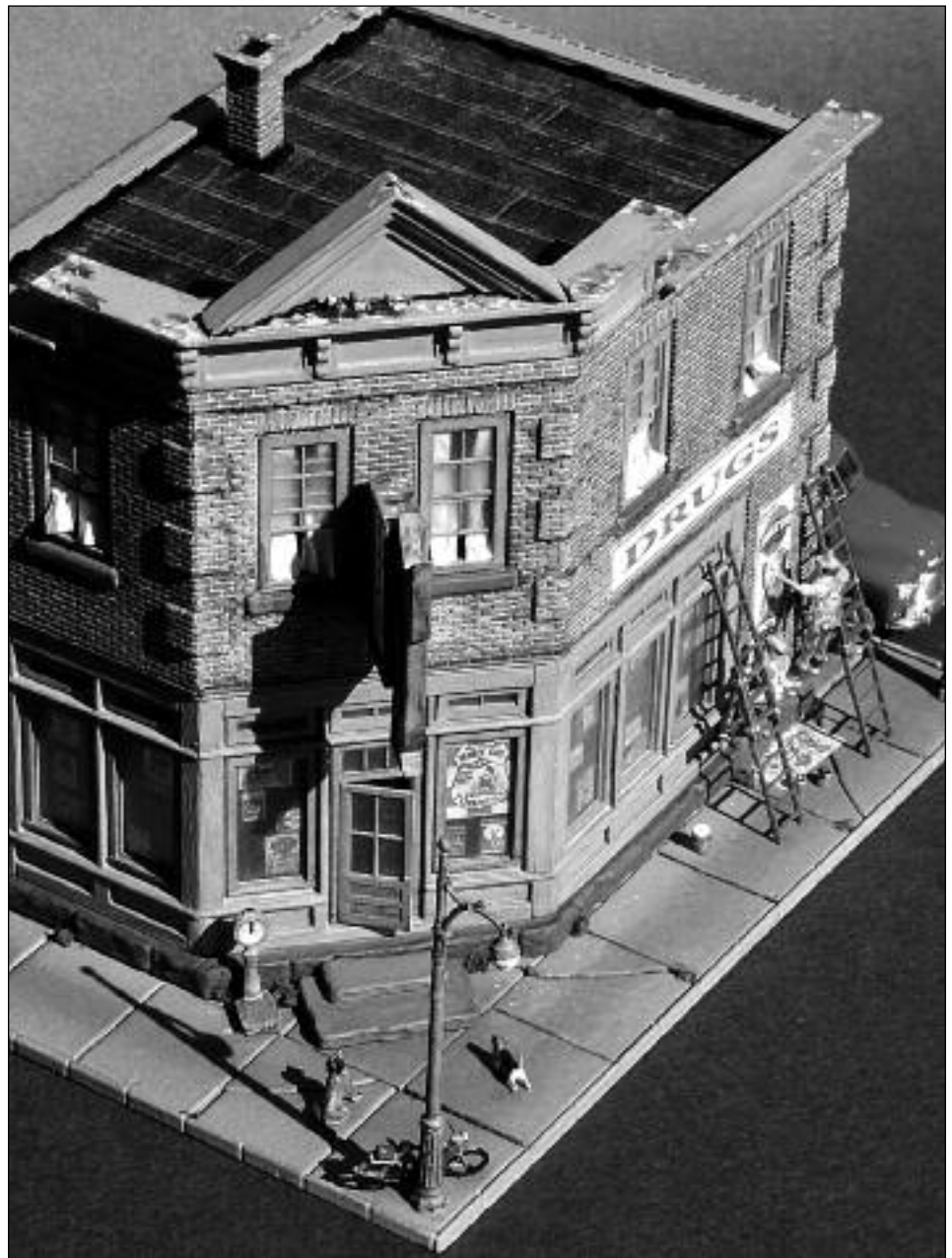
But making a cast kit for sale also takes a lot of time.

The first step is to find a subject. Most of his designs are freelanced, although they are based on structures Fulasz finds in his travels. “I take bits and pieces of parts that I like,” he said, “so most of my buildings are make believe.” His designs generally date from the steam era.

Fulasz then scratch builds a master of the model using styrene. He uses room-temperature vulcanizing rubber to make molds from the styrene prototype. When the molds have cured, he does a first Hydrocal pour. After the Hydrocal sets, the detail work begins.

Fulasz is especially proud of his brickwork. The bricks found in plastic or laser cut kits are too perfect, he says, and lack a prototypical look. Fulasz carves bricks into the Hydrocal using an Xacto® knife. While he’s careful to make sure all bricks are exactly the same, scale size – he builds a jig for that purpose – the knife blade makes tiny dings and tears around the edges of each brick, producing a much more realistic outline.

It is not a quick process. Carving the bricks into a single wall takes about eight hours. Fulasz worries not only about keeping the sizes of each brick uniform, but also checks the alignment at corners and to make certain the bricks land correctly



Wow, is it real, or is it a model? Exceptional brick work is the hallmark of an Ed Fulasz craftsman kit, cast in Hydrocal. The level of detail is simply outstanding. PHOTO COURTESY ED FULASZ

around windows and doors. When he’s satisfied with the first-generation castings, he gets out the two-part rubber and prepares his production molds. He’s honed his production techniques to ensure that there are no bubbles or voids in the castings.

“It takes about three months to make a model,” Fulasz says. Then comes a three-

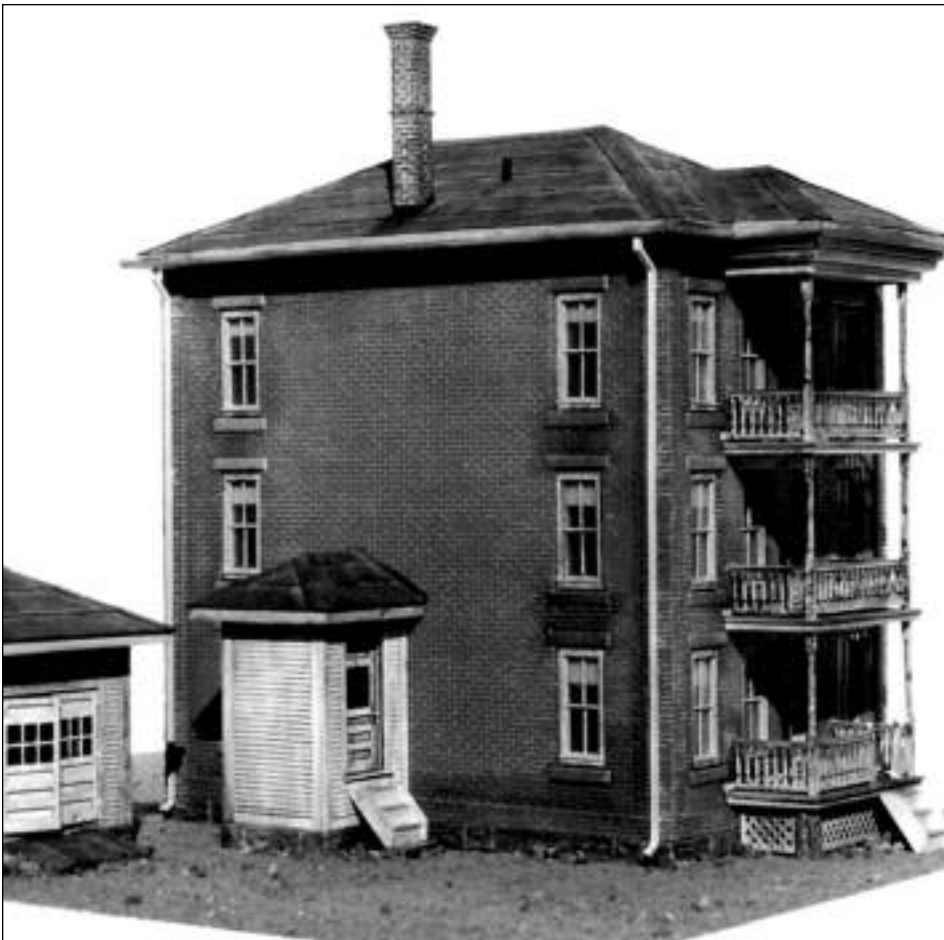
month production run. Fulasz typically produces two kits a year. Since he started his business in 1997, he has produced 15 kits. All of them are available. Most sell for \$59, but the prices range from \$29 for the smallest kit to \$79 for the most elaborate. Some include multiple buildings.

In addition to the cast walls, his kits include necessary strip wood, cardstock, roofing materials, detail parts and color decals appropriate to each particular model. Doors and windows also are included. “I buy windows

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Kit No. 5 is a typical three-story brick tenement with no specific prototype, yet could easily fit a range of locales and eras. PHOTO COURTESY ED FULASZ

from Tichy by the thousands,” Fulasz said.

Fulasz said the instructions included with his kits – along with color photos to guide modelers – are not as extensive as

the manuals produced by some manufacturers. He recalls a 100-page manual included with a South River kit. “I didn’t want to do that,” he said. “I make it short

and sweet.” What Fulasz does provide is his telephone number. “I’m available 24-7,” he said. “Call me and I’m more than happy to tell you what to do and how to do it. I enjoy talking to my customers.”

Fulasz said the time it takes to assemble one of his kits depends on the design. Painting is the most time-consuming step. Although Hydrocal is easy to paint, several coats usually are required and the paint must dry between coats.

Fulasz makes his kits only in HO scale. When he started his business, he had requests for N scale models. How, he said, O scale comes in second, behind HO. But Fulasz has no plans to scale up his kits. “They would weigh a ton and probably break in shipping,” he said.

Fulasz, whose home is in Stirling, Conn, came to the craftsman kit business by inclination and by experience.

“Art has always been my hobby,” he said. “I love creating things. I’ve been doing it since I was a little kid.” Fulasz recalled going to the supermarket with his mother, coming home with a 5 cent tube of glue and a box of toothpicks, then sitting down to build elaborate wooden bridges.

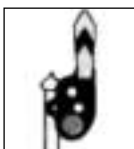
In the years since those toothpick constructions – Fulasz is 62 – he has demonstrated his craftsmanship in many ways. He has built several houses in 1:1 scale. He prefers building models. Less heavy lifting, “and no ladders,” he said. Fulasz also has been a furniture making, working in the Queen Anne style. For a time, he even worked as a Christmas tree decorator, preparing trees for department stores including Macy’s and Neiman-Marcus and once doing the White House tree, during the Nixon administration.

But now, the kit business is his full time employment. And there is only one downside to that. “I started all this because I wanted a layout,” he said. “Now I just don’t have the time.” ■

MEET ED FULASZ

You can meet Ed Fulasz and see some of his kits at the Craftsman Structure Show in Mansfield, Mass. Nov. 13-14. The show, now in its second year, includes clinics, demonstrations and exhibits by manufacturers of craftsman kits. More than 30 kit-makers have signed up to participate. For more about the show, visit the Web site at www.craftsmanstructureshow.com.

NER



New Members

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

COMPILED BY NER Office Manager

New Members as of 8/26/08

Ernest Johansen Bridgewater, MA
Alexander Buko Worcester, MA
Jospeh Dumas Hopkinton, MA
James Dumas Hopkinton, MA
Chester Fisk Franklin, MA
Jack Foley Scituate, MA

Franklin Steen Brookline, MA
Gregory Wemyss Rockport, MA
David Ferrari Whippany, NJ
David Pauer Chatham, NJ
Lewis Varady Elizabeth, NJ
Scott Van Epps Rensselaer, NY
John Roon Pompton Lake, NJ
Steven Woodward Great Meadow, NJ

Robert Cronin Granby, CT
Doyle William Gansevoort, NY
Robert Verkuyl New Hartford, NY
George Busler Westhampton, NY
Scott Van Epps Rensselaer, NY
Francis Menair Portland, ME
Stanley Bagdon Williston, VT



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

Last Call for Empire Junction!

Late-breaking updates on our NER 2008 Fall Convention

By Jim Heidt

EJ '08 General Chairman

Well, modelers, this is it! Our last scheduled update of the highlights and attractions for Empire Junction '08, the 2008 Northeastern Region NMRA Fall convention being held at Syracuse, NY on September 11-14, 2008. All aboard for these critical updates!

1. Change of Friday Prototype Tour

We had planned and scheduled a tour of Crucible Steel, but that option has been eliminated by the company, so we are pleased to substitute the Hanson Quarry at Jamesville. Please see the side bar about this exciting company prepared by Ed Olszewski, Prototype Activities Chairman. Cost is still \$20 per person.

2. Reserve your Hotel Room NOW!

As of August 1, 2008, EJ'08 convention hotel registrations are filling in nicely within the contracted block of rooms for the extended weekend of September 11-14. However, two recently announced items might cause Syracuse-area motel/hotel rooms to become scarce, at best:

(1) Syracuse University will host Penn State at the Carrier Dome for football on Saturday, 9/13, for the first SU/Penn State game at Syracuse in many years, renewing a huge traditional rivalry; and

(2) "The Express", a biographical movie about the late Ernie Davis, the first black Heisman Trophy winner, will be premiered in downtown Syracuse at the Landmark that weekend as well, with many former SU football greats, Hollywood types, and other

non-NER members grabbing hotel rooms.

Again, as of 8/1, the number of Holiday Inn sleeping rooms still available outside of our block (of 100 for each night) is only 33 for Friday night and 32 for Saturday night. By agreement with the hotel, the NER's block at the Holiday Inn ends on August 12. With the release of unsold rooms within our block and the potential rush, you may not get a room in the hotel or anyplace nearby. If you have not reserved your Holiday Inn room yet, we most strongly recommend that you do so immediately. Call (315) 457-1122 to reserve directly with the hotel, or log on through the link found at www.empirejunction.org. If you call, be sure to say you want the "National Model Railroad Association block." Do it now, or risk losing out.



A tour of Hanson Quarry has been added to the schedule, replacing the Crucible Steel option.

3. Latest EJ'08 News Up-Dates:

A. Modeling with the Masters - is booked!
As of 7/28, we have 20 participants registered... but don't forget that we will hold the next 10 on "stand-by." So, if you are still interested, we encourage you to register right away with John Campbell and be ready to go on short notice if you get reached.

B. Map Books - have been printed, with an initial batch shipped to the NER Registrar, John Campbell. If you have registered and pre-paid to receive the map book early, check your mailbox!

C. Rail Clinics - are firming up right now. Clinicians, subject matter, days/times/locations of presentation will all be soon itemized on our convention website: www.empirejunction.org.

D. "Dispatcher's Desk" - will be our "nerve center," to be located in the Hospitality Room at the combined Boardroom 4/Room 139 complex. Enter this phone number and

save it in your cell phone: (315) 457-1122, and ask for extension 7139. That will be your direct answer line for all things EJ'08 during the convention.

E. OPSIG - is expanding! We have received word that there are two additional operator spots for each of the two sessions at the Mohawk Valley Southern (registration items 151 and 155). Contact John Campbell for more information and availability. Also, OPSIG local chair Dave Martini reports that, with the blessing of NER OPSIG chair Al Oneto and the local EJ'08 committee, appropriate paperwork and documentation will be sent to OPSIG registered participants by email within days... all so that you can get oriented and prepared in advance to enjoy your OPSIG sessions with us.

F. Saturday Night - will be full and festive! Besides the traditional opening social hour, we'll enjoy a "free-form" meal featuring the carving stations that we previously reported. However, in addition to the after-meal enjoyment provided by Lou Sassi's remarks, we'll also have a full video pres-

entation of all contest award entries while the awards themselves are presented.

G. Check the website - for all other late-breaking developments! Before convention, check the site for photos of (1) all raffle donation prizes and credits to donors, (2) more photos of layouts on tour, and (3) more details as they emerge. The website, again, is www.empirejunction.org.

Well, that's it for now! We hope you all will consider joining us at Empire Junction '08 and, if you have any questions or comments while visiting with us, look for the ball caps with "EJ08" for a convention staff member. Have a safe trip, and see you September 11-14, 2008 in Syracuse!

EJ'08

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