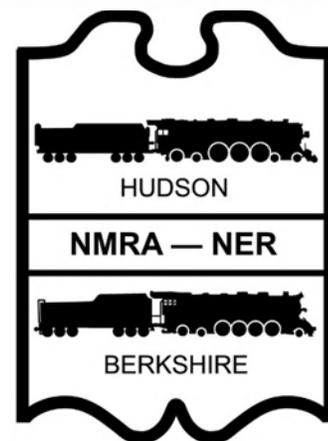


FORM 19

The Official Newsletter of the
Hudson-Berkshire Division
of the NER NMRA



Order Number 363

February 2021

Virtual Meeting February 19, 7pm

From the Editor By MARK SKLAR

February is here and I am at my basement workbench with a little electric heater by my feet. I am almost done working on a F&C resin kit of a New York Central USRA caboose. February has started with very cold weather so I am staying inside. If you are working on a project send me a picture so everyone can enjoy seeing it.

In this issue on page 5, there is a description of John Valachovic's Raquette Lake Railway. John will be presenting his N scale layout at the Friday, February 19th virtual meeting. We hope you can join us to see John's layout. Mark the date on your calendar. *If you don't have a camera or microphone on your computer don't worry. You can just watch and listen. You only need a computer with headphones or speakers and any internet browser. You can also use a tablet or smart phone. Even if you come in late please join in.*

Also on page 6, Bob Mohowski has an introduction to an interesting story he wrote for *Locomotive and Railway Preservation* many years ago. The first part of that story starts on page 7 and will finish up next month. Thank you Bob.

Finally, Ken Nelson presents Part 3 on "Tips for Operation". We learn more about yard tracks on page 8. Thank you again Ken.

That is all for this month. Keep warm!

-Mark

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Form19

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The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Division. Products and publications mentioned in *Form19* in no way constitute an endorsement by the Division.

Contributing to the Form19

The *Form19* staff welcomes all contributions. Letters, articles, photos, and other items may be mailed or e-mailed to the editor. Please include a note if you would like materials returned. Suggestions also welcome.

Hudson Berkshire Division PO Box 83

Clifton Park, NY 12065-0083
trains@hudson-berkshire.org

President

Irwin D. Nathanson
609 Diamond Point Rd
Diamond Point, NY 12824
518-668-9892
trains@hudson-berkshire.org

Vice President

Doug Dederick
32 Van Dyke Drive South
Rensselaer, NY 12144
518-283-5063
dougdederick7@gmail.com

Treasurer

Benjamin Maggi
602 Albany Shaker Road
Loudonville, NY 12211
585-506-2680
BenLMaggi@hotmail.com

Form19 Editor

Mark Sklar
121 Brandon Ter.
Albany, NY 12203
(518) 229-9421
mark4527841@gmail.com

Bert Pflagl

Associate Editor
bpflagl@gmail.com

GTE Manager

James Lauser
1814 Park Blvd
Troy, NY 12180
james@jlauser.net
(518) 528-5453

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The Ready Line

By Irwin D. Nathanson

Working on the Railroad

In last month's column, I made some forecasts for 2021. Sadly, one of my negative forecasts has already come true: the NMRA National Convention, scheduled for July in California, has already been *canceled*. Whereas *Regional Conventions* can be *postponed*, with all subsequent conventions being pushed back, there's too much advance planning with *National Conventions*, so when they cannot be held, they get canceled, not postponed, and subsequent conventions are still held as originally scheduled. Due to COVID-19, this is the second National Convention to be canceled in a row. But I am still optimistic that our Regional Convention will still go forward in October.

I'm a member of a local (loosely defined) Wednesday Night 'Round Robin Group. Many (most?) of the members are also members of our Hudson-Berkshire Division (HBD). Since we have not been able to meet in person since early last year, we have been staying in touch via e-mail, sharing photos and stories about various projects we have been working on. Some of those projects have appeared in the pages of the *Form 19* or on the HBD web site; many more have not (more below).

It never ceases to amaze me, the talent we have within the Division and within the Group! Most of the modeling I have seen is utterly amazing! To my eye, most of the models would qualify towards the NMRA Master Model Railroader (MMR) Achievement Program (AP), with many models also qualifying for AP Merit Awards. Yet although a few of the Group are already MMRs, I doubt if many of the others are actively pursuing this certification. And I cannot understand why...

As Bob Hamm and Kevin Surman once explained to me, the main purpose of the AP is to help members learn and apply new skills, to help push them to try things they would never otherwise attempt on their own. Well, that is certainly the case with me. Especially with all the extra free time I have due to the continuing COVID-19 lockdown. A lot of what I have been doing has been, for me, really pushing the envelope.

For example, back in pre-COVID times (can we really remember way back then?), when we had in-person Division meetings, I attended two great clinics given by Artie Krass. These were about using Arduino electronics and software to automate and animate our model railways. Back then I was impressed, but I was worried that such projects were way out of my league. Then, a Product Review in the December 2020 issue of *Model Railroader* magazine caught my eye... This Review was for a Dr. Duino Explorer with Model Railroad Expansion Pack.

In effect, this is an introduction to the possibilities Arduino devices can add to a layout. These include special effects like custom light emitting diode (LED) sequences, sound effects and layout control with servos and bloc detection. This kit is a helpful all-in-one, uncluttered prototyping board. All the components are supplied, but they all need to be assembled (read: soldered onto the bare circuit board).

The kit comes with secure log-in information to the Dr. Duino web site where I found very comprehensive, step-by-step, well illustrated instructions. With the purchase of my kit, I had full

(Continued on next page)



(Ready Line Continued)

access to the doc's on-line Help Desk. Typically, when I had questions (and Artie will not be surprised that I had a great many!), I usually received helpful answers the same day or the very next day.

In an e-mail, I thanked Artie for being my inspiration. He replied, asking me "how much soldering was involved?" My reply was rather vague: "Lots!" In writing this article, I decided to take an inventory, to give myself and Artie a specific answer. The results are shown below. This table also catalogs most of the components supplied with the basic (Explorer) kit.

Additional components, such as MicroSD MP3 player module, speaker, servo motor, infrared detectors and more are included in the Model Railroad Expansion Pack. You can check this out at www.drduino.com/modelrail

Part	Qty	# Pins to Solder
3-Pin Headers	19	57
2-Pin Shunts	8	45
Female Sockets	6	62
Push Buttons	5	20
Test Points	9	9
LEDs	6	12
Arduino Nano	1	30
Light Dependent Resistor	1	2
Potentiometers	3	9
Resistors	9	18
Blue Tooth Module	1	6
Buzzer	1	2
8-Neopixel	1	4
Voltage Regulator	1	4
Organic LED	1	4
Grand Total for Soldering		284

(No one should be scared off by all this soldering! If I can successfully do it, anyone in HBD can do it! This is really a great product from a great company – highly recommended!)

The main points I am getting to are these:

- Without Bob's mentoring me on my progress towards MMR, and teaching me soldering skills, I would never have been able to solder all those components without burning something up, destroying the circuit board or causing other untold damage.
- If Artie had not presented his clinics on Arduino, I never would have looked twice at the Product Review in *Model Railroader* and would never have ordered the Explorer Kit + Model Railroad Expansion Pack.

Getting back to the AP, I am planning on submitting my completed Explorer Shield, and Model Railroad Expansion Pack projects as some fulfilled requirements towards my Model Railroad Engineer – Electrical Achievement Award.

What Achievement Awards are *you* working on? I will bet a lot of what you are doing would qualify – all you need to do is submit the paperwork which really isn't so difficult. And our Division AP Coordinator (read: coach and helper!) Kevin Surman, would be glad to help if you ask!

Do not forget: our Editor, Mark Sklar, could always use new materials from our members. You do not need to be

a professional writer to appear on the pages of the *Form 19*...Mark can help you get your article ready for publication. And returning to my theme above: your articles will count toward your Model Railroad Author Achievement Award.

For example, send us an article of a rail-fanning trip you have taken, or brief descriptions and photos of projects you have been working on. These projects do not always have to be Merit Award winners, they can be bloopers as well or anything in between! None of us should take our modeling too seriously, remember that model railroading is fun! We all have the Good, the Bad and the Ugly! (Credit is due here to the Editors of the Central New York Division *Red Markers* newsletter.)

As you will note elsewhere in this issue, our Vice President Doug Dederick has, as always, put together remarkably interesting (virtual) meetings for this month and next. Weather and COVID-19 permitting, we *may* start having outdoor, socially-distanced, mask-wearing, in-person events again starting in the Spring.

Take care, everyone!

Irwin



HBD Upcoming Events/Meetings

HBD Vice President Doug Dederick has planned virtual meetings for February and March. Mark these dates on your calendar.

February Virtual Meeting Friday the 19th 7PM

This month, Friday February 19th at 7pm we will revisit John Valachovic N scale Raquette lake Railway. This will be our 3rd Virtual meeting on Google meet. Last month we had 33 participants and I am hoping that you will all join us again this month for what should be a great Power Point. If you were unable to join us last month, I am hoping you make it this month.

March Virtual Meeting Friday the 19th 7PM

In March we will have Jim Lewis from Model Train Technology give a clinic on “Lighting and Animation“. This should be a great clinic on some of the products they offer and the different ways they can be used. They offer products in both HO and N scale and some in O scale.

February Virtual Meeting Introduction

By James Lauser

Hi everyone! Since it still isn't wise for us to meet indoors, and it's too cold for us to meet outside, your Hudson-Berkshire Leadership Team is continuing virtual meetings. I will be hosting the meeting on Google Meet, which is a service similar to Zoom or Webex. You'll be able to join the meeting from any computer, tablet, or smartphone with an Internet connection, and there is **no fee or signup** required. There's also no software to install; the meeting will run right in your web browser.

A few hours before the meeting starts, a link for the meeting will be sent out via Constant Contact, and the link will also be posted on the main page of hudson-berkshire.org. Simply follow the link and you'll be brought to the meeting. If you're already signed in to a Google or Gmail account, you'll be

brought into the meeting immediately. If not, you'll be prompted to enter your name. You may also get a notification asking for permission to use your camera or microphone.

Simply follow the prompts and you'll be brought into the meeting. You might need to wait a minute to be accepted, but once you are, you're all set. I'll start allowing people into the room around 15 minutes before the meeting starts.

During the meeting, I'm going to have everyone but the presenter muted by default to cut down on background noise so that everyone can hear clearly. If you have a question during the meeting that you'd like to ask, please type it into the chat, and I'll read them all at the end of the meeting. To access the chat, click the bubble icon in the top right corner of the screen, and then type your message in the box that appears.

That's all there is to it. Please join us!



John Valachovic's Raquette Lake Railway



For most of us when we talk about building a home layout we look to the prototypes to model after. In this neck of the woods those railroads would most likely be the New York Central, the D & H, or the Rutland to name a few. But there were other less known railroads that lived in these here woods. One such railroad was the Raquette Lake Railway.

A few years ago John Valachovic gave the members of the HBD a Power Point on his soon to be home layout of the Raquette Lake Railway. Since then John has started construction on his N scale home layout and this clinic is an update to bring people up to speed on the progress he has made. The Raquette Lake Railway model runs from its connection at the Adirondack Division at Carter Station to Raquette Lake and also includes the Thompson-Dix Logging Line. All the track work is installed and wired, and the scenery is underway. An operating scheme has been developed and put into place. The layout is based in 1920 (generally) and now is completely steam driven. Steam is

modeled with the best available products, and in N scale it is not a rivet counter's paradise (Per John). This clinic will provide an overview of the prototype, an overview and discussion of the model and some of the upcoming work that will be going into this project.

John has put in a lot of work to see his dream come true so please join us to see what he has accomplished in the last few years. After all this is what makes this hobby so great, sharing your love of your railroad and hobby with others.

Note: You DO NOT need to download Google meet to join the meeting. The link to the meeting is on our web site <http://www.hudson-berkshire.org>, on our Facebook page, or through Constant Contact. Just click on the link and click "Join Meeting". Note you may be prodded to use your microphone and camera, and if you want to be seen and heard you will need to accept.

-Doug Dederick



January Meeting Report

By: Mark Sklar

On January 22nd our division had its second virtual meeting. The meeting started with division business, then Bob Hamm used his gruff and entertaining alternate persona Grant Cleveland to narrate the trip. Using a mix of live presentation and recorded videos, Bob kept everyone's interest. There were up to 33 members watching. Thank you Bob.



Lake Champlain's Last Railroad Drawbridge

BY ROBERT E. MOHOWSKI

We were driving home from a family camping trip to northern Vermont, crossing the northern end of Lake Champlain. Paralleling our auto route across the water and just a few hundred yards south, was the Central Vermont's route from New England to Montreal. The railroad utilized fill and trestlework for its crossing with a swing bridge over a boat channel leading into Missisquoi Bay. There was a green house-like structure on the bridge sporting CV's script logo in yellow and a person on the structure. Perhaps he was the draw tender? The scene intrigued me and with that was born the idea of a story.

I contacted the CV and received permission to do a piece on the bridge. A few weeks later, I met a CV supervisor at the bridge and he took me out to the operator's house where I met Gerald Ostiguy, a very friendly gentleman of French-Canadian descent. I camped nearby and spent a couple of days with Gerald at the bridge. He kindly allowed me to use his fishing boat to photograph trains from the water. My thanks to Phil Larson, Gerald Ostiguy, Don Valentine, and Andy Clermont for technical data and Mark Smith who gave me permission to use this article which I originally had written for his publication, *Locomotive and Railway Preservation* (July-August 1990).

(ed: read Bob's story on the next page.)

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Lake Champlain's Last Railroad Drawbridge

BY ROBERT E. MOHOWSKI
PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

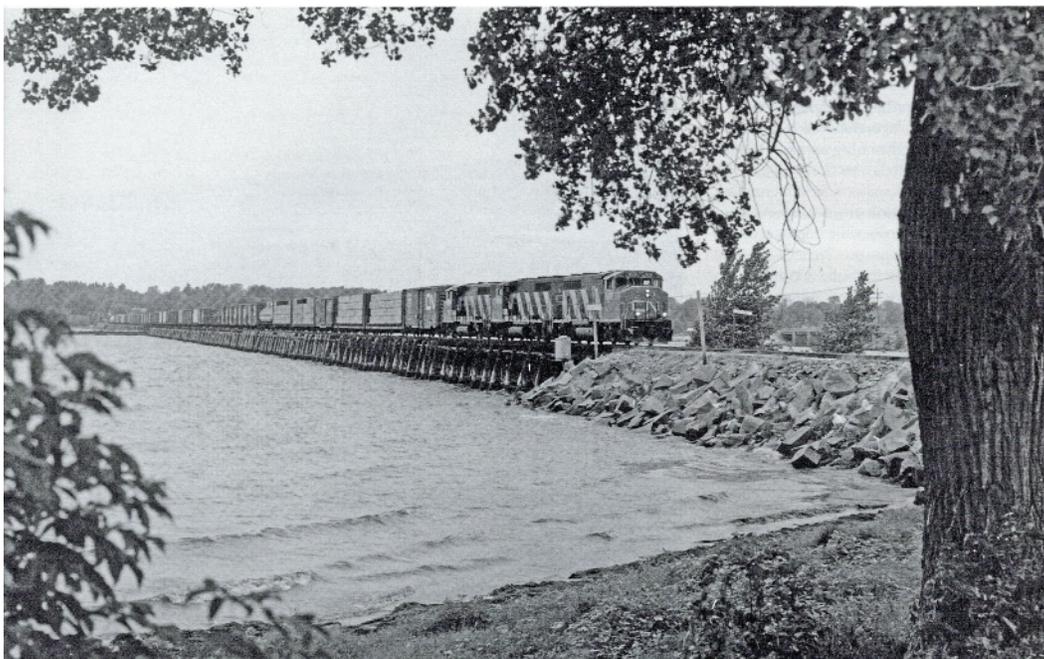
"Good morning, train 447 on the Swanton subdivision northbound. The drawbridge at East Alburg is secure for you to go by."

"Okay on the drawbridge for 447," comes the French-accented reply on the radio. Two short horn blasts follow, and four Canadian National 9600-class engines sitting at the West Swanton stop board begin a slow, almost imperceptible movement onto the bridge. Dozens of gray and white gulls, resting on the rails and stringers, raise a raucous protest over their forced movement. At the draw span near the center of the bridge, the engineer leans out to pass a few words in French to the draw tender, who waves while looking over each passing car.

Dozens of CN and Central Vermont boxcars assigned to newsprint service rumble past. Among them are empty bulkhead flats, whose steel lading straps twang an accompanying note to the rhythmic bass of wheels thumping across rail joints. A few final thumps signal the CN van, its yellow cupola signifying international service. When the end of the 125-car northbound reaches the marble fill at the west end of the bridge, the flag man riding the rear platform keys the radio mike, "On a de passe le pont, 447" ("Clear of the trestle, 447"). By this time the head end is at least a mile closer to

Canada, and the engineer's response is to pour on the horsepower for the uphill climb to the border. With No. 447 gone, Gerald Ostiguy, the CV's draw tender on the East Alburg trestle in northwest Vermont, prepares to deal with another kind of traffic, for his trestle spans Missisquoi Bay, a popular, busy waterway at the north end of Lake Champlain. Sailboats and powerboats, rowboats, canoes, and even a kayak or two head in or out of the bay. Its shores are dotted with summer homes, camps, and docks, almost all of

Rain and wind blowing in from the south raise a chop on the lake, but freight No. 447 is oblivious to the weather. The 82-car consist will require some switching at St. Albans before the train continues south. The rock fill at right is waste from one of northern Vermont's marble quarries.





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which have some type of pleasure craft tied alongside. The majority of these boats can easily pass through the channel and under the 102-foot-long draw span; it's the cabin cruisers and sailboats that Ostiguy must watch for.

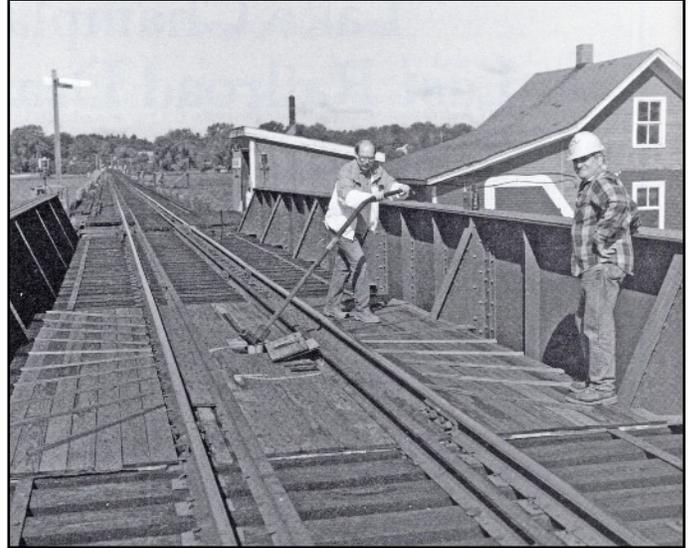
No train will cross the trestle again until Amtrak's 624, the southbound *Montreader*, arrives at 7:00 pm, so rather than unnecessarily delay the bigger boats, Ostiguy partially opens the draw span. First, he sets a pair of manual semaphores on either side of the span at "Stop." Then he walks onto the span and unlocks and pulls back the pins that hold the draw in place. In the center of the span, just above its large turning gears, he removes two covers to reach a pair of large sockets. The first controls steel wedges that hold the span in vertical alignment with the trestle. Using a five foot-long removable steel bar that fits into the socket, Ostiguy turns it a few times; well greased steel pipes and bell cranks transmit his effort to the wedges, pulling them back. Ostiguy then connects the bar to the second socket and turns it a few times, swinging the span open a few degrees rather than the full 90. Since the draw tender must be on the span to open it, Ostiguy is isolated from his shelter and line communication when it is open; opening the span only partway saves a good deal of time but does not cut him off from the rest of the trestle.

Some days, Ostiguy doesn't have to open the bridge at all. His record, however, is 27 times during an eight-hour shift. Recalling that day, Ostiguy states that he got a good workout. He had to walk 594 complete circles pushing the turning bar ahead of him!

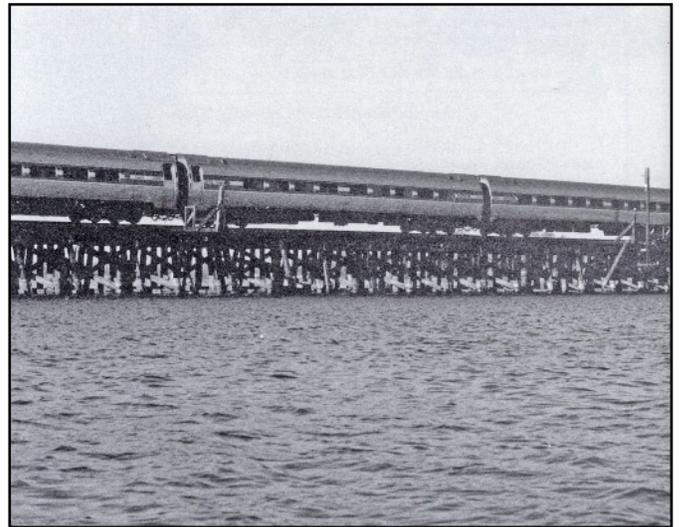
Many years ago, the draw tender and his family lived in the house near mid trestle. The former kitchen is now the bridge office where a dispatcher's phone, Bell phone, and radio communication are located. A table, chairs, kerosene stove, sink, hotplate, and a few other amenities are provided. Ostiguy has recently painted the room; he is currently repainting the exterior of the building, and has included a large CV emblem on the east side of the structure.

In a small shanty next to the house is an emergency motor car equipped with a gas powered fire pump and hose. Charred piles near the east shore remind railroaders of the need to always be on the watch for fire. An alarm system has been installed over the length of the structure with signals located in the bridge and dispatcher's offices. In addition to keeping an eye open for fire hazards, the draw tender walks the bridge frequently for

general inspections and inspects each train as it crosses; on occasion, he has reported flat wheels and sticking brakes.



Paul Larner, the CV's Supervisor of Operating Practices, turns the mechanism that pulls the wedges, which bear the weight of the span when it is closed. At right is Gerald Ostiguy, who knows all the subtleties of the span- he has been an operator and maintainer of the trestle for many years.



Amtrak No. 60 is about an hour behind schedule as it heads north behind engine No. 391. Draw tender Ostiguy, with his usual diligence, watches the train's 10-mile-per-hour passage and will report his observations to the crew. Variations in lake level are visible on piles and cribbing. Higher water means more openings, due to reduced clearance at the draw span.

(Final part 2 continued next month)



TIPS FOR OPERATION

Part 3

By: Ken Nelson

Continuing our series on operation, we are ready now for our third tip:

DON'T CHERRY PICK

I can remember our Tuesday Night Group operating on a friend's railroad some years ago, and on several occasions, I was assigned to be on the yard crew. Our orders would say something like: "Make up a train using the New York Central box Car number 123, the Texaco tank car 456, two Refrigerator Cars numbered 789 and 101112, and a caboose. Each of these cars would be on different tracks, usually several cars deep, and we would have to first find them, then pull them out, then after putting them together, add the caboose. This is cherry picking, and is almost never done on the prototype. Keep in mind that a brakeman or clerk would have to walk all over the yard to find each of those cars, and then tell us where they were. This wastes time.

Instead, as a road crew would bring in an arriving train, we would have them put their entire train on an open track, at no more than 4mph. Remember Tip Number 1. Then they would take their power to the engine terminal. Meanwhile we would uncouple the caboose and take it to the caboose track. Next we would pull all of the cars from this train and begin to make up not one, but several trains on different tracks simultaneously. At the beginning of the session (or before the session starts) the Yardmaster would have been told what trains were scheduled to leave from his yard, as well as those that were arriving, and in what order they might arrive. In addition, he would be told approximately how long each would be, and if there was anything unusual about any of them, such as a

special train that may need special handling, a hazardous material car, or a car with an oversize load which may need special care in switching. There may even be a business car at the end of the train with the president of the railroad riding in it. This would have to be switched to its own special track somewhere in the yard.

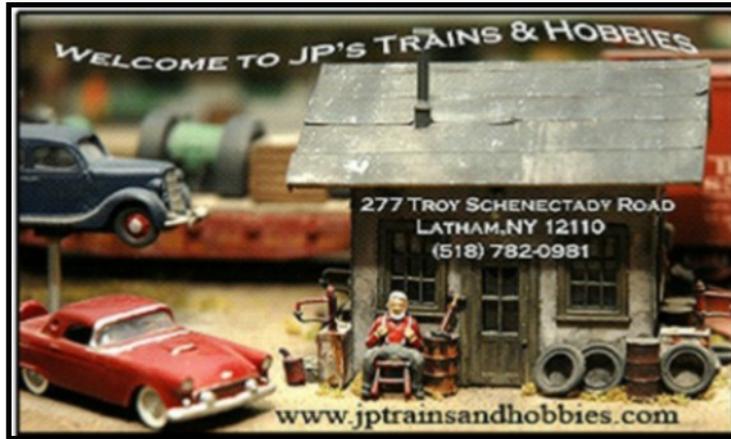
After the car inspectors have checked the incoming train, they may determine that there are one or more cars in the train that need to be repaired before going out on another train. If you would like to add this step to your operation, then you will need a short track somewhere called the RIP track. RIP stands for **Repair In Place**. A car may have a bent handrail, a broken hand brake, or any number of other problems that will make it unsafe to use. If it can possibly be repaired quickly, it will be.

As the yard switcher pulls an entire track of cars, there should be a destination for every car on the track. He should not be pulling just the fifth car in the cut to another track and putting all of the others back.

When the switching crew (which on a model railroad may be just one person) has added a caboose to the next train that is departing, and has determined that the correct cars are in the train, the dispatcher will be contacted to call a crew to run it. Comparing this to "cherry picking" should give you a great deal to think about as you plan how your yard will best operate in trying to make your operating session more prototypical. Just keep in mind that every car in the yard must have a destination, and not just be sitting there looking pretty. This destination may or may not be on your layout, but could be on a staging track at the far end.

In our next issue, we will look at the hand and whistle signals that are used on prototype railroads. If you have sound on your engine, or are working with a crew member, this adds to the enjoyment of operating a train.





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You have probably received an email from the Northeastern Region office announcing that the latest issue of the Coupler is now online. The NER website is - [NER Coupler](#).

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Hudson Berkshire Division
PO Box 83
Clifton Park, NY 12065-0083



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