



# The Mail Car

Newsletter of the St Lawrence Division – NMRA

Issue no. 37 – January 2006

St. Lawrence Division web site: [www3.sympatico.ca/gd.knowles/sld/sld\\_index.htm](http://www3.sympatico.ca/gd.knowles/sld/sld_index.htm)

## *From the Superintendent's Desk*

By Stanley Conley

Happy New Year to all!

The November meet was well attended with about 25 members coming out to be entertained and educated. We had two excellent presentations from Brian Earl and Chris Lyon, the usual interesting display table and a nice period of fellowship. In the afternoon we had two very different layouts on the tour, Jim McSherry's Vancouver Island empire and the HOTRAK setup at St. Anthony's hall.

We started the meeting with business items, a thank you to all who participated in the Rail Fair display and module presentation, a quick review of important items raised at the NFR Executive meeting in Toronto that took place in October, and a quick run down on the proceeding changeover of NMRA to NMRA Canada. Member Bruce Robinson donated to the SLD a large number of VHS tapes of train subjects, the only restriction on the donation was that we do not sell the tapes. Gary Baillargeon quickly volunteered to organize the tapes into a lending library for members, more information on this will be forthcoming.

Brian Earl was the first presenter of the morning and he engaged us in his story of research and discovery which led to the creation of a scale model of the Watson's Mill complex spanning the Rideau River at Manotick. The model was built to show the mill complex at the peak of its development with the gristmill, sawmill and weaving mills in operation. Brian took us through the search for information in various archives and a multitude of sources as he and his son, a professional industrial archaeologist, searched for 'just one more photo' to get the 'other side' of a building. Brian then translated the information into sketches and finally into three dimensional form. The resultant four foot by eight foot diorama shows the river, control dam, various mill buildings and the lightly built bridge in their context in the late 1890's and is a very educational display in the existing Watson's mill.

Before we took a short break to set up for Chris, Grant Knowles covered the items on the display table, a little light this time perhaps but of high quality as usual. More information can be found in the display table report in this issue of the Mail Car.



Backdrop sample created by Chris Lyons during his clinic.

Photo: Andreas Mank

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Special thanks to Beate Herzig for proof-reading and general nit-picking

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Next up was Chris Lyon, a relative newcomer to the SLD and Ottawa. He has been an active modeller and participant in a number of modeling groups across Canada as he has hopped around for his career, recently moving here from Alberta. Chris has brought with him a talent that will endear him to many, he can paint backdrops! And he wants to teach you to as well! Chris's approach to backdrop painting is direct, simple and effective. He is able to create the essential illusion of depth, the look of intricate, complex landscapes and blend it right up to the edge of the modeled world. By utilizing a limited palette of colours, simplified brush strokes (mountains are down, trees are up) and the idea that the backdrop is an element that should not draw attention to itself, he showed us how to create a very viable landscape to compliment our model layouts. At the end of the session, Chris had created a forested foothills landscape with meadows and a small lake and trees that came right out to the back edge of the layout. The audience was split at the end, half were willing to believe that they could attempt something similar, the rest wanted to know when Chris was available.

In the afternoon we had two layout tours to attend, Jim McSherry opened up his in development Shawnigan Lake Lumber company layout. Jim's layout is based on the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway on Vancouver Island and its interaction with the logging and coal mining railroads particularly in the Ladysmith and Chemainus locations. Jim is at the stage where the E&N is capable of running its full length, Victoria to Nanaimo, with the interchanges in place. Current work will be on developing the feeder railways from the logging and mining regions. Although there is little scenery at present, there are place holders for the major structures and one can get a sense of what is going on. Jim currently operates the layout which even now is capable of absorbing three or four crews busy with yard or road duties. Jim was somewhat reluctant to be on tour as he felt that there was not much to show, but by the end of the day he felt there had been good interaction with the visitors to both his and their benefit. As modellers, I have always felt that there is much to learn from a visit to a layout, in any stage of its development. Yes, they are usually 'prettier' in their final form, but how they got there is usually more interesting!

The other tour for the afternoon was the Ottawa Valley HOTRAK setup in St. Anthony's Hall dart room. My thanks go to Tim Pullen the current president of the group and all the members who graciously allowed us to view and occasionally run on the modular setup. The strength of this group is the diversity of the participants and the ability to accommodate a wide range of interests and abilities. They have implemented a carefully controlled set of criteria to ensure interoperability of the modules; they have built a wide variety of modules from simple single track country side to complex station and yard trackage. They operate each setup as a layout, with a dispatcher, logical train movements and operating rules. In short they are able to accommodate as wide a variety of modeller as possible, they get to operate on a layout larger than any basement I have seen and they have fun!

Our next activity is the workshop/get together on Saturday January 14 to work on and assist anyone who is having trouble with some kit. Please look over the announcement in this edition of the Mail Car and make this an opportunity to get out of the house and join a collegial group of fellow modellers for a day of relaxation.

The next meet is scheduled for January 28, 2006 at St. Emanuel United Church on Smyth Road. As usual at the time I write this, not all activities are nailed down but one of our clinicians will be the ever entertaining Colin Churcher, subject(s) to be decided. I realize that attendance may be a tad sparse as this meet corresponds to the Big Show in Springfield Mass which a number of regular members will be attending but I am sure that for those of us who make it to this meet it will be worthwhile.

As always I am on the lookout for clinics, clinicians and layout tours; please don't be shy, volunteer, or nominate and we can all keep this ball rolling.

# Layout Tour Report

by Andreas Mank



Two Layouts were open to the SLD crowd at the November meet, the modular set up of the HOTRAK group and Jim McSherry's Shawnigan Lake Lumber Company. This report focuses on the later layout.

For more details on the Shawnigan Lake Lumber Company, please read Jim's article in the last mail car (No. 36, November 2005). Briefly, the Shawnigan Lake Lumber company is a fictitious railroad interchanging with the E&N on Vancouver Island in 1949.

The layout is progressing rather nicely. Jim works on his beautiful handlaid track until he needs a break. During these breaks, he started working on scenic elements and getting the layout ready for operations.

The photo at the top of the page shows the layout as viewed from the entrance to the finished basement room. At the front is the main yard on the layout, which doubles up as both Victoria and Nanaimo. The town of Ladysmith (center photo) can be found at the back of the room. The last photo shows the throat of the combined Victoria and Nanaimo yard with Jim's excellent handlaid track.

Photos:  
Top, Center: Stanley Conley  
Bottom: Andreas Mank



# Display Report

Compiled by Alex Binkley

Brian Earl not only provided an illuminating presentation to the November SLD meeting on building models of several water-powered mills constructed in Manotick in the 1800's, he also brought out the latest NMRA heritage and living legend cars. They were O scale models of a reefer from Cliff Grant's Hardscrabble & Great Divide, No. 15 in the NMRA's heritage series, and a tank car from Allen McClelland's Virginia & Ohio, which is living legend car No. 5.



Photos: Stanley Conley



Jim Baxter brought out a Model Power Boston & Maine 4-4-0. It wasn't that long ago that small N scale steamers were hard pressed to move themselves along a piece of track. This latest model is a smooth runner, Jim notes. The model came with alternate parts for the pilot, cylinders, headlight and cab.

Photo: Stanley Conley

Mike Hamer displayed a pair of milk cars that he employs on his HO pike. They were Intermountain Pfaudler Milk Cars lettered for Borden's Milk and H.P. Hood & Sons. Mike says the plastic R-T-R cars rival earlier brass models in terms of detail and are a lot easier on the wallet.



Photo: Stanley Conley



Alex Binkley displayed two S scale coaches. Both were from American Models. One was a smooth side coach painted and lettered by John Licharson using the HO decals from his SBLK coaches. The other was a heavyweight car painted in CPR Tuscan and lettered for the Canada Southern Railway.



Photos: Stanley Conley



Bill Meredith brought out some on Cimarron Models pre-production jobs. One was an Sn3 DSP&P 600 series 26 foot boxcar which will soon be in kit form. The other was an ON3 C&S flat car/ gondola master that was built by Bob Stears and will be used to make a series of gondola kits.

Grant Knowles showed how well trained his family is. They went with him on a road trip holiday in the United States last summer and seem to have taken in a good collection of railway museums in the process. Grant brought out pictures of the railfan part of his holiday as well as shots of other events he has attended.

Photo: Andreas Mank

## NMRA Dates

### SLD Meetings

January 28, 2006	<b>Emmanuel United Church</b> 691 Smyth Road, Ottawa
March 25, 2006	<b>Emmanuel United Church</b> 691 Smyth Road, Ottawa
May 27, 2006	TBA

### NFR Spring Convention

*April 28 - 30, 2006*  
Chatham, Ontario

# The Enhancement of the M1

By Peter Nesbitt

Some years ago I acquired a model of the East Broad Top's gas electric M1. It was a factory painted brass model in On3. It had the usual strengths and weaknesses of brass locomotives of its day; well detailed on the outside, nothing on the inside, and it ran reasonably well but not without some issues.

On M1, some of the "underneath" wasn't there but enough was such that I decided not to add the missing stuff. Lights, an interior, and someone to drive it were all needed though.

My layout is controlled by DCC and I want sound in all my locomotives. Reliable power pickup is essential, especially with sound and operations in mind.

A quick look-over clearly showed the major operational problem; the only power pickup was on the front two axles. The wheels in the rear truck were metal so I soldered a wire to the truck frame. For the other side, a length of phosphor bronze wire was soldered to a small piece of PC board. In turn the PC board was epoxied to the truck frame and the wire bent to lightly rub against the rear of the wheels.

Next on the agenda was figuring out the electronics. Since, to my knowledge, no one makes a sound decoder for a gas electric, the question was which one would come closest? The choices appeared to be a Galloping Goose, Alco, or first generation GM, all of which are available from Soundtraxx.

I had no recollection of ever hearing the prototype. A quick search of the Web turned up an East Broad Top user group. So I posed the question. The first response confirmed my suspicion that neither of the diesels would be right. The second person offered to send me a copy of some video he'd shot that had some sound on it. After hearing this, there was no doubt that the Goose decoder was the best of what was available.

But; the Geese were gas mechanical and the Soundtraxx decoder copies this quite well and as you accelerate there is the clear sound of the various shifting of gears. Clearly not right for a gas electric. A little experimenting on my test setup showed that the first gear shift occurred at speed step seven.

The model of M1 that I had ran faster than I'd ever want it to on my railway. One of the nice features of DCC is the ability to use a user defined speed table for a particular locomotive. As well, with NCE DCC such a speed table is very easy to create, and this may also be the case with the other brands. A little more experimenting yielded the percentage of maximum throttle that gave what appeared to me to be a nice top speed for the upgrade portion of the layout. This (105) then became the value for the CVs that govern speed steps 6 to 28 while a sliding scale of lower values were used for the CVs that govern speed steps 1 to 5.

Since the motor sound doesn't increase from idle until speed step three and even then there is a delay, some momentum and / or slow movement of the throttle will keep the sound and actual speed in sync. I now had a workable sound solution.

As a bit of an aside, CV 58 in the Soundtraxx decoder controls how the engine sounds respond to throttle changes. I found that a value of 6 was best for what I was trying to do.

I chose to use a sound only DSX decoder along with an NCE motor decoder (a D15SR). Before installing the decoders I test them and assign the engine number. At this point a choice has to be made. Will each decoder have the same number or will they be different.

If using the same number approach it is a good idea to install mini-plugs on the black and red wires from the DSX decoder. There is some overlap of CVs and there'll come a day when you'll want to change the value in one of the decoders but not the other. The plugs facilitate this. Since space wasn't a problem in M1, I installed the plugs even though I planned on using different numbers for the two decoders.

For the motor decoder I used the actual locomotive number as the long address, in this case 01, and prefaced it with 90 for the sound decoder, resulting in 9001. Then I made up an advanced consist with 01 as the lead and last locomotive and 9001 as a mid-locomotive. After programming the appropriate CVs to act on function commands sent to the consist address all the various functions behaved properly.

I made an enclosure for the speaker out of scribed styrene painted a light brown colour. Installed in the baggage compartment this looks like a large crate or crates. A couple of barrels were also painted and put in this compartment. These help hide the decoders and motor. A few wires ended up being visible though.

Three rows of seats were installed in the passenger area. Window glass (in this case clear plastic) and coloured paper for blinds were added. Up front I made a bench for the engineer to sit on. A suitable gentleman was found for the position. Window glass was also installed up front and in most of the baggage compartment. The barred windows were left without glass and this helps with the sound.

The front and rear headlights were brass castings and these were drilled out to accommodate 5mm and 3mm "Sunny White" LEDs respectively. The front brass markers were also drilled out and I used tiny surface mount "Sunny White" LEDs so that M1 can run Extra at night and show the proper white markers.

False ceilings were made from styrene for the engineer's area and for the passenger compartment. In turn these were used to hold ceiling lights - three of the surface mount LEDs for the passengers and one so that the engineer can read his orders at night.

A little function re-mapping allowed me to have:

- F0 headlights - front and rear directional
- F1 bell
- F2 horn
- F3 cab light
- F4 headlight dimming
- F5 front markers
- F6 passenger compartment lights
- F7 coupler
- F8 mute



Photo: Peter Nesbitt

When re-mapping, remember that besides mapping a particular output to the desired function you also have to re-map the default output associated with that function to another one. If all this programming sounds complicated, believe me it isn't. The telling is more than the doing. The other thing, it is completely reversible! No paint or glue to remove or pieces to re-cut. The worst case scenario is a simple reset to the factory defaults and starting over.

Red markers at the rear would also be good -perhaps at the next major overhaul. In the meantime, a much nicer looking and running M1 is now ready to enter revenue service. Now all we have to do is get some fare paying passengers.

I plan to bring M1 to the January meet and anyone interested is welcome to have a closer look.

## Kitbusters

The first kitbusters workshop will be held on Saturday Jan. 14 at Emmanuel United Church (our usual venue) starting at 9:30 am. As suggested by Jim Baxter, we are asking everyone who is coming to the workshop seeking assistance to let us know what it is you want help with.

Please contact [alex.binkley@sympatico.ca](mailto:alex.binkley@sympatico.ca) or 749-7633 or [stanley\\_conley@carleton.ca](mailto:stanley_conley@carleton.ca) or 523-8237.

As noted in previous communications, the idea of the workshop is for members who have a kit for a structure, a piece of rolling stock or a locomotive that has you psyched out. Either a thick wad of instructions has spooked you into putting the lid back on the box the kit is in or maybe the lack of instructions has unnerved you.

Our intent is to have experienced modelers at the workshops to assist people to get started so someday these models will grace the SLD display table.

Naturally you must bring the kit in question, a work surface, appropriate tools and other material to the work session.



# Next Division Meet

St Lawrence Division – NMRA

***When:***

**Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

***Where:***

**Emmanuel United Church**

691 Smyth Road,

Ottawa

East of CHEO at Dauphin Road

Doors open at 9:00 am -- Admission \$5.00

***What's on:***

***Morning:***

**Division Business**

**Clinic**

- Colin Churcher

**Display**

- Structures

**Door Prizes**

- You never know what to expect!

***Afternoon:***

- Layout Tours

