

Rochester Model Rails

Dedicated to Quality Model Railroading

VOL. 5, NO. 38

ROCHESTER, N.Y.

FEBRUARY 2006



On30 Mogul # 22 starts across the Boreas River Bridge on the HO model railroad of Fred Cupp of Williamsport, PA. See article on Page 2 about Fred's digital image editing.

Editing Model Railroad Digital Images <i>by Fred Cupp</i>	2
Things to Ponder – Modeling New England Railroads <i>by Gordon Spalty</i>	5
Doctor Dick – Gauge vs. Scale	9
The Sociology of Model Railroading – Hobby Magazines – Part II <i>by John Bruce</i>	10
Train Events – Expanded 2006 Calendar	20

Editing Model Railroad Digital Images

by Fred Cupp

Let's face it! Whether we like it or not, the digital age is solidly upon us. Some folks may feel that any "tampering with a photo" is foul play. Only real photos are acceptable. On the other hand, no one is trying to deceive you, only attempting to enhance and add to your enjoyment of something pleasing to the eye. So please, lighten up and relax. . . Just go along for the ride.

There are many "Photo Editing" programs, which are often bundled free with scanners and digital cameras. They usually have the same basic "tools", but the names of the tools may be different. Some examples are: *Corel Custom Photo*, *iPhoto+4*, *MGI Photo Suite* and *Canon Photo*. In the purchased category, you might consider *Adobe Elements* or *Paint Shop Pro*. Rather than waste space on a sell job about why should you do editing of digital photos, let's just get right into the "how to use" some of the tools and examples of the results you can expect.

Always start your work by saving a copy of the raw photo in case you hit the wrong key or save a botched job instead of the good one. Also, you should save your work at 5 or 10-minute intervals, in case of a really bad goof. Then you won't have to go back to the start. While you are working in a picture, the "Un-Do" function will let you step back several steps for instant corrections.

Another word of advice: Even though your digital camera will send you an image in JPG format, you should make your first "SAVE" in BMP format. JPG format will make small reductions in the accuracy of the picture information. If you repeatedly save the picture, the small in-accuracies will add up and become very noticeable roughness with "ghostly" edges around objects in your photo. When you are finally done with work on the photo, you may make the last save in JPG format. If you are a perfectionist, you may want to archive a final copy in BMP format in case you decide to do additional work on the picture at a later time.

BASIC PHOTO FIX-UP: Rotating, Cropping, Sharpening, De-screening, Distorting

The tools available in all picture-editing programs will perform many basic functions. These may be used to make corrections to the whole photo at one time. Suppose that you have just returned from shooting some trains at your local hot spot. You had tilted the camera and your best shot was taken a little too soon. No problem: In all of the "freebies", there is a set of adjustment tools to allow you rotate right or left any number of degrees, until the subject is again level.

Next, you may select the "crop photo" tool that places a rectangular "frame" on the photo. At each corner there is a little black square. If you "Click-'n-hold", you can drag the corner left-right and up-down, (diagonally), to set two sides of the desired photo. Repeat the adjustments for the opposite corner. You may also use the markers in the four sides to move the sides one-at-a-time. A "double-click" will snip off everything outside the frame. If it needs a little more color, or contrast, the color adjustment tools will let you enhance or reduce the color intensity as well as the brightness.

SHARPENING PHOTOS. This is a tool to take blurry pictures and make them sharp. Please don't ask me how it works, I don't know! The sharpen tool is most likely to be used on older, historical pictures. Photo # 1 shows some guys exploring an old shipping shed along the D&H R.R. in upstate New York. This is actually a small section cut out of the center of the photo to emphasize the blurry nature of the original photo. The Sharpen tool in Paint Shop Pro has two variations; "Sharpen"; and "Sharpen more". They can also be used repeatedly until you have the desired result. Photo # 2 is the amazing result of 1-Sharpen, plus 1-Sharpen-more. Check the HELP file, then practice. The best way is to learn by the old "trial-and-error" method.

Photo # 1, Before sharpening



Photo # 2, After sharpening



There is also a tool to make a sharp picture blurry! (We'll save that one until later to show the reason for blurring parts of a photo.) The important thing is to learn how to use them, not understand them!

There is another tool that can be used to advantage under certain conditions. Distortion! Why would you want to distort a nice photo? At a railroad display, there were a number of historical photos under glass. I wanted to make copies for my collection. The lighting was very low and I did not have my tripod handy. I turned on the flash, shot the photos from an angle above the photo so that the flash would not reflect in the glass. The photos came out fine, but had a severe "Keystone" tilt to the edges. Using the "Distort" tool, you can "grab" each of the four corners and pull the bottom two corners outward, to expand the shrink, while pulling the top corners inward to remove the expansion. By pulling and pushing the top and bottom corners equally, the aspect, or "height to width ratio" remains constant. Since there is nothing unusual to show in a corrected picture, you'll have to take my word on this trick. It really does work!

DESCREENING. Now we are ready to dig into some tougher problems. If you scan a photo from a book or magazine, you will find that the picture was printed using a process called "Halftone", consisting of dots, which vary, in size. The photo will come out with a severe case of miniature measles! This is because the scanner converts photos into uniformly spaced "Pixels". (PICTureELements). Unless the printed photo and the scanner are perfectly matched, scanner will see variations between the dots and spaces. According to Murphy's Law, they never will match, so the apparent dot size varies as the scanner moves along. Some scanners now have built-in software to "De-Screen" the photo as it scans. Fortunately, so does your photo program

Most photo programs contain an "effects" toolset to mathematically average out or adjust the dots and spaces to restore the uniformity of the adjacent Pixels. (Can you spell algorithm?) I will not try to instruct you in the detailed use of the de-screening. You must learn empirically! Use the Help and the tutorial that came with the program. Photo # 3 is an example of a small "snippet" from a raw screened photo. After a little playing around with the settings for dot size, photo # 4 is the final resulting photo.

Photo # 3**Photo # 4**

Next month, we'll demonstrate the many amazing uses of cloning. Cloning is the process of selectively copying objects or areas from another part of a photo or even from a different photo. Once selected, these areas may be over-layed on top of unwanted things, such as power lines, or they may be saved as files for future use. These objects may be freely moved from photo to photo. For example, the sky background in the cover picture is a portion one of many different sky shots in my "library of picture parts". Cloning may well be the most useful tool in the bag of imaging enhancement tricks.

Also next month, we will take a look at "Stitching" two photos together to make a Panoramic shot out of two pictures, when there is not enough room to back away to capture the complete subject. A real life historical example from 1957!

Things to Ponder

Modeling New England Railroads

by Gordon Spalty

I model New England railroads: Maine Central, Boston & Maine and St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain or St. Johnsbury and Lamoille County Railroad.

Hm... why?

I love the New England area. I love the quaintness and down home style of railroading. Everyone who rode the trains had a name and every town was a destination, not a dot on a map.

The countryside is rugged, lush with foliage. The fall season is a fire with all the hues of the rainbow. I feel mesmerized by the colors of the season.

For the railroads this is man against nature, an intrusion into the New England wilderness. Wilderness? Yes.

It all began with a group of folks wanting to have an inland port to the Great lakes from the Atlantic Ocean. In 1867 the Portland and Ogdensburg Railroad was chartered to build a railroad connecting these two great waterways. The year 1875 saw completion of this project through Crawford Notch going to Fayban, New Hampshire. This was the most difficult part of the project. This was a heavily forested wilderness with many vertical granite cliffs and few roads leading to a very exclusive resort area for the privileged. Most of this forested area was eventually logged over but that's another story.

The railroad continued on through St. Johnsbury going through to Ogdensburg, New York as part of the Rutland Railroad. This was short lived for as soon as the Rutland reached Ogdensburg the rival Central Vermont bought the track and severed the rail connection. So much for the P&O.

Moving on...

The portion of the P&O from Portland, Maine, to Lunenburg, New Hampshire, was Maine Central Railroad (Mountain Division), which eventually moved on to St. Johnsbury. From there west was the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Railroad to Swanton, Vermont. Here the St. J. connected with the Central Vermont Railway. The St. J. & L.C. was to become the St. Johnsbury and Lamoille County Railroad which lead to the Lamoille County Railroad which lead to Vermont Northern which pretty much lead to oblivion. Whew... It is a convoluted story... Believe me.

Starting in the early 1920's the Boston and Maine, and Maine Central Railroads were operated under joint management until 1953 when they separated. Included in this management agreement was the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Railroad which was operated as part of the Second Operating District of the Boston and Maine railroad. The operating equipment of the St. J was hand me down's from the B & M.

So... what about my railroad, The Maine and Western? The name is pretty obvious now that you know about the P & O.

I model the MEC through Crawford Notch. I model the St. J, more or less, through the eastern portion. Since most of the area I model is / was heavily forested I also will have some logging scenes, which is my second area of interest. Since my time period of late 40's to early 50's has the B & M, MEC, St.J. and Maine & Western (heh...heh) under joint management you'll see all kinds of power on the M & W. Convenient huh?

So where did all this begin? Would you believe an article in a 1947 "Train's" magazine? The author was Philip Hastings. The subject was the St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain Railroad. Here was a railroad that had plenty of curves, steep grades, short trains, mountain and valley scenery, and a total length of only 96 miles, single track most of the distance. This could be a model railroad! I cut that article out of the magazine and still have it. Hm... maybe I should have kept the whole magazine.



St. Johnsbury & Lake Champlain article in 1947 *Trains* magazine.



Passenger Train at Johnson depot, circa 1940.

So what did I learn from this article and further research of the St. J.?

Well let me tell you...

I found this interesting, especially from a modelers standpoint.

The St. J. was a single sheet timecard...Hm...model railroad here? "Keep it simple" mind set.

Of the nineteen towns located on the mainline only four exceeded one thousand population and of those four they were less than two thousand in population.

Ninety percent of traffic on the railroad originated there or terminated there. Not a money maker for the railroad but great for us modelers. We get to do a lot of switching. Anyone using car card operating systems? You'll be busy turning those cards over.

The St. J. had many sharp curves and grade changes. The trains were short, ten cars or less. Train speeds were slow. You can pack in a lot of mileage with slow speed operation on a model railroad.

What were the trains that actually operated on the St. J.?

The passenger trains were numbers 51 and 52. Number 51 ran west from St. Johnsbury, Vermont in the morning to Swanton, Vermont. The same train, now number 52, returned to St. Johnsbury in the afternoon. The train consisted of a single RPO/Baggage/Passenger combine. These trains made their money through mail contracts and L.C.L. shipments. Occasionally a milk car (cans) was added. This would increase the time at a station as the milk car was loaded. Another plus for us modelers.

The other passenger train was a mixed (love those combine's). Number 75 was west bound and ran from St. Johnsbury to Cambridge Junction, Vermont. The train lay overnight. It returned the following day as Number 74 to St. Johnsbury.

All freight trains ran as extras. Westbound train ran Monday-Wednesday-Friday. East bound train ran Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday. Hm... six day work week. Maybe real railroading is real work. If the St. J. had a lot of cars for interchange with the Central Vermont an extra-extra was run to accommodate online customers.

The rolling stock of the St. J. consisted of:

B & M locomotives, Ten Wheelers and Consolidation's that were on their last legs. Caboose were three ex -B & M. Combines were two ex-Rutland with open passenger ends and closed mail ends. Two ex- B & M with closed ends. Add a few work cars and that was it.

As has been mentioned the St. J. & L.C. had ninety percent of its traffic originate or terminate online.

Outbound:

Milk- bulk tank car
or cans in reefer.
Limestone- bulk
in gondolas
or bagged in boxcars.
Talc- bagged in boxcars.
Asbestos- bagged
in boxcars.

Inbound: Coal hoppers.

Through:

Grain-boxcar-eastbound.
Pulpwood- bulk flats-westbound.



GE 70 Ton No. 46 in original orange body and black cap paint scheme, circa 1950.



Caboose No. 81, ex B & M.

This was all in 1947. Steam era! Let's move ahead to 1948-1950 and the St. J. has gone diesel. Here we find GE 70 tonners in the Orange, Yellow and Black scheme. Move ahead to 1968 and the Pensy era. We find EMD GP9's, and Alco RS3's. These are painted Red with Black and Yellow pinstripes with Yellow lettering. We end up with Vermont Northern in Black and Yellow. The end of the line.

How do we take all of this and make a model railroad... The Maine and Western? I'll show you in the next installment.



GE 70 tonners at Fisher's Bridge, Wolcott, VT, 1967. Richard Phelps photo.



Ask Doctor Dick (The Scenery Doctor)

OCRR@frontiernet.net

Debbie writes:

I am just starting to look into building a model railroad and I am confused about gauge verses scale. Are they the same thing?

Doc:

No.

Gauge is simply the distance between the rails (railheads) of a railroad. For example, most US railroads today have a gauge of 4' 8 ½", called *standard gauge*. So if you go outside your house and measure distance between the rails on your local railroad, you should get this measurement.

Below is an image of an original track gauge (RUTLAND RR). It was used when laying new track and/or checking the gauge of old track.



Scale on the other hand is much different than gauge. Scale is the relation in size between a model and the real thing. For example, if you build a model that is 87 times smaller than the real thing, then you are modeling in 1:87.1 scale, or commonly called HO scale. If you build a model that is 48 times smaller than the real thing, then you would be modeling in 1:48 scale, or commonly called O scale. N scale is 1:160. S scale is 1:64.

So far so good.

But sometimes you will see designations such as On3. What does this mean? Not to worry.

The large capital letter is the scale. In this case the "O" stands for the scale 1:48. The small "n" stands for "narrow" as in "narrow gauge". Narrow gauge is any gauge smaller than the 4' 8 ½". The "3" in the above designation stands for "three foot", that is, the gauge is three feet between the railheads. Many famous railroads were three-foot gauge such as the East Broad Top and the Denver and Rio Grande. Also, some early mining and logging railroads were built as "narrow gauge" in order to save money on rail and locomotives.

**For a more detailed explanation
of scale and gauge**

Go to the following website:

<http://www.nmra.org/beginner/scale.html>

Sociology of Model Railroading

Hobby Magazines – Part II

(Abridged Edition)

by John Bruce

The informal impression of several fellow modelers I've talked to has been that a number of the people most closely associated with the Layout Design SIG had a strain of self-promotion and were perhaps hoping in some way to make a commercial venture out of the movement. The only person to succeed in that, however, was Tony Koester. If we postulate that in his editorial record there are tendencies toward "Good Tony", the talent spotter, the early recognizer of productive trends, the thoughtful editorialist, and "Bad Tony", the self-absorbed, overly verbose, authoritarian, then the Layout Design SIG was the devil whispering in Bad Tony's ear. His earlier ability to spot clear winners like Frary and Hayden had somehow gone through a climacteric. His next move was to found a Kalmbach spin-off of MR called *Model Railroad Planning* (I intended to add a hyperlink to this magazine's web site, but find no current content for it on Kalmbach's sites, perhaps another illustration of a certain hollowness at the core of the movement).

The magazine's approach was to turn the Layout Design SIG's tendency to overanalyze, overtheorize, and self-promote into a journalistic formula, a parody of Koester's earlier success at talent-spotting. Taking tiny, incremental ideas and pumping them into a magazine feature is the essence of hack writing, and given the tendency of "layout design" adherents to chew every thought 99 times, the overall effect is the opposite of spontaneity or creativity. For the hobby's development, *Model Railroad Planning* is an overspecialized evolutionary dead end.

Koester's influence, while unofficial, spilled over into the content of MR as well. The February 1994 issue carried a story on the layout of Lionel Strang, a modeler of moderate ability, who had brought his layout to what he felt was a reasonable level of completion -- but something was missing: ". . . now I wanted some experts to view what I had accomplished and give me their comments." It should come as no surprise that the "experts" Strang had in mind were Allen McClelland and Tony Koester, and he discussed how, working through the NMRA, he was able to get both to visit his layout and "make comments", presumably approving or at least tactful.

MR's editors are ferocious in gutting anything remotely controversial from copy, so it's clear that Strang's position that his layout wasn't finished until Koester and McClelland blessed it met the approval of those in authority. Nor is it surprising that Strang's layout was a "prototype freelanced" Appalachian coal railroad like McClelland's original and the derivative layout Koester had developed by minutely following McClelland's ideas. This was Malcolm Furlow writ small, an endorsement of the hobby as imitation rather than creativity, with the correct people to imitate clearly identified. The final unsurprising development was Strang's appointment as a columnist at MR in his own right, and like Furlow before him, he became a semi-professional hobbyist for the magazine, building several project layouts and writing

numerous articles, all to a less than challenging standard (some of his columns have been truly risible, such as the one in which he explained how he uses hockey stick putty to improve his grip on his X-Acto knife).

Strang's run as a columnist ended with the announcement in the May 2005 issue that he would be "taking a break" from his column, but at the same time, the Editor named him a Contributing Editor of MR. "Contributing Editor" in the magazine industry is an honorific carrying no financial compensation; it simply indicates the individual in question contributes frequent features to the magazine. It's MR's announced intent to have Strang continue doing project layouts and other features, of the sort he's already done, but the discontinuance of the column must have required some additional sweetener, such as the title. That Strang continued to write his column for eight years in the face of what must have been strong complaints on model railroad forums, letters to the editor, and likely weak internal polling by MR regarding its own features, suggests he must have had at least one powerful protector. That his column was finally killed suggests other changes may be in the works. An anonymous web poet summed up Strang as follows:

Bulletproof boxes for holding my styrene,
 Nine color pictures to show you what I mean,
 Bright hockey tape on the handles of knives,
 I get paid for this drivel, and you have no lives!

Patching up holes in my Masonite fascia,
 Buying DeWalt, 'cause I want to disgrace ya,
 I suck up to Koester, and the V & O too...
 These are the things that L. Strang likes to do.

Strang's 1994 debut as one of the people to watch in the hobby came two years after MR's circulation and advertising pages peaked. That peak corresponded with Russ Larson's promotion to the magazine's publisher and the appointment of Andy Sperandio, a former associate editor, to the vacancy. Sperandio, who had joined the magazine as a 1970s refugee from the academic Ph.D. job market, struck me as a peculiar choice, the sort of surprise you sometimes see in the corporate environment when a colorless also-ran succeeds to a highly visible position.

It should be pointed out that MR's decline in key statistical areas corresponded with unprecedented prosperity in the US, with the stock market growing four or five times in value over the period 1992-2000. The baby boom generation was reaching its most productive, highest-earning years, and many of those who were long-time hobbyists had reached a point where they had ample disposable income to spend on the hobby. In 1980, there had been MR, RMC, and *Prototype Modeler* as monthly magazines (but *Prototype Modeler* didn't take ads at the time); by 1992, the hobby was supporting as monthlies MR, RMC, *Mainline Modeler*, *Model Railroading*, and *Railmodel Journal* (a specifically Canadian-content monthly also now exists north of the border, though this is a creature of protectionist market distortions). The number, selection, and quality of products had grown enormously -- and somehow, MR's share of those buying magazines, as well as those buying advertising in hobby magazines to promote the burgeoning supply of products, had begun to decline not just relatively but absolutely.

If the hobby itself was in decline, this wasn't reflected in the products available, nor the people buying them. MR, as the flagship publication, might reasonably have been expected to look more

like the very thick, upscale magazines like [Architectural Digest](#), which itself sometimes had features on model railroads in expensive homes. MR had instead lost 20% of its circulation and much of the heft it used to have in page count.

An example of its decadence was the cover of the July 1999 issue, where electronic horseplay among staffers resulted in the image of a space alien being placed in a photo of a locomotive cab on the magazine's cover. Through some inadvertency, the staffers, who had produced the image as an inside joke but intended to delete it from the production cover, left it in place, and the space alien cover went out all over the country. Sperandeo editorially indicated that the person responsible had received a "serious talking-to," but such episodes, like any horseplay, reflected management inattention. Sperandeo himself during this period was a highly visible participant in high-traffic e-mail lists, leading me to question how he was spending his time in the office.

While Sperandeo was philosophically aligned with the "prototype modeler" movement, and some in the hobby expected that MR would move away from the Malcolm Furlow school of model railroading with Sperandeo's appointment, he seemed to lack a clear sense of where the hobby and the magazine ought to be moving. A cover and feature story on the [Northlandz](#) tourist trap in New Jersey suggested he was still likely to knuckle under to Russ Larson in featuring dumbed-down content -- something that further eroded the trust of the high-end readership. More serious features deferred to Koester's ideas on operation and layout design, which had become at best controversial. While some who preferred doctrinaire points of view enthusiastically supported Koester, this further tried the patience of others among the high-end readership.

Another episode during this period, while not Sperandeo's fault, illustrates the overall bad business judgment that has characterized Kalmbach in recent years. MR entered a "business partnership" with an advertiser called eHobbies during the peak of the dot-com bubble. As part of the partnership, MR staff members would provide content for the eHobbies web site, which intended to sell hobby merchandise over the web. Like most dot-com startups, eHobbies appears to have been poorly funded, and the merchandise it sold on its web site seemed poorly selected, with little understanding of the hobby market.

At the same time, MR's brick-and-mortar advertisers were offended at MR's apparent change in policy. In the past, MR had been even-handed among all advertisers, showing no preference for one over another. By providing content for the eHobbies web site, however, MR appeared to be favoring one advertiser over all others, tilting the playing field. A number of brick-and-mortar advertisers promptly withdrew their ads from MR -- but not long afterward, eHobbies went belly-up in the dot-com bust. The result was that MR damaged its reputation with a number of advertisers who, unlike eHobbies, continued in business, but lost the eHobbies advertising in any case. Accounts from a former MR staff member quoted below suggest that Russ Larson was primarily responsible for the eHobbies debacle, but was able to avoid accountability, at least for several more years.

In late 2001, Sperandeo was finally removed as editor. Reasonably attentive management at Kalmbach would probably have paid heed to problems like the space alien and the high-profile presence on heavy-traffic, flaming-and-mail-bombing e-mail lists much sooner. However, his penalty was quite mild -- he was demoted to a newly created "executive editor" position, where he now appears to perform the duties of a lightly burdened associate editor. Russ Larson, who as publisher and the presumptive adult in charge might have been expected to be held accountable

for MR's decline, instead took over again as acting editor, but initiated a "national search" for a replacement. The "national search" resulted in Kalmbach simply recycling an editor from another of its magazines, Terry Thompson, into the vacancy.

Rumors from Kalmbach suggested that Sperandeo's demotion represented a victory for corporate opinion that felt attempting to satisfy the high-end readership was futile, since this was the philosophy he represented. It seems to me that Sperandeo, whatever his personal preferences in modeling (he is thought to be an authority on the Santa Fe), primarily represented mediocrity. A Ph.D. should not be given control over creative functions without extensive reflection, and without imagination, he confused accurate observation of the real world with pedantry.

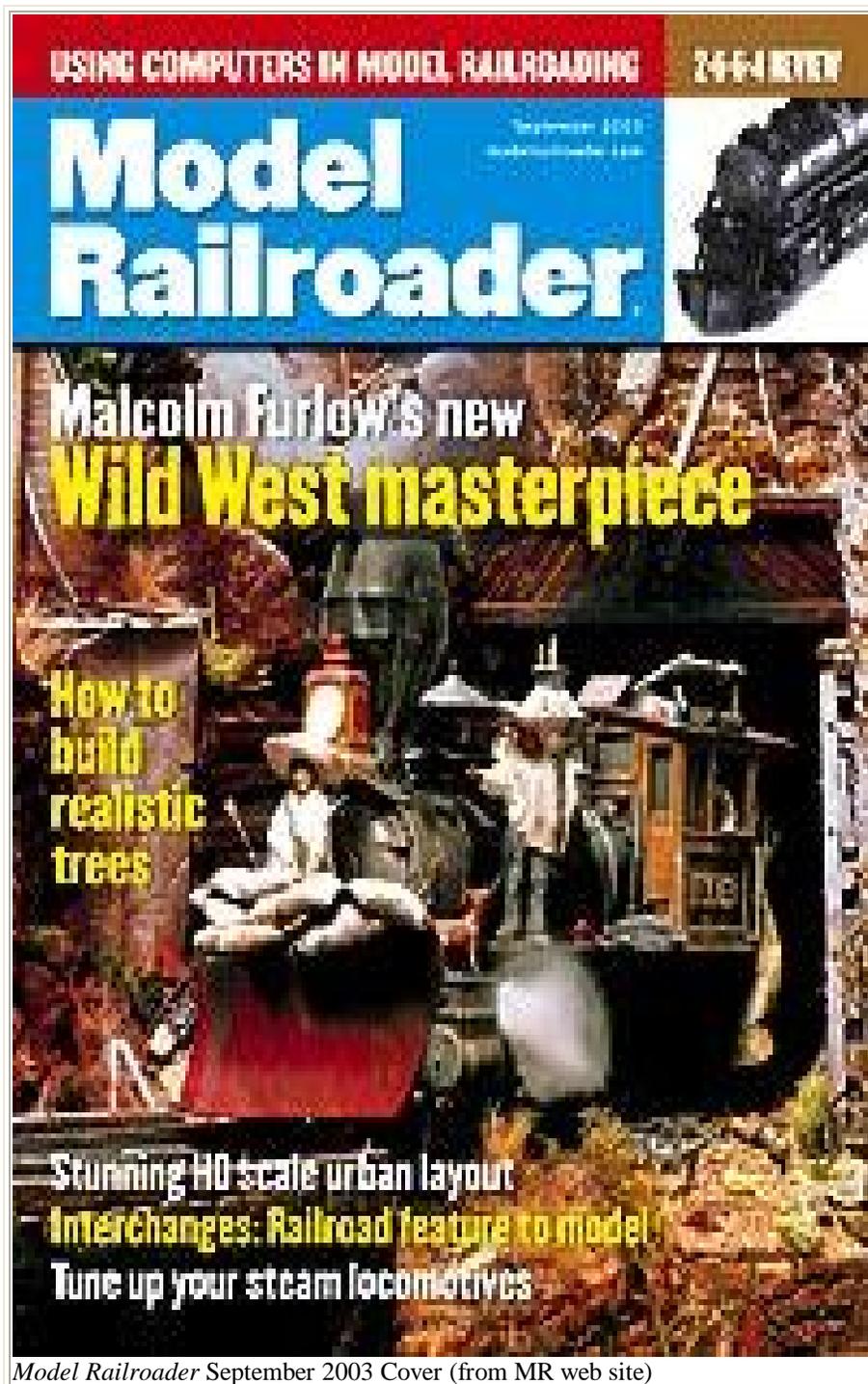
Terry Thompson, the new editor, also has a Ph.D., a bad sign. I recently received e-mails from Paul Schmidt (who did not request confidentiality when he sent them, which under generally understood internet etiquette makes them publishable here), who worked briefly for MR as an Associate Editor during its recent period of staff upheaval, and from posts on various forums does not appear to have been happy during his time there, although he insists that he resigned from MR because his wife wanted to return to the Pacific Northwest. Schmidt says of his exposure to the magazine's management: *I hold [Russ] Larson responsible for most of the internal issues at MR, as he made decisions on staffing, e-hobbies, etc., then later triangulated himself when those decisions failed.*

Remember the short-lived name of senior editor Mike Johnston in late 2000? Larson's work. The guy was hired nominally to replace Jim Kelly after Kelly retired. He had little to no model railroading experience or interest. Ended up being a spy for HR and Larson as to what other MR staff members were saying and doing. It almost provoked a revolt amongst the staff. Andy finally demanded that Russ fire the guy -- not something an editor should have to do if he was the one who did the hiring initially.

Terry settled things down for a while, brought in a sense of cohesiveness, but something about hiring PhDs to take the helm of MR just seems to snakebite that company. And he's arrogant. Was angling to be Larson's fair-haired boy from the first day he stepped into KPC as an associate editor at CTT. He was subtlety, and not so subtlety, bucking for the MR editor job from the get-go. He is not a person to be trusted. What I said about him in August, and here, is as charitable as I can be.

Bottom line, Russ Larson had a problem choosing a successor. Andy was the best of the lot of the staff available in 1993. Marty McGuirk or Jeff Wilson too in 2001 when events finally began eroding beneath Andy, but by then they'd had enough and had moved on. Wilson announced his departure the first day I arrived in Wisconsin. I stepped into the void left by Marty -- a big void in terms of experience with the magazine and name recognition.

In another e-mail, Schmidt said, As for the internal turmoil at MR, sheesh, it was going on long before I arrived there and continued sometime after I left. I flat out told Human Resources during my exit interview that were I to stay at Kalmbach I would seek to transfer to another magazine or to Trains.com, as I didn't want to work with Terry Thompson as editor. The laundry list of reasons is long, and contributions to it were made by other MR staff members.



Model Railroader September 2003 Cover (from MR web site)

Another bad sign was the magazine's cover and feature story in its September 2003 issue, the return of Malcolm Furlow from his 16-year, politically correct, Santa Fe-chic painting career, complete with a cover showing mustachioed, sombrero clad, bandolier-wearing "banditos" riding on a locomotive, which one assumes they, as "revolutionaries", have commandeered. The copy of MR's September 2003 cover is reproduced here under "fair use" doctrine for the purpose of comment. The presence of sandbags on the locomotive reinforces the idea of systematically hostile, "revolutionary" activities that are apparently taking place. What fun! The mustachioed, hostile, bandoliered bandit is a [long-standing Mexican stereotype](#) that is not appreciated by many in the Hispanic community. While John Allen depicted highly overweight Mexicans wearing sombreros on his layout, none was specifically a "bandit" or

revolutionary, and those scenes date from the 1950s. There should be no reason to cite his precedent in placing figures on a magazine's cover that some people will inevitably find offensive in our own time (a Google search quickly reveals [other references](#) to the long-standing recognition of this offensive stereotype). Furlow's condescending remarks about Native Americans cited earlier should also be read in the context of his clear willingness to employ

well-known ethnic stereotypes to sell his material -- again, in my opinion, Furlow appears to be simply a phony.

MR is apparently willing to employ ethnic stereotyping in an effort to sell magazines and increase its circulation. MR's editors would quickly excise from copy any derogatory reference to an advertiser, and likely wouldn't permit (though I'm now not completely sure here) offensive characterizations of African-Americans. But it feels "Frito bandito" will sell magazines to mainstream hobbyists, who presumably will not object to its association with their hobby.

In fact, a cover like September 2003 damages the image of those in the hobby who would like to appear intelligent or socially aware among their peers, clearly a worthwhile goal. The sources cited above indicate that the Mexican-American community fought and won the battle over stereotypical representation of hostile Mexicans in sombreros, mustaches, and bandoliers by the early 1970s. Yet more than a generation later, the flagship publication of the model railroad hobby sees commercial merit in using this stereotype, which most had thought was long-discredited. On one hand, Kalmbach sponsors the largely ineffectual "World's Greatest Hobby" campaign; on the other, it actively works against the objectives of that same campaign.

My own knowledge of technical issues like magazine distribution is limited to what I can glean from the owner of my local hobby shop, but it's likely that MR's decline in circulation would probably have been greater if it were not for Kalmbach's control over distribution channels and the ability to put its product in front of potential buyers. MR's competitors are at a disadvantage in this area, and this is probably a factor that prevents competitors without strong industry connections and financial backing from mounting a serious challenge to MR's continued, though diminished, dominance in its field.

RMC appears to be satisfied with its secondary role. One indication is its increasing stress on Canadian authors and material (despite the government-mandated presence of a specifically Canadian-content model railroad magazine north of the border) -- a niche market in North America. RMC remains formula-driven, serving not the high-end market generally, but more specific segments, such as resin kit builders, those of Canadian nationality or interests, or DCC operators. The 1960s focus on the offbeat and regional has given way to the overspecialized and the pedantic. No effort appears to be made to identify new, appealing authors of general interest, such as Boyd, Frary, or Hayden. (I should say here that, while I don't put myself in that category, I've occasionally submitted material to RMC with a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope, and never had it acknowledged. An editor interested in developing a new author of any sort would be expected to provide at least minimal feedback.)

In late 2003, I did have an article published in RMC -- apparently someone connected with the magazine found the page on Larry's Truck and Electric on this web site, and RMC contacted me wanting to use the material in a feature. Things went fairly smoothly until the time came for me to be paid, and then RMC went into bargain-basement mode. I found myself still attempting to collect the amount they promised, two months after the article was published. I've seen remarks on other forums discussing collection problems with RMC, and other difficulties dealing with Bill Schaumburg. The e-mail below is typical, discussing specifically problems trying to deal with RMC, but also referring to issues with other magazines:

It was suggested at one time (by a person that has had good contact with Schaumburg) that I might do an article about my Metra F40PH engines. Now, I don't mind going to the trouble to do an article, but I don't particularly want to submit a manuscript into a "black hole", so I emailed Schaumburg first to start a dialog as to whether there would be interest and what level of detail should be included. No response. No article.

At least one other magazine seems to require that you be part of their "group" to get any response. One person observed that if you send a picture of something (prototype), rather than publish that picture, they will send out their "insider" for that area to take a picture of the same thing for publication.

The "others" -- *Mainline Modeler*, *Model Railroading*, and *Railmodel Journal* -- are driven by formulas they feel will allow them to hang on in a niche market. *Mainline Modeler* and *Railmodel Journal* appear to stress keeping fees paid to authors as low as possible by printing material mainly developed by the editors themselves -- in the case of *Railmodel Journal*, by recycling material already reprinted several times in the editor's past enterprises. This magazine's production qualities also verge on the disastrous. *Model Railroading* features material almost entirely from a small clique of contributors, often in the form of repetitious multi-part articles. These aren't places where new Haydens and Frarys will break into print.

These "other" magazines exist in their current form probably due to market distortions. The US auto industry was able to survive producing a substandard product in the 1970s due to tariff protection, though eventually the combination of Japanese competition and the buying public's ability to visualize quality and reliability that *could* exist probably constructed a *de facto* political situation in which the industry had to sink or swim. Equivalent factors will eventually force themselves on the model railroad hobby magazines.

As I've gained more knowledge of the publishing side of the hobby, I've been hearing more dissatisfaction with the job most of the magazines are doing and the way they treat writers. An author of some scores of model railroad magazine articles recently e-mailed me, for instance:

I have no experience with MRG, other than that they lost, literally, the only article I sent them, including the slides. I kid you not. They got it in, acknowledged it was there, then it was gone. Nice. Had no incentive to re-send to them. RMJ screwed up my stuff on such a regular basis that I gave up on them too. No matter what I did, no matter how I spoon-fed it to them, they destroyed it.

MR pays on acceptance, a big difference. They send you a contract when they accept the article, then you send it back signed, and they send you a check. So this is before it's even published. In fact, when I was a teenager, they bought an article from me, paid me for it, THEY lost it, and never published it! MR also has a bad reputation for taking an axe to your text, greatly reducing it or even re-writing it, which I can't abide by. MM can be tough at times to get money out of, did a few articles for them for a period.

The magazine editors occupy a position at the top of the social heap in the hobby. They are in demand as speakers at NMRA meetings, and as we've seen, ordinary modelers like Lionel Strang aspire to have them visit their layouts and extend approval. This position provides a considerable measure of prestige and perks, such as expense-paid travel and speakers' honoraria, to the

editors. Their ability to decide whether to publish or not a particular hobbyist's articles means they receive considerable deference at their appearances.

This respect doesn't appear to be repaid to the hobby community at large, however. Bill Schaumburg discussed in the June 2003 issue of RMC his habitual lateness at such events: "Rambling' and I get along together all too well, so much so that 'getting there' means getting there late, often real late. Add to this my known allergy to time and you can figure that I will be one of the desk clerk's 'last ones'. . . . This year I decided to outsmart myself. . . . It worked so well that Dick Flock, one of the meet's organizers, was amazed to see me walk in around 2:00 PM on Friday, only an hour after the first seminars began. . . . (People know they should never schedule me at the beginning of anything)." It's good to see some self-awareness of discourtesy in this passage, and possibly even the start of finding a solution to it, but it also indicates the relative standing in which a magazine editor places himself: lateness is just something people need to put up with where he's concerned, because he, presumably like other editors, can get away with it. And naturally, such cheerful rudeness occurs only if he's the guy on top -- if it were a job interview, he'd no doubt be a trifle early, like anyone else.

Along with the greater criticism of the press that's occurred with the weblog or "blog" movement in society at large, there needs to be increased monitoring and awareness of the ways in which the hobby magazines aren't serving committed hobbyists' needs. And from outright bigotry in editorial content (even if obtuseness is a partial excuse); to simple rudeness and discourtesy in arriving late for meetings or not acknowledging submissions, even with return postage paid; to implicit endorsement of bullying on e-mail lists by unprotesting participation in the list; the hobby editors, like other journalists, appear to place themselves at a level of society that they may not currently deserve, and they damage relationships within the hobby by this thoughtless personal conduct. I suspect that eventually, however, economic reality will call all the editors to some type of account.

MR, like the monopoly urban daily papers, produces a bland, predictable product, irrespective of flaws in execution like space aliens or Mexican banditos on the cover. MR's readers, like the readers of the daily papers, have been abandoning this product. The story of MR's decline, and the potential effect it will have on the other magazines as its status changes, isn't complete. And in a key development since I originally posted this essay, MR announced the retirement of Russ Larson at the end of 2003. I believe Larson would have been 65 in 2008, so the exact reason for the timing is unclear -- though if the turmoil in the last few years at MR is any indication, other developments will follow Larson's retirement. However, MR's position in the hobby, like that of other once-established institutions like the NMRA, seems increasingly less relevant.

In the months following Larson's retirement, Kalmbach's management has apparently become increasingly sensitive to knowledgeable criticism. Paul Schmidt, a former MR Associate Editor, [posted](#) the following remarks on the Atlas forum in January 2004:

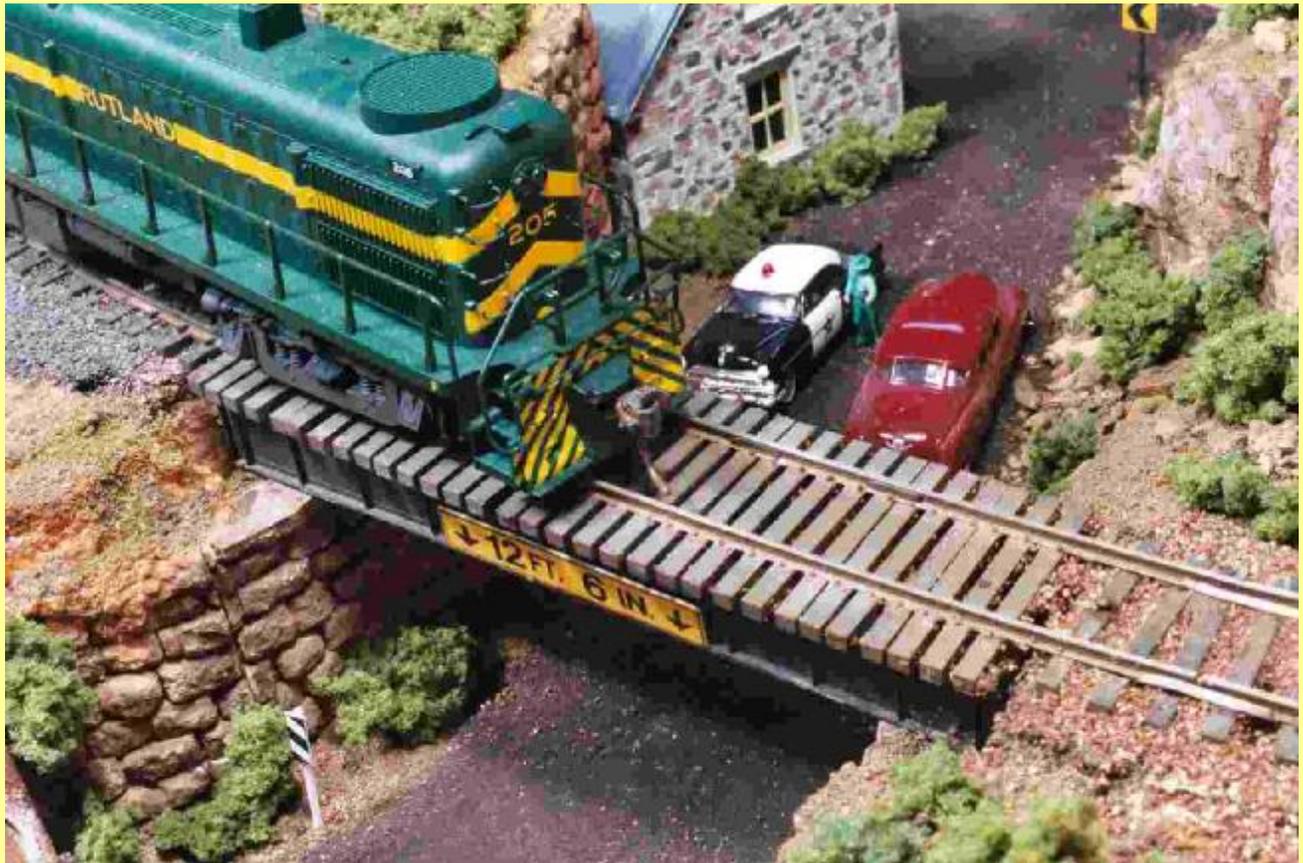
That deal with e-hobbies was one of the brainstorms of Russ Larson, who frankly gets too much credit for what's been right with MR and not enough blame for what's gone wrong, especially the internal turmoil in the past few years. Oh, the background information I know!

This post was on the Atlas forum, independent of the Kalmbach-run Trains.com forum, and Schmidt was a former, not a current, Kalmbach employee. In [a second thread](#) on the Atlas forum,

Schmidt detailed Kalmbach's reaction to his *Atlas* post: a very high-ranking Kalmbach executive ordered Schmidt's ID on the *Kalmbach Trains.com* forum deleted. One suspects that if Kalmbach is so hypersensitive to criticism, the "turmoil" Schmidt mentions isn't over.

Next Issue – Part 10

Technical and Historical Societies



John Bruce's Model Railroad

Los Feliz and North Western Railroad

www.trainweb.org/lfnwfan

Future Articles

Planning for DCC

Touring the Floquil Paint Factory

Modeling Keuka Lake - Hammondsport

Modeling a Civil War RR

Hiding that Basement Pole

Designing the Bath, NY Yards

Video Review – Photo Mural Backdrops

*Visiting the Brunswick, MD,
Railroad Museum*

Coming Next Month

Editing Model Railroad Images

Modeling an Icicle-Breaker Railcar

Modeling New England Railroads

Sociology of Model Railroading

Ask Doctor Dick – the Scenery Doctor

Train Events - *Updated 2006 Calendar*

Rochester Model Rails

Editor and Publisher
Richard A. Senges

Web Master
Ted Larson

Photography
Matt Kovacic

Columnists
Leo Adamski
Gerald Brimacombe
John Bruce
Fred Cupp
Jim Hutton
Betty James
George Irwin
Steve Levine
Jack Matsik
Lou Nost
Gary Patterson
Richard Roth
Harold W. Russell, MMR
Frank T. Smith
Gordon Spalty
Ned Spiller, MMR
David L. Thompson
Norm Wright

Authors: Articles, digital images, and plans are welcome.

Mailing Address
1231 Wellington Drive
Victor, NY 14564

Web Site: www.trainweb.org/rmr

Any interest in an

Index ?

for the first 38 issues of the

Rochester Model Rails

e-mail: OCRR@frontiernet.net

Don't Forget to Visit

www.railroadmuseum.net



Coming Train Events for 2006

Updated 1-2-06

2006

- January 15** **Utica, NY** – Toy Train Meet, Info: 315-865-5115, e-mail: cnyttcs@yahoo.com
- January 28 – 29** **West Springfield, MA** – Amherst Railway Society Big Railroad Hobby Show, Eastern States Exposition Grounds, Memorial Avenue. Info: www.AmherstRail.org
- January 28 – 29** **Cheektowaga, NY** – Winter Wonderland Limited, Train Show and Swap Meet, Info: 716-876-7031
- February 11 – 12** **Hornell, NY** – Hornell Model Railroad Club Open House, Info: www.hmrc.org
- February 17 – 19** **Seattle, Washington** – 21st Annual Sn3 Symposium, Contact: 425-778-6069
- February 18 – 19** **Barrie, Ontario** – Train Show, Barrie Event Center, Essa Road & Highway 400
- February 19** **Syracuse, NY** – The Syracuse Model Railroad Club, Open House and Train Meet
James Street and Nichols Ave. Info: 315-452-0982
- March 11 – 12** **Rochester, NY** – Rochester Model Railroad Club Show, 150 South Clinton Avenue – First Universalist Church. Sat. 10:00am – 5:00pm. Sun. 1:00 – 5:00pm. (*Flea Market Sat. only.*) \$3.00 adult, \$2.00 age 6 – 12, under 6 free with adult. Info: Tom McColloch 585-872-6106
- March 26** **Rochester, NY** – RIT Train Show and Sale, RIT campus. Info: www.ritmrc.org

Coming Train Events for 2006

Updated 1 - 2 - 06

- April 22** **Schomberg, Ontario, Canada** – The First Annual Ontario Narrow Gauge Show, Schomberg Community Centre, 10:00am – 4:00pm. Website: www.creative-works.ca/NGM06Home
- April 28 – 30** **Chatnam, Ontario, Canada** – Chatham Express: The NFR 2005 Spring Convention
Wheels Inn, 615 Richman Street. Info: 519-351-1100
- June 1 – 4** **Worcester, MA** – NMRA NER 2006 Spring Convention
- July 1 –2** **Galeton, PA** – Bark Peelers' Convention, PA Lumber Museum
- July 2 – 8** **Philadelphia, PA** – NMRA National Convention
- August 21 – 26** **Durango, CO** - 26th National Narrow Gauge Convention
- September 10** **Buffalo, NY** – Buffalo Central Terminal First Train Show. Info: www.buffalocentralterminal.org
- October 20 – 22** **Parsippany, NY** – NMRA NER 2006 Fall Convention
- November 4- 5** **Syracuse NY** - Train Show and Sale at NY Fairgrounds
- December 9-10** **Rochester, NY** – The New and Expanded Two Day RIT Train Show and Sale,
Location – RIT Field House, many layouts displayed, largest train show in western NY.