

Model Railroading in Wintery New England By Tom Miller

Model railroaders always enjoy unique scenery and they would find just that on a visit to New England. While living in Connecticut, I joined the Amherst Railway Society and found modelers for all gauges. The Amherst Railway Society is a non-profit organization, much like ours with some 400 members. If you enjoy large model railroading shows, make the trip to West Springfield Massachusetts for their annual "Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show" <<http://www.railroadhobbyshow.com/>> at the Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds January 29-30, 2011. This Show has become the biggest railroad show in the Northeast and the Amherst Railway Society has received the Walther's Showmanship Award in recognition of this annual event. As a member of the Society you are entitled to receive a free admission ticket for one day of the Show. The Amherst Railway Society's Modular Layout called "The Amherst Belt Lines" which was started in 1978. The original specifications were modified from those of the "Mount Clare Division" of the NMRA® and have been further revised over the past three decades.

On your visit you would see a modular layout, not a sectional layout. The difference here is that a sectional layout has a common theme that holds it together – scenery, era, purpose, etc. – and gives it the look of a completed layout. A sectional layout almost always goes together the same way all the time. A modular layout can have a common theme, but relies solely on a standard interface between different modules for assembly. This means that a modular layout can be assembled in any sequence to present a new layout at different shows – the Belt Lines has rarely, if ever, been assembled the same way twice. There are no specifications or requirements for scenery, era or track arrangement permitting the module owner to exercise his or her own creativity and modeling interests. Some of the modules in the layout represent real locations in New England while other modules are the creation of the module owner. This allows the layout to take on a unique look, while still allowing it to operate as a miniature railroad system.



Pictured and modeled on one corner of the layout is a module featuring down hill skiers something common to winter scenes in New England. It is done with three lines of HO rail with a chalet modeled into the scene not unlike a great winter scene in New England.