

# Rochester Model Rails

*Dedicated to Quality Model Railroading*

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ROCHESTER, N.Y.

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The HO scale *Oregon View* model railroad of Matt Kovacic, Fairport, NY. Digital image by Matt Kovacic.

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# Letter to the Editor

WOW! I opened up my May issue of the *Rochester Model Rails*, and there staring at me on the cover is a familiar sight from my childhood. Every time we would for some reason drive down Algerine St. my father would tell how he used to catch the trolley over on the County House Rd. in Hopewell and ride to Geneva or to the Algerine St. shelter as a kid back in the 1920's. It seemed that for a while he had a girlfriend that lived on Algerine St.

Why it is a street I do not know as it is located right in the middle of a lot of farmland as shown in the photo. One of those little shelters was purchased after the demise of the line and spent its last days as a tool shed on the farm next door to where I grew up in Hopewell. I also used to love to stop in at the Pittsford, NY station when it was an Ice Cream/Dairy Bar store. Again my dad would tell many stories of taking the trolley to Pittsford and Rochester when he was a teenager.

The Rochester and Eastern Rapid Railway is long gone but not forgotten down here in Geneva, NY. A friend of mine, Alan Schenck, lives in a house that was built in the 1840's and sat right beside the trolley tracks on Castle Road as it enters Geneva. A few weeks ago (just before I got the *RMR* issue) we were coming home from a Camp Whitman Program Committee meeting in Victor. As we passed one of the old stations on Rt. 4, which is now a private residence, I happened to say something about the old trolley line. As we neared Geneva, he suddenly pulled off the road and pointed at a concrete pole located in a lawn just outside of Geneva. The pole is that last remaining catenary pole from the R & E left in the Geneva area. He then pulled into his own driveway and said, "get out, I want to show you something. Just a few feet from his property where a gate led into what used to be a field is the last remaining tie from the line still intact after all these years.

*Ray Howard*

See photos on Page 3.



R & E Algerine St. Station. Photograph by Gerald Brimacombe, copyright 2006.



The concrete catenary pole.



The tie still holding its own.



(Alan Schenk, who lives next to where the trolley line ran, loaned the last three photos to me. These were all taken in the 1920's and are kept in a safe by his family.)

Looking across the street at his house.



Taken from his great aunt's house across the road.



In January of 1927, a local coal truck had just unloaded at his house and had pulled around the side of the house (which does not have a good view of the tracks and is not a crossing). The driver of the truck pulled onto the tracks and was immediately struck by a trolley car. The driver of the truck was killed. He had no information about the passengers on the trolley.

# Installing Decoders in *Old Locos*

Clinic Given at the NMRA NFR LSD Meet in the Fall of 2005

by Dave Mitchell

In this clinic I will relate some of my experiences with installing DCC decoders in older locomotives. Having modeled in HO for over 50 years, I have a broad range of locomotives to convert. With most of my friends having already gone to DCC, and since I am starting a new layout, I needed to convert my existing engines to DCC. Here are a few experiences I have encountered.

First thing to consider, **do you want to convert a particular locomotive?** Newer locomotives, especially diesels, are smoother running, have correct dimensions, individual details (not cast-on grab irons etc.) and most have a plug to install DCC decoders (known as plug-n-play). Newer models usually come with can motors that are isolated electrically and operate smoothly. Older diesels usually only pick up from one truck and return thru the other truck, while newer diesels have all-wheel electrical pick-up. If you are like I am, you may still want to convert the older locomotive that is a particular favorite, or no longer available, or was a gift from a friend that you want to keep to remember them. This then is the clinic for you.

## Preparation of the model:

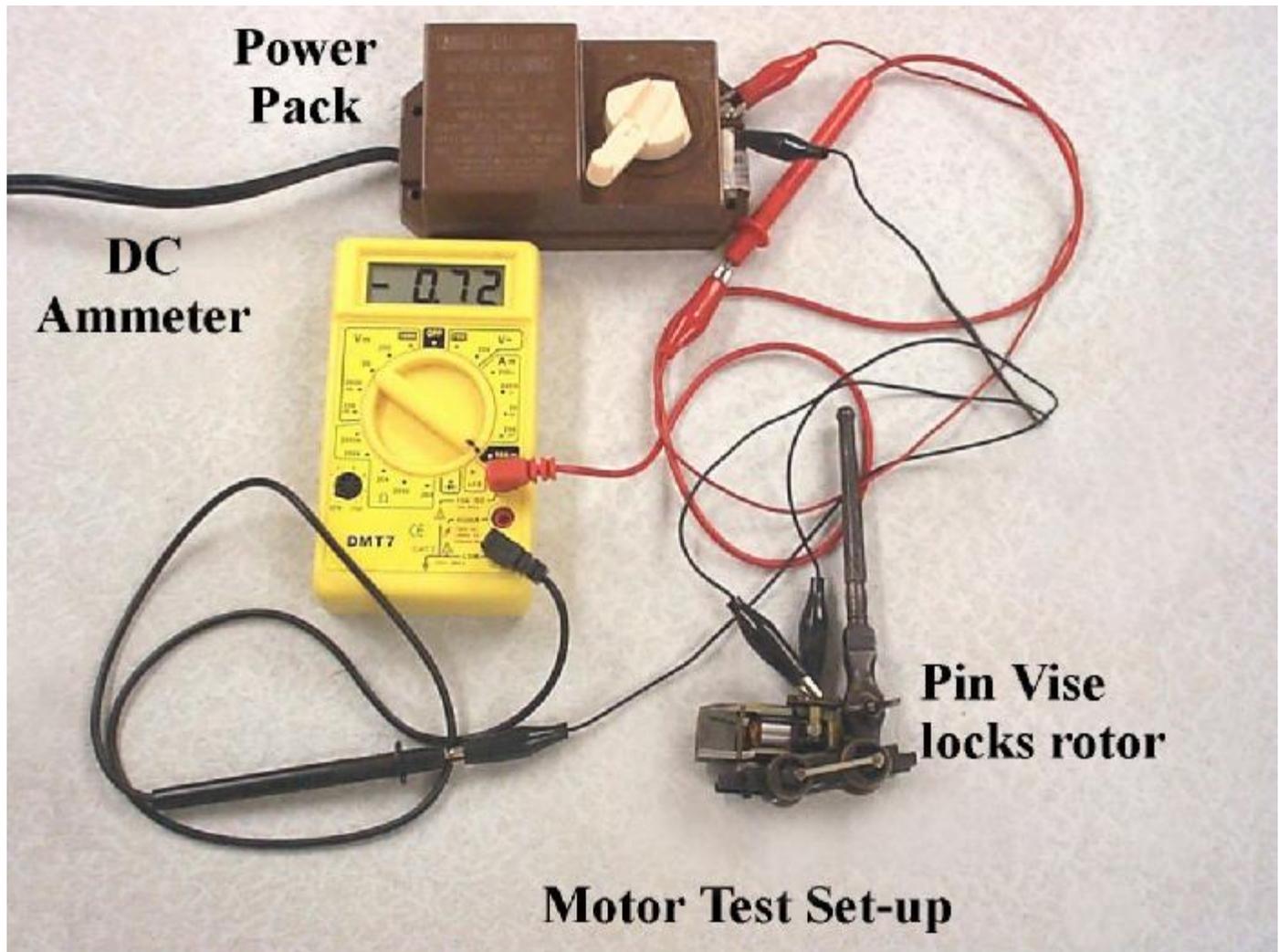
1. Determine if you can use the existing motor.
2. Determine where you can fit the decoder in the locomotive or tender.
3. Determine the mechanical requirements if you have to change motors.
4. Determine what additional functions you want (headlight, backup light ditch lights, mars or strobe lights, firebox lights) and how you can install these.



## Step 1: .Can I use my old motor?

Take the body off the locomotive so that the mechanism is exposed. Set up a DC power supply that can deliver 12 volts DC to the motor. Connect an ammeter in series with the power to the motor. Hold the armature shaft and apply 12 volts to the motor **FOR ONLY ONE OR TWO SECONDS** and read the current draw. If the motor draws less than 1 ampere stalled you can use an N Scale decoder, which is smaller physically which helps with locating it in the locomotive. If the motor draws 1.0 to 1.5 amperes stalled, you need an HO size decoder. If it draws between 1.5 and 4.0 amperes you need an O Scale sized decoder. (Note that O Scale decoders will not physically fit in HO locomotives). If your motor draws more than the listed values for your scale you will need a new motor that draws less than the above ratings.

If the motor draws the correct current, test for cogging. Connect a DC power pack to the motor. Slowly turn up the power until the motor starts to run. Then slowly turn the power down. Does the motor continue to run at much lower power? Does the locomotive jerk to a start and then coast to a stop if this test is done on the track? If this happens this condition is known as "cogging". This is a design flaw in the motor, and cannot be corrected. You will need a new motor.



**Motor Test Set-up**

If your existing motor passes the current and cogging tests, then you have to determine if the electrical circuit of the motor can be isolated. That is, there must be no electrical path from the armature circuit to the frame of the motor (and then to the locomotive frame and the track). **Connecting either of the motor leads to the track will destroy the DCC decoder immediately!**

Using the ohmmeter function of your meter, test each brush for grounding. Note: remove or raise the motor brushes for this test, so you can tell which brush holder is grounded. Examine the "grounded" brush to determine how to isolate it. Usually one brush is insulated and one is grounded, as this is how older models were built. Some motors have the ground connection made by the brush spring. To isolate this brush slip a piece of wire insulation from a wire the size of the spring wire over the spring wire. This should isolate the brush.

Some motors have the brush holders insulated, but have a tab from the brush holder soldered to the motor frame. Just unsolder this tab and your motor is isolated. Other motors have the ground as part of the motor design. This cannot be corrected. If you cannot isolate the brushes from the ground, a new motor is required.

We assume here that the new motor will come isolated, and will not exhibit cogging. There are several kinds of motors, open frame, can and coreless. Coreless motors are precision motors usually used in electronic equipment and are not compatible with DCC. New open frame motors are available from Bowser Mfg., which are isolated and wound to work on DCC. Can motors (which are totally enclosed by a "can") are available from a number of vendors, primarily Northwest Short Line and Micro-Mark. Step 3 will address choice and installation considerations of motors.

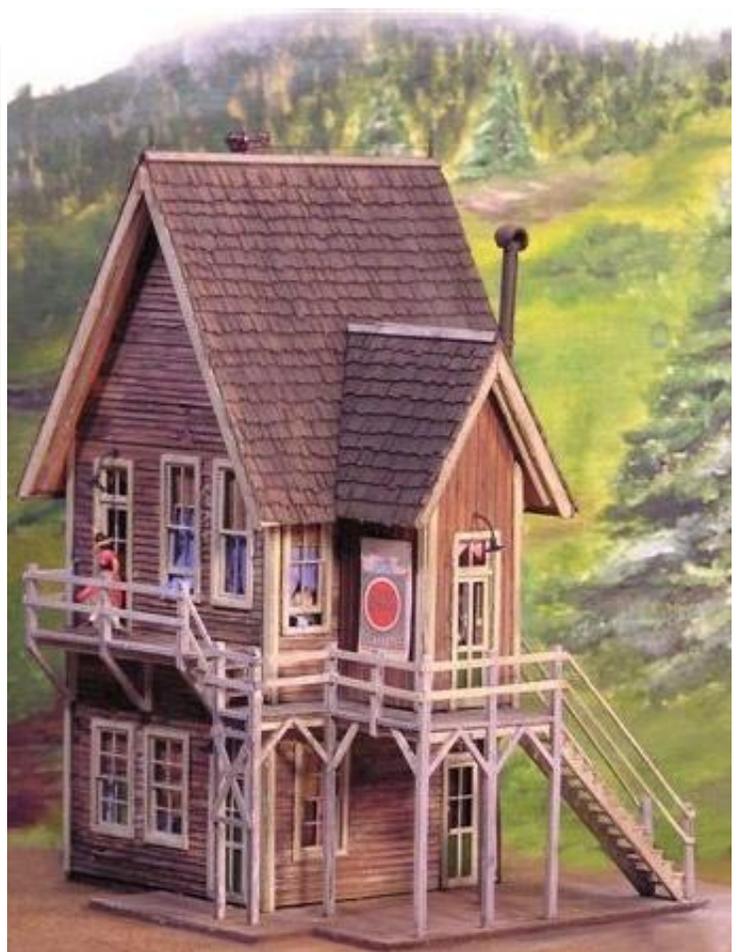
**Next Month – Part II – Decoder Location**

## Photo Gallery



### The Models of Matt Kovacic

Matt displays his model building skills and unique weathering techniques in these HO scale models. The railcars above and below are made by *Cache Creek Scale Models* and the “house” on the right is a *Barr Mills* wood craftsman kit. Matt also painted the backdrop shown behind the *Barr Mills* structure on the right. Digital images by Matt Kovacic.



# Ten Years of the RIT Model Railroad Club

## Part II

*by Mike Roque, Chris Stilson, and Otto M. Vondrak*

### **VOLUNTEER WORK WITH ROCHESTER CHAPTER NRHS**

Since 1998, many RITMRC members have also become regular members of the Rochester Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (<http://www.rochnrhs.org>). The third oldest in the nation, the chapter operates the Rochester & Genesee Valley Railroad Museum just minutes down the road from RIT at Industry Depot in Rush, NY (<http://www.rgvrrm.org>). Over the years, many RITMRC members have had the opportunity to work on their full-size working railroad. Volunteers have been involved in nearly every aspect of the museum from equipment preservation and restoration, track maintenance, and carpentry and construction to tour guide and train operations. While helping maintain vintage equipment and giving tours to the public is fun, let's face it... RITMRC members want to run real trains! Many RITMRC members have been trained as track car operators, brakemen, conductors, and locomotive engineers.

Each year, the club sponsors "RIT Day" at Industry Depot where RITMRC members handle all aspects of museum operation from tours to track car rides. For many, RITMRC is a first-hand introduction to the world of model trains as well as full-size railroading, and is just another fun hands-on aspect of the club's commitment to education and community service.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

As a student club, RITMRC understands the importance of encouraging young people to join the hobby. For the last few years, RITMRC has exhibited at Strong Museum's annual "All Aboard!" railroad-themed event for children. A popular local event, many Rochester families bring their kids out for a day of railroad fun. RITMRC members happily volunteer their time with interactive hands-on displays and help to entertain the large crowds that come each year. Always appreciative, Strong Museum has invited the club back to participate year after year.

## THE MODULES

In 2004, the club embarked on its second most ambitious project to date: a large modular HO scale layout. This yet-unnamed modular layout, based on the Free-Mo standard (<http://www.free-mo.org>), allows RITMRC members another opportunity to design and construct a model railroad from the ground up. This modular layout is also portable, allowing RITMRC to travel outside of the RIT campus and show off its modeling talent.



The caboose-servicing track at Dispatch Shops on the R&IT is quiet during this nighttime view. After routine servicing, these hacks will again be rolling behind a way freight on the Rochester & Irondequoit Terminal Railroad, the HO scale layout designed and built by the RIT Model Railroad Club. After several years of construction, the club members are now able to enjoy detailed and realistic scenes such as these. Photo by Dave Scheiderich.

**Next Month ..... Part III**



## Ask Doctor Duck

### Terry writes:

As a long time model railroader, I have experienced some manufacturers' defects in the model railroad products I purchased recently. What are your experiences in this area?

### Doctor Duck:

Terry – What a coincidence. I too have experienced some quality problems.

For example, *Micro Engineering* has had problems in making good quality HO code 70 insulated frog turnouts recently. I ordered and received six turnouts late last year, which turned out to be defective. The problem was that all the cast frogs were too high by about three to seven thousandths of an inch. Since the product is guaranteed for life, I returned these for six new ones.

After waiting for three months, I received six replacement turnouts. However these also had somewhat high frogs - **L**. So I kept these and ground the frogs down even with the adjoining rails.

Another quality problem occurred with a *Broadway Limited Imports* K-4 locomotive. When the K-4 was received from BLI, the headlight never glowed brightly. It was sent back, and after two months returned with the proper resistor installed. The headlight works fine now - **J**.

However, the chassis was replaced by *BLI* stating that it was binding at low speeds. The problem now is that the K-4 will not stay on the track, i.e., it derails frequently - **L**. The original K-4 ran fine. It is now back to *BLI* for "repairs".

In the realm of DCC products, some problems have been experienced with *NCE* products. Specifically, two EB3 circuit breakers were found incomplete, one missing eleven posts and one missing a wire connector - **L**. These were returned and a replacement EB3 was supplied by the manufacturer - **J**.

An *NCE* Z14SRP decoder was purchased and found to be defective, i.e., the headlight would not function (another headlight problem). The Z14 was returned to *NCE* and a fully functional unit was supplied - **J**. My compliments to *NCE* for their quick and professional problem resolution.

Another quality problem occurred recently relative to a *Bachmann Spectrum* 4-6-0 locomotive. It was ordered from *Train World*, a distributor, not a manufacturer, as a new engine. But when received, it turned out to be a used 4-6-0 - **L**. The price was very low which should have been a red flag.

Per the *Bachmann* warranty, it was returned to *Bachmann* for repairs or replacement. My hat off to *Bachmann* who replaced the engine with a new one - **J**. It works fine now.

Relative to good quality products made by model railroad manufacturers, I am impressed with the new line of *Roundhouse* reefers, such as the HO RTR 36' Old Time Reefer PRR # 89622 (RND84116). A very nice railcar and it runs exceptionally well - **J**.

To enhance the car, I changed the #5 couplers to *Kadee* #58s, burnished the couplers, coupler pockets and axel holes with powdered graphite, changed the wheel sets to *Intermountain* 33" blackened brass, and painted the hardware on the car with *Floquil Grimy Black* - **J**.

# The Model RR Post Office

*Number 16 in the Series*

*by Norm Wright*

Uruguay Scott #1168, a 5 pesos stamp depicting a toy wood steam train, was issued on June 8, 1997 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Inter-American Institute of Children. E. Salgado designed the stamp, and Imprimex of South America was the security printer. The lithographed and unwatermarked adhesive item is valued at \$2 in the current catalogues.



## Model Railroader Switches

### - *Digitrax* to *NCE*

Well I did it.

I am 45 years old, I talk to my daughter about peer pressure and I turn around and give in to it. Most of our club, the *Tuesday Night Gang*, uses *NCE* and I was a rebel with *Digitrax*.

I had my reasons for choosing *Digitrax* as my DCC system. I defended them whenever questioned why. I still think they have a great system even though I am changing.

So why cave in and switch companies. While both *NCE* and *Digitrax* have options I like (and dislike) and I already had everything I needed to run trains I still changed.

*NCE* has one thing that is very important to me, as I switch to more of an operating layout I cannot afford to purchase enough throttles to have a good operating session. This may sound small but try to go out and buy between 6 and 15 throttles. With *NCE* most people can bring their own. Also most of us have at least 2 throttles so they can bring one for someone who does not have DCC.

For me this became a major issue and pushed me over the edge.

So my *Digitrax* is all boxed up and ready to ship out to its new home and my *NCE* should be up and running in soon.

**Future Articles**

*Resin Casting*

*Modeling Keuka Lake - Hammondsport*

*PA Cabooses*

*Designing the Bath, NY Yards*

*Video Review – Photo Mural Backdrops*

*Tortoise Installation Made Easy*

*DCC Demystified*

*Building the Lakeview Winery*

**Coming Next Month .....**

**Jack Matsik's Car Loads**

**The Santa Fe CF – 7**

**Decoder Installation in  
Older Locomotives – Part II**

**The RIT Model Railroad – Part III**

**Train Events Calendar – Updated**

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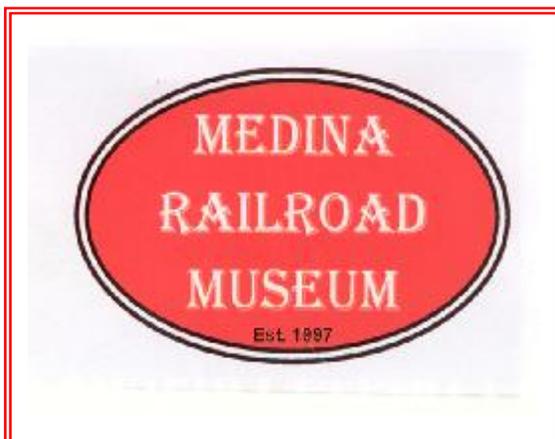
**Web Site:**

[www.trainweb.org/rmr](http://www.trainweb.org/rmr)

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**Don't Forget to Visit**

[www.railroadmuseum.net](http://www.railroadmuseum.net)



## Coming Train Events for 2006/2007

**Updated 5 - 25 - 2006**

- May 27 – 28**      **Midland, Canada** - Midland District Model Railroad Club Model Railroad Show, Midland Sports & Recreation Complex, King St., Midland. Contact: Paul at [okppmcd@msn.com](mailto:okppmcd@msn.com)
- June 1 – 4**      **Worcester, MA** – NMRA NER 2006 Spring Convention
- June 17 (or 24<sup>th</sup>)**      **Hornell, NY** – NMRA NFR Lakeshores Spring Meet, hosted by the Hornell Model RR Club, Tour of the Alstom plant. Contact Dave Mitchell, Lakeshores Superintendent for details at: [dbmitch@rochester.rr.com](mailto:dbmitch@rochester.rr.com)
- June 24 – 25**      **Baltimore, MD** – The Great Scale Model Train Show, Info: [www.gsmts.com](http://www.gsmts.com)
- July 1 –2**      **Galeton, PA** – Bark Peelers' Convention, PA Lumber Museum
- July 2 – 9**      **Philadelphia, PA** – NMRA National Convention, Info: [www.ij2006.org](http://www.ij2006.org)
- July 7-9**      **Philadelphia, PA** – National Train Show, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA
- July 3 – 9**      **Santa Clara, CA** – Garden Railway National Convention, Info: [www.bagrs.org/convention/index.html](http://www.bagrs.org/convention/index.html)
- July 19 – 22**      **Parsippany, NJ** – O Scale National Convention, Info: [www.2006oscalenat.org](http://www.2006oscalenat.org)
- August 2- 6**      **Pontiac, MI** – S Scale National Convention,
- August 9 – 12**      **Denver, CO** - N Scale National Convention, Info: [www.nscollector.com/Denver\\_NSC.htm](http://www.nscollector.com/Denver_NSC.htm)
- August 12 – 13**      **Gananoque, Canada** - Thousand Islands Model Railroad Show, Thousand Islands Model Railroaders, Gananoque Recreation Center, 600 King St. E.  
Contact: Bill 613-382-7575 or Rick 613-382-3244
- August 21 – 26**      **Durango, CO** - 26<sup>th</sup> National Narrow Gauge Convention

## Coming Train Events for 2006/2007

**Updated 5 - 25 - 2006**

- September 9**      **Niagara Falls, NY** - The Sept. meet of the International Division of the NMRA will be held at the Niagara-Orleans Model Railroad Engineers club at Summit Park Mall, Williams RD. Niagara Falls N.Y. at 9:30 A.M. Clinics, and a Switching Contest will be held, and the clubs layouts will be open.
- September 10**      **Buffalo, NY** – Buffalo Central Terminal First Train Show.  
Info: [www.buffalocentralterminal.org](http://www.buffalocentralterminal.org)
- Sept. 30 – Oct. 1**      **Brampton, Canada** - Brampton Model Railroad Show, Orangeville Shortline Model Railroad Club. Brampton Fairgrounds 12942 410/Heartlake Rd., Brampton  
Contact: Dave 705-435-4986 or Carl 416-499-1498
- October 14 – 15**      **Bowmanville, Ontario, Canada** – 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Train Show, Bowmanville High School, 49 Liberty Street North. Sat – 10:00 am - 4:30pm, Sun. 10 am - 4:00pm. Adults \$5, Senior \$4, Family \$10. Presented by the Soper Valley Model Railroad Association. Contact: Ron Radcliffe 905-987-3099
- October 20 – 22**      **Parsippany, NY** – NMRA NER 2006 Fall Convention
- November 4- 5**      **Syracuse NY** - Train Show and Sale at NY Fairgrounds
- November 12**      **Batavia, NY** - The Great Batavia Train Show, Batavia Downs Gaming, 9:30am – 3:30pm. Donation \$5.00
- 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.
- 2007**
- May 4- 6**      **Rochester, NY** – NMRA NFR convention. The “Flower City Flyer” event will include the usual – model railroad clinics, model contests, and layout tours. Info: Harvey McIntyre: [hmcintyre4@cogeco.ca](mailto:hmcintyre4@cogeco.ca)