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President's Message Bob Fallier

From the President's Chair...

With the Lexington Museum show behind us and Greenberg just ahead, I'd say Northeast NTrak has had a pretty good show season. The weather has been very kind to us this year and thus far I think every show we've done has gone very well.

Lexington went very well indeed! We were not only all set up, but easily running trains a full hour ahead of opening time, and we had a steady stream of trains running all weekend long. Great job by everyone who attended. A special thanks to Jack Brown for stepping in and helping where he could, and of course to everyone who lugged and hauled, unpacked and repacked all their modules and equipment and trains. A yellow bullet train flew around the tracks at nearly the speed of sound (in N Scale of course) and Thomas and friends entertained kids at a slower pace at the Disney module. Jim Pyle had his new Seattle Tower with its operating outside elevator and mountain division auto reversing trolley. Of course Roland and Bob Pawlak always capture the imagination of young and old with their perennial favorites. T-Trak was also present with a sizeable layout in the museum lobby area. Thank You Fay. Attendance was down again, but that seems to be a general trend lately and Bob Pawlak is looking into that with the museum.

As I alluded to last month, I'm planning some changes for Winterfest 2018. Some of the changes will be in conjunction with George Michaels and TroveStar. We are going to tease you a little by giving you a preview of some of the items that will be used for awards. Just one or two pictures per month. We never know what the final donations will be from Kato and several other manufacturers until just hours before the banquet. But I can tell you this: TroveStar is going to make everyone happy in one way or another! But more on that this summer. We would also like to introduce an auction as is done at the national shows. We are still working on this idea, but we'd like your input about it, too.

Another Winterfest change will be on Friday night. Year after year the same few people volunteer to do clinics, which frankly is unfair to them. I've spoken with most of the major manufacturers who donate products to us about having a Mini-Show on Friday night and thus far they all agree to do it for us. This is your chance to get up close and personal, ask questions, and make your comments and suggestions known to the right people, without a dozen other people hanging over your shoulder while you try to talk above the crowd. I would also like to set up a small, table-top size DC/DCC mini layout so that they can do a live demo of new (continued page 3)

Museum Show Wrap Up By Bob Pawlak

The annual Presidents' Day weekend show at the Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington took place on Saturday and Sunday February 18-19, 2017. About 80% of the layout was assembled and clamped during the Friday afternoon set up period. The remaining two modules arrived bright and early on Saturday morning and everyone pitched in to have everything ready with trains running at least 15 minutes before the doors opened to the public at 10:00 A.M. Instead of the typical rush of a bunch of people, only a few people came in at 10:00. This was probably because Fay Chin had his T-Trak layout set up nearer to the entrance of the building (first time at the museum - welcome Fay!) so people probably visited there for a while before coming to the N-Trak layout down the hall.

The N-Trak layout was a simple 23' x 27' rectangle with two 4' corners and two 3' corners. This left about 8' of aisle space all around the layout. (We could have used another 8' or 16' of straight to make a 27' x 27' or 27' x 31' rectangle with only 6' aisles, but members tend to use the weekend and following week of school vacation for family vacation activities.) Across the front of the layout at the entrance to the room we had Roland Kelley's 8' circus module, George Michael's 4' helicopter Army base, then Bob Fallier's 4' straight, 4' Disney corner, and another 4' straight. Continuing up the right side we had Peter and Brian Mathews' 12' Auto Train module, Mark Ferracane's 4' Burning Building module, and a 3' corner borrowed from Dan Pawling. Across the back of the layout we had Bob Pawlak's 12' Bridges Canyon module, Jim Pyle's 4' straight Seattle Tower module, and Jim's 4' corner. The left side consisted of the 16' yard borrowed from Dan Pawling, Frank Dignan's 4' straight intermodal module, and 3' corner.

Jack Brown came early on Saturday and was there again on Sunday to help set up, tear down, and run trains almost continuously on the DCC Red and Blue Lines. Bob Pawlak and a few others kept the DC Yellow Line loop running long trains all weekend, and everyone else kept at least two trains running on both the DCC Red and Blue Lines most of the time. Various people handed off their DCC throttles to youngsters to run their trains for a few loops which added to the fun of the show. Brand new member Jim Nolan came early Saturday, brought a train which he ran, and ran, and ran several times. He came back on Sunday and was conversing with the crowd like a seasoned pro. Welcome Jim!(continued page 2)

T-TRAK Train Show Schedule - 2016 & 2017

If you wish to be part of the T-Trak layout contact Fay Chin Show Coordinator at e-mail faywchin@gmail.com

- March 25-26, 2017, Greenberg's Train and Toy Show, Shriners Auditorium, Wilmington MA**
 Show Sat & Sun 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
- April 2017, NMRA Spring Training, TBD**
- April 23, 2017, Hooksett Lions Model Train Show, Crawley Middle School, Hooksett NH**
 Show 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

MaiNe TRACK

Apr 23, 2016 Mount Ararat High School, 73 Eagles Way, Topsham, ME Set-up 8am Layout 12x20 ft.
 ***For the 2 Maine shows contact us ahead of time as we try to meet for breakfast. Times and locations of that may change.

2016-2017 NENtrak SHOW PARTICIPATION SCHEDULE

March 25,26, 2017 Great Train Expo, Shriners Auditorium, Wilmington, MA

Set-up: Fri 1:00pm to 5:00 pm - Sat 7:30am
 Show Sat 10:00am to 4:00pm - Sun 10:00am to 4:00pm
Coordinator: Frank Dignan - 508-866-9660

April 23, 2017 Hooksett Lions Club, Cawley Middle School, Hooksett, NH

Set-up: 8:00am - Show 10:00am to 4:00pm
Coordinator: Jeff & Russell Putnam - 603-835-6952

Show Dates **Subject to Change**...Check Newsletters for Updates. Please check schedule for errors and send up dates to Roland at: northeastntrak@msn.com
 Thanks for your help.

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I was a little disappointed that no one else besides those already mentioned were available to bring modules or come to help set up, tear down, or run trains. Attendance for the weekend was 293 adults and 273 children for a total of 532. This was down from a total of 683 last year and less than half of the attendance of all shows prior to 2012. An effort is being made to work with the museum to improve the publicity with the goal of doubling the attendance next year.

What to Expect at the Amherst Train Show
by Jenna Michaels

In January, I attended my very first [Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show](#) (January 27 & 28, 2017). Along with more than 22,500 people, I made my way to West Springfield, MA and descended upon The Big E (Eastern States Exposition) to experience this annual "anything and everything railway" event.

Over the years, I've attended a number of train shows. These events as well as "spousal osmosis" and research have exposed me to the world of model railroading.

My spouse (George Michaels, Founder of [TroveStar](#)) has been collecting n-scale trains for 20+ years and exhibits n-track and t-track modules at local train shows as a [Northeast N-TRAK](#) member. I've bought George a coveted [shorty tank car](#) or two and yes, I've helped him load these rolling stock and his Army Base train module into the bed of his pick-up truck.

As head of marketing for the [n-scale model train database on TroveStar](#), I research [bathtub gondolas](#) and [articulated well container cars](#). So I do have some experience with model railroading and train shows. However, I've never experienced anything like the [Amherst Train Show](#) – this ginormous venue delivers an all-encompassing and unforgettable model railroading experience.

Primed with Prototypes

My [Amherst Train Show](#) experience started before I even entered the more than 350,000 square feet of exhibit space. It began when I spotted several 30,000 gallon tank cars standing idle on the tracks adjacent to the show entrance. I thought this was pretty neat especially since this hobby, which has been around for over 100 years, is based on the modeling of real life locomotives, rolling stock, vehicles, structures and other prototypes. (The very first "model trains" were toy trains made in the 1860s of wood and metal [with no moving parts] and meant to be played with on the floor sans a track.)

While walking with other attendees of all shapes, ages and sizes toward the entrance, something else caught my eye. Little kids were carrying collapsible foot stools. These 3 or 4 year old boys and girls looked determined and on a mission. I had not seen foot stool-toting tykes at other shows. I did not give this much more thought and made my way out of the cold and into one of the four exhibit buildings full of operating layouts (of all gauges) and rows and rows of booths manned by many manufacturers, dealers, collectors, historical societies, supply shops and other model train-related folks.

Have Foot Stool Will See . . . Trains!

It wasn't until I was inside near the train displays that I put two and two together. There are a number of different scale sizes in model railroading. Thanks to the many train clubs who travel from as far north as Montreal and from all over New England and run hundreds and hundreds of cars on many, many feet of track of all gauges/widths, the Amherst show is a great place to see many of them. And that's exactly what these little kids did. They yelled "trains" and ran up to the layouts, expertly opened the foot stools and once at optimal viewing height, they just took it all in.

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Lexington Show Wrap-up

(l to r) Bob Fallier, Peter Mathews, Mark Ferracane, George Michaels, Bob Pawlak, James Pyle, Frank Dignan, & Roland Kelley.

Museum T-TRAK layout by Fay Chin



Jane & Fay Chin setting up on Friday at the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum, T-TRAK layout

T-TRAK for the first time on February 18-19, 2017 setup an operational display for the National Heritage Museum (now known as Scottish Rite Masonic Museum). The layout was on ten (10) tables in an "U" shape with dimensions 20' x 11'. The T-TRAK would be equivalent to a 20' x 22' rectangular layout, which is almost the same size as the NTRAK layout at the museum. Below are photos of the layout and the complete layout on a cart.



T-TRAK layout on a cart.

(President Message continued from page 1) products for you. Registration will be set up in the elevator lobby and the banquet room will be exclusively dedicated to the Mini-Show. **Any volunteers to provide a simple layout?** An inner and outer loop would be fine. One for DC, the other for DCC.

Lighting and animation. I've been playing with an MRC Light Genie, Touch Toggles, and Woodland Scenics "Just Plug" lighting. Each system is unique and can be used in a number of ways. With the Touch Toggles set that I have, I can control Tortoise Stall motors or turn lights on/off. What surprised me is that with LED's, I don't have to worry about the reverse current burning out the LED. Nice! The touch sensor and status LED can be mounted entirely behind a glass or plastic panel. Easy clean-up and no buttons sticking out! The Just Plug street lights are very nicely scaled and the master module can control the brightness on 4 different light circuits, so you could adjust interior light levels differently from street light levers. Downside - the very fine wires are easily broken and *for me...*impossible to strip or solder. The N scale lampposts are also very easily bent. The MRC Light Genie is a very cool toy! Lots of ways to use it and at shows you could hand the remote to a child and let him or her turn your lights on and off.

With "wife approval" I brought the ScaleTrains "big blow" turbine set. It is very impressive! and loud. With DCC you initially start up the A-unit and the small diesel is heard running. In this mode, speed is very limited as only the 850HP diesel is heard running. But after 20 seconds or so, you can light up the turbine in the B unit. Have your earplugs handy as this is a screamer! Having spent years around jet engines, I can tell you ScaleTrains has really captured the sound extremely well, even in N scale! The A-B set is also heavy and you will have no problem pulling 50-70 cars. Guess what? TroveStar will have a set available at Winterfest 2018! Now that is worth buying raffle tickets for! More good news next month. Meanwhile - Happy Rails!

History in the Making

So what exactly did they take in? The American railways began in 1830 when Peter Cooper's American-made steam locomotive, dubbed Tom Thumb, steamed along a 13 mile stretch of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad track, one of the oldest U.S. railroads. Many model railroaders create vignettes (stories in time) that began with the Tom Thumb. They depict American railways or choose foreign lands as inspiration. The foot stool-toting tykes had the chance to see many layouts, which replicate past and present eras of a (mostly) American cultural landscape. Some are loosely based on prototypical railroads and locations and others are more exacting in their representations.

It was neat to see adults share this hobby with children and more importantly it was nice to see kids engaged in the process (carrying their own foot stools) to see the train displays. I had read collector profiles in media outlets like the [N Scale Enthusiast Magazine](#) and knew the familiar theme or variation of it: "My Dad gave me a such and such train set when I was a kid and I've been hooked ever since." However, seeing dozens and dozens of future generations of train modelers / collectors mesmerized by so many train layouts was more powerful than any magazine article. I couldn't help but wonder if some of these kids would one day in the future make their way back to the Amherst Train Show and participate in the Youth in Model Railroading section.

N-Scale and Winterfest

I was most interested in the n-scale (1:160) layouts and manufacturers or [Winterfest](#), the annual NTRAK convention held in conjunction with the Amherst Train Show. Three clubs -- [Northeast T-TRAK](#), [MaiNE Track](#) and [Northeast N-TRAK](#) -- participate in Winterfest.

Some of the N-TRAK and T-TRAK layouts / modules I saw were quite impressive and spanned a wide variety of themes, representing different time periods, landscapes and countries. Layouts included: scenic mountains, realistic-looking bridges and canyons, nuclear reactors, fields full of solar panels, a cityscape with a building on fire and firefighters hard at work; a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus complete with tents, elephants and everything needed to bring the circus to town; a bridge running over a waterfall (T-TRAK) and much more.

For some clubs, such as Northeast N-TRAK, Winterfest and other shows represent the only way to meet and socialize and run trains together as a group. This year marked the club's 38th year attending the show!

Continuing Trend: More Realism

After seeing lots of great operating train layouts, I tried to connect with as many n-scale manufacturers as possible. The Amherst Show makes it quite easy to talk with a wide array of companies spanning [Athearn](#) to [Walthers](#) and learn about new products and features (trends). I chatted with a number of n-scale manufacturers [so far I have written blogs on only a handful of those exchanges ([Atlas/BLMA](#), [InterMountain](#), [ExactRail](#), and [MicroTrains](#))]. "More realism" (factory-installed DCC-sound, more realistic sound, more lighting features, etc.) thanks to more sophisticated micro-electronics was definitely one of the continuing trends echoed by these and other makers of n-scale inventory.

First Places Goes To

In addition to sharing news of their products, manufacturers also share some of their inventory, which is awarded during the Winterfest Awards Banquet Dinner. During a dinner of steak or chicken shared by over one hundred members (mostly men) of all three n-scale clubs and a smattering of women, train sets, engines, accessories and many other items were given away as raffle items and [contest prizes](#) for categories including, Motive Power – Steam; Rolling Stock – Passenger; Structures – On Line; Humorous; Parade of Trains; and Best in Show. This year TroveStar volunteered to help Winterfest organizer Robert (Bob) Fallier tally contest votes. TroveStar also donated a prize.

Each year Winterfest invites a guest speaker to the banquet. This year Bill Schneider, Product Development, [Rapido Trains](#) shared an abbreviated power point presentation that shed light on both the company and the production process of HO and N-scale engines. It was fascinating to learn the involved process -- from the raw idea to the computer-aided drawings to the translation issues with Chinese workers to the actual very hands-on process -- behind the creation of some of these model trains.

Well, there you have it: my very first and most definitely not my last Amherst Train Show. I did not touch on every aspect of the show (would love to learn about the Clinics offered by manufacturers) . . . but that's what next year is for . right?

Education and Philanthropy

Kudos to the Amherst Railway Society. For more than 50 years, this organization has been dedicated to educating and informing the public about model railroading and railroads in general. The Society also dons a philanthropic hat and has donated over \$750,000 to railroad preservation and restoration projects all over the United States. Thank you!

See you at the 50th Anniversary Show in January 2018!

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The T-TRAK display was fun and eventful. Since the layout was at the lobby of the museum, many youngsters were unsupervised while their parents were paying for admission. It was a test of endurance. The damage report was not too bad, a bent drawbridge metal linkage from a child mishandling and a loose gear on the coal dumper, again from mishandling. All repairs were fixed for the following Greenberg train show at Handover MA.

The teardown of the layout when quickly. The museum allowed only an hour before locking the doors. I like to thank everyone for loading my thirty (30) T-TRAK modules onto my truck after the show.

Until next year!