

THE COUPLE

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGION • NATIONAL MODEL RAILROAD ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 235 • JULY-AUGUST 2009

DON'T MISS THE
HARTFORD NATIONAL
JULY 5-11, 2009



An Olympic & Puget Sound 0-8-0 eases across the draw at Lake Quinault as it drags fresh cut lumber into Tacoma on John Elwood's beautiful HO scale layout. On the truss bridge overhead, an NP Alco leads a short freight out of town towards Seattle. This and other layouts will be open for your pleasure during the upcoming NMRA Hartford National this July 5-11 in Hartford, Connecticut. PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT

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www.nernmra.org

THE COUPLER

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Association.

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SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR COUPLER #236 IS AUG. 21

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

NER President's Letter

Quarterly news and editorial commentary regarding the goals and activities of the Northeastern Region NMRA, and its member divisions.

BY KEN MAY NER President



When you receive this issue of the Coupler it should be but a few short days until the beginning of the 'Hartford National 2009' NMRA National Convention. It has been

a long journey of nearly five years to develop the program, get the commitments for activities and volunteers, work our way through the issues and end up with a program that we feel is going to be outstanding.

So what is the one ingredient that is more critical than any other toward making this convention program an outstanding one? It is the volunteers! Since the NMRA is a non-profit organization, it is made up

almost entirely of volunteers. In fact, we are the NMRA! What the NMRA is, or isn't, depends entirely on what we want it to be. This applies to the Northeastern Region just as much as it applies to the NMRA and to the Hartford National 2009.

We all have different talents to offer. Many of us do not feel comfortable standing up in front of a room of people giving a clinic. Many of us have not built a model that can compete in the model contest. Many of us do not have a home layout that we feel is worthy of a home layout tour. All of us do have something to offer, however, even if it is serving as a bus monitor on a trip, a door monitor at a home that is open for a layout visit, a security monitor in the contest room or auction room, or a general

assistant at an activity.

Yes, due to the scope of the 'Hartford National 2009' convention, the need for volunteers is greatly enlarged. At a Regional Convention there are not as many clinics, not as many layout tours, and not as large a facility so the needs are not as great. I would challenge you, however, to make yourself available to serve in a volunteer role – any role! The rewards will be many – new friends, a sense of contributing and belonging, and perhaps an increased level of enjoyment of this hobby we all share!

Come on, take a chance! Volunteer!

—Ken May, NER President

P.S. See you all in Hartford in July!

FROM THE EDITORS

Did you forget we have a Web site?

The way we distribute and receive information is changing. Quarterly newsletters like *The Coupler* are no longer enough. The Internet has allowed us to reach a much wider audience, to help supplement (not replace) our other methods of communication. To reach a wider audience, the Northeastern Region board of directors was tasked with rebuilding and redesigning our web site. The result was unveiled more than two years ago, and it has sat largely dormant ever since. This is a tremendous resource that we are not utilizing. How do we improve our web communications, without duplicating efforts?

The web site is never updated, so I never check it. The Webmaster can only post what has been submitted to him. We barely get cooperation from the Divisions to get news items for *THE COUPLER*, but it's practically non-existent on our web site.

But only PhD candidates know how to update web sites, it's way too hard for anyone else to understand. Not so. The new site is built around a Content Management System (CMS). If you're able to compose an email, you can use the CMS with ease. The system also allows multiple authors to submit content for the web site, so we

don't have to rely on one person for updates. In other words, anyone can get involved and contribute.

And what of the individual web sites of our Divisions? Some are very active, others are dead links, abandoned long ago. For some, maintaining a division web site is a burden. It takes a dedicated individual to



keep a web site fresh and active. Why "preach to the choir" members in your own division when you can reach the entire NER all at once? Of course, you cannot invent content out of thin air, it must be provided on a regular basis.

Getting involved is easy, and you can be involved as much or as little as you desire.

The ideal situation would be each Division naming a person responsible for sending the webmaster information on a regular basis. Just like a print publication, submit a complete story. Don't make the Webmaster try to piece together a story from a fractured announcement. We also need high-quality photographs of your division model railroad events like train shows, modular layout exhibits, and model contests (forget the picnics and barbecues for now). Let's show off the efforts of our members' home layouts! I bet there's some real gems hiding in those basements all across the NER.

If you wish to post regular updates, the Webmaster can make an account for you to log in and post material any time you wish. It's also a great way to get involved at the volunteer level, and learn more about the Northeastern Region. You can reach the Webmaster at webmaster@nernmra.org.

Also, please publicise the web site to your members! The correct address is www.nernmra.org and should be included in your communications with division members. We should make our web site a resource useful to the whole region, and a portal to our divisions.

—Otto M. Vondrak, Art Director



CENTRAL NEW YORK

August 22, 2009: "Modeling with the Masters," location TBA. Visit our web site at www.cnymra.org for more information.

August 23, 2009: Annual CNY Division Picnic, hosted by Bill and Judy Brown. Visit our web site at www.cnymra.org for more information.

GARDEN STATE DIVISION

August 30, 2009: Summer Meet and BBQ, Garden State Model Railway Club (HO scale), Model Engineers Railroad Club of North Jersey (O scale) in North Haledon, NJ, 12 noon. Have a hotdog and soda on us, 50/50 and door prizes. Second hotdog or soda are \$1.00 each. Possible clinics and/or how to videos, two great clubs open for attendees. Visit our web site at www.trainweb.org/nergsd for more info.

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.greenmountainmra.com.

Chris Carfaro, Chief Clerk of the Division, and Dana Brown, Superintendent, have taken the GMD from inactive to convention hosting in several short and growing years. They have a website under development at www.grenmountainmra.com, and they just completed a recent set of elections and are working on FREE-MO modules as a community building project. Photo updates available on website. Module and general friendly nature of group bringing in old NMRA folks as well as new. Division meetings on break until September. Over summer, Chris Carfaro and perhaps a few "volunteered" others plan to host model building clinics for local youth and adults. In addition, they are working on overhauling their newsletter. Check them out if you live in this area.

HUB DIVISION

July 10-12, 2009: At the NMRA National Convention & Train Show in Hartford, CT,

see the HUB Division and our friends in Ohio Division 4 displaying the largest HUB Modular Railroad display we've ever assembled, planned to be 58'x58'!

August 16, 2009: 13th Annual HUB Division Cookout, at Pete Watson's house. (Rain date: Aug 23rd) For more details see www.hubdiv.org.

Sept. 18, 2009: HUB Railfun Meeting 8:00 PM, Cambridge School of Weston, in Weston, MA. Topic: Our Season Opener & Welcome, presented by HUB members.

On March 21, members of the Worcester Model Railroad Club presented a fully equipped, 4'x8' model railroad to the Webster-Dudley Boys and Girls Club to the great delight of their members. Staff member Mike Kelly of the Boys and Girls Club accepted it enthusiastically on behalf of the community.

HUDSON BERKSHIRE DIVISION

No activity

HUDSON VALLEY DIVISION

Aug. 25-30, 2009: Dutchess County Fair, Rhinebeck, NY. Our division will operate at 10'x20' layout in the Arts & Crafts Building. See www.dutchessfair.com for more info.

LITTLE RHODY DIVISION

No activity

MARITIME DIVISION

No activity

METRO NORTH DIVISION

No activity

NUTMEG DIVISION

July 2009 General Meeting: Either July 17 at 7:00 PM or July 18 at 10:00 AM; Wethersfield Police Station, Wethersfield, CT. See website for details.

September 2009 General Meeting: Either September 11 at 7:00 PM or September 12 at 10:00 AM; Wethersfield Police Station, Wethersfield, CT. See website for details.

2009 Board of Director's Meetings, at Seeley Kellogg's house. June 3 at 7:30 PM, July 1 at 7:30 PM, August 5 at 7:30 PM and September 2 at 7:30 PM. Visit our web site at www.trainweb.org/nutmegdivision.

The efforts in the Nutmeg Division are continuing. We had an excellent clinic/product report from Dave Cone on "The Flea", a turnout mounted switch machine from Cypress Engineering. Following Dave I gave a clinic on the AneMode (an Australian company) DCC Compatible Servo turnout control system. There are several excellent features of this system, which controls a block of 4 turnouts using the same servos as radio control model airplanes use.

The Nutmeg Division website is being reconstructed and re-formatted using a content management system (CMS). We also will be presenting a return of the *Nutmeg Flyer* on the website as a downloadable PDF file. We hope to be adding new features including active content in the pdf format as time goes on. This is a large task that is being spearheaded by Randy Hammill and Chuck Gray. Ken May and myself are acting as content arrangers trying to bring our website up to the standards seen in other division website's through out the country. Randy is also our new editor of the Nutmeg Flyer. Hopefully we will be releasing our first new issue in PDF format by the convention.

The Nutmeg Division is considering a change too Saturday morning meetings, this is reflected in the schedule above. If you have a preference please send an email to seeleyk@comcast.net by June 3rd 5:00 PM. The idea is to have several people open up their layouts Saturday informally after lunch so that members can see what others in the area can get a feel for what others are doing.

—Seeley Kellogg
President/Director, Nutmeg Division

SEACOAST DIVISION

July 18, 2009: The Seacoast Division quarterly meeting, 10:00am-2:00pm. The Great Falls MRRC will be hosting the meeting at their building located at 144 Mill Street, Auburn, Maine. The program includes how-to's, clinics and a business meeting.

SUNRISE TRAIL DIVISION

July 11, 2009: Sunrise Trail Division members can take advantage of a Bus Trip up to Hartford for the National Train Show on Saturday, July 11. Bus will pick up at three locations in Long Island – Melville, Hicksville and new Hyde Park. \$40 Round Trip fare, which includes admission to the Train Show. For reservations and informa-

FOR THE LATEST NEWS VISIT
www.nernmra.org

tion, contact Fernand Washington, 179-65 Selover Road, Jamaica, NY, 11434-3411. Phone 718-528-2308, or by email: buzzyfernand@aol.com.

HARTFORD NATIONAL 2009

This is it! All Aboard for Hartford! We are in need of volunteers to work at the convention or as a tour bus captain. If you think you can help please contact the Volunteer Chairman Ron Pelletier by email at locomotive40@comcast.net. Ron is assisting Don Straub with coordinating volunteers to work at the convention. 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! This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Thanks to all who have helped make it possible, and enjoy your NMRA national convention in your own back yard!

—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

Worcester Model Railroad Club Update



The Worcester Model Railroad Club will celebrate its two-year anniversary this June at its new location in a 3,300 square foot area in the Stevens Linen

Complex, 137 Schofield Avenue, in Dudley, MA, after spending the previous 56 years at various Worcester locations. We have 40 dedicated members, of all ages, and all walks of life who are building a brand new, computer controlled, 43'x51' HO model railroad from the ground up. This encompasses drawing on the various skills of our members that includes project management, financial discipline, carpentry, electronics, conceptual design, model making, track laying, computer programming, painting, artistry, scenery construction and knowledge sharing, all with the focus of fellowship, having a good time and running trains that simulate real world train action.

The theme of the model railroad is loosely based on the Providence & Worcester that runs from Worcester to Providence and New London, and on the Boston & Maine that runs from Boston to

Springfield. In the last 20 months we have completed the bench work, 400 feet of main line track work, and the supporting electronics and have begun to run trains. The branch line is in process with completion expected by summer.

An open house is scheduled for July in conjunction with the NMRA National Convention that will be held in Hartford CT. We are open to the public every Tuesday night and most Saturday mornings and visitors are welcome. While devoting most of our time and energy to the big layout, we also found time to build a 4'x8' fully equipped model railroad to raffle off as part of our annual fund raising initiatives. This years winner happened to be one of our own members and he graciously donated it to the Webster-Dudley Boys and Girls Club.

Membership is open to anyone that has an interest in model railroading or wants to learn more about the hobby. For additional information, contact Peter Smith by email at pjsmithross@aol.com or visit www.wmrr.org.

—Peter J Smith, President



FOR THE LATEST DETAILS VISIT
www.hn2009.org

NORTHEASTERN REGION • IN MEMORIAM

WILLIAM S. PARKER of Brockton, MA passed away on May 3, 2009. Bill was a long time member of the Hub Division of the NER, a past President (several terms) of the Northeastern Region of the NMRA, and served as the Trustee for the Northeastern Region to the NMRA Board of Trustees. He was also General Chairman of "Minuteman '86," the NMRA National Convention held in Boston in July 1986. To the best of my knowledge Bill was active with the NMRA, the NER and the Hub Division for about forty years. At one time (about five years ago) he stated to me that he had attended something like twenty straight National Conventions. Bill was one of the Senior Citizens of the NER, and though his health issues limited his contributions to the Region and the Division in recent years, he was always supportive of them. —Ken May, President NER



ALLEN THURSTON of Auburn, ME passed away April 10, 2009. I think it is fair to say the without Al's continuous efforts twenty years ago, the existence of the Seacoast Division, NMRA might be a historical note. He and Wally Chase were the Seacoast Division presence for a number of years and kept it alive with an annual show that they were almost the sole support. When the Great Falls Model Railroad Club was formed, he was there, helping to guide us around the pitfalls and pettiness that had done in some previous efforts to start a local club. He supported the club and made a presence at our shows long after he had lost the stamina to regularly attend meetings. For Allen, the shows were a call to duty. He loved trains almost as much as he loved his wife Rose and family. His way of finding short circuits is legendary: Apply 110v AC and watch for smoke! He was a senior lineman for Central Maine Power after all... As a Purple Heart veteran of WWII he was an example of "the greatest generation." Remember Al, and watch for the smoke... Al's spirit may be testing something, maybe us. —Larry Cannon



Lou McIntyre is working on an extensive HO scale basement empire based upon the line between Hampton and St. Martins, NB. Lou is currently the Vice President of the St. John Society of Model Railroaders, one of the driving forces behind the upcoming joint 2010 convention. A few minutes to catch up on the latest news coming from St Martins, and this CN road crew will be on their way. PHOTO BY LOU MCINTYRE

Don't miss Trains and Tides 2010

We go north of the border for a joint MFMR/NER Spring Convention

By Steve McMullin
Maritime Division

Welcome to the joint Maritime Federation of Model Railroaders and Northeastern Region NMRA convention scheduled for May 20-23, 2010 in Saint John, New Brunswick. Plans are progressing very well, and we are anticipating the largest joint model railroading event ever held in Atlantic Canada.

The prospect of having convention participants from both the NER and the MFMR meeting together in Saint John has added a great deal of excitement among model railroaders here in Atlantic Canada. We believe that the greatest success of the convention will be the opportunity for people from both sides of the border to meet one another and be exposed to new ideas, new layouts, new clinicians, etc. We are really looking forward to welcoming guests from the U.S. Our planning committee continues to meet monthly to NER/MFMR joint convention May 20 through 23, 2010. Here are some additional details:

Hotel: The hotel rate will be C\$89.00 per room plus tax and includes a prepared breakfast for two people per room. At the current exchange rate, that means a rate of about US\$73.00 plus tax. We are very pleased with the rate. The Fort Howe Hotel and Convention Centre is a fine hotel, with indoor swimming pool, health club, meeting rooms for clinics, and a restaurant. It is located adjacent to the Lord Beaverbrook Arena, where the public show will be held, and is within walking distance of the uptown area. Parking at the hotel is free. The hotel overlooks the harbour, and the NB Southern Railway mainline.

Registration Fee: Convention registration fee will be C\$25 per person. At the current exchange rate, that means a registration fee of about US\$21.00. Registration will include free admission to the public show.

Banquet: We have not finalized a decision about the banquet/cost yet. We are considering the possibility of an alternative event that would provide more of a New Brunswick cultural experience for conven-

tion attendees, especially those venturing north of the border for the first time!

Operation Sessions: Operating sessions will be included in the schedule, in addition to tours of local layouts. The Fredericton Club (located in the capital, about an hour's drive from Saint John) just confirmed that they will provide at least six additional layouts for the layout tours. Various members of our planning committee are also working on program ideas.

Clinics: We have a number of people in the MFMR who will offer clinics, but it would be great to have some "new faces" among the clinic presenters. We have tentatively scheduled time/space for about 20 clinics in the program; it would be great if half of them could be led by NER members.

A basic convention website is available now at www.tracksandtides2010.org. Look for additional updates through this summer as we finalize more of the program. You can also email Steve McMullin at mcmulls@nb.sympatico.ca. We're looking forward to seeing you north of the border in 2010! ■



Stamatov's HO scale Muscoot Valley is a free-lanced representation of scenes from around New England and suburban New York. This beautiful layout focuses on scenery and structures, and has been published in *Great Model Railroads*. The Muscoot Valley is just one of the attractions available to convention attendees during the upcoming Hartford National, July 5-11 in Hartford, Connecticut. PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT

Hartford is here

Enjoy the 2009 NMRA National Convention in your own back yard

By Vin Gallogly

Metro North Division

2009 National Convention Chair

This year's NMRA National Convention, HN2009, will open at noon Sunday, July 5, in Hartford, Connecticut. Clinics will run nonstop from 8 a.m. till 11 p.m. on four consecutive days, Monday through Thursday, while fewer will be scheduled on Friday and Saturday. With almost 200 clinics on tap, presented by more than 140 experts in their fields, attendees should review the choices in advance. The North Boston layout and the Historic Rail Stations tours are sold out, but you can still find many layout and special interest tours with seats available. In addition, the



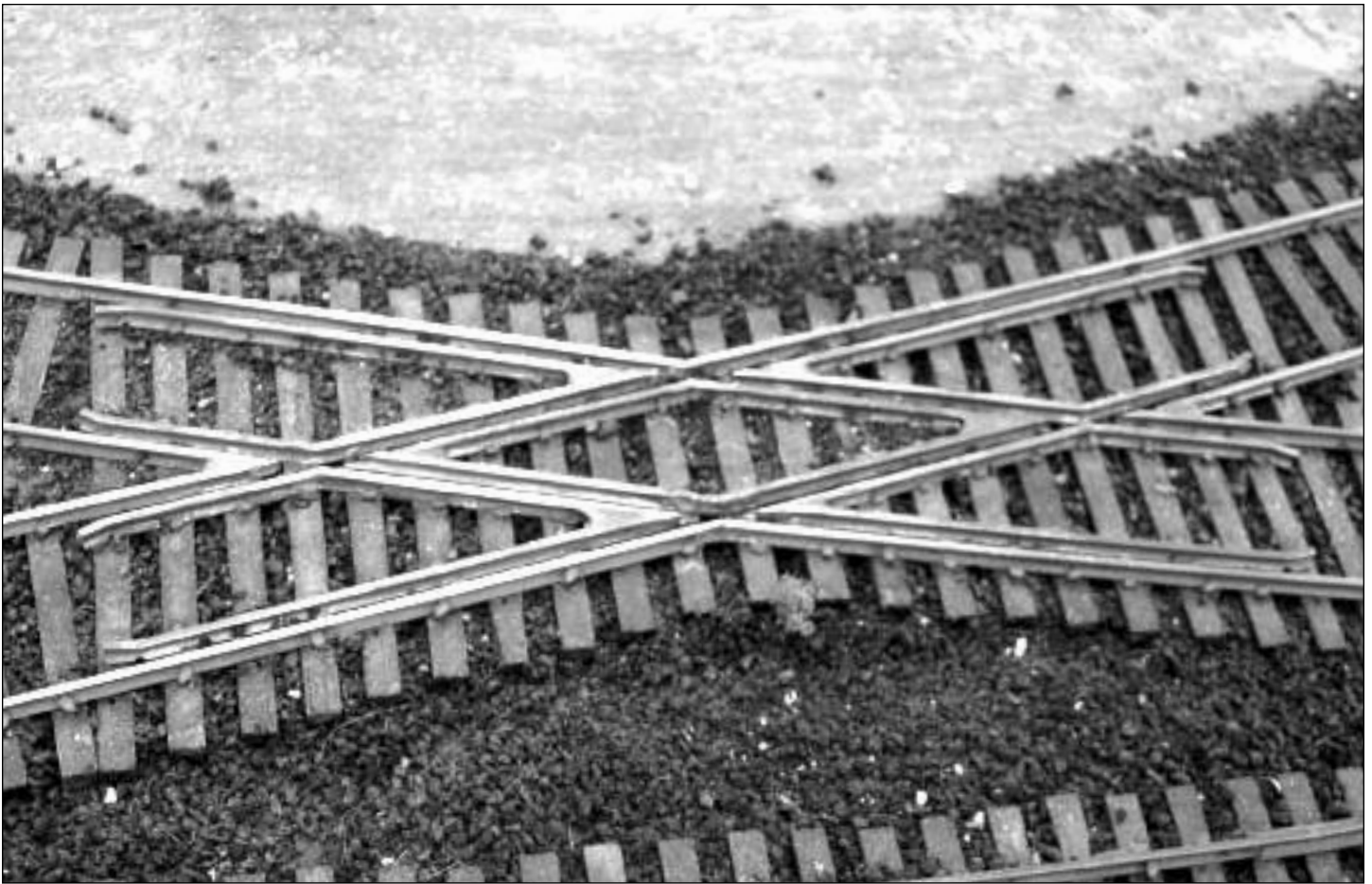
Operations Special Interest Group (OPSIG) has over 500 operating slots available for folks who wish to turn a throttle, visit www.opsig.org for more information.

Within the Convention Center each morning we will offer a self-pay breakfast at 7 with a short talk of general modeling

interest, then return for a self-pay lunch and meet HN2009's clinicians and authors.

The National Train Show will be open Friday morning for convention registrants only. The show will be open to the general public Friday afternoon, Saturday, and Sunday. Admission to the National Train Show for all three days is included in your full convention registration package. For more information, please visit the NTS web site at www.nationaltrainshow.org.

So, come on in. Join your fellow modelers for one or more days, bring a model to exhibit, something to sell at the auction or just have a great learning and social experience. For a full listing of all activities and the latest updates, please visit the convention web site at www.HN2009.org. ■



Beautiful trackwork that also operates beautifully is no longer a fantasy! The author explains how you can electrically isolate the rails in your crossing for reliable, stutter-free operation. PHOTO BY KEN BELOVARAC

Make a reliable gapped crossing

Creating gapped crossings with good electrical contact is easy

By Ken Belovarac
HUB Division

The conventional method of making a scratch-built crossing diamond involves cutting gaps to isolate the crossing frogs in the rails within the diamond to prevent electrical shorts. Unless the gaps are camouflaged very well, they can detract from the convincing appearance of the crossing. For those who would like to do away with the gaps entirely, there is a way of wiring the diamond that does not require gaps. To do this, a toggle switch will have to be thrown to set a selected route through the diamond. Remember, this is designed to work for scratch-built diamonds. To follow these instructions, you must be building a scratch-built diamond crossing. The construction of the diamond will be left to

the reader. This article focuses only on the wiring portion.

The attached diagram (Sketch 1) shows how the diamond needs to be wired and where insulating gaps in approach track segments are to be placed, and finally, how it is to be wired to a 4-pole double throw switch. The basic concept is to provide power only to the rails in the diamond that are needed to power the selected route that a locomotive will take through the diamond. Only one route at a time can be cleared though the crossing anyway.

Consider the crossing as having two routes, A and B. Traditionally, the power goes through both routes simultaneously with the polarity being controlled with gaps within the diamond to avoid an electrical short. The frogs are insulated by gaps to maintain proper polarity. The

method illustrated here powers one route, A or B at a time, but never both at the same time. The double 4-pole double throw switch is used to select the route.

The source of power for a selected route comes from the two rails on that route. Initially, the entire crossing assembly is isolated from the connecting tracks with insulating gaps several inches away from the crossing so as to not affect the esthetic appearance of the crossing. If an engine is going to use, say, route A, then the power from the track approaching the diamond via route A is employed to power the rails through the diamond on that route. The same goes for route B if that route is used. Once a route is selected, power is automatically shut off on the unused route by the toggle switch since only one route at a time can be powered.

When scratch-building the diamond, solder the rails that form the frog points (Sketch 3). The frog rails need to be connected for electrical conductivity purposes.

The inside guard rail assembly in the center of the crossing actually takes on the shape of a diamond or parallelogram made of four rails. It's a square for a 90-degree crossing. (See Sketch 3) These rails can be soldered or glued together as desired because they are never electrified, but will serve to provide the appearance and functionality of guardrails.

For the inside diamond assembly, spike only the inside rail bases, not the ones that are next to the running rails. In other words, do not install spikes in the flange-way because they will create a conductive path between the running rail and guardrail. However, spiking the bases from the inside of the rail diamond will anchor it sufficiently so it will not move.

See the attached spike pattern sketch (Sketch 2).

Make the throat-ways or flange-ways (the distance between the gauge face of the running rail and the adjacent guard rail face) throughout the crossing wide enough so the backside of the axle/wheel sets cannot touch the inside guardrails, anywhere. The wide flangeway tab on the bottom center of the NMRA gauge for frog flange-ways can be used to establish this clearance for Code 70 rail. For different rail sizes, use a flangeway width appropriate so that the rail bases do not touch.

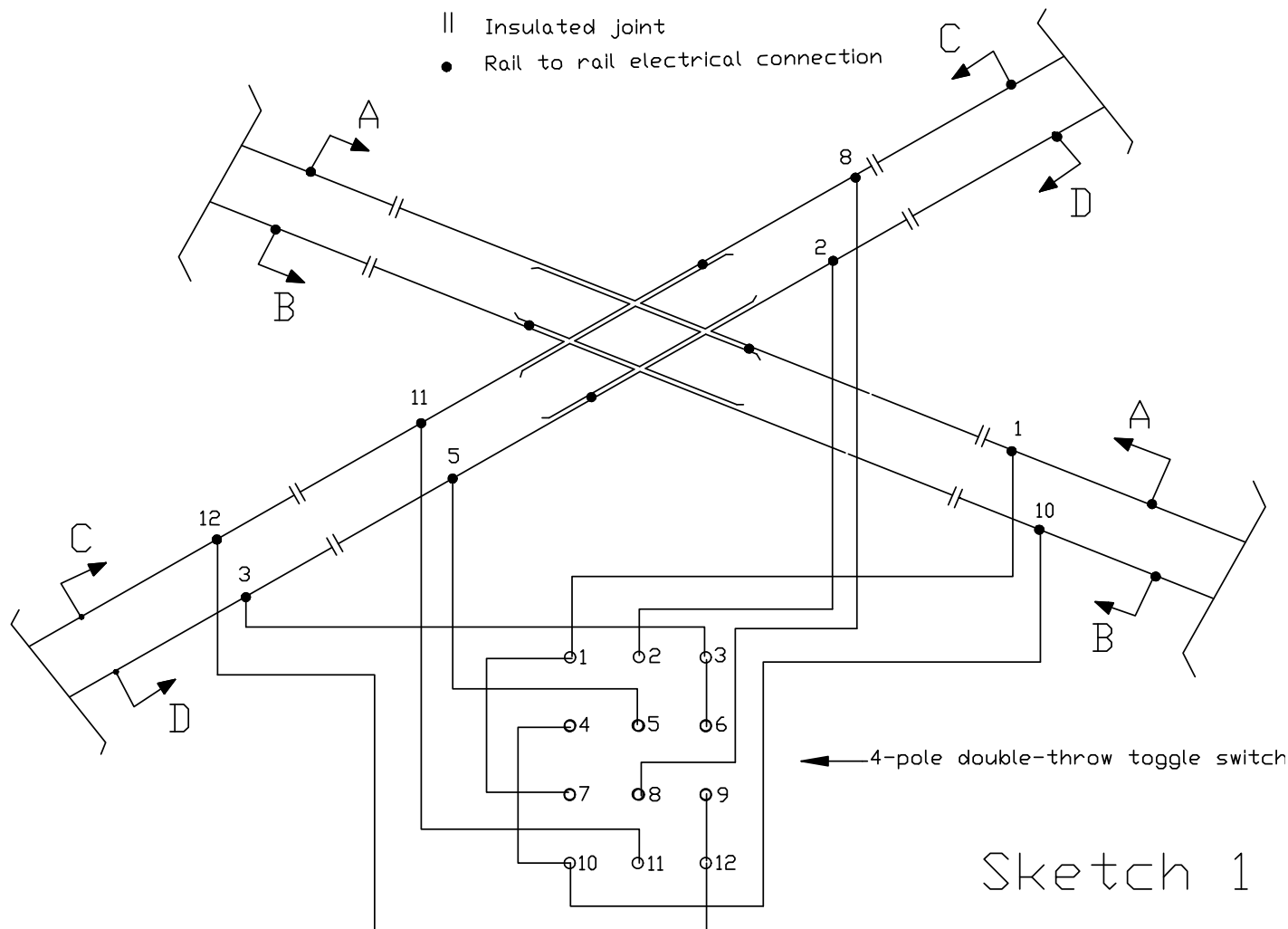
The four guard rail assemblies surrounding the center of the crossing are each configured like a three-sided figure where the middle component is a running rail and the two outside pieces are guard rails. (See Sketch 3) These need to be soldered as a unit and are also spiked on the inside except that one side for each assembly must electrically connect with its

mated running rail as per the electrical diagram (Sketch 1). The diagram shows for each three-sided assembly which side is to be electrically connected to an adjacent running rail.

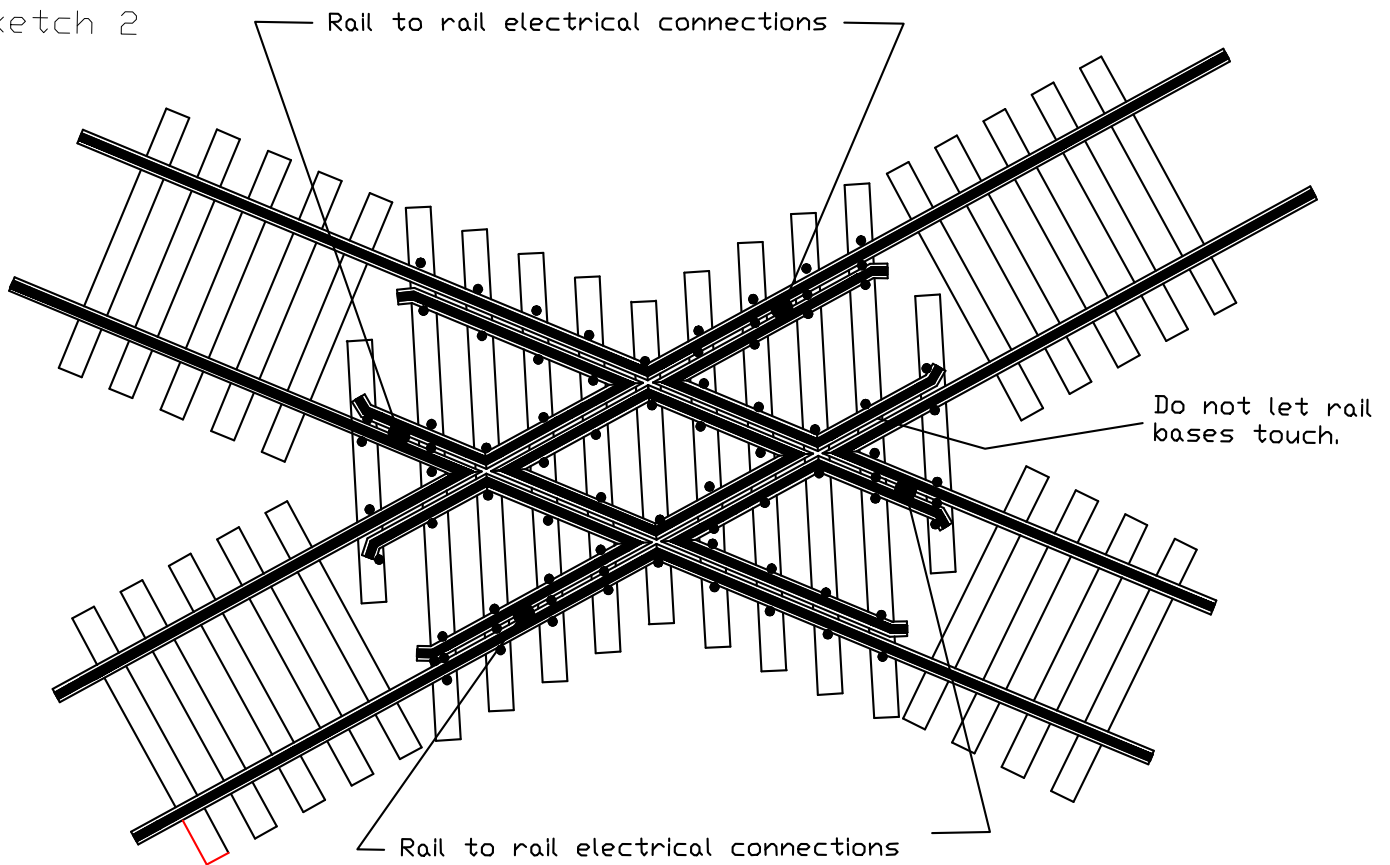
The rail and wire connections must be made as shown in the wiring diagram, Sketch 1 for this to work. Once all of the above is completed, the assembly must be wired to the 4-pole double throw switch. This is done by soldering wire to the rail where desired at locations shown on the attached diagram and connecting them to the 4-pole double throw switch as shown. Once this is done, the crossing is good to go.

Power it up and flick the switch to the desired route to power a test engine through the crossing. Test it to see what route goes with each switch location and test for shorts. If they appear, then one or more the flangeways are too narrow and the wheels are touching a guardrail it

Gap-less crossing wiring diagram



Sketch 2

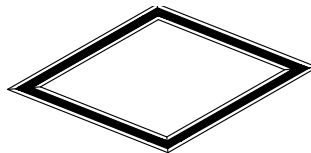


- designates allowed spike locations

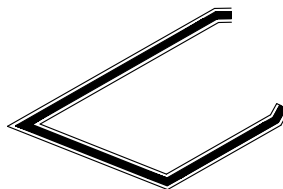
SKETCH 2: Make sure no rail bases are touching except where electrical connections or spikes are allowed. Do not spike in areas between running rails and guard rails where no spikes are shown in the above diagram. Make sure guard rails are spaced so that the backs of engine wheels will not touch any guard rails. ILLUSTRATION BY KEN BELOVARAC

should not be touching and causing a short. Make sure there is a suitable flange-way and there are no spikes between the guardrails and the running rails except at the locations shown on the spiking sketch. If assembled and wired correctly, the crossing should perform quite well, without the need for the unsightly insulating gaps, which is why this is being done in the first place.

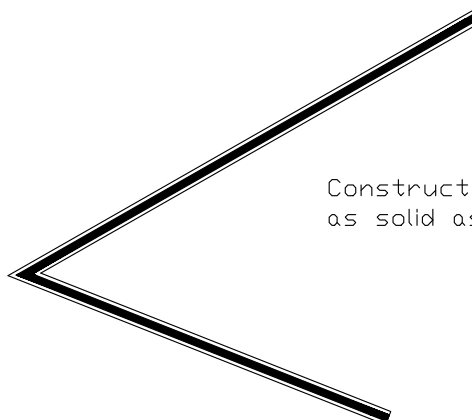
The 4-pole double throw toggle switch could be replaced with an electronic train detection system to automatically throw the switch so no hand throwing is necessary. The switch would automatically be thrown based on the detection of the nearest approaching train on a given route to fully automate the system. But this could be a topic for a future article... ■



The center diamond component should be a solid assembly, but it is not an electrical component of the crossing and must remain insulated from the other rails.



Construct the guard rail/running rail sections as solid assemblies.



Construct the frogs as solid assemblies also.

Sketch 3

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KEN BELOVARAC

**FOR THE LATEST NEWS VISIT
www.nernmra.org**

NER Contest Results

Model contest results for juried Northeastern Region NMRA model contests, NMRA national convention contests, and special thanks and recognition of NER showcase participants.

BY BOB HAMM, MMR NER Model Contest Chairman



Bob Hamm, MMR
NER and National
Contest Chair

Judges and perspective judges please consider attending the clinic on Monday afternoon at 2:30pm to 5:00pm. In addition to reviewing the judging procedure and very importantly some of the changes we have made, we will be holding a forum to discuss future changes to improve the contest. Be there or miss out!

And, please bring an entry or two!

Also, I do want to announce a small but important change to the rules for the Kit Built contest classification I announced in the May issue of Scale Rails. I said Kit Built entries will be limited to 10 points on the scratch built factor. My staff and I have debated and decided to change the maximum point score from 10 to 8. This aligns better with the requirement that Kit Built entries can not be altered more than 50% (Normal 15 pt. score x 50% = 7.5 or 8 pts.). We'll see you in Hartford! ■



FOR THE LATEST NEWS VISIT
www.hn2009.org
WE NEED YOU TO VOLUNTEER



The Delaware & Susquehanna local crew is hunting down the manager of White Haven Fuel to get the delivery truck moved, so they can retrieve the empty tank car spotted in the back. While scenery on Phil Monat's HO scale layout is only about 30% complete, the layout is fully operational and will be open for ops sessions during the upcoming Hartford National, July 5-11 in Hartford, Connecticut. Visit www.opsig.org to find available open operating slots at many fine layouts across the region opened especially for the convention. PHOTO BY PHIL MONAT



VISIT ONLINE FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND UPDATES

www.nernmra.org

BY PAUL ALLARD, MMR Advancement Program Manager

Tom Piccirillo is MMR #418

By Paul Allard, MMR
NER Advancement Program Chair

I am pleased to announce that Garden State Division's Thomas Piccirillo has earned the NMRA Achievement Program's highest award, earning Master Model Railroader # 418. Tom's journey to Master Model Railroad began when he was three years old and received a Lionel train set from his parents. Later, he discovered HO scale in the pages of *Model Railroader*. As a teenager, he looked forward to the annual exhibition put on by the O scale model railroad club in Westfield, NJ. When he turned twenty one, he was able to join the club and learned many new skills from the club's traction experts.

In 1977, Tom was able to start his O Scale Somerset County Traction System. Over the years, he expanded his system and developed a broad set of model building skills. With a new home in 2000, Tom began work on his current layout. You may not have visited Tom's layout in person but you may have seen it in print. It is featured in *Great Model Railroads 2009*. In 1992, Tom joined Micro-Mark and currently serves as president. His models have graced the covers of multiple Micro-Mark catalogs. They are an excellent example of what can be accomplished when outstanding model building skills are combined with the tools listed throughout the catalog. Tom owns and operates a 1" scale live steam locomotive. He enjoys working with his son Joey as he develops his skills as a model steam locomotive engineer.

Tom earned the Golden Spike Award in March 2008. He quickly followed that accomplishment with his first Achievement Program Certificate: Author. Tom has published multiple articles in *Model Railroader*, *Trolley Talk* and *Railroad Model Craftsman*. He has enjoyed the fruits of his labor by conducting operating sessions twice a month. His second certificate was Chief Dispatcher earned in May 2008. Tom set his sights on what I consider the most difficult AP Certificate: Motive Power. He built three self propelled O Scale traction models: a Crane, Line Car and Steeple Cab Electric. A traction system needs electricity to function. Tom's overhead wire worked flawlessly throughout Somerset County as the motors earned their keep navigating simple and complex track configurations. The residents enjoy lighted homes, industries and streets. Even the tug Neshanic enjoys interior



Our own Tom Piccirillo is Master Model Railroader #418. President of Mico-Mark Tools, his O scale models have graced many catalog covers.

lights. All of this fine work earned the Electrical Certificate in September 2008.

Scenery was next on Tom's certificate list. He has masterfully combined county, marine and city scenes into a very picturesque layout. Be sure to look over his excellent work in *Great Model Railroads 2009*. The fine scenery stands out as a challenge for each of us to work towards. Tom's sixth AP Certificate was Civil Engineering. His layout contains turnouts, crossings and crossovers as well as wyes, simple ladders, complex ladders, a turntable and transfer table. Tom's last certificate was structures. He built seven models from scratch and five highly detailed models to complete the requirements. His curved trestle and bucket coal loader have graced the covers of the Micro Mart catalogs. ■



2009 NMRA NATIONAL CONVENTION

WWW.HN2009.ORG

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT



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

ISLAND CENTRAL RAILWAY

Although the ICR, not Illinois Central, but rather Doug Devine's Island Central Railway in Saint John, New Brunswick has been in operation for over forty years, it has morphed itself into a regional operations oriented HO layout of 2009 genre. Situated in a well designed 40x22 room, with comfortable crew lounge and relief facility, the ICR is a three level (not three shelf) point to point system where each level is reached by long inclines that are incorporated into one overall scene. This makes for long runs, many industries, yards and ports replicating the thriving rail operations around current day Saint John.

Although Doug says that scenery has always taken second place to operations, the ICR is fully scenic with hand painted murals depicting the prototypical locations modeled. The latter was not always so, for Doug started with a more freelance approach with fictitious location names and backdrops. When he decided to go "prototype," his crew changed town and industry names and lowered the original Appalachian mountain backdrops by over painting more sky to better depict the terrain along the Saint John to McAdam subdivision.

Technically, like the scenery, much has changed over the years. CTC has become the norm. Tethered DC cabs were replaced by Aristocraft radio cabs which in turn were replaced in 2005 by NCE DCC. The fast clocks have changed ratios from 12:1 to 8:1 and switch lists have been replaced with what Doug says, is a revolutionary new simplified car control system known as "tab on car." You can see why Doug is operations oriented.

The 10 to 12 operators on the ICR are a close knit group of guys that have a good time and have a good sense of humor. If you take a look at Doug's website you will see a web site that will show you plans for all three levels, operating notes, pictures, video and the ICR's Rules which are fun to read! Examples include... *No operator can know all the rules and if the President suspects operators know all the rules, he will change them. If the President is wrong, it is due to something the operator said or did and the operator must apologize immediately.* And the list continues... Doug and his crew live by "model railroading is fun." That, coupled with a well designed layout, make great operating times (as long as you know the rules). ■

Visit <http://www.geocities.com/islandcentral/> for more info.



Various scenes from Doug Devine's HO scale free-lanced Island Central Railway, loosely based on the railroad activity in and around St. John. PHOTOS BY BOB BOUDREAU

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

MADE IN THE NER: Old & Weary Car Shop

By Barry Abisch

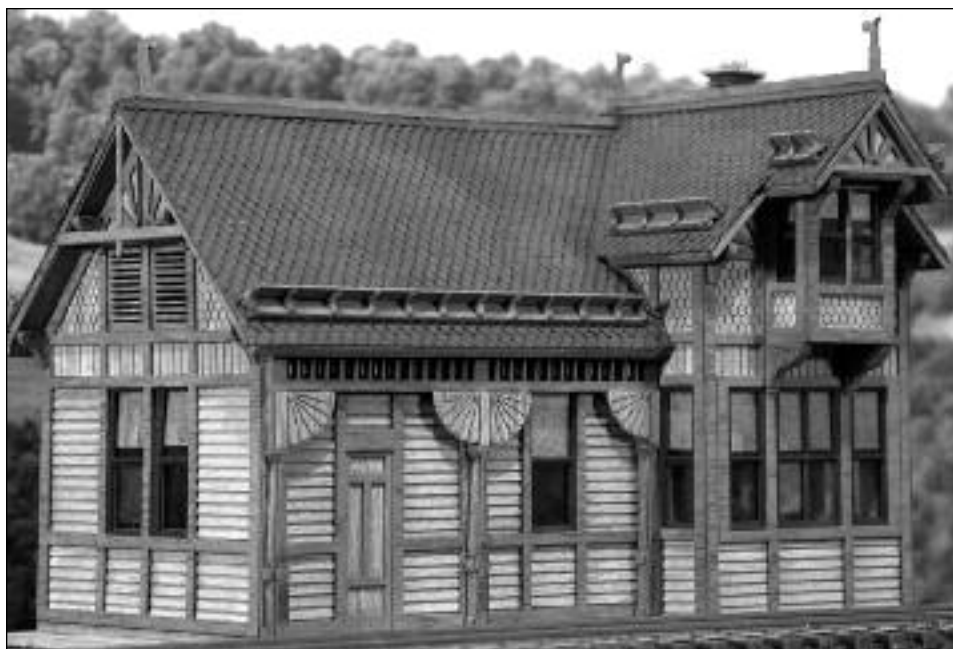
Metro North Division

When Allan Seebach set out to produce a model of a New York, West Shore & Buffalo “Plan 5” station, the only way he could get it exactly right was by doing it backwards. The Plan 5 station is the latest product from Seebach’s Old & Weary Car Shop. For more than 20 years, Seebach has made car kits and small structure kits for modelers interested in the New York, Ontario & Western Railway, which made its final revenue run in March of 1957. But the new station model became a “personal project” for Seebach.

Seebach grew up in Tappan, New York, not far from the New Jersey border. The New York Central’s West Shore Division ran past his boyhood home. Young Al’s playground was a rail yard where O&W cabooses and other equipment were stored to await the scavengers and salvagers. During its lifetime, the O&W had operated over the West Shore, stopping at West Shore stations, between Weehawken and Cornwall, where it took to its own tracks through the Catskills and on to Scranton and Oswego.

The Tappan station – built in 1883 following the West Shore’s Plan 5 design – was still standing while Seebach was growing up. But by the time Seebach was in business and able to recreate the station, all that was left was a basic floor plan and a few photographs. Only when fellow O&W historian and author Bob Karig showed him a copy of an 1885 “Carbuilders Encyclopedia” did Seebach find the details he needed to add the Plan 5 station to his company catalog. One problem: the layout of the West Shore station at Tappan was reversed to fit the terrain and track alignment. So Seebach had to flip the plans, and now produces the model in two versions: one for Tappan, and the “correct” version for other stops along the line.

With the designs in place, Seebach turned to Branchline Trains (another “Made in the NER” business, based in East Hartford, Conn.) for the actual production



ABOVE: The “NYWS&B Plan 5” passenger station kit project grew out of Allan Seebach’s childhood growing up along the New York Central “West Shore” in Tappan, New York. The New York, Ontario & Western had track-age rights over the West Shore from Cornwall to Weehawken, New Jersey (though NYO&W trains did not stop at Tappan). **BELOW:** Allan Seebach in his Old & Weary Car Shop retail location in Tappan.

of the laser-cut kits. The kit ran through four revisions before Seebach was satisfied. He then turned his focus to the instructions. “I try to make the instructions as good, if not better, than the models,” Seebach said.

The research that went into the Plan 5 station reflects Seebach’s interest in the history of the O&W. Seebach joined the New York Ontario & Western Historical Society in 1984, two years before he opened the Old & Weary Car Shop in his home. He has been active in the Society ever since, currently his is vice president of the Society and vice chairman of the Board of Trustees. Among other achievements, Seebach was instrumental in developing the Society archives, one of the largest collections of its kind in the country.

History remains the heart of Seebach’s business. Indeed, a few years ago he was honored by the O&W Historical Society for 20 years of service to preserving the history of the railroad through his Society activities and his business.

In common with many of the small man-

ufacturers who support model railroading, Seebach also operates a hobby shop. Seebach’s family owned a nursery which also housed a train store. In 2000, his father and uncle retired and closed both businesses. So, in 2001, Al Seebach opened his own retail shop in a local strip mall, where he also moved the base of his manufacturing business. The impetus for his kit business is the shortage of prototype models for fans of the O&W, Seebach says. Among other models, he has produced kits for O&W Series 8300 cabooses, hopper cars and lineside structures.

As demonstrated by the research that went into the Plan 5 station, Seebach is in no rush to add products at the expense of historic accuracy – even if it means doing some things backwards. ■

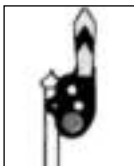


**MADE
IN THE
NER**

**Old & Weary Car Shop
33 Route 303
Tappan, NY 10983**

**845.680.0405
al1hdagent@aol.com
theoldandwearycarshop.com**

NER



New Members

List of new members joining the Northeastern Region NMRA, compiled by the regional office manager. Lists are updated quarterly, please send all membership corrections and additions to the Office Manager, c/o Mark Harlow.

COMPILED BY MARK HARLOW NER Office Manager

New Members as of 6/1/2009

CONNECTICUT

Mark Adams
Luciano Faraci
Howard Kaiser
George Lindley
Tom Murray
David Owens
Francis Richard
Jeffrey Van Wagenen
Yvonne Webber
James Webber
Jeffrey Keener
John Swainson
John Elwood
Bruce Lawler
Thomas Blundon
John Grosner
Ronald Musco
Joe Strtin
Marcel Perlman
Robert Schenker

MASSACHUSETTS

John Hillier
Philip Johnson
Fred Lockhart
Edwardrion
Fred Waskiewicz
James Duval
Robertnchek
Alan Green
Randy Torres
Andrew Crowley
Morton Fearey
Jack Foley
John Frassica
David Shamlan
John Walach
Peter Wilde
Peter Higgins
Frank Sandstrum

MAINE

Daniel Desclos

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Ed Kemp
Randolph Petren
Darryl Cathers
David Sias

NEW JERSEY

Barry Childs
Austin Frank
Avont Lowther
Andy McKellips
Adam Milo
Marc Pitanza
Richrtin
Christopher Todd

NEW YORK

Richard Chiarello
Richard Yeaman
Howard Brennan
Ned Schwartz
Gary Brandstetter
Vincent Glauda

Daryl Wonderly

James Olson
Matthew Rorke
Richard Spohn
Stephen Williams
Tom Principale
John Bemis
Vicki Travis

RHODE ISLAND

Carl Willi

VERMONT

Richard Collins
Carl Laskey

CANADA

AcDonald, NS
Billrtheleur, NS
Guy Loiselle, QC

WELCOME ABOARD!

You Could Become a Member of the Coupler Team!



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.



A short Rutland freight rounds the bend past the Wrisley Papers Mill on Bob Van Gilder's lovely New England-themed HO scale model railroad. A tribute to railroading in all of New England, this beautiful layout will be open to attendees of the upcoming Hartford National convention this July 5-11 in Hartford, Connecticut. Visit www.HN2009.org for the latest updates and information. PHOTO BY MIKE TYLICK

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