
THE COUPLER

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION • NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

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ALL ABOARD FOR HARTFORD! A pair of new EMD F units eases around the blind curve at Charlemont before crossing the Deerfield River on Bill Duffe's Boston & Maine Division of the LKJ&W Railroad. This beautiful layout will be open for tours and operations during the upcoming Hartford National 2009 NMRA Convention, coming to the NER this July! PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT

WAYBILLS AND MANIFEST

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www.nernmra.org

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SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR COUPLER #235 IS MAY 15

We want to hear from you—Contact Editor Phil Monat at phil@philmonat.com



BY KEN MAY NER President



The big event in the life of the NER this year will be hosting the 2009 NMRA National Convention this July. The "Hartford National" will be the first national convention held within

the boundaries of the NER since 1986. This year I believe we have a program that is the very best that the NER and Southern New England can put together, and you are in the drivers seat to take advantage of a jam-packed week of model railroading activities. Let me point out some of the highlights of our program for you:

Rail Tours: We will have at least one rail tour each day. Included in this program will be a ride on the freight-only Providence & Worcester, a ride on Amtrak's Acela from Boston to Providence, the Essex Dinner Train pulled by steam, the Central of New England Railroad from Hartford to Windsor Locks, visits to the Danbury Railroad Museum and the Shore Line Trolley Museum, and a tour of historic New England Railroad Stations.

Layout Tours: We will have at least three layout tours on Monday thru Thursday. There is a great mix of tours, from local half-day tours to all day tours to Boston North (George Sellios) and the Albany area. There will even be some car-pool tours to layouts where capacity is extremely limited. In total there are about 60+ layouts open.

Clinic Program: We believe that our clinic program will be second to none in the last fifteen years of National Conventions. At this time we have 130 confirmed presenters who will be giving nearly 200 individual clinic presentations. Our clinic chairman has personally viewed three-quarters of these clinics over the last three years to ensure top-level material and presentation. Currently posted on our website (www.hn2009.org) is a listing of the names of the confirmed clinicians. We hope to add clinic titles to the list by March 1, and a preliminary clinic schedule by April 1.

Our facility: The Connecticut Convention Center was opened for business in June 2005. It is a well-designed facility, with a large ballroom in the center that can be sub-divided and seven function rooms along either side of the building. One side of the building will be devoted to rail clinics, and the other side of the building devoted to the remaining activities. One level below is the show floor of 140,000 square feet. I expect the show floor to be packed, as we have many excellent modular layouts in New England.

Our Hotels: The Convention Hotel is the Hartford Marriott. This hotel is about 50 feet across the plaza from the doors of the Convention Center. If you have mobility issues, then you should try to get a room in the Hartford Marriott. Due to limited rooms at the Marriott, however, we have space booked at two additional hotels - the Crowne Plaza (four blocks away) and the Sheraton (located just across the river in East Hartford. There will be transportation from these hotels to the Convention Center in the mornings and evenings.

Food: We are planning to hold breakfasts and lunches Monday through Thursday in the Convention Center. There will be a kiosk with pre-prepared food that you can purchase and take into the eating area. Each morning at the conclusion of breakfast we plan to have a ten minute presentation on a rail related subject to get you going in the morning. This will be completed with time to spare to make tour departures or clinic presentations. For lunch, the kiosk will offer luncheon items. This time the theme will be 'Lunch with a Clinician'. Clinicians will be encouraged to sit at a table, and you may join them for lunch and conversation. Dinners will be open for your choice. The Hartford visitors bureau will provide a dining guide with map showing the free 'Star Shuttle' bus route around downtown Hartford. This provides easy and free transportation to the many dining options in downtown Hartford.

General Interest: In the greater Hartford area we have many attractions

that are unique to our area of the country. We will have bus tours to Old Sturbridge Village, Mystic Aquarium and Institute for Exploration, Mystic Seaport, and the Submarine Museum and USS Nautilus. We will have many other attractions that will be suggested as an "on your own" tour. Within the convention center we will have a program of activities designed to keep our spouses active and involved.

SIG Activities: There will be a large presence of the LDSIG and OPSIG, and well as Rail/Marine SIG. OPSIG in particular will be featuring their Wabash modular layout that operates under Timetable and Train Order (TT/TO) rules. There will be operations sessions for all who are interested, some as far away as Albany. LDSIG will be having clinic programs on Tuesday and Thursday as well as their traditional banquet.

How can you make the convention more affordable? Well, driving should be one of the more cost effective means of coming to Hartford, especially since the price of gas is down. Why not join up with one, two or three of your friends; car-pooling makes the trip go faster, and sharing a hotel room can significantly reduce the overall price of your convention experience. The Crowne Plaza hotel has the lowest room cost and parking is \$2 per day (limited capacity). The Star Shuttle has a stop near the Crowne Plaza, which provides another way to get to the Convention Center.

If your reason for never having attended a national convention has been one of cost, the Hartford National will be as inexpensive as any recent convention. We feel we will provide more "bang for the buck" than any national convention held in the last five years or more. Even if you cannot participate for the entire week, plan to come to Hartford for a few days and enjoy the jam-packed program for a few days. Please stop by and say "Hi" if you do. See you there!

—Ken May,
NER President

For full convention details, please visit our web site, www.hn2009.org



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

September 9-12, 2010: 2010 NER Convention in Burlington, Vermont. This will be the first NER regional convention in Vermont in over ten years – don't miss it! See announcement elsewhere in this issue. Full details to follow soon, please visit: www.greenmountainnmra.com.

GARDEN STATE DIVISION

April 19, 2009: Union, NJ. Garden State Division NMRA Spring Meet, starting at 12:00 noon at The Model Railroad Club, 295 Jefferson Ave., Union, NJ 07083. Clinics, White Elephant Table, Model Judging, Lunch Donation: \$5.00. Additional information at www.trainweb.org/nergds Contact: Andrew Brusgard (908) 686-4856 or email ajb1102@comcast.net.

SEACOAST DIVISION

April 11, 2009: Train Show Sanford, ME. 10AM to 3PM

April 16, 2009: Great Falls Model Railroad Club meeting, 7 PM. 144 Mill Street, Auburn, ME 04210. Phone 207-933-2477 tpking@roadrunner.com.

April 25, 2009: Spring Train Show, Mount Ararat High School, 73 Eagles Way, Topsham, ME. 10am to 3 PM.

May 16, 2009: Seacoast Division Quarterly Meeting, Rochester, NH. 10am to 2pm, Rochester Community Center, 150 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH 03867. Members are encouraged to bring items for show-and-tell. The program consists of how-to's, show-and-tell and a short business meeting.

March 4-April 29, 2009: The Introduction to Model Railroading course at Timberlane Regional High School, Plaistow, NH will run from March 4 to April 24, 2009. This eight-week course will include the basics of the hobby and is presented by several Division members. Registration is with the school. Contact Assist. Principle Robert Dawson at Robert.Dawson@timberlane.net.

METRO NORTH DIVISION

March 21, 2009: Division Meeting at Trumbull, CT. Two clinics, display your new acquisitions and three layouts are in store for attendees on March 21. The Trumbull Library located at 33 Quality Street, Trumbull, CT. This is just off Main Street (Route 111) in the center of Trumbull and adjacent to Town Hall. Take exit 48 on the Merritt Parkway and drive north approximately two miles, turn right onto Quality Street, just after Stop & Shop. The library is the second red brick building on the left.

May 16th, 2009: Division Meeting at Danbury Rail Museum, Danbury, CT. In addition to clinics and layout visits, a visit to the Danbury Rail Museum (DRM) will provide modelers with a number of different attractions. The DRM is housed in a former New Haven station from 1903. It was beautifully restored to its original appearance in 1994. It appeared in the Hitchcock movie "Strangers on a Train." The DRM's grounds cover six acres of former NH yards on which there is a sizeable collection of vintage locomotives and both passenger and freight cars. Some of these are have been restored and some are operational. There are active tracks which surround the museum are used by Metro-North for commuter trains between Danbury and Norwalk and New York City. The station houses four layouts in N, HO, O and G. There is also a railroad oriented gift shop. Quite plainly, there is a lot here to see and enjoy. In addition, you can experience the golden age of railroading. The DRM will provide rides on vintage locomotives, passenger cars, Budd Cars, and cabooses. The DRM has the only operating turntable in Connecticut and it will be demonstrated.

NUTMEG DIVISION

Welcome the new Division Superintendent Seeley Kellogg, at seeleyk@comcast.net. You can see lots about the Nutmeg and Seeley's plans for it in this issue's Division Spotlight. But one of the first things is that Seeley asks that you contact him with your email and confirm the Division's contact info for it's membership is correct. Seeley is trying to re-invigorate the Division's activities and being able to get in touch with all of you would be the first step. Contact Seeley for the next meeting date and location.

May 8th, 2009: Division Meeting at Wethersfield Police Station Community Room, 7:00pm. Agenda TBA, contact Seeley Kellogg at seeleyk@comcast.net.

HUB DIVISION

March 28-29, 2009: HUB Modular Railroad display at the Greenberg Show, Shriner's Auditorium, Wilmington, MA

April 17, 2009: Annual HUB Meeting, 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA. HUB Railfun will be held immediately following the annual meeting. Topic: Weathering Rolling Stock by Rudy Slovacek

May 15, 2009: HUB Railfun Meeting 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA. Topic: Surprise Clinic by The Muster Guest .

June 19, 2009: HUB Railfun Meeting 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, Weston, MA. Topic: To be determined.

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION

April 11, 2009: Division Spring Meet at St. David's Lutheran Church ,20 Clark Blvd., Massapequa Park, NY, 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Modeling Clinics, Model Contest, NMRA Merit Award Judging, White Elephant Table, and swearing in of new officers and directors. \$2.00 for NMRA/STD Members. Others \$3.00. For further information contact: John Mac Gown (516)285-0876 or e-mail: burljohn@verizon.net

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION

No Activity

HUDSON BERKSHIRE DIVISION

No Activity

HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION

No Activity

CENTRAL NEW YORK DIVISION

March 29, 2009: (10 AM-5 PM) - Mini Layout Tour and CNY Large Scale Railway Society at Driver's Village. This meeting is planned to provide a day full of modeling. Things get started at 10 AM when we meet and take a mini layout tour of 4-6 home lay-

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★ NOTICE ★ NMRA ELECTIONS BALLOT ★ NOTICE ★

TO ALL NMRA MEMBERS:

Due to a printer's error, the ballot accompanying the March *Scale Rails* is invalid. Headquarters will be mailing a new ballot to all members at the printer's expense. **Please do not use the magazine ballot.** We are sorry for the inconvenience and confusion caused by this situation.

—Jan Wescott, Chair
NMRA Member Services

—Gerry Leone, MMR, Deputy Chair
NMRA Member Services

outs in the area. We will visit a selection of layouts from the Empire Junction convention map book section "A". We end up at the CNY Large Scale groups' layout in Drivers Village. After enjoying the G-Scale layout there will be a clinic on modeling the DL&W Syracuse and Utica Branch.

May 3, 2009: Bus Trip To Scranton, PA. We are planning a bus trip to Scranton, PA to visit the Steamtown National Historic Site and the Lackawanna Coal Mine. Plans for this trip are still being worked on. What we can tell you is we will leave Syracuse Sunday morning arriving at Steamtown in Scranton about 10 AM where you will enjoy the exhibits and have an opportunity to ride a short excursion train. Don't forget your camera because you will be able to wander around the extensive equipment collection in the yard getting ideas to detail and weather your models. If you would rather go shopping, The Mall at Steamtown is next door to Steamtown where you can shop in many brand name stores. We leave Steamtown around 2:30 PM and travel to the Lackawanna Coal Mine where you will descend to the bottom of the main shaft

for a walking tour of an anthracite coal mine. Plan to be back in Syracuse around 6:00 PM.

June 7, 2009: Mini Layout Tour and Mike Shanahan's PRR based layout. Our second mini layout tour will be held on June 7th. The tour of map book section "B" begins at 10 AM. We will end up at Mike Shanahan's home to view the changes he has made to his fabulous PRR layout featuring Horseshoe Curve.

August 22, 2009: Get ready for Modeling with the Masters. Details TBA.

August 23, 2009: Our annual CNY Division Picnic hosted by Bill and Judy Brown. Details TBA.

HARTFORD NATIONAL 2009

We are always in need of more volunteers to work at the convention or as a tour bus captain during the convention. Please contact the "Volunteer Chairman" Don Straub at dancingbear20@sbcglobal.net. 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 up and volunteer!

—The HN2009 Committee

DON'T MISS THE NATIONAL TRAIN SHOW:

Visit more than 140,000 square feet of exhibition space, featuring many high-quality operating layouts, national and regional manufacturer's representatives and diverse vendors from around the country. Private openings will be available for the HN2009 attendees and their families. Don't miss this exciting event! For more details, please visit www.hn2009.org.

—The HN2009 Committee



★ SPATE PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD NOMINATIONS ★

Nominations for the Robert W. Spate Award are solicited at this time, preferably by July 31, 2009. Nominations should be directed to the selection committee chairman, Terry King (tpking@roadrunner.com). Nominations may be made by active Division boards of directors or trustees and by the Area NER director for those members or organizations not represented by an active Division. In the event of a vacancy for area director, another area director or the Region President may submit the nomination for a member or organization not represented by an active Division. The award is for an NER member or organization among the members or organizations nominated who or which best exemplifies the promotion of the hobby of model railroading. Preference is that the service to the hobby be in a public forum, open to young people and/or others who normally are not exposed to the hobby. This is a unique award to recognize deserving modelers and organizations that continue to work to offer our hobby to young people and new comers in general. Nominations do not have to be limited to those within your own Division or area. Please help select the next deserving recipient.



Vermont Railway 202 leads a southbound Champlain Flyer out of Burlington station in 2002. Burlington is home to the Vermont Railway, which offered the short-lived "Flyer" as a shuttle around major disruptive construction on Route 7. We'll see you here in 2010! PHOTO BY OTTO M. VONDRAK

NER 2010 Champlain Flyer

Our annual NER convention returns to Vermont in 2010

By Glenn Glasstetter

Green Mountain Division
Champlain Flyer Convention Chair

This past September, the Central New York Division hosted the NER for our 2008 Empire Junction convention. I'm sure that those of us who were there would all agree that the CNY pulled out all the stops to make this one of our most memorable conventions. Thanks to Convention Chairman Jim Heidt and the rest of the committee who worked so hard to provide us with a great experience.

As you are probably aware by now, the NER will not be hosting a regional convention in 2009 because we are hosting the rest of the NMRA world at the 2009 Hartford National Convention, in Hartford, CT this July 5-12. Convention Chairman Vin Gallogly and his fine team have been working hard for the last few years to be sure they showcase the best of the NER.

HN 2009 is the first national convention in the NER since Boston's Minuteman Convention in 1986. This is the perfect



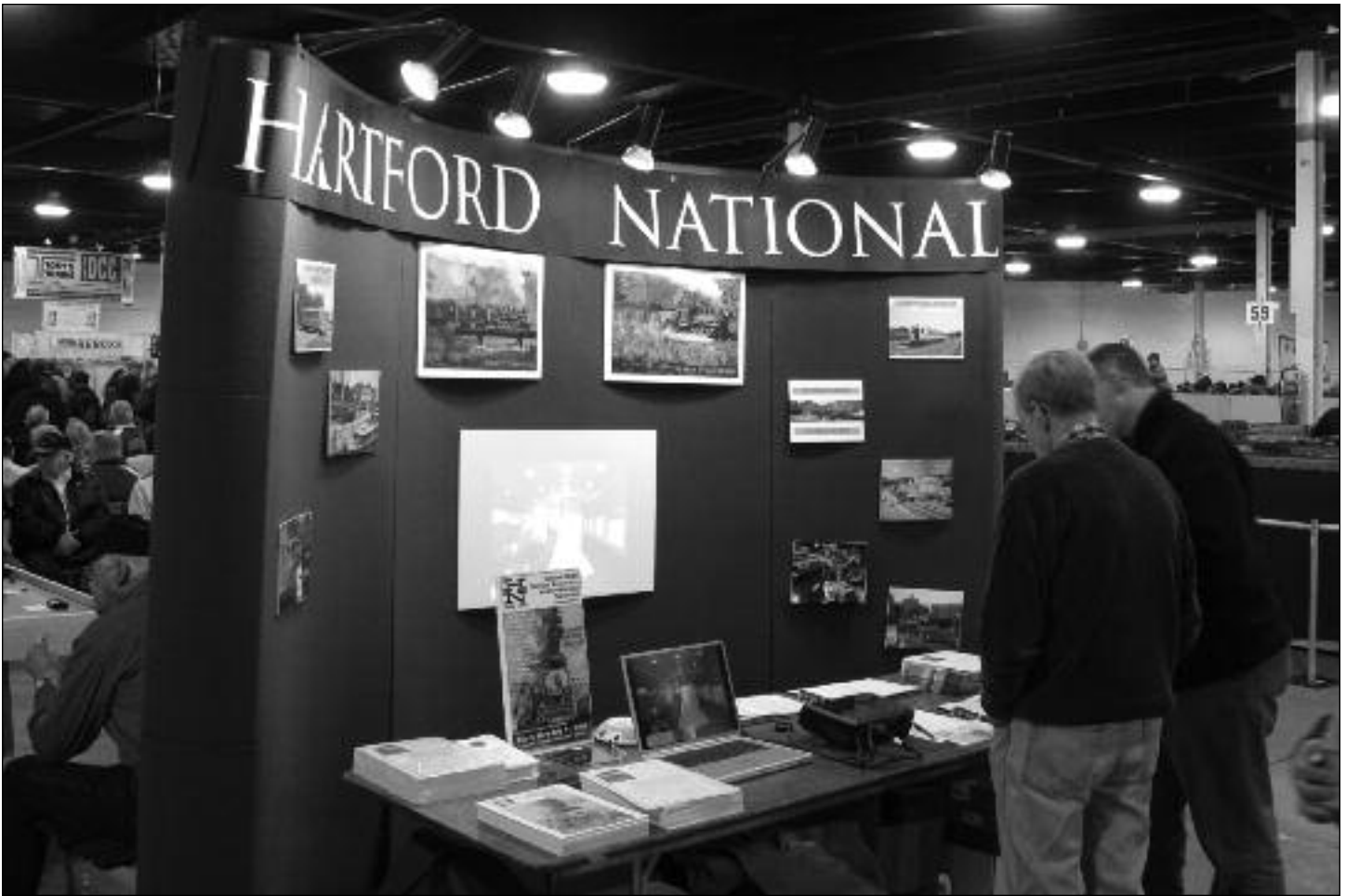
opportunity or those who have never attended a national convention to experience all the fellowship and fun these events provide. If you are unable to spend the whole week at the convention, I urge you to consider attending for even a few days. I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

Our next NER regional convention, The Champlain Flyer, will be held in Burlington, Vermont from September

9-12, 2010. Our convention hotel headquarters will be the Sheraton Burlington Hotel & Conference Center. This will be the first NER convention in Burlington since 1993. We are working hard to line up our events, including layout tours, operating sessions, the model and photo contests, several prototype tours, and a first rate clinic schedule, as well as some other unique convention activities.

With our new extended convention schedule, Master Model Railroader, NER Vice President and NER Achievement Program Chairman, Paul Allard (Boy, this guy wears a lot of hats!) is putting together an extensive clinic schedule of prototype and modeling subjects including hands on clinics. Our goal is to provide you with a generous number of activities during the convention, so that you will have a choice of activities that interest you the most.

For more information and the latest convention updates, please check our web site at www.greenmountainnmra.com. See you in Vermont in 2010! ■



Visitors to the annual Big Railroad Hobby Show in Springfield, Massachusetts were greeted by this informative booth promoting the upcoming NMRA national convention in Hartford, Connecticut this July. It was staffed throughout the day by hard working and dedicated NER volunteers, coordinated by NER President Ken May and Convention Chair Vin Gallogly. PHOTO BY SCOTT DUNLAP

Hartford 2009

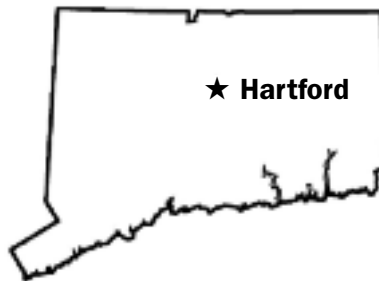
Getting ready for the big show in our own backyard!

By Vin Gallogly

Metro North Division

2009 National Convention Chair

As many of who receive the NMRA's national publication SCALE RAILS already know, the full HN2009 registration package appeared in the March issue and the General Interest activities brochure appeared in the February issue; both items are available in PDF format on the HN2009 web site. The timing of the clinics within the clinic program is firming up and also will be posted on the official web site, www.HN2009.org your best location for



the latest convention news.

We have already posted a list of confirmed clinicians and by the time you are reading this note, the clinic titles and descriptions should be there as well. Just as soon as the clinic presentation schedule

is firming up we will post the specific days and times for each clinic.

However, the following clinic activities are scheduled: Sunday night the JMRI folk will be gathering and each evening through Thursday at least one DCC group will be conducting a session. Tuesday and Thursday will feature Full-day symposia conducted by the Layout Design Special Interest Group (LDSIG). Wednesday and Thursday will feature all day symposia on Rail Marine activities, which will be conducted by the Rail Marine Information Group. A steel industry track will also be presented on Thursday. And if you like to

operate, the Operations Special Interest Group (OPSIG) has set up sessions throughout the week, with over 500 available slots. There are also layouts available to operate if you are driving to or from the convention.

Check out the extra fare prototype tours and excursions on rare mileage. At 7:00 AM Monday morning plan to join all attendees at a self-serve, self-pay opening breakfast within the Connecticut Convention Center. The session will run from 7 until 8 and feature a short talk (15 minutes) by Ramon Rhodes "From the Tower: BNSF's Willow Springs Intermodal Terminal" featuring the many UPS unit trains which utilized the terminal. Ramon is a "modern era" modeler with deep roots in the Chessie and its history.

On Monday our clinics, tours and all other activities start at 8:00 AM Tuesday through the end of the week some will start earlier. Tuesday through Thursday mornings will also open with a 7:00 AM self-payBreakfast and a short talk of general model railroading interest.

Scheduled to speak at these breakfasts are Bob Jacobsen from JMRI, presenting "DCC is Fun?!", Nancy Workman from Soundtraxx, with tales of recording those sounds, and the ever-entertaining Tony Koester on loan from Kalmbach Publishing with some amusing tales about several of our hobby's more colorful characters. So plan to start each day with insights into railroading, modeling and just plain fun in the middle of all the HN2009 activity, the Connecticut Convention Center.

The entire HN2009 team, clinicians, layout owners and volunteers are looking forward to your active participation in this dynamic weeklong program. Also plan to visit the National Train Show, open to "convention attendees only" on Friday morning and everyone there after. Come on board for a day, two, three or the full week. ■



TOP: Dick Elwell's well-known HO scale Hoosac Valley. MIDDLE: Trains pass over and under each other on Earl Smallshaw's HO scale Middletown & Mystic Mines. ABOVE: The modern Providence & Worcester is well represented on Don Irace's HO scale layout. These layouts are just some of the attractions to be seen at this year's national convention. PHOTOS BY PHIL MONAT

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WE NEED YOU TO VOLUNTEER



An award-winning model of a Canadian National wooden coach constructed by NER Achievement Program Chair Paul Allard, photographed on his home layout. The Model Contest can be a fantastic learning experience for everyone. PHOTO BY PAUL ALLARD

A celebration of modeling skills

Think the Model Contest is not for you? Think again!

Bob Hamm, MMR

National and NER Contest Chairman

As we head toward the Hartford National this summer we in the NER have the special position of being the host region. Now I know for many that means many hours of hard work as you help prepare the various activities for the convention, but it also means that because the convention is nearby many of us will be able to attend, and I hope everyone will try to go if not for the whole convention at least for several days (Consider getting a two-day pass for quite a bit less money).

That gives us, a region of prolific and top notch model builders, photographers and crafters the opportunity to display our talents, strut our stuff so to speak. So, I am asking, no pleading with everyone who reads this to please consider bringing your handiwork, models, photos or crafts to display or compete in the celebration.

Last year in Anaheim we got some 95 entries in the model events up from the 45

in entered in Detroit and breaking a four year decline. But those of you who know me know they I am insatiable. I want more. I am setting a goal for the convention of 150 total model entries (Judged, People's Choice and Showcase). You guys and gals of the NER comprise some of the best and most productive modelers in the world. Even if your entries took top honors in the NER all are eligible to enter at the national, so please brings some of these great past entries, also, if you have the time and inclination get building; there is still time to get that masterpiece underway before July, and remember you can choose the type of competition from judged to popular vote to none at all.

So far I have avoided using term "contest" because it's so much more than simply a contest when you look at the range of different events from technically judged to popular vote to display only. It is not just about who wins, but also about sharing our accomplishments, discussing techniques, teaching and learning and perhaps

most important encouraging and inspiring each other.

Another reason is that in years past with some modelers and groups the "contest" has been cast in less than favorable light, sometimes with good reason, poor judging, arrogant attitudes. Let me tell you, as NER and National Contest Chairman, we have heard you. And, the we includes not only the National Contest but also the National Achievement Program, under the leadership of Paul Richardson with whom I chat frequently. Let me say it again: *We have heard you!*

We have been working hard to make changes to improve things. Here's some of what we've done and plan to do.

New Events - Last year in Anaheim we added two new events, the People's Choice Awards, a popular vote contest with minimal paperwork, and the Model Showcase, a display-only event, again with virtually no paperwork. (In both cases the paperwork includes modeler name and model identification, so we can

provide the proper security.) Incidentally the NER has embraced both of these contest events for three or four years now.

The National People's Choice awards comprise a number of categories and awards including first place plaques for Best Locomotive, Best Rolling Stock, Best Caboose, Best Structure, Best Display, Best Model Print and Best Prototype Print as well as first, second and third place plaques for Best Train. There are also first, second and third place special awards for Best Photo Match (models which best match prototype photos), Most humorous, the Thumbs Awards, and two manufacturer sponsored awards for most creative models.

This year in Hartford we have another national first time event, a parallel **Kitbash Contest** in the judged model competition. Models so entered will be judged in accordance with the AP Judging Guidelines in the same manner as the regular contest and will be eligible for merit awards in the normal fashion.

What is different is that there will be a parallel array of award plaques for the winners. Now let me say at this point we haven't decided if we will provide plaques for all eleven of the categories, (loco, freight car, structure etc.) or whether we'll be able to offer all three places, (first, second and third) in each of the categories. This represents a new expenditure and plaques are expensive, and we will probably start small and expand the awards as we see the entries increase.

Now to some key questions on some people's minds. First, can a kit bash model compete with scratch models for merit awards and top contest honors? There have been complaints at various times and from various chat groups that models that are not scratch built will get clobbered and haven't got a prayer against "scratchbuilt entries." The answer roams between urban myth and stark reality in some past contests (national, region and division). However, I'm here to tell you the answer is a resounding YES, they can compete.

The model contest is about skill and effort, and the fact that scratchbuilding is one way to demonstrate that requirement does not diminish the skill and effort evident in the superb modeling demonstrated by large numbers of modelers who employ a mix of kit bashed commercial parts. In fact, quite honestly, most models entered in the regular contest do not qualify as

completely scratchbuilt models, which according to AP rules requires that 90% of the parts (by count), be built from scratch. That's pretty hard when you start adding up detailed castings such as N-B-W and other little ditties. When was the last time you made your own windows for a structure? I did so on a national entry in 1991. Each one required some thirty pieces. (Took second in category.) Probably not going to do too many of those.

In terms of points the kit bash entry will probably be limited to ten of fifteen points on the scratchbuilt judging factor. However, again many models entered in the regular, scratchbuilt contest do not qualify for over ten points which requires that virtually all parts, detail as well as basic model structure, be built from scratch. That range (ten to fifteen in scratchbuilt) is left for the guy or gal who makes virtually everything from basic materials. But bear in mind and assuming all other factors (construction, conformance, details, and appearance) are maxed out that puts such models in the rarified range of 120 to 125 points, and not too many Best of Shows including National Gold winners score that high.

That said, and I don't want to belabor the scoring policy too much, many people (including some judges) are under the misconception that the kitbash model should automatically be marked down on other categories. The answer here is NO. However, the kitbash modeler will have to demonstrate an equivalent amount of skill and effort. For example consider the construction factor. In constructing and modifying the commercial parts that make up the kitbash the modeler has to show a similar complexity of construction steps with the same resulting quality as the modeler who built from scratch. You do not receive point credit for the work a manufacturer has put into a part be it a little piece of detail or a complete diesel shell. And, that equivalence is demonstrated all the time. The two top

point scoring models at Anaheim were diesels that used a lot of commercial parts. Duane Bucks GN F-3s took 114 while Joe Aymar's SP SD-45 got 113 points. You can see Joe's superb model in the January issue of *Scale Rails*. The same is true for conformance, detail, and appearance. You have to do the work, demonstrate the skill and effort; no credit of what the manufacturer supplies.

New Judge's Training Program (JTP) – Many of the complaints in the past regarding the judged contest, both perceived and real, have centered on poor judging. That seems to be a universal theme being echoed to some degree by all discussion groups, so Paul and I have undertaken to start the JTP.

Working with several groups of experienced judges and MMRs (I have enlisted seven from the NER to advise me, and Paul is doing the same in his region) to start we are reviewing some of the problems and will be expanding and clarifying the AP Judging Guidelines, which we want to be renamed the AP/Contest Judging Guidelines, to help us to improve the training. As a first task we have already developed a Code of Conduct for Judges and Entrants which sets forth the purpose of the contest as well as what is expected of the participants on both sides of the score sheet.

The working group will be expanded to include the AP and Contest Chairman of the seventeen regions. In the end we hope to bring new clarity in how to judge to achieve better objectivity, uniformity and fairness to the process and make it consistent from contest to contest as well as division to region to the national.

This will involve new training for all judges and possibly a certification process to ensure all are up-to-date with the improved guidelines. This will be accomplished by live clinics at the national as well as the region level, and eventually we hope to produce a video clinic that can be sent around as well. While we expect this to take several years to implement, the first such clinic will be presented by yours truly this summer at Hartford, and I would greatly appreciate all those from the NER who would like to judge to please set aside several hours for the clinic. It will be given over two time slots on Monday of the convention, from 2:30pm to 5:00pm.

Thanks for checking us out and considering joining the celebration. ■





Author Larry Cannon is giving a model entry the “white glove treatment,” surrounded by other volunteer contest judges. Prototype conformity and documentation is an often overlooked item in many contest entries. PHOTO BY TONY BUCCA

Conformity in the Contest Room

A contest judge offers some points to consider for your next entry

Larry Cannon
Secoast Division

Some of you may have entered model contests held by the NMRA at the Divisional, Regional or National level. A smaller number of us have helped judge those contests. Working on the judging will teach you a better understanding of what kind of modeling is needed to produce the higher scores that result in Achievement Program (AP) Merit Awards and contest awards.

The recent “Empire Junction” NER convention in Syracuse had several really good models and at least two that could hold their own in National Convention judging: over 115 out of 125 possible points. One was by a first-time contest entrant. But there is more than judging and scoring happening in the contest room. It is a classroom for entrants and for judges.

Entrants can learn what it takes to produce a good model. Judges learn how to judge better, model better, and how to be educators. Being an educator is a more important

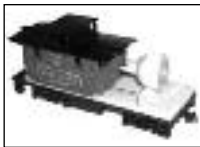
part of judging than your judging precision. Granted, you will take flak if your judging skills are flawed, but you can improve the hobby and people’s enjoyment of the hobby if you turn a contest into a positive learning experience for most people.

All it takes is a little bit more personal effort to explain both the judging guidelines and tell people constructively how to improve their modeling. While you can’t re-enter an improved model at the same contest level, the AP allows models to be improved and re-judged for Merit Awards that count toward the AP Certificates. Explaining the guideline often involves coaching people how to fill out an entry form in a manner that gets them full consideration of the efforts that have been put into the model.

It also means as a judge you need to take the time to make constructive comments on the entrant’s portion of the judging sheet. Point out what can be improved on the model if it is possible that improvements can be made and the model re-

judged for a Merit Award. Also constructive criticism of modeling flaws allows the entrant the chance to avoid the same mistake in the future.

This time around I judged Conformity. Most people either bury you with information or do not document Conformity which is a stiff 10 points off the score. One of the recurring mistakes is using plans that are not documented to a prototype or prototype practice. Two questions often come up here. First, “I or someone drew these plans, is that okay?” Fine, but what were prototypes? Second, “I built it from XYZ Company’s kit plans, is that okay?” Same problem if the prototype information is not supplied. The phrase “one picture is worth a thousand words” is what Conformity is about. If there are no pictures, can you take one? If there are no pictures, are there plans that can be tied to the prototype? If you take steps to ensure some form of prototype-based documentation, then your model will have a chance to receive good marks in this important and often-overlooked judging criteria. ■



Nutmeg is NER's oldest division

It's the oldest division in the Northeastern Region, covering seven of Connecticut's eight counties and a couple more in Massachusetts. And as this new year tumbles pell-mell toward spring, it's also among the most active outfits in the region.

As host division, the venerable Nutmeg is working with fellow NER members and others to put the finishing touches on NH2009, the NMRA's national convention scheduled for Hartford this summer, and it is also welcoming in new leadership at the top.

With members in nine counties and two states, the Nutmeg, like other divisions, has sometimes found timely communication a problem. It helps that meetings are generally scheduled at the same time and place every other month. Still, notices of things like changes, last-minute additions or upcoming events need to reach the membership more efficiently.

So the division is banking on the Internet as its vehicle for speedy communication. But its 218 NMRA members are spread over Hartford, Litchfield, Middlesex, New Haven, New London, Tolland and Windham counties in Connecticut and Hampden and Hampshire counties in Massachusetts. And, at best, e-mail addresses are up to date for only half of them.

Seeley Kellogg, the division's new president, is making an appeal for valid addresses (See box). A Durham, Conn., resident, he is also looking to put some spark back into division meetings. "At this point," he notes, "we are lucky if 16 of the 218 members show up for meetings. My goal is to get that to 50."

To do that, Seeley hopes to implement a few novel twists, some of them inspired by other divisions he's "visited" on the Web. "Surfing the Internet and looking at some of the other divisions around the country



Veteran modeler Earl Smallshaw is a member of the Nutmeg Division. This dockside view is from his well-known Middletown & Mystic Mines Railroad. PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT

and what they are doing... has spurred my desire to get this division rolling along toward being at least part way up to the standards these divisions are setting," the Nutmeg's newest president said.

For all the newness of the position—his first office after 17 years in the NMRA—Seeley has been model railroading since 1953, when his parents gave him an American Flyer 4-6-2 train set as a Christmas gift. A familiar figure at the Time Machine hobby shop in Manchester (he helped build the large model railroad back when the place was still known as the Train Exchange), Seeley "got involved in the Nutmeg Division" about five years ago. "I decided last fall that I needed to get more active in the administration of the division and volunteered my name to [NER President and Nutmeg Treasurer] Ken May," Seeley says. "So now the fun begins."

Among the fun Nutmeg members could soon enjoy are meetings at which opposing panelists debate operations: card cars vs.

switch lists, for example, or car forwarding vs. scheduled departures. For car-weathering clinics, members could bring a piece of rolling stock and an expert would help everyone weather the car or loco and explain why it should be done that way.

"Still," Seeley acknowledges, "these things are useless if I cannot communicate with all the division members and let them know what's happening at these meetings. That is why communication is my first short-term goal." ■

Nutmeg needs updated e-mail

Nutmeg Division President Seeley Kellogg and Fred Wintsch, a newly elected director, have dispatched a questionnaire to all the e-mail addresses in the division known to be valid. They are appealing to others who did not receive the questionnaire to please submit their updated contact information. Please e-mail seeleyk@comcast.net and he will send back a questionnaire and record your address for future messages.



NUTMEG DIVISION - serving Hartford, Litchfield, Middlesex, New Haven, New London, Tolland and Windham counties in Connecticut and Hampden and Hampshire counties in Massachusetts
Seeley Kellogg, Superintendent • seeleyk@comcast.net • www.nutmegdivision.com

BY FRANKLIN LANG Wordsmith

MOOSE RIVER VALLEY RAILROAD

Peter Eaton of Derby Line, Vermont has morphed his HO empire (see July 2006 *Model Railroader*) into a G scale 1500 foot outdoor masterpiece. Many of us tend to think that fine craftsmanship, scratch built structures and the like, are only the indoor domain of HO, N, O and S. Not so with Peter's work modeling northern New England of Central Vermont, Canadian Pacific and Maine Central's first generation diesel years. Peter loves to build and his talent is on display here with over 100 freight cars and 25 engines rolling over a 100'x 65' outdoor empire. In addition to several scratch built cars, there are many hills, 14' tunnels, rivers and ponds with flowing water and scratch built bridges and industries a plenty. It's sort of why he dismantled his HO Moose River Valley layout when it was completed and started up again in another scale – his passion and enjoyment for building does not quit!

His new layout began in 2001 and 8 years later is just about ready to have some op sessions this coming summer. Peter likes switching and has 18 sidings with scratched built industries like a grain mill from St. Johnsbury, a paper mill in Grovton and a granite quarry at the highest point on the layout built with real granite given to him by a quarry in nearby Quebec. With 14 scheduled trains, some up to 20 cars long, Peter built a number of outdoor storage facilities to protect his rolling stock from inclement weather recognizing that even with 1500 feet of track, each op session would only utilize a fraction of what the MRV owned. One storage shed is a real barn for indoor storage, others are hand built 6'x16' sheds with storage/staging tracks and one for his work trains.

Center stage is another structure in 1:1 scale, a gazebo situated near his scratch built long trestle over his flowing river. A tranquil summer spot for his wife to play cards with friends but it's most frequent use is for Peter to view and run his hands-on masterpiece. Peter is a long time member of the Vermont Garden Railway Society and many of their members have visited this superb layout.

Reflecting his many years working for the US Border Patrol and observing all the railroads that crossed the border to Canada, Peter held onto a collection of 600 HO scale boxcars left over from his previous layout, each one representing a little or well known railroad he observed. We in the NER have a true "Empire Builder" among us who never stops building no matter the scale. I wonder what his next project will be? ■



Scenes from Peter Eaton's outdoor railroad. Peter dismantled his HO scale empire and moved his hobby into the open spaces of his backyard. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

Want to be featured in Empire Builder?
E-mail the Editor Phil Monat: phil@philmonat.com

MADE IN THE NER: B.E.S.T. TRAINS

By Barry Abisch

Metro North Division

Brian Bollinger has been making and selling kits to model railroaders for the past dozen years. He gets his ideas from modelers, from museums and from his own research. But one item in his current catalog had a rather unexpected genesis: it was suggested by a 10-year-old girl.

Bollinger and his wife, Jill, run Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains out of their home in Belmont, N.H. Last summer, the Bollingers sponsored a contest to support the Lowell, Mass. division of Youth in Model Railroading, a national organization which introduces youngsters 8 to 18 to the hobby. The Bollingers challenged division members to develop an idea for a new kit. The young modelers had to research the prototype and write an essay explaining why it would make a good kit.

The winning entry, The Sail House in New Harbor, Maine, was submitted by 10-year-old Brenna Whitney. Bollinger turned it into a limited edition laser-cut kit, with proceeds from kit sales benefitting Brenna's YMR division.

Brian Bollinger says it is the pursuit of the prototype that sets BEST Trains apart. "As our tagline says, 'It's not just a model, it's a piece of history,'" Jill adds.

Included with each kit description is a brief history of the prototype, in many cases with prototype photos as well. The history lesson comes with kits as unique as Brenna's Sail House and with more mundane structures, such as a detached, one-car garage.

Brian Bollinger also cites the detailed instructions that are included with BEST Trains kits. He said that many kits on the market are more difficult than they need to be because of poor instructions. Because of the quality of the instructions, he said, BEST Trains kits rate somewhere in the middle of the difficulty range.

Brian said that perhaps half of the kits sold by BEST Trains originated with commissions from modelers. The others are based on his own research. For example, the company's kits for structures in Wickenburg,



To get youth involved in model railroading BEST Trains sponsored a contest to challenge young modelers to develop an idea for a new kit. The winner was 10-year-old Brenna Whitney, seen here assembling her model of The Sail House, a real structure in Bar Harbor, Maine. Brenna assembled the kit at the BEST Trains booth at the 2009 Railroad Hobby Show in Springfield, Massachusetts. Many BEST Trains kits are based on actual historic structures from around the country. PHOTO BY OTTO M. VONDRAK

Ariz. were developed from drawings provided by a museum in need of scale buildings for a diorama. To model some of the buildings in the Bodie (Calif.) State Historic Park, Bollinger visited the site to measure the buildings, take photos and learn some of the history from park rangers. Sometimes, though, Brian finds a prototype just an hour's drive from his New England home.

Brian Bollinger started in the hobby business in 1992, with a line of custom-finished G scale cars. Four years later, he and David Edgerly established Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains. Edgerly later left the company. BEST Trains took off after the Bollingers moved into their current home, which offers ample work space. The shop is equipped with three laser cutters, and with a spin caster for making metal detail parts. Although Brian still works as youth pastor for his local

church, Jill left her job at a bank to work with BEST Trains full-time. She applies her accounting experience to the business, and has taken on the task of writing instructions for the company's kits. The company has two other employees.

Over the years, BEST Trains has developed more than 40 kits, all in HO scale. And Brian has developed some personal favorites. One is a kit for a Maine Central signal tower. That was his first kit. The other favorite is the Congress Mercado, based on a 19th century building in Congress, Ariz. "The best part of making that kit was hanging out with the owner and talking to the people next door."

In fact, Brian said, meeting people is the favorite part of prototype research. "It's just as much fun to talk with the people, find out the stories behind a building," he said.

Apparently, it's infectious.

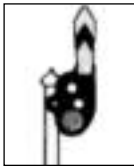
"I like to watch Brian work," Jill said. "He enjoys talking, and everyone around him gets excited." ■

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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 MARK HARLOW NER Office Manager

New Members as of 2/1/2009

CONNECTICUT

Vincent Hauser
Robert Lang
Lawrence Burch
Michael Rosenberg
Blais Vece
Garrett Menard
Ed Shaw
Lambros Viores

MASSACHUSETTS

Ron Haviland
David Vandette
Edward Beauchemin
Alexander Bryainder
Chris Cooper
Chase Green
Joseph Hicinbothem
David Jordan
William Markowski

Arthur Martin
Bryan Miller
Tom Shields
Ralph Weischedel
Simon Winchester

MAINE

Andrew Hastings
Pat Readon

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Jay Conant
Douglas Fraser
Thomas Mertzing
John Obrien
Tom Johnson
Erich Whitney

NEW JERSEY

Ron Snider
Edward Harkey
Jeff Hart

Philip Gengler
Daniel Laurie
Dan Meff
Joseph Rizzo

NEW YORK

Derek Buchanan
John Busa
Joseph Calisi
Dan Shepard
Stephen Trager
William Seader
Chris Horton
Steven Leader
Michael Sessa
Vincent Dirubbio
Richard Martin
John Aldrich
Lynne Denny
Alfred Muller
William Seader
David Babson

Joel Banyai
John Caslake
Gordon Davis
Eddie Degan
B. Duerr
Edward Feeley
Bruce Haney
Tom Kehoskie
Mike O'Neill
Robert Verkuyll
Bill Adams
Skpy Payson

NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA

David Allen
Henry Cripps
Patrick Hiemstra
W Blake Johnstone
Pat Nolan
Nicholas Walz

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PRESTIGE! Want to be part of the team that puts together The Coupler each quarter? We're looking for someone to take over duties of the Art Director in 2010. Candidates must be proficient in a layout program (like Quark XPress, Adobe PageMaker or InDesign, or MS Publisher), capable of making PDF's for printing as well as web viewing. Work via e-mail with writers and editors, gather photos and illustrations for articles, and coordinate with the printer. Help serve the Northeastern Region NMRA and get recognized for your contributions! Interested candidates should contact Otto Vondrak at ovondrak@yahoo.com for more information.



Don Itrace is seen here paying close attention to his screens as he coordinates train movements on his Providence & Worcester Railroad. While the actual CTC board is present, all information is presented on the twin screens in front of him. This system also allows for remote dispatching as in the real world — Don's usual dispatcher runs the railroad from his home over 1,000 miles away! This layout will be open for extensive operations during the Hartford Convention. PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT

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