



The Hot Box

*The Newsletter of the
Eastern Canada Division
of the NMRA*



Issue # 29 September 2025



Here is a seldom-seen sight – A CP ES44AC first arrived in Saint John in late 2022, specially painted and lettered “SAINT JOHN EXPRESS” to recognize the partnership between CP and the container shipping company, Hapag-Lloyd. It was back in the city in late May 2025 to celebrate Saint John Port Days (Photo credit Gerry McCoy) See inside for more photos

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- [F.R.E.D](#)- links, laughs and everything else

The official publication of the Eastern Canada Division of the Northeastern Region of the National Model Railroad Association.
ISSUE #29

Editor

Lou McIntyre
506 847-7009

<mailto:louisnmca2012@gmail.com>

Division email address:

<mailto:easterncanadadivision@gmail.com>

President's Message



Greg Williams (President, Eastern Canada Division)



Something in this issue really brings home how things have changed in model railroading. Steve Hill's "Stick Handler"™ is an example of the joining of laser cutting and 3D printing technologies. As both come down in price rapidly and their use becomes easier, I'm sure in a few more years, they will become common tools in model railroading.

In the 1950s tools such as an airbrush, or even an electric drill were not as common, or as inexpensive, as they are now. Yet, most model railroaders are familiar with both. I think things such as laser cutters and 3D printers will be in the same category soon. Both tools are really similar inside. There is an electronics board that sends signals to a precision motor called a stepper motor. These motors have been around for a long time and if you were to open up your home printer, you'd likely find one.

Perhaps someone in your home is a crafter and has a Cricut or similar machine. Again, these are very similar in operation to a laser cutter or 3D printer. Motors move a tool that cuts, burns or extrudes melted plastic. Woodworkers are getting into the game with CNC Routers too!

As time marches on, I wonder what the next thing will be. Will we have a machine that you can put your car, locomotive or structure in and it will come out coloured and lettered? It's not impossible! While we have a long way to go before that comes about, and even current technology will no doubt improve, it's wonderful to see our hobby get more interesting, and tasks made easier through technology.

Our ECD Executive and Board of Directors:

President:

Greg Williams - gregw66@gmail.com

Vice President:

Steven McMullin -
mcmulls@nb.sympatico.ca

Secretary:

Fergus Francey -
dasfergmister@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Doug Margison -
douglas.margison@gmail.com

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- Achievement Program Chair – James Whatley jawhatley@bellaliant.net
- Membership Chair and Webmaster - Rob Leathley - rleathley68@gmail.com
- Communications and Hot Box Editor - Lou McIntyre – louism@nbnet.nb.ca

Call Board - the NMRA and the Region



<https://conventions.nernmra.org/home/home-2025/>



The Summer 2025 issue of the **NER Coupler** is now available online. In it, you'll see many of the features of the Concord Flyer Convention shown above. NER President, Ed O'Rourke, describes recent happenings that re-enforce his beliefs in the value of the NMRA

<https://nernmra.org/ner-couplers/>



Balloon Track – News around our Division

Monthly Workshops

Here is the Fall lineup. The Winter/Spring schedule will appear the December Issue

Thursday, **September 18, 2025**, at 08:00 pm ADT (UTC-3): **“A Model Railroading Tour of Saint John, New Brunswick”**, by **Lou McIntyre**.

Thursday, **October 16, 2025**, at 08:00 pm ADT (UTC-3): **“Weathering with Oil Pastels”**, by **Will Lawrence**.

Thursday, **November 20, 2025**, at 08:00 pm AST (UTC-4): **“Automatic Block Signalling Using Arduinos”**, by **Douglas Margison**.

Thursday, **December 18, 2025**, at 08:00 pm AST (UTC-4): **“The Halifax Explosion Rescue Train from Kentville”**, by **Dan Conlin**.

Stay tuned for the Zoom log-in details, which will be sent out via email a few days prior to each presentation.

AP Award

Congratulations to **Steve McMullin** for having received his Achievement Program award as Chief Dispatcher



Steve has also been recognized by the OpSIG group for hosting operating sessions – well done!



Summertime and the living is easy

(A.K.A. a tour of what's been happening throughout Atlantic Canada this summer)

First are some photos from **James Whatley** as he works on the first module on his layout. It represents a typical Acadian fishing village with the railway terminating at the wharf.

"I studied lots of photos and visited several wharfs in this area to come up with the basic design. The house and lobster boat are modified kits with quite a few scratchbuilt details; the wharf and everything else is scratchbuilt. The lighthouse is an accurate model of the one at Cocagne, NB"



The layout also has a digital sound effects module designed by **Douglas Margison** that plays a recording he compiled of very pleasing seaside sounds.



Ronald Grandmaison has been hosting a number of visitors to his layout this summer



Malcolm Mackay of Hampton NB has been busy expanding his 7 ¼" gauge outdoor layout



Fergus Francey has worked diligently over the past 2 years scratch building a museum-quality masterpiece – the road bridge over the Mira in Cape Breton.

Most recently, he installed it temporarily at the Sydney & Louisburg Railway Museum; he still has



some finishing touches to complete before final installation



Steve Hill's Stick Handler

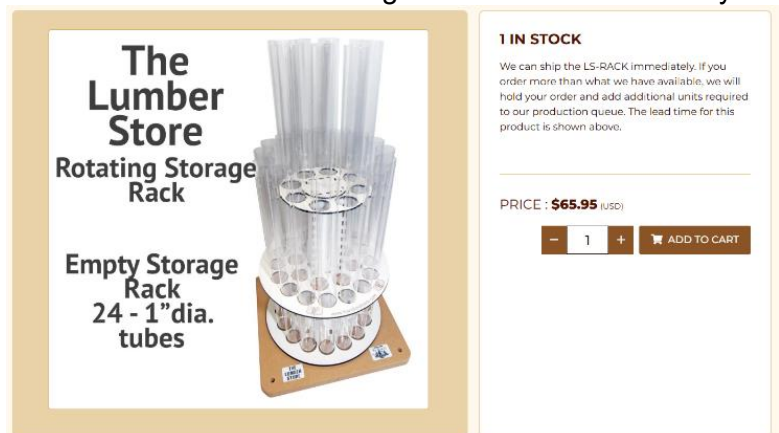
Back in the June issue, **Steve Hill** and **Don Fitzpatrick** presented a story on a hybrid 3D and scratchbuilt crane boom car. In this following story, Steve presents another hybrid project to store his scratchbuilding supplies

I believe that there is an axiom for scale model builders that states:

- 1) A modeler's workbench is never large enough,
- 2) A modeler can never remember where he/she stored the most critically needed size of scale building materials,
- 3) A modeler can only find the old materials he/she thought they had after buying new materials.

So, these were the annoyances in my world that compelled me to find ways to get my model building space in order, once and for all.

I have been designing and 3D printing several organizing and storage devices for things that continuously reside on my model building desk such as small hand tools, sanding devices, paints, brushes and airbrushes recently. Now I had come to the point of how to manage the multitude of sizes of styrene strips and scale lumber that I have amassed over many years of scratch building and kit bashing scale models. For several years, I have wanted to purchase the "Lumber Store™" storage device that is offered by Mt. Albert Scale Lumber. It seemed to be the ideal solution for properly managing up to 24 sizes of scale lumber. I resisted purchasing the "Lumber Store™" for a long time due to its landed cost with currency exchange and shipping fees factored in. Things were really getting out of control with my inventory of scale lumber and I felt I had no choice but to bite the bullet and order the "Lumber Store™" from the Mt. Albert Scale Lumber website.



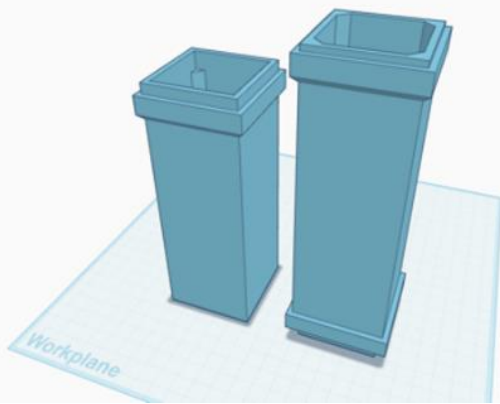
<https://handlaidtrack.com/product/ls-rack/?v=5435c69ed3bc>

My order arrived promptly and was very easy to assemble BUT it turns out that 24 slots are not nearly enough to accommodate all the sizes of scale lumber and styrene strips that I have.

Now, let me assure you that I am very pleased to have bought the "Lumber Store™" but I've also realized I would need one or possibly two more of them to fulfill my wish to have an orderly workspace. This was getting to be a very expensive investment in workbench efficiency. Having assembled the "Lumber Store™" as a kit I now had very good insight as to how it was designed and the materials used in its make up. It was quite simple, really. A sturdy MDF base to give enough weight and low center of gravity for stability. A 3-inch Lazy Susan swivel plate. Some 1/8" thick laser cut coated (tempered) hardboard disks

to radially arrange 1-inch x 14-inch plastic storage tubes and finally, eight pieces of the same hardboard material laser cut to include interlocking tabs used to assemble a square central column.

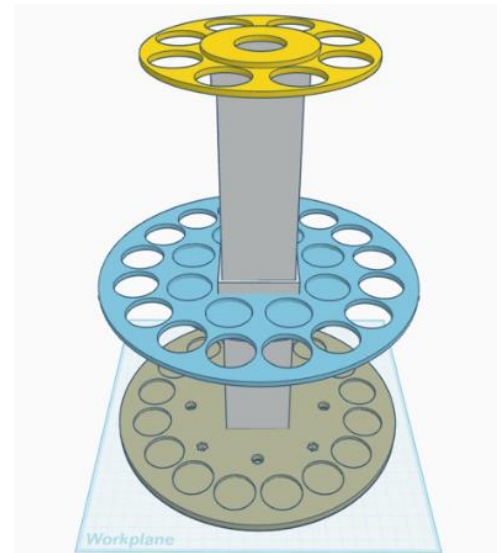
As part of my railroad hobby interest is 3D printing and 3D CAD design, I concluded there was a possibility that I could create a 3D printed version of the "Lumber Store™". So, I set out by designing all the pieces, except for the Lazy Susan bearing plate, using the on-line design app, Tinkercad. The design process was straightforward in Tinkercad using combinations of square and round disk shapes, both as solid shapes and as holes to replicate the design of the original "Lumber Store™" kit. Aside from a significant cost saving to be had by producing my own version, I found a couple of ways to improve on what I felt were deficiencies in the prototype's design. The central column of the prototype occupies a considerable



amount of space on the stack of organizing disks that I thought could be used to allow for one more plastic storage tube. So, I added a 1-inch hole in the center of the top disk for locating a 25th plastic tube. I also had found that the assembly process for the central column's 8 pieces was tedious and quite fragile until all the kit was fully completed. To overcome the assembly issues that I had encountered with the prototype, I designed the central column to be two square tubular pieces that would press fit together snugly and could easily be produced on a filament type 3D printer.

Next came the design of the organizing disks. Creating the design of the disks in Tinkercad was a simple exercise.

However, producing the largest disks on my 3D printer was not going to be possible unless the disks were divided into three wedge shaped sections as the build plate of my printer was not large enough to print the disks in one piece. I did not like the idea of printing the disks in sections as this would introduce points of weakness in their structure and I did not want the inconvenience of a likely future failure of the disk. This is the point in a project where it is very advantageous to have friends who have the right tools for the job, and I have a few of those fellows within my sphere. In this case, Greg Williams came to my rescue with his laser cutting machine. I was able to send Greg the design file (.STL) for the disks that I created in Tinkercad which he was then able to apply as an input instruction to his laser cutter. It was also fortunate that Greg had a good supply of 1/8" coated hardboard on hand that was perfect for use in creating my storage system that by now I had named "The Stick Handler". I have recently found a good supply of 1/8" coated hardboard in stock at our local Home Depot store. They have it in both natural wood color as well as with a white surface coating. I made the base from a leftover piece of 17mm thick Baltic Birch plywood that I had bought at Home Depot some time ago. I cut and sanded the plywood then marked the center point using diagonally drawn lines as guides for placement of the Lazy Susan swivel plate. The bottom disk in the stack had concentrically placed holes laser cut for attaching to the other side of the swivel plate with #6 machine screws and nuts.



Everything has been very easy and budget friendly to this point. The only purchased item thus far has been the 3-inch Lazy Susan swivel plate which cost around \$6 at a local hardware store. I assembled

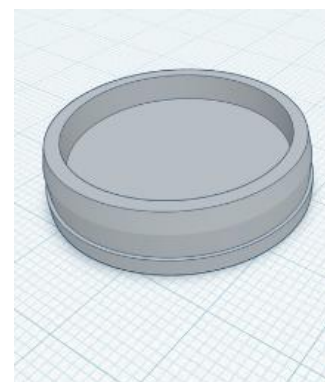
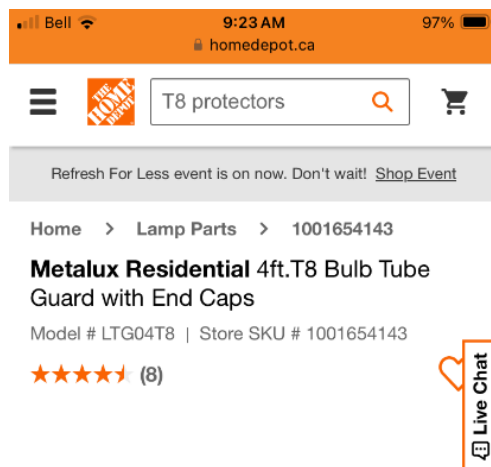
the central column that I had 3D printed along with the set of organizing disks that had been laser cut using my design files. Everything fit perfectly and with the close-fitting tolerances that I had hoped for.

The only remaining task was to outfit the “Stick Handler” with 25 pieces of 1-inch diameter X 14-inch length plastic tubes. The tubes could have been made only 12-inches in length, but I chose to follow the dimensions of the prototype kit. This proved to be the most difficult portion of the project. Firstly, for the life of me, I could not find a reasonably priced source for the plastic tubes from any internet vendors. There were some on-line sources found but either the minimum order quantity was too great for my needs, the shipping costs were extravagant, or the prices per unit were unacceptable.

Then I remembered that protective sleeves are made for fluorescent and LED lighting tubes. These are used in areas where protection from shattered tubes is needed to prevent injury to persons or to prevent contamination of products in the event of a broken lighting tube incident. A quick search with Google revealed that Home Depot sells protective sleeves for type T8 lamps (1-inch diameter). The sleeves are 4-ft in length so 8 of them was needed to fabricate 25 storage tubes for the “Stick Handler”. Had I made the storage tubes only 12-inches in length then I would have needed to buy only 7 of the sleeves from Home Depot. The lamp sleeves are made of very strong polycarbonate plastic which proved to be difficult to cut, even with a very fine-toothed hacksaw blade. The polycarbonate plastic resists cutting and sawing tends to result in jagged, uneven edges from the saw teeth “chipping” at the surface. At the suggestion of another friend, Mike Gerrits, I tried cutting the polycarbonate with a hot Xacto knife #11 blade attached to an old soldering iron. This worked wonderfully! There was no smoke or odor that I had anticipated. The cuts were accomplished very quickly. The final edges were very clean and smooth. I was delighted with this result.

The final detail to complete the job was to design and 3D print small caps to enclose the bottom of each storage tube.

This was a very worthwhile project and I’m enjoying the fruits of my labor. It’s now time to make another “Stick Handler” as I still have additional strip sizes needing to be efficiently stored.



Events

A Modelling Day was held on June 7 at the Truro Public Library





REAL RAILS 2025 BURLINGTON

A joint Railway Historical Association 3 day convention.



Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo H.S.



VIA Historical Ass'n

**October 17th, 18th and 19th, 2025,
Holiday Inn and Candle Wood Suites, 3060 South Service Road,
Burlington Ontario. CANADA.**

Prototype Tours - Speakers - Hobby Manufacturers' Displays
Product Sales - Model Displays - Modular Displays - Huge Train Show
Banquet with Special Guest Speaker

Basic Registration fee - \$119. Does not include trips or banquet.
Registration Opens - April 1, 2025. Discount of \$20 if registered before June 30.
Additional \$20 Discount for members of CPHA, CNRHA, TH&BHS, VIAHA

NOTE: Registered convention guests will enjoy a one hour exclusive entry
to the train show prior to the general public opening at 10am.

For more **REAL RAILS 2025 CONVENTION** info: contact Richard McQuade - secretary@cptracks.ca

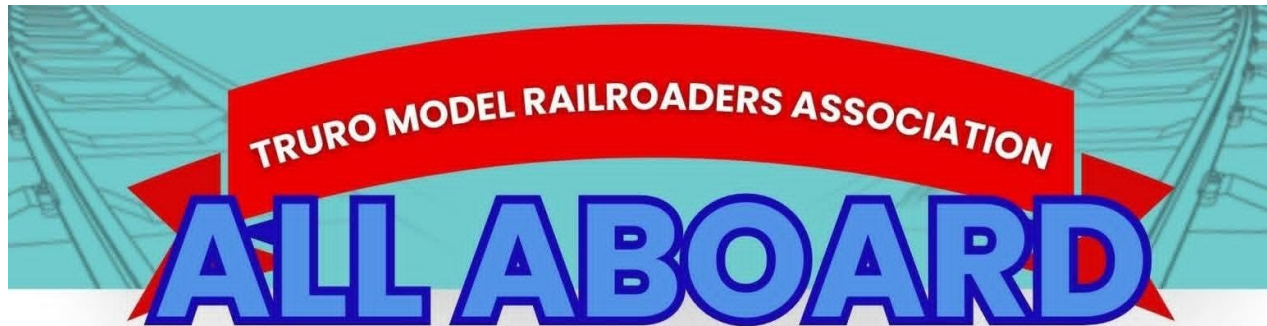
For more **TRAIN SHOW** and **TABLE RENTAL** info: contact Laura Spring - lauraspring66@hotmail.com

For more **REGISTRATION** info or problems: contact - Larry Sebelley - RRB2025Registrar@outlook.com



www.cptracks.ca/realrails2025.html

Truro



48TH ANNUAL MODEL TRAIN SHOW

**OCTOBER 18TH 2025,
9-4PM**

OPERATING LAYOUTS IN HO, N
& OTHER SCALES
SALES & DISPLAY TABLES

HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER
@ NOVA SCOTIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
36 ARTHUR ST. TRURO, NS

ADMISSION:
\$7.00 PER PERSON
CHILDREN 10 AND
UNDER FREE IF
ACCOMPANIED BY A
PERENT/GUARDIAN



For general information, layouts or tables please contact:
Holly Whittaker

Email: TruroModelTrains@hotmail.com

TMRA is a not for profit association - Thank you for your support

Saint John / Quispamsis



Quispamsis Lions Club

October 25, 2025

**Adults \$7, Children 12 and
under Free**

**Train Layouts in HO, N, G,
On30, Live Steamers and
LEGO**

**All-Day Live Demonstrations;
Vendors new and old;
Canteen available**

Modelling Day –



*The Eastern Canada Division – NER – NMRA
&
The Saint John Society of Model Railroaders
INVITES you to ATTEND*

Modelling Morning

Quispamsis Lions Club

Friday October 24th, 2025 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Participants are invited to bring:

- A model project
- Small hand tools
- A cutting mat (or the equivalent) to protect the tables
- A small desk lamp
- A few additional completed or in-progress models for display
- Your lunch, water, and snacks (nearby restaurants are also available)

Please confirm your participation by contacting:

Greg Williams gregw66@gmail.com 506-279-2232

*This event is open to **ALL**, regardless of group affiliation. While the focus is primarily on railway models, model makers in any field are welcome! We are gathering to build and display a few models, exchange ideas, and chat. Enjoy an informal slide show or video in the early afternoon.*

Notes:

- *Spray painting, including airbrushing; grit blasting; and the use of heavy-duty power tools is not permitted at the venue.*
- *Tables, chairs, and some extension cords will be provided.*
- *The venue has asked us to please clean up after ourselves and leave it as we found it.*
- *All participants are requested to practice handwashing / sanitizing immediately upon entry. Anyone with a cold, flu or other contagious illness is asked to please reconsider attending.*

The F.R.E.D.

Rail activity on CN's Dartmouth sub is seen by many Halifax commuters and is followed on Facebook
(Photos by Chris Lyon)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/413265159550648>



The cover photo was a part of a chase from Saint John to McAdam NB that **Gerry McCoy** undertook with the **O'Brien** crew



Gerry also had taken photos in 2022 for the locomotive's inaugural visit to Saint John



A large group of Nova Scotia bridge photos was posted to Facebook; many are of railway bridges including the DAR, Canso, etc

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.769507602181565&type=3>

(Original Sources: Ingenium Archives, CN Images of Canada Collection, and Nova Scotia Archives)



We need your input! If you want stories or history from your local area, it's up to you to share them. Send any projects, stories or reviews you want to share to us at our e-mail address: easterncanadadivision@gmail.com or to louismca2012@gmail.com

