

Mohegan Pequot Model Railroad

The News for: March 2006

Condolences

With great regret we learned that Grace Curtis passed away suddenly. We will long remember the Club picnics we had at the Curtis home, and the long hours we spent in the basement there working on modules, thanks to the kind Curtis hospitality. The Club members express their condolences to Henry and his family.

Donations may be sent to the Second Congregational Church, 45 Broad Street, New London, CT 06320. A memorial service will be held at the church 11 AM, Saturday March 11.

World Wide Web

Over the last few months, I have been adding to and upgrading the website. I thought I'd share with you some of the major additions that have been done. First, the members section has really started to expand. There are pages for people with home layouts, an area for member projects, and member photo galleries. These have really started to expand thanks to contributions from a number of members and more contributions would be welcome.

Also, the how-to section has grown with contributions from a number of people. I am also trying to keep up to date with club activities on the website so there have been stories and photo galleries of all the recent train shows and club activities.

Even with all this progress I am looking for a number of very specific items to help move to a more complete website.

The first is the history section. There are lots of opportunities to show what this club

has done over its past and I have expanded the history section so we can show what we've done as a club. One thing I am looking for more photos of club events specifically dating back from over two years ago. Most shows over the last two years have been documented with the website in mind so there are photos from those shows but anything before that I would like to get pictures of.

Also, any other club activities such as club trips, picnics, etc. I am also adding a newsletter archive as a history reference. I am looking for paper copies of old newsletters so that we can pdf them and add them to the website. I have most of all the newsletters that have been sent in electronic form. Also, if anyone has any old newspaper clippings of the club, I am interested in seeing those as well, as we can pdf them and put them on the site.

Of course, I am always looking for contributions to the member sections or layouts section. If you have a module, working on a module, I would love to be able to put up a page with what you are working on. I can take photos and will be able to make arrangements to do that if you contact me.

I would also like to thank all the people that have currently contributed to the site: John Waller, Stu Dom, Dan DeLany, Jonathan Harger, Don Counsellor, Bob Applegate, and Glenn Siter. Also feel free to send any new ideas or suggestions over. Here is how you can get in contact with me:

Email: jimspav@alum.rpi.edu

Snail mail: 39 Buckland Street Apt 421-2, Manchester, CT 06040.

Jim Spavins

Much work required on HO Club modules

February Meeting Notes

The meeting on the 12th was cancelled due to the storm. The meeting on the 26th was held at the Bill Library.

Springfield went very well, with 21,003 patrons attending. This is close to the best attendance ever. The good weather may have been a factor.

Communications across the huge HO layout were still a problem. Stu and John W will investigate. Dan wants more of the new personal modules on show next year.

Bob McGregor wants to include the G-Gaugers in a future show. The Club will support Bob in anything he wants to do G scale wise!

Little Rhody Division are having a display at Warwick RI 18/19 March. Details are fuzzy at the moment, but hopefully will be resolved in the next day or so. The Club plans to be represented. The Division also plans a train display (no vendors) later in the year, which the members support in principle.

Willimantic is scheduled for April 23. Again details are fuzzy and Dan will try to clarify.

NER convention June 4th at Worcester. The morning after the meeting John W received an email from Mike Tylick to say the Club's presence with (a) layout(s) has been approved. John is negotiating for a preliminary inspection of the hotel layout.

P&W Railfan Club is hosting a show September 16 at Webster, MA. We are interested in attending the show, and John W is seeking more information.

First Church of Christ in Old Saybrook wants to know how to use a train display to raise money. The meeting agreed to support the idea in principle. A reply had been sent.

Main traction bus harnesses. Some of the new harnesses have faults and should be inspected and repaired as needed. See also VP notes.

March meetings will be at Larry's 12th and Bill Library 26th.

Work sessions, as a minimum, will take place Wednesday evenings and on Sunday 12th. Work is proceeding with Club modules. The 4' lift bridge will need to be replaced. Ballasting is required, an opportunity for members to learn how to do it, and painting is planned for the 12th.

At some time the transition and staging modules will need to be replaced with light-weight versions.

Field Trips

There is a plan to visit Bob Murphy's layout (now expanded) on 25/26 March.

The summer field trip is tentatively scheduled for 12 to 16 July.

Bert Beukelaer Update

Bert is back at Avalon but only until Thursday 3/2/06. He will then be moving to Academy Point in Mystic. I will let everyone know his room number and phone number when he gets settled. He has lost 13 pounds of excess fluid he had so he is able to breathe easier. He still isn't doing well as far as walking but maybe it will improve at Academy. The main phone number for Academy Point is 536-1133.

Berts phone number at Avalon is 572-5630.
Barbara

John Waller's Column

Much work required on HO Club modules

The dictionary defines the word “interlocking” as an adjective, such as fish with powerful jaws often have interlocking teeth. We rail fans also use the word as a noun, such as there is interlocking between signal and turnouts. It is also a noun referring to a part of railroad track where turnouts and crossings exist. When we bring trains out of the transition module onto the main lines, they pass through an interlocking.

Needless to say, interlockings can be very dangerous. My friend Graham Lewis from Melbourne kindly sent me a copy of Ian Macfarlane’s book *Railway Safety: Interlocking and Train Protection*¹.



Ian Macfarlane

The opening chapter in Ian’s book is called *Head-on at Harvey*. The importance of safety, signals, and interlocking was refined during the 19th Century, and some very important rules put into place. One century later, at Harvey, the rules had gone out management’s window.

Harvey, Illinois, is about 15 miles south of Chicago. In 1979 there were eight main tracks of the Illinois Central Gulf RR running through Harvey: two yard tracks, two suburban tracks, two fast-freight tracks, and two freight-only tracks. A “ladder” existed across all eight tracks.

On October 12, Amtrak 392 was approaching the ladder from the south on one of the fast-freight tracks. A south-bound ICG freight was stopped north of the ladder on the other fast-freight track, waiting to cross to a freight-only track, that is, across the track carrying the Amtrak train, which was running at maximum permissible speed, as given by the signals. It was night time.

The turnouts on the ladder which directed the Amtrak train into a head-on collision with the freight were thrown. With “train brakes applied in emergency and horn screaming²,” the Amtrak train hit the freight head on. The Amtrak locomotive was a write off, but the crew survived. Two locomotives on the freight were written off, and two crew members killed.

If interlocking had ever existed on the ladder, by 1979 it had been removed. The colored lights on the turnouts had been removed and replaced with colored reflective strips.

Who had thrown the turnouts? A single switch tender, alone, in the dark, charged with operating 28 turnouts spread along nearly half a mile of track, did it. The poor guy had minimal training and had only been on the job a few weeks. His supervisor was some distance away. The communication between them was by el-cheapo two way radio. But the radios were inadequate to span the distance between tender and supervisor, and messages had to go via a third party. The stage was set.

The only action taken by the NTSB at the enquiry was to recommend that speed be limited to 20 mph everywhere on the interlocking; not even a slapped wrist. Ian writes about the accident, and many others, in a very entertaining style³. Having

¹ ISBN 085825 779 3 published by Engineers Media www.bookshop.engaust.com.au, 2004.

² NTSB-RAR-80-3.

³ Lest you think that Ian is “Yank Bashing”, the cover of his book shows a Sydney commuter train on its side, having exceeded the allowable

removed interlocking, the ICG was relying on a set of very complicated and self-contradictory rules, which placed the onus on workers down at the track, not where it should be, with the managers.

Fortunately, the ICG is gone and Canadian National has taken over, a more safety conscious railroad.

My demo layout has a very simple interlocking, just two turnouts on a single-direction track. One turnout is for heading out, the other for heading in. The turnouts and signals are fully interlocked. There is a considerable amount of logic required to make the interlocking safe, and it has worked well. My new layout has far greater interlocking challenges.

The book reviewed here is Ian's third on the topic of railway safety. They all should be compulsory reading for anyone operating trains.

John

The President's Corner

This week the Prez approached me and, without warning, told me he had an article for the Newsletter. The next thing I can remember is hearing celestial music but which gradually faded away to the background noise in Larry's basement. It was true, and here it is:

I know it may be a shock to the system, but I actually was able to write a President's Corner article this month. Why this month you may ask? Well, to quote Bluto from Animal House, "Why Not". Now that the great Springfield Show has come and gone, I actually have found myself with a little free time here and there. Well, I guess a March President's Corner article wouldn't be complete without a post game wrap up of the Springfield Show, and after that, a look ahead at upcoming club activities.

speed at an interlocking. Seven passengers were killed.

All things considered, I think the show went very well. Setup went very smoothly, except for a few electrical glitches (more on those later), and operation seemed to go smoothly as well, with the usual mix of train wrecks and derailments. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and we got a return visit from Rich Einhorn, from "The Train Show". Rich had previously featured our club on his show, "The Train Show", while we were set up at the Stamford NMRA Convention. He took more footage of the HO Layout, as well as plenty of footage of our On30, N and G scale layouts, (Thanks Sandy). I even had my M&P club Sweathshirt, and my NEW M&P Club hat. Yes folks, I actually wore a club hat. Thanks to Stu for procuring and guilting me into wearing it.

I guess we'll start with a list of the Top 10 things I learned this year at the show, Letterman Style:

10. The passenger modules are still heavy.
9. MRC ControlMaster 20 powerpacks smell awful when you fry them.
8. The N-scalers will always have trains running before us.
7. There is something wrong with our new module harnesses.
6. Only Al can wear a suit and a do-rag and keep a straight face
5. Only I can lose an entire coal train and later find it in another box
4. You need an advanced degree in mechanical engineering to assemble the legs on Jim Spavins' new corners
3. 65 Doublestacks in one train is too many
2. The Bread Pudding at the Enfield Hometown Buffet is better than the Bread Pudding at the West Springfield Hometown Buffet

And the # 1 thing I learned at the 2006 Springfield Train show is:

1. No matter how much I rant and rave, I now know the office of the president has no authority whatsoever.

SO yea, things went very well, but of course, there were some things that came up that need to be commented on. We did encounter some electrical issues, which revealed some more pressing problems which were later discovered with our new module harnesses. The first clue of an electrical miscue came as I stood by the passenger module and got a waft of a pungent “something electrical just caught fire smell”. Turns out one of our main powerpacks had bit the dust, and Stu and I hurried out to buy a new one. A new powerpack was procured, and we proceeded to test the main lines. Test running revealed a working outside main, and an inside main that was shorted out. After much frustration, the suspect module was isolated. The module was Jim Spavin’s new corner module, and the problem was in the brand spanking new power bus harness we had just built. We unplugged it, bypassed it, and went on our merry way.

After the show, the plug was disassembled to reveal a very poorly soldered connection, with 4 cold solder joints, and globs of solder and ends of wires all touching one another. **NO WONDER IT DIDN’T WORK!!!**

The bigger issue is that these connectors were assembled as a group build on various Wed. night work sessions. Since they were built by multiple people, and there are over 35 of them, **EVERYONE SHOULD DISASSEMBLE THEIR CONNECTORS AND CHECK THEM.** We began this endeavor last Wednesday night, and over half of the connectors need to be re-done.

Moreover, if you are not comfortable with wiring or soldering, bring it Wednesday night and have one of the many club members who are proficient at soldering help you out. One of the greatest assets of a club like ours is the vast array of specialty

knowledge held by different members. If you don’t know something, ask around.

The passenger module has been running well, and Larry’s has been having a blast weaving trains in and out of the station. The system of dispatching seems to work well when a dispatcher (OK, Me) was around. The radios worked well once again, especially when we actually used them to talk to each other, not just wearing them because they look cool.

One thing we will be looking into in the near future is a new set of radios. Due to their bulky nature, and some reliability issues, we tend to only use the radios at Springfield. I’d like to try to change this over time, and get to the point where we use them at all our shows, except for really small displays like Willimantic, etc. I believe they would be a great help, especially at shows like Thomas, and any other venues where the room is loud. Not to mention that it sounds stupid to scream “DOWN ON THE INSIDE” at the tops of our lungs. It would also allow people who are operating modules, or just hanging out at the layout, know what’s going on, and they would know why/if a track was shut down. Having everyone wearing and listening to the radios would help operating immensely. Eventually, I’d like the club to purchase enough for all operators to have headsets, but for the time being, we’ll be testing out a few here and there to see which system works best for the club.

The last post-Springfield discussion I’ll have here is transportation. I felt this year went well, as all modules were there essentially by 9 AM Friday. This year did illustrate the sheer volume of stuff we have, and the need to further evaluate how we get the layout to and from the shows. With the anticipated influx of personal modules over the next few years, and the retirement of some of the older club modules, we should have less club “stuff”, and more member stuff. I’m not looking to make an across the board rule, but due to the ever-expanding

passenger module system, and other club necessities, it will probably be necessary in the future to rely more heavily on members to transport their own modules. It is a bridge that will have to be crossed when we come upon it, but for now it's just something to keep in the back of our minds.

Looking to the future, or at least the next few months, we're actually quite busy. We have a bunch of shows coming up, including the NER Convention in Worcester in June. Wed nights will focus on getting the passenger modules done, with work session to paint people (lots of HO Scale People⁴), and tree making sessions later in April. Jonathan is also heading up the work on the inside corner modules, and we're always painting/fixing/tweaking the other pieces of the layout to get things ready to go.

SO stop over, get your hands dirty, and have some fun. On the horizon: a new transition module, and new lightweight staging modules. This project will be a good one to get in on if you're new to the club, or just new to module building.

Rock on dudes; see you all Wednesday night...

Vice President's Niche

I purchased a main traction bus harness for my new 16' module fitted with 4-pin connectors. Previously, these harnesses were supplied by Sandy Alonzo and were professionally made. The new harnesses were made by Club members. I found faults in my harness, not hard to fix, but they would have given trouble at a train show.

As a consequence, Stu, Don, and I inspected all the harnesses we could find in Larry's basement on February 22. Many faults were found and corrected.

⁴ Ed: if we scale our dues down for these little people we would charge them 35¢ per year each; still make quite a bit of money?

I urge all members who have purchased these harnesses to have them inspected.

Another matter is how to connect to the harness in your module(s). Two don'ts: Never cut the wires in the harness. Do not attempt to solder additional wires to the Jones connector pins on the harness.

The recommended, and only, method is to carefully pare back the insulation over a short section on each harness wire, solder your wire to the harness wire there, then make good the insulation.

Setting up for a train show can be a nightmare if there are bad harnesses in the layout.

A final point is not crucial but helpful. If you have a control panel on your module, connect indicator LEDs across the inside and outside wires. I plan to do this on my new module, using green/yellow two-wire LEDs, green for normal direction, yellow for reverse. Then if a train stops unexpectedly you can see at a glance if main traction power is down.

John

Commercial Corner

(from Barbara Schubler)

Hello to all fellow model railroad buffs.

I am here to tell you that not only is TACDAB a dealer for BROADWAY-LIMITED IMPORTS. I also deal with TONY'S TRAINS, AMERICAN HOBBY DISTRIBUTORS, and PORTMAN HOBBIES And for those of you looking to purchase BACHMAN, BRANCH LINE, LIFE-LIKE or ATLAS...I am also a dealer for HOBBY STORES DISTRIBUTING.

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TACDAB can be reached by calling Barbara at 860-447-9023 or cell phone 860-460-4900 and the email is schubb@myeastern.com

Spread the word.... ONE OF THE ONLY REMAINING MODEL TRAIN HOBBY PLACES LEFT IN SOUTH EASTERN CONNECTICUT is TACDAB. *YOU'LL BE PLEASE WITH THE DISCOUNT YOU RECEIVE.*

REMEMBER... THE PLACE TO FILL YOUR MODEL TRAIN "WISH LIST" or anyone else is TACDAB!



Hello Model Train fans,
Well thanks to the Springfield show, I am now a dealer for HobbyTyme and Dallee. Also for those of you that have requested that I become a dealer for Precision Craft Models, I am already a dealer for them. They are a sister company for Boradway-Limited imports so I was already in there system.

This is good news for those of you that are N guage fans. It's great to finally have N engines and accessories that are good quality AND are equipped with LokSound.

Precision Craft Models have the same good looks as the Boradway HO models.

And don't forget the good discount you get from TACDAB!

HobbyTyme has some very nice engines that are made exclusively for them. Very nice looking, I will be sending you all a couple of photos of them as soon as I scan them. I don't know how many of you may have stopped at their booth at Springfield but they had 2 very nice models on display. One was the GP-38 Rail America NECR in HO and the GP-38 in N scale. They are very nice good looking engines in Red White and Blue.

Look for my new email in a few days with the photo's. I also have some n order so I will bring them to the next meeting if they arrive in time.

Happy modeling!

Barbara

Letters to the Editor

Glen Siter asked Clark at Springfield to be on the lookout for anything for the following railroads: Connecticut Western, Hartford and Connecticut Western, Central New England, Philadelphia, Reading and New England.

Model Railroad Calendar

Hi Guys,

We are posing a question to you all. We are having a discussion about having a layout only show sometime in the near future .This show would be just modular railroads with no vendors.

It would be a 2 day event open to the public here in RI. We are just putting out feelers at this point just to see the interest. If you think your group would like to be apart of this please give us some feed back.

There also could be a module contest to. Please forward this to any other modular groups that might be interested.

Thanks,
Little Rhody Div.s BODs

(From Ron Poirer)

Train Show – March 5, 2006 10 AM – 3 PM, Cheshire, CT. – Cheshire High School Cheshire Band Association
Contact: Thomas J. Kotulaki, 54 Old Lane Rd, Wallingford, Ct. 06492
(203) 265-7527

Station Stop Train Show – March 12, 2005 10 AM-4 PM, Fairfield, CT. Ludlowe Middle School
Housatonic R/R Club, Station Stop Show
Contact: (203) 255-3795 Friday 7-10 PM or www.housatonicmr.org

NMRA-NER, Model Railroad Show – March 19, 2006 9 AM-4 PM, Warwick, RI. – West Warwick Civic Center – Little Rhody Division Show

Train Show – March 19, 2006, 10 AM-3 PM, Greenwich, CT. – Greenwich Civic Center

Westchester Model R/R Club
Contact: Ron Rosenberg (914) 967-7541, or
Doug Kadow (607) 435-1198

Train Show – March 25/26, 2006 10 AM-4 PM, & Open House – Hingham, MA, - Bare Cove Park, Building 51
South Shore Model Railroad Club
Contact: (781) 740-2000 or
www.ssmrc.org

Train Show – April 2, 2006 10 AM-2 PM, Milford, CT. – Jonathon Law School
Robert L. Fabbri (203) 933-0922

Train Show – April 23, 2006 , 10 AM-3 PM, Willimantic, CT. – Windham High School
Eastern Connecticut Chapter NRHS

*Spring Convention – June 1-4,2006
Worcester, MA. – Holiday Inn, 500 Lincoln St. Thrifty Sixty NMRA-NER, Hub Division*

*National Convention – July 2/8, 2006
Independence Junction, Philadelphia, PA
Pennsylvania Convention Center
Mid-Eastern Region
National Model Railroad Association*

Train Show – Aug. 20, 2006, 9 AM-3 PM, New Haven, CT. –
New Haven City-Wide Field House
Contact: John or Robin Vanacore (203) 629-1083
www.AFSTrains.com

Train Show – October 8, 2006, 9 AM – 3 PM, Orange, CT. – High Plains Community Center
Derby & New Haven Model R/R Club
Contact: Number (203) 932-0185 or (203) 795-9644

*Fall Convention – October 20/22 ,2006
Parsippany, NJ, TBA*

Train Show – November 11, 2006 9 AM – 3:30 PM, North Haven, CT. Holiday Inn
NHRHTA

Train Show – December 2/3/, 2006 10 AM – 4 PM, Marlborough, MA, - Royal Plaza Hotel
[NMRA-NER, Hub Division](http://www.nmra-ner.org)
Info: 781-862-0388 or 508-528-8587

Big Railroad Hobby Show – January 27/28, 2007 Sat. 9 AM-5 PM, Sun. 10AM-5 PM, West Springfield, MA. – Amherst Railway Society
Eastern States Exposition Grounds

Club Administration

MPMRR Officers & Functionaries

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Pictures from Springfield



Much work required on HO Club modules

Wall-to-wall people



Now where did that train go?



So he did pay parking fees



Being signed up for his next movie role



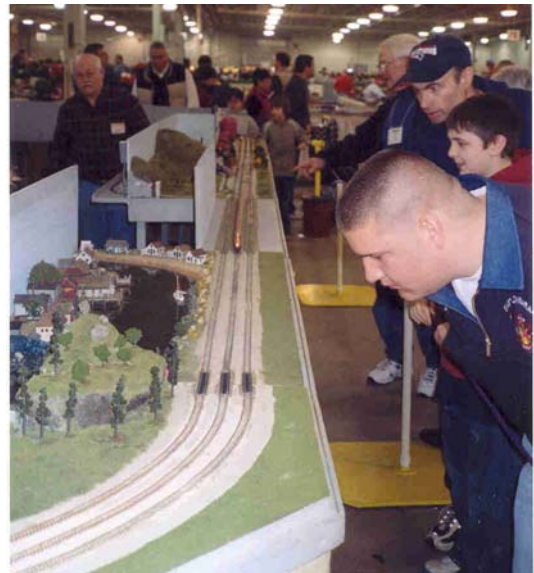
No, he is not asleep



Lord of all he surveys, now he is in full uniform



Gee! These trains are magnificent!



Darn! I forgot my magnifying glass.

Much work required on HO Club modules

<http://www.mpr.org>



Trying to remain incognito because he is about to try one of his suicide cross-over maneuvers on the passenger station

Much work required on HO Club modules