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'Ferroquinologists' Preparing For RR Hobby Show This Sunday

BY PATRICIA K. GITTES

Robert Buck first became enchanted with the railroads when he was a youngster, just tall enough to peer over the windowsill of the bay windows at his mother's home on Bacon Street. From there he could look across the Warren common and watch with fascination the old steam locomotives pulling the railroad cars through town.

Over the years, the fascination never diminished. Instead it flourished and now Buck can be found most weekdays in Tucker's Hobby Shop which

is located in the gracious Victorian house where he grew up.

Celebrating its first anniversary, the shop overlooks the same view enjoyed by Buck as a young child. However, the steam engines which so fascinated Buck are no more, having been replaced by diesel powered locomotives.

Those old steam engines may be gone but they are definitely not forgotten as visitors to the Amherst Railway Society's annual Railroad Hobby Show being held this Sunday at the New England Center Building on

the Eastern States Exposition Grounds will quickly find out.

Railroad enthusiasts or "ferroquinologists," as they are more precisely known, will be exhibiting displays, operating layouts and running a railroadianna flea market.

Many Model Layouts

According to show director Buck, the displays, both operating and static, will feature model equipment from N-scale up to live steamers. An HO gauge modular layout will be set up and operating for this year's show, he said. In addition, there will be an N-Trak layout.

Tables will be set up for those wishing to participate in the flea market which will feature timetables, models, magazines, books, and other model and full-sized railroadianna.

The Amherst Railway Society was founded 20 years ago as a small, informal group of people interested in model railroads. Gradually, as word spread, the group began to grow. It started

offering programs on model railroading, travel and photography. "One good program led to another," according to Buck and the society, which currently boasts 125 members, began meeting monthly.

Programs now feature speakers from the railroad industry, travelogues, and a March film festival as well as combination bus-rail trips to some of the huge clubs in New Jersey and museums.

The annual hobby show evolved from regular meetings where members brought in their model equipment and modular layouts. The first one was held in a regular classroom at the University of Massachusetts (where all the Society's meetings take place). Each year, as the show expanded the group had to move to larger quarters.

"Last year's crowd of 3,000 strained our space and so we had to find a new location for the show. The newly renovated New England Center Building at the

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Show Director

Robert Buck of Warren stands in front of a portion of the large assortment of railroad books on display at Tucker's Hobby Shop. (Photo by Patricia K. Gittes)

'Ferroquinologists' Preparing RR Hobby Show

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Eastern States fit the bill," Buck said.

Model railroading attracts all age groups and the Society boasts many parent-child groups within its membership. Buck's two sons, Kenneth, a student at UMass, and Russell, a senior at Quaboag Regional High School, are active members. In fact, Russell is coordinator of the N-Trak modules at this year's show.

For Serious Hobbyists

The N-Trak models, gauged at 1-160 of the real thing, are for those who take scale modeling very seriously, according to the

younger Buck. The N-trak aficionados are a world-wide group and have their own monthly newsletter.

The N-Traks were responsible for the pioneering of the modular concept in model railroading which began in California in 1974. This concept allows model railroaders to easily transport modules, usually in four by eight foot sections, to shows or another enthusiast's home, to be fitted together to form a layout for the trains to run. A minimum of four sections are needed to complete a layout.

Each module emphasizes certain concepts, Russ said, and reflects each individual's interests. Most N-Trak owners are purists and so the train models and layout modules are accurate and to scale down to the minutest detail.

The 17-year-old displayed a module he will be bringing to this weekend's show. A cooperative effort between Buck and Michael Tylik of Sturbridge, the module depicts a typical scene in the Sturbridge-Southbridge area. So detailed is the layout, that one can look into the tiny buildings and see people working at their desks or workers at the lumberyard stacking lumber. The paint on the trains comes from the original factory where the trains were painted and was applied in diluted form to the miniature models by Russ.

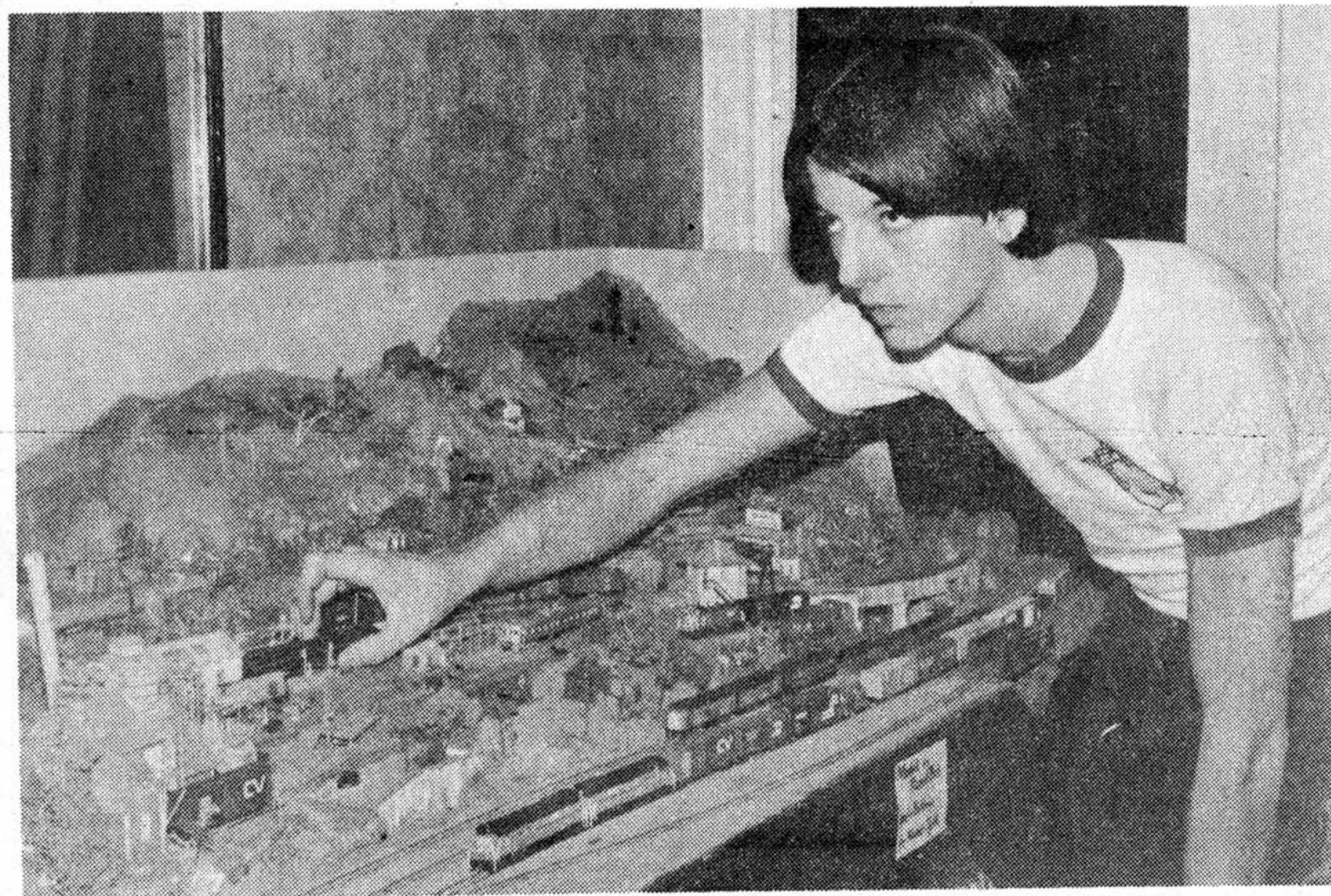
Also featured at the show will be O-scale (1-48) and HO scale (1-87) models. Live steam locomotives, built to one-and-one-half inch scale, will also be on display.

Local Exhibitors

Many local residents, including John Conn and Maurice Cook of Ware, will be at the show. Conn, a long-time enthusiast who is known to many in this area for his role in bringing the railroad back to Ware, will be displaying his layouts.

According to Buck, most of the local model railroaders frequently gather at one another's houses to talk railroad or to take a look at each other's models.

Buck opened the Hobby Shop last year when the



N-Gauge Coordinator

Russell Buck displays N-Trak module which is one of several he will be displaying at the Railroad Hobby Show. The Quaboag Regional High School senior is N-Trak coordinator for the show. (Photo by Patricia K. Gittes)

model railroad section in Tuckers' Hardware kept crowding out his regular hardware supplies. He finally sold the Main Street hardware business and opened the Hobby Shop just around the corner.

Stepping into the Hobby Shop is an almost overwhelming experience for the

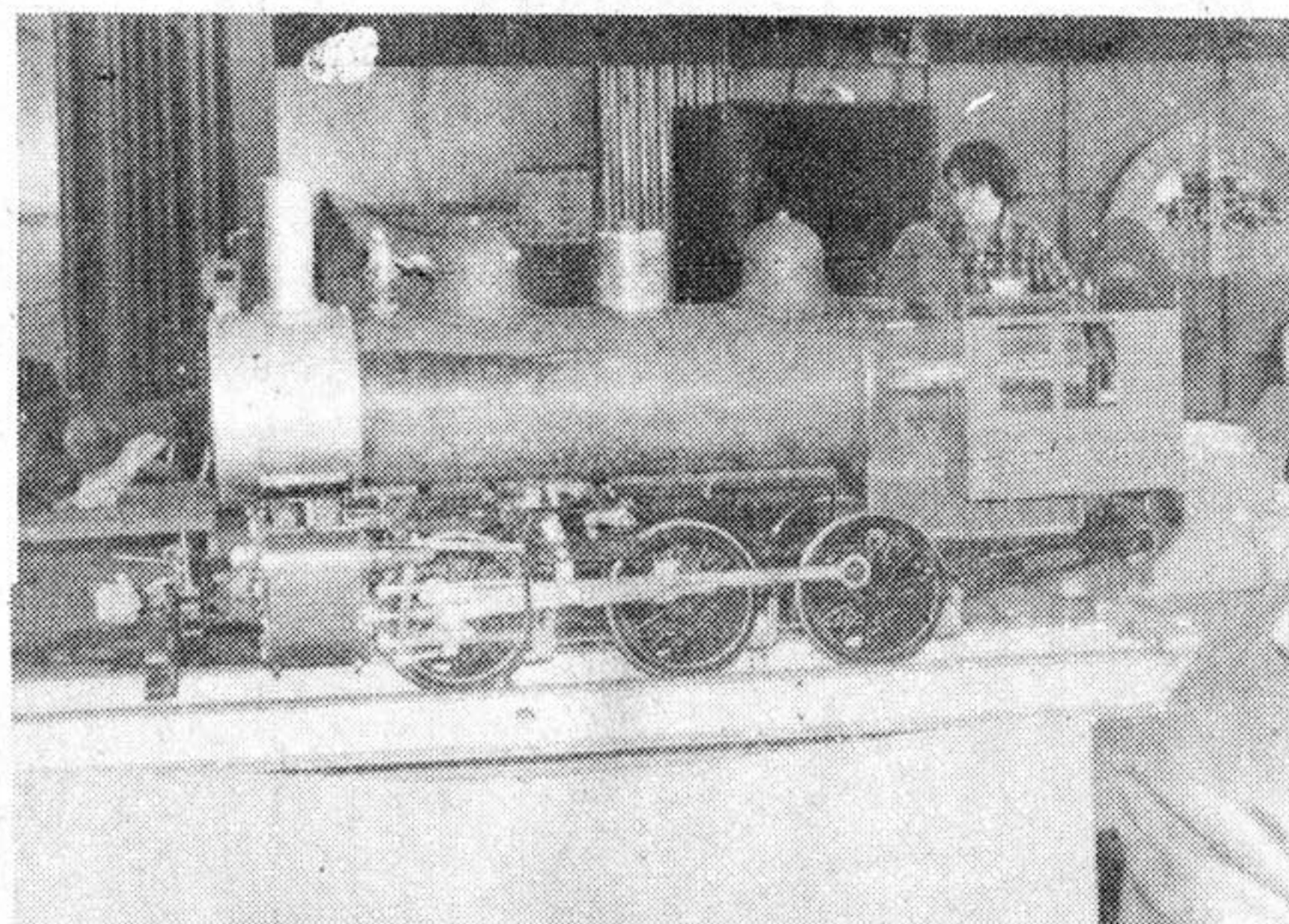
uninitiated. Models, parts, accessories and books line every inch of wall space in the store's three rooms. And if the local hobbyist is not busy with customers in the shop or on the phone, he will gladly explain the finer points of model railroading.

Buck, who even spends his

vacations visiting areas rich in "railroad archeology", can offer the interested listener a wealth of historical information including a tidbit about Whistler's Father. We've all heard of "Whistler's Mother," the portrait American Artist James Abbot McNeill Whistler painted of his mother. According to Buck, the artist's father, George Washington Whistler, also had his claim to fame. Chief engineer for the Western Railroad (later known as the Boston & Albany) which ran through Warren, he is credited with designing the stone twin arches (one set of which has survived in West Warren) which were considered pioneering feats during the mid-nineteenth century.

New Members

The Amherst Railway Society welcomes new members. Persons interested in joining the Society are invited to attend a meeting of the group. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 8 p.m. in the Engineering East Building, UMass, Amherst. The next regular meeting is on March 16.



Big Model

This 1½ inch scale Live Steam Locomotive built by Amherst club member Tom West of Hadley is one of a number of working steam locomotives to be displayed at Sunday's Railroad Hobby Show. Photo was taken by Doug Moore of Warren, who is also a member of the club.