Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine™

HAVING FUN WITH TRAINS

Price:
Forever Free
EMBEDDED
Edition

February 2011

The *Pacific & Northwestern*

Erik Kalinski's *Northern Exposure* Railroad

Add Small Rocks to Your Scenery

Window Curtains with a Computer

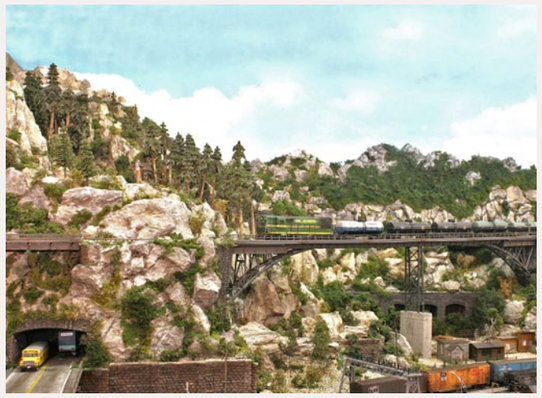
Build a Boom Car for your Crane

Power-routing Turnout Controls

A 'relaxed' GN trackplan

and *more*!

Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine™



Front Cover: Erik Kalinski's Pacific & Northwestern models an unusual prototype – the Northern Exposure TV show! Erik lives in Slovenia in Europe where hobby stores are few and far between and Alaska, the locale of his layout, is half a world away. But he didn't let that stop him from constructing a top notch layout!

ISSN 2152-7423

QUALITY COUNTS!

BLMA MODELS

...see for yourself

Afton Canyon, California

NEW!

200' Brass Truss Bridges

WATCH the video on YouTube

- 100% Assembled
- ALL-BRASS Construction
- 200 Scale Feet Long
- Painted (Silver or Black)
- Extremely Fine Detail
- Double-Stack Clearance

HO SCALE $445

#5002 - Silver
#5003 - Black
Early 2011

N SCALE $325

#2002 - Silver
#2003 - Black
IN STOCK

Order Now!

PRE-ORDER TODAY...
THROUGH YOUR FAVORITE DEALER!

BLMAmodels.com

ONLINE AT: YouTube BLMA BLOG

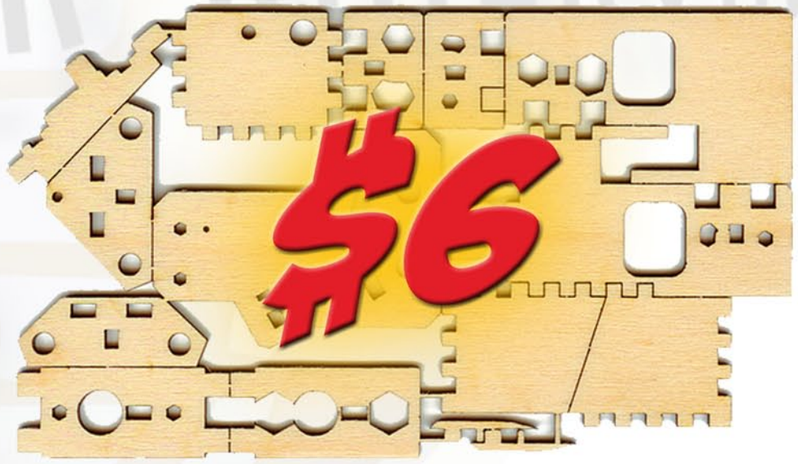
THE BULLFROG NEW
MANUAL TURNOUT CONTROL

- Inexpensive
- Integrated Control Rod Mount
- Automatic Power Routing
- Full Selection Of Supporting Products

$9

Ready To Install

You Assemble It



$6

FAST TRACKS

Order online now at:

www.fast-tracks.net/bullfrog

Digitrax UT4D Duplex Equipped Utility Throttles

Select, Run and Dispatch

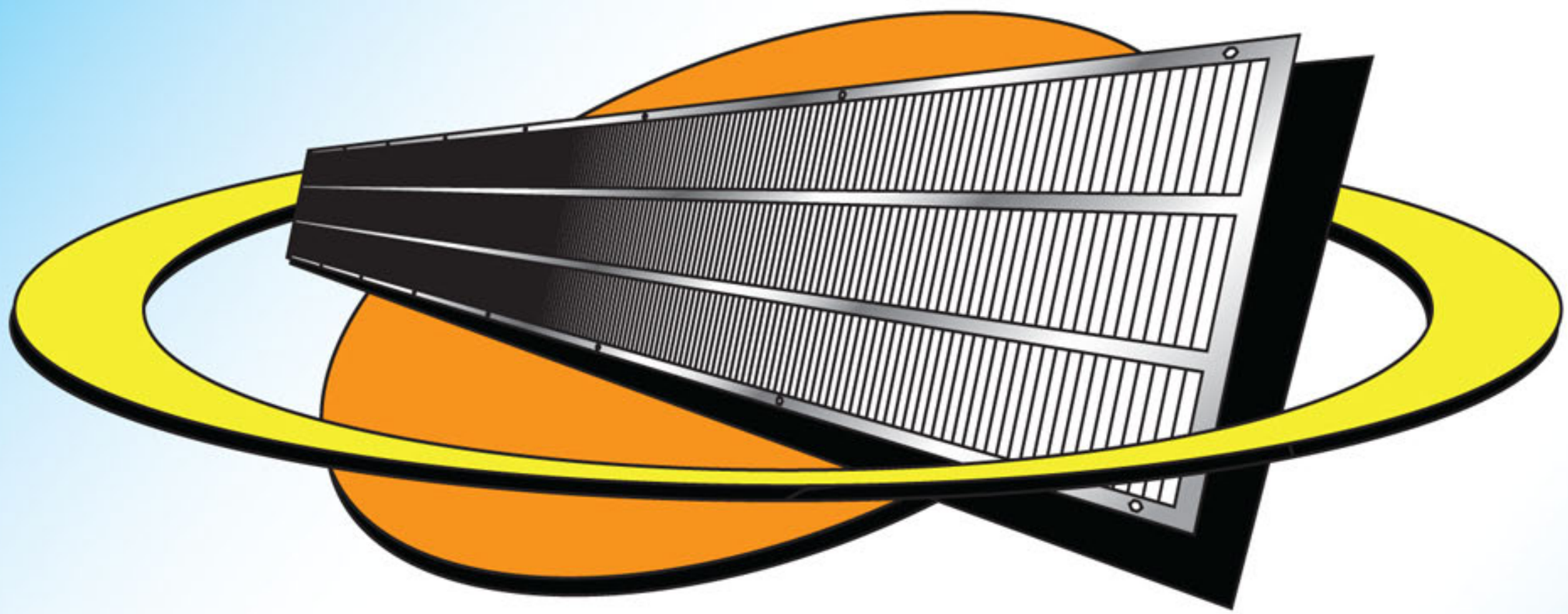
Without Plugging In!

Shipping Now! The UT4D is the latest in the UT4 series of Digitrax Utility Throttles. Operators from around the world asked for a simple to use, affordable throttle with intuitive operation & rock solid design. Based on operator input, Digitrax created the UT4 throttles.

UT4D is Duplex Equipped to work with the UR92 Duplex Transceiver. It can also be used as a walk around throttle with UP5 or as InfraRed with any Digitrax InfraRed Receiver.

For UT4 & UT4R upgrade information visit **www.digitrax.com/ut4upgrades**

Digitrax, Inc. 2443 Transmitter Road, Panama City, FL 32404
Phone 850 872-9890 / Fax 850 872-9557 www.digitrax.com



NO WARP GRILLS

EXCLUSIVELY FROM
RAPIDO TRAINS INC.

Table of contents

Main Features

Other Features

Columns

Tell us what you want. We'll help you find it.

Specialists in HO, O and N scale hard-to-find items

BPL Brassworks' sophisticated Want List system "sends up a flare" when a new collection comes in with just what you're looking for, and we send you a "heads up." You won't miss out on the opportunity to add that sought-after item to your own collection. You know what to look for, and we provide crisp, detailed photos to give you confidence in the quality and value of our offerings.

Fine Domestic and Imported Brass Models for discriminating collectors and operators.

- All major importers and domestic manufacturers
- Newest manufacturer offerings
- Want List system for special requests and hard-to-find items
- One-to-one personal service
- More than 15 years of railroading study and experience
- A boss who's as passionate about brass and trains as you are
- Order confirmations, layaway and prepayment options available

Make our web site your first stop for the newest offerings.

2 6 2 - 3 7 5 - 1 1 0 7

Click for more Info

BPL Brassworks
www.railmodel.com

About the Publisher

Joe Fugate is the featured expert in many Model-Trains-Video.com videos, and he's also the founder and publisher of ***Model Railroad Hobbyist Magazine***.

To learn more about Joe, click here.

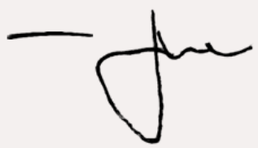
PUBLISHER'S EDITORIAL: This is Not Your Father's NMRA Convention

Guest editorial by Jack Burgess

Reader Feedback (click here)

This month I'm giving the editorial to Jack Burgess. If you've been in the hobby for a while, you'll be familiar with Jack's name and his reputation for top-notch, contest-quality prototype modeling, mostly revolving around his Yosemite Valley Railroad.

What you may not know is that Jack is one of the big-wigs for the 2011 NMRA National Convention being held in Sacramento, California. This convention is being deliberately planned as unconventional.



Back in the late 1980s, Oldsmobile launched an advertising campaign centered on the phrase "Not Your Father's Oldsmobile," trying to show that the new Oldsmobile was completely different and no longer associated with older drivers. While Oldsmobile is now long gone, the slogan has become a pop culture catchphrase and could easily refer to the 2011 National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) Convention in Sacramento.

The recent 2010 NMRA Convention in Milwaukee celebrated the organization's 75th anniversary and was well-received by over 1600 attendees. While that was a great convention, the committee for the 2011 NMRA convention likes doing things differently. In fact, the slogan for the 2011 Extra West National Convention, is "The Unconventional Convention." That tag line reflects a number of ways of doing things differently:

- An Advance Section of layout tours over the weekend at the beginning of the Convention.
- Self-guided layout tours all week long in addition to the traditional bus tours.
- Clinic tracks on subjects such as layout design, operation, and DCC, plus clinics with an emphasis on prototype and scale modeling.
- A full Railroad Prototype Modeler (RPM) meet.
- Week-long entry to the California State Railroad Museum as part of the registration fee plus several special museum events.
- A low registration fee of $139, 20% less than the cost of registration for recent conventions.

If you've never attended a national model railroad convention, this is the one to attend! These week-long conventions feature more activities than

Jim Dias' HO scale Western Pacific (MRH May 2010)

one person could ever attend. If you attended an NMRA Convention years ago and came away wanting more, this also is the convention to attend! Don't expect our Convention to be like previous railroad conventions!

Layout tours are a staple of national conventions and give attendees a chance to visit a large number of home layouts. You'll probably recognize several of the layouts that will be on tour for this Convention: Jack Burgess' Yosemite Valley Railroad (MRH July 2009), Ed Loizeaux's New York Central (MRH October 2009), Jim Dias' Western Pacific (MRH May/June 2010), and Steve Cavanaugh's Western Pacific (MRH January 2011). All of the layouts on tour will have ideas you can incorporate into your own layout. While national conventions have traditionally had layout tours available only by bus, this convention will be different. Not only will there be bus tours (and even a commuter-rail layout tour), we also have a number of self-guided layout tours all week long for those who prefer to find their own way or car-pool.

For even more layout tours, plan to attend the Advance Section Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning at the beginning of the Convention. The Advance Section features layouts and tour locations in the San Francisco Bay area. Most of these layouts will not be available for visiting during the convention in Sacramento.

Another staple of national conventions are clinics. Clinics cover a large variety of subjects and are scheduled from first thing in the morning until late at night. In addition to "stand alone" clinics, there will be a number of clinic tracks – day-long series of clinics geared to a single subject. For example, the Operation Track is expected to include clinics providing an introduction to dispatching and strategy, basic and advanced TT&TO

Jack Burgess's HO scale Yosemite Valley RR (MRH July 2009)

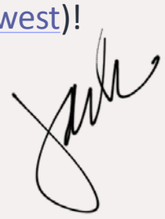
(timetable and train order) operations, operations using basic and advanced track warrants, and even CTC. Also expect clinics on advanced modeling skills with emphasis on prototype and scale modeling.

Want more? How about a tour to ride the world-famous Sierra Railroad, or the reconstructed Virginia and Truckee Railroad, or a chance to operate a diesel locomotive at the Western Pacific Railroad Museum at Portola?

Sacramento is home to the California State Railroad Museum, one of the finest railroad museums in the world. Registration for the Convention allows you unlimited museum visits during the week. Plus, we will have a number of special events at the museum.

There also will be modeling contests, operating sessions to join, industrial tours, a full Railroad Prototype Modeler (RPM) meet, and the National Train Show on the weekend at the end of the Convention. Here you can meet hobby vendors and manufacturers, in addition to seeing a number of modular layouts on display. Of course, you'll also have the opportunity to meet the *Model Railroad Hobbyist* staff!

The X2011 West Convention will be held July 2-9, 2011. For more information on the Convention, check out our website (www.x2011west.org) or our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/x2011west) or follow us on Twitter (twitter.com/x2011west)!



Ed Loizeaux's S scale NYC (MRH Oct 2009)

Over 2750 Inventive Tools and Ingenious Products

that make your model railroad look terrific...and perform great!

Micro-Mark®

THE SMALL TOOL SPECIALISTS

Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922

Prices guaranteed through Feb. 28, 2011. S/H extra.

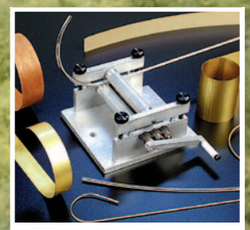
Shop On-Line:
www.micromark.com
Order Toll-Free:
1-800-225-1066
Mention ad code BA8 when ordering

FREE CATALOG with any order!

View our catalog online.

Here is the index from one of our recent catalogs:

For more info and to order, click images



BENDING MACHINE
#81356 **$99.95**

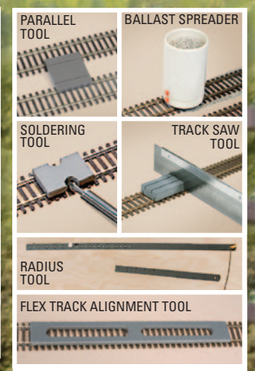
HO/On30 LOCOMOTIVE ROLLERS (SET OF 4)
#82896 **$54.50**
Other gauges available – see our website

UNIVERSAL CAB HOLSTER
#84074 **$6.50**

UNCOUPLING TOOL FOR HO AND On30 TRAINS
#80972 **$6.25**

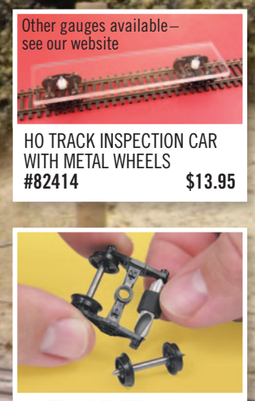
NOCH GRAS-MASTER STATIC GRASS APPLICATOR
#84370 **$169.95**

HO GAUGE TRACK CLEANER
#82992 **$19.95**



DELUXE HO GAUGE TRACK LAYING SET **#84114** **$29.95**

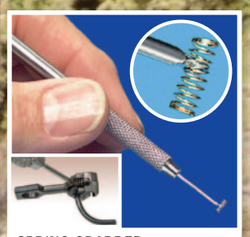
RUST n DUST **#84625** **$16.95**



HO TRACK INSPECTION CAR WITH METAL WHEELS
#82414 **$13.95**

HO TRUCK TUNER
#82838 **$11.95**

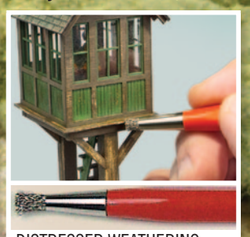
O scale model railroad and photo by Tom Piccirillo, MMR



SPRING GRABBER
#81029 **$7.60**

HO SCALE COUPLER SHIMS (PKG. OF 25) **#82562** **$5.95**
Other sizes available – see our website

RAILROAD TIE & BRIDGE STAIN, 3-1/2 FL. OZ.
#83760 **$7.85**



DISTRESSER WEATHERING BRUSH **#82466** **$14.15**

LIQUID PSA (Pressure Sensitive Adhesive) **#84775** **$14.95**

TOPSIDE CREEPER STEP LADDER SUPPORT SYSTEM
#83876 **$239.95**

Other colors available – see our website

FLOQUIL PAINT MARKERS, SET OF 3 TRACK COLORS
#84069 **$7.29**

GRAIN ENHANCER TOOL
#84434 **$24.95**

DIGITAL PULL METER
#84708 **$19.95**

WHEEL AND GEAR REMOVER
#84746 **$15.95**

MINIATURE DIGITAL LEVEL
#84519 **$34.95**

BACHMANN HO SCALE TRACK CLEANING TANK CAR
Will also clean On30 track.
Our choice of roadname.
#84534 **$26.95**

SWITCH TENDER SWITCH MACHINE **#83201** **$15.95**

Notes from the MRH Staff

Leading articles last issue, our future, bonus downloads, and more ...

Reader Feedback *(click here)*

Having fun with trains

If you've looked carefully at the cover of this issue you may have noticed it's a bit different. We've done a little reformatting of nameplate and we're reducing clutter. But there's something new. Yup! We have a slogan.

Having fun with trains

We feel that this describes what we're doing, both as readers and editorial staff, and hey. If you're not having fun with trains, maybe you need a new hobby?

5-star rating system

In the November 2010 issue, we added a 5-star rating system to our reader feedback web pages. We encourage you to give us your 1 - 5 star rating on each article.

These ratings will help us see which topics are of interest to our readers.

Tell us what you think, and influence the kind of articles we present!

The top 5 in January 2011 are:

- **4.6** WP mushroom layout
- **4.5** Improving bottle brush trees
- **4.5** Questions, Answers and Tips
- **4.4** Fun with Talus
- **4.4** Up the Creek - Rockwork
- Issue overall: **4.8**

We promise not to focus only on highly-rated topics, however. We

I am pleased to announce that Charlie Comstock has been promoted to Editor of Model Railroad Hobbyist magazine.

"Charlie has proven his ability to assist with the task of editing and delivering magazines during our bimonthly schedule last year, " said Joe Fugate, publisher and founder of the eZine. "With our move to monthly in 2011, I know I can count on Charlie to expertly lead the process of releasing more frequent issues without compromising quality."

Congratulations, Charlie, on a well-deserved promotion to editor!

continue to strive for diversity. If we enslave ourselves to the ratings, we'll be unlikely to do articles on the minority scales or subjects and that's not part of our plan.

Speaking of diversity

While we want to publish articles for all scales and on all topics about *having fun with trains*, we can't publish articles that aren't submitted (and don't expect the MRH staff to write all the content themselves!). If you have a pet topic that isn't getting covered, consider writing for MRH. More on becoming a MRH author later ...

Second monthly MRH issue

February is our second monthly issue and so far, so good. The January 2011 issue was well received, setting some new circulation records! We say *Thank You Very Much* to all our readers!

January 2011 also set a record for MRH website traffic with nearly 50,000 unique visitors.

What are our plans for the monthly publication schedule?

- Longer articles will now tend to be split across issues, plus we'll be editing more tightly. If we do split an article, you'll only need to wait a month for the next episode instead of two months last year, when we were bimonthly.
- We're looking for more short articles to balance out the big boys. More short articles in our page budget will help with our goal of topic diversity.

Why are we doing this? There are only so many hours in a month. We're shooting to keep each issue's content at around 60% (or a bit more) than bimonthly. Keeping the magazine the same length it was when bimonthly just isn't feasible. The good news is that over a two month period readers will have even MORE content than before, they'll be getting it sooner, and of course, MRH is still FREE to readers!

The quiet storm

We try to upload each issue to the mrhmag.com web site a few days early. This lets MRH forum regulars grab an 'early' download. We're figuring the early-bird readers will let us know if we really messed up something (like a download script or ad link) so we can get 'em fixed before sending out the weekly subscriber e-mail to come-and-get-it.

Hang out on the MRH site the weekend before the first Monday of the month – the new issue may already be available.

Hobby Marketplace

If you're a small business selling items for model railroaders, and you would like a very cost-effective way to advertise, check out our Hobby Marketplace in each issue. A text-only ad there can reach 30,000+ readers and costs as little as $10/mo (with a 12 month commitment). And with MRH, when a reader gets interested, they're only a click away from your web site.

Contact Les Halmos for details using the http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/advertise_with_us page.

Issue naming

With the move to monthly, we've changed the naming scheme for the downloadable MRH pdf files. The file names now include a numeric year and month. For example:

- MRH11-01-Jan2011.pdf
- MRH11-02-Feb2011.pdf
- MRH11-03-Mar2011.pdf
- ... and so on.

In 2012, the issues will become:

- MRH12-01-Jan2012.pdf ...

The issues will appear in sequence in your MRH directory now, which will make finding a particular issue a lot easier on your eyes!

Getting published in MRH

If you're an aspiring author with a great article you think ought to be published, we want to hear from you. Send us an article inquiry at http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contribute describing your proposal. Include some samples of your writing and photography.

Hint – to increase the odds your article will be accepted, focus on providing *really good photos.*

We can fix text with grammar or spelling problems (although we'd rather have well-written text), but

poor quality photos are a show stopper. We can't fix out-of-focus, over-exposed, or under-exposed photos. Video with audio problems or shaky camera work is even harder to fix.

If you don't know which end of a camera lets the light in, consider asking a photo-buff friend to take photos for you. Here's a quick check list:

- NEVER use the on-camera flash.
- Each shot has a definite subject
- The subject is well-lit and focused.
- There are no areas so over-exposed (bright) the detail is washed out or so under-exposed (dark) the detail disappears in the stygian gloom.
- There's enough depth of field so the subject isn't an oasis of focus in a desert of blurriness.
- White balance is correct. Please, no blue horses! This is easiest to achieve using a single type of light (all incandescent or all fluorescent). Remember to set the camera for that type (color) of light.
- Double check the scene to for derailed wheels and 'dead' or 'sleeping' people (fallen over) laying around on their noses.
- Don't shoot into a bright background – a window with a bright, sunny day outside makes a really bad background.
- Include a 2 to 4 sentence caption for EVERY photo.

Great photos (and video) really help an article. Of course, well written text helps too – please proof read twice before submitting.

You never call or write!

We've had a few submissions we'd like to use, but emails to the author 'bounce'. Either their spam filter is flagging us as 'naughty' or they made a typo in their email address.

Please, double-check all address information for correctness. Include your email, phone number and snail mail address. White-list the model-railroad-hobbyist.com domain so your spam filter won't reject our emails.

Stuff does get lost and sometimes we get really busy. If your submission hasn't received a reply in a month, contact us at http://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contact_us

Giving MRH away

Making copies of MRH for 2 (or 200) of your closest buddies is fine with us. Since we're ad-funded, we want to increase our circulation to appeal more to our advertisers.

So burn issues to CD or copy 'em on USB thumb drives and pass 'em to your friends. Take 'em down to your club.

You can even cut and paste content from the magazine into other forums as long as you also include a link back to MRH. Bet you didn't know that!

If you like MRH but you haven't been telling your friends about us, now's the time to start! We don't want to be the best kept secret in model railroading!

Want to really support us? When you need something for your layout, SHOP OUR ADVERTISERS! If you buy something, tell them "I saw you in MRH!"

When you buy from a non-MRH advertiser, mention us to them – ask if they've considered advertising with us.

Cartoons

Like the cartoons in Derailments? How would you like one of YOUR cartoons featured there? Contact us if you think you've got a good, funny, train-related cartoon (or photo). Include a caption if appropriate (and your contact info!)

Visit MRH at a show

We're going to the following shows, in force in 2011. Come stop by the booth!

- ***NMRA National Train Show*** (Sacramento, CA) - Jul 7-10, 2011
- ***National Narrow Gauge Convention*** (Hickory, NC) - Sep 6-11, 2011
- ***Fine Scale MR Expo*** (Peabody, MA) - Oct 12-16, 2011
- ***Naperville RPM Meet*** (Naperville, IL) - Oct 19-23, 2011
- ***Craftsman Structure Convention*** (Mansfield, MA) - Nov 2-6, 2011
- ***Trainfest*** (Milwaukee, WI) - Nov 11-14, 2011

Any volunteers?

There are too many shows for MRH staff to attend! As always, we're looking for volunteers to help promote MRH at shows.

We're looking for modelers willing to do any (or all) of the following:

- Put flyers and CDs out on the free handouts table.
- Help staff a table.
- Help us get flyers and CDs in the registrant bags (if the event has such a thing)

If you're willing to help staff a table, we'll pay for the table and pay the entry fee for you and for any other reliable volunteers you can get to help you at the table.

We'll also give you an official MRH shirt to wear at the event (yours to keep) and send you promotional materials and guidelines on how to best use them.

Just click here if you're interested in helping out at a show!

Reader Feedback *(click here)*

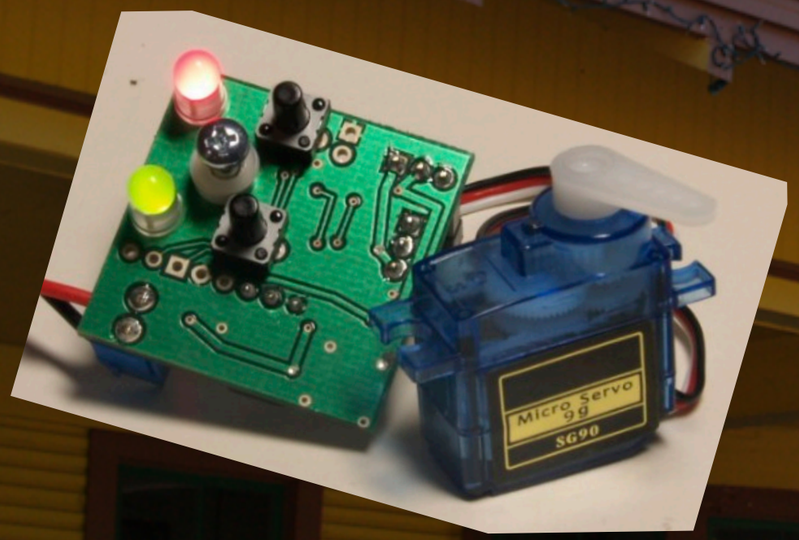
Innovative Electronics for Model Railroads

Frog Juicers - Automatic Frog Polarity

Servo Drivers for Turnouts and Semaphores

TAM VALLEY DEPOT

Great Electronics for Great Model Railroads



Featured Product - Singlet built-in panel controls, a DCC decoder, and a servo driver to control your turnouts or animate your layout. Now features bi-color LEDs!

www.TamValleyDepot.com

Click here to contact us by email

Get Better Sound from your Locomotives

Can't get good sound from your sound decoder? Give our speakers a test drive with your ears.

We offer high quality speakers to enhance your model railroad experience

Dealer inquiries welcomed

RailMaster Hobbies

Bass Reflex Speakers

High Bass Speakers

Our newest speaker only 14 x 36 x 10 mm
Self-contained ported speaker

RailMaster Hobbies
Lakewood, CA 90713
562-461-8825
WWW.RAILMASTERHOBBIES.COM

SIDETRACK LASER

HO, N and O Scale Laser Cut Model Railroad Building Kits

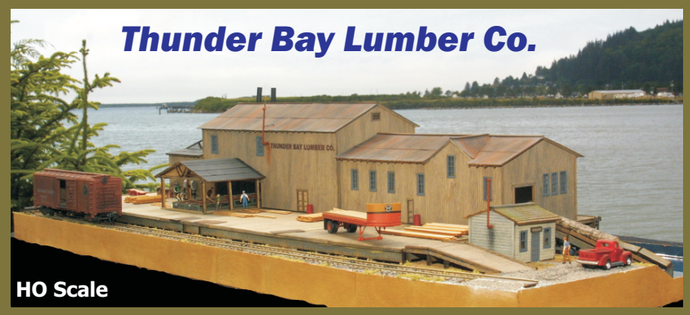
www.sidetracklaser.com

Desperation Pass
Coming in 2010...2011.

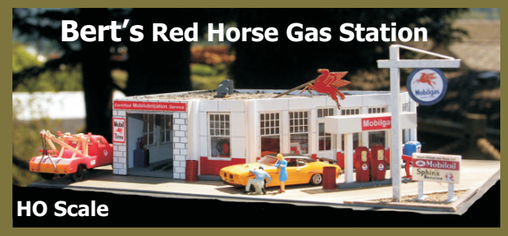
A series of 7 On30 Kits:

Available Now: Depot, Engine House, Outhouse & Coal Platform/Ramp.

Available Soon: Water Tower, Foreman's Shack & Utility/Yard Building.

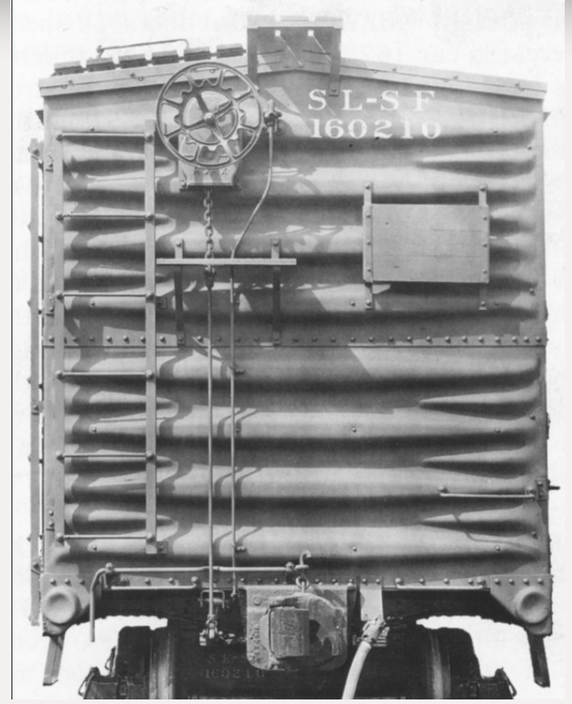


503-449-5361
Newberg, Oregon 97132



MRH
Questions, Answers and Tips

Reader Feedback *(click here)*



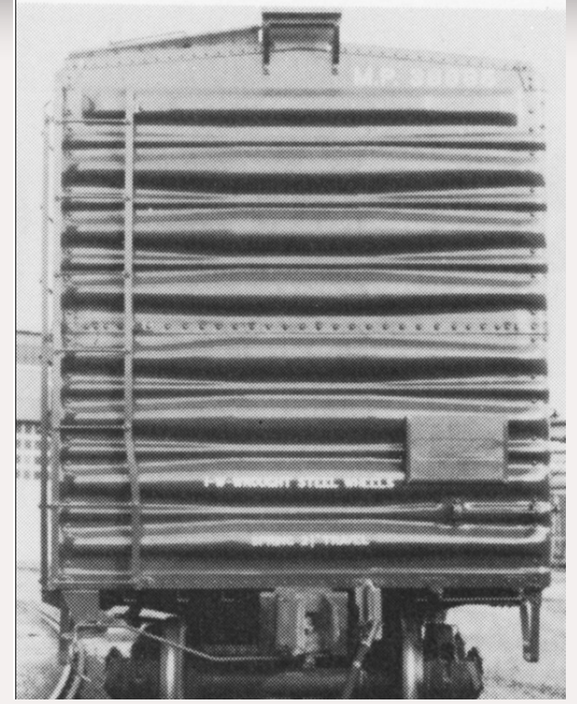


Figure 1 and 2: Two-piece 4/4 Dreadnaught end, left, has short ribs or darts at the sides. Photo courtesy ACF archives. Improved 4/4 Dreadnaught end, right, introduced in 1944, has full-width secondary ribs between large ribs. Promotional photo from Standard Railway Equipment Company.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How did railroads improve the durability of wooden trestles?

A: Either they built the trestles using wood treated with preservatives such as creosote, or they dumped enough dirt and gravel through the deck of the trestle to bury it in a fill. Fills don't rot or burn down (but sometimes they wash out).

— Charlie Comstock

Q: Why are DCC programming tracks needed?

A: The programming track is used to set decoder addresses and read the contents of CV (control value) registers in a decoder.

Nearly all other functions can be accomplished using *Ops Mode* (also known *Programming on the Main*). In this mode the DCC system selects a loco (on any track) by its address and writes (blindly) into its CVs. Since Ops mode has to select a decoder by its address, you can't write the address CV(s) in *Ops* mode.

— Jeff Shultz

Q: What is a *Dreadnaught end*?

A: This is the name of the most common type of car end, consisting of a steel panel or panels with horizontal ribs stamped into them for strength (figures 1 and 2). They were first produced in 1925 by Union Metal Products Co. (a subsidiary of the Standard Railway Equipment Co.)

Common belief is they were named after the first modern battleship, the British HMS Dreadnought, as a testimony to their strength.

The Dreadnaught styles are described by the type of ribs such as terminating and non-terminating, number of panels and number of ribs. On the terminating style the ribs look like a very wide, fat letter X.

— Jeff Shultz, Marty McGuirk

Q: I have next to no woodworking abilities. What's the best way for me to build my benchwork?

A: The easiest way? Find someone to do it for you!

However, if you're going for domino (figure 3) or modular style benchwork, you don't need any special woodworking abilities – just the ability to measure accurately, some clamps, glue, screws and (optimally) a compound miter saw.

Domino benchwork is just a rectangular box. You'll need two side rails of equal length and three cross pieces of equal length. 1x2 or 1x4 stock is good for all these. If you're making a lot of the same sized dominos, cut all the pieces out at once, assembly-line fashion. Clamp them together at the corners (I suggest putting the long sides on the outside of the joint) then drill pilot holes and screw the corners together. Optionally top the dominos

Figure 3: You can see the simplicity of domino benchwork. Here's an upside down domino (topped with 2" of pink foam). Add 2x2 legs in each corner.

with a sheet of $^1/_2$" or $^3/_8$" plywood – you can have a lumberyard to cut it to size for you. A layer of rigid extruded foam on top of the plywood will let you carve surface features, such as drainage ditches or small stream beds.

If your benchwork needs are more complex (or even if they aren't), I recommend hunting up a local model railroad club and joining it. You'll make some good friends and will learn a lot about model train layout construction.

— Jeff Shultz

Q: What is a good source for semaphore signals? How do I make them work?

A: The first question to ask is "what sort of semaphore?"

Semaphores are grouped into two major categories – lower-quadrant (used primarily by the Southern Pacific) and upper-quadrant (used by most everyone else). The blade projects straight to the side to indicate stop on upper and lower-quadrant semaphores.

Upper-quadrant semaphores pivot the arm upward for the less-restrictive (go) position. Lower-quadrant semaphores pivot the blade downward for the less-restrictive position.

It's important to not confuse semaphore signals and train order boards.

MRH advertiser NJ International makes upper-quadrant semaphores in N, HO, S, and O scale, as well as a two-light lower-quadrant semaphore in HO scale.

Tomar Industries makes upper and lower-quadrant semaphores in HO scale. They can be purchased online at MRH advertisers Southern Digital and Walthers.

Circuitron's SD-2 3 Position Semaphore driver combined with a Tortoise Switch Machine and block occupancy detection circuitry is probably the most popular method of making them work.

Tam Valley Depot's Dual 3-way Servo DCC Accessory Decoder controls two model airplane servos which can be used to run two independent semaphore signals.

— Jeff Shultz

Q: I got some cast resin vehicles from a friend. Do I need to do anything special to the castings before painting them?

A: You'll need to do a little prep work before sending these vehicles into the paint shop. The first step is to carefully remove any excess resin flash and parting lines around the windows, bumpers, and, if necessary, along the roof line. Just be sure any parting lines are really that and not some trim that exists on the prototype vehicle! In most cases, cast-resin vehicles require you to add the wheels or other parts. Once you've get these cleaned up, glue them in place with cyanoacrylate adhesive (CA). Note that solvent type cements intended for use with styrene or plastic won't work with resin.

The resin casting process requires the use of a mold release to get the parts out of the mold without tearing, so the next step is the most important. Thoroughly clean the casting(s) prior to painting. If you don't you run the risk of the paint either simply running off or drying and then peeling off in a big sheet (don't ask how I know this!).

Different resin manufacturers use different types of mold release. Most of them can be removed with dish soap and a good scrubbing with a soft toothbrush. I've found one popular manufacturer of resin kits, Sylvan Scale Models, uses some of the toughest-to-remove mold release. I've found citrus cleaners, such as Goo-Gone, work great at removing this. I follow this step with a rinse in soapy water. Once the parts are clean do NOT handle them with bare fingers. The oil in your finger prints is likely to show through the paint!

Spray the parts with gray, silver or white primer such as Testors. Then paint the vehicle. I suggest using automobile colors, like those available from Testors – using railroad colors on cars and trucks tends too produce vehicles that don't look "right."

Use a fine tip brush to paint the trim (depending on the vehicle's era there could be a lot or little trim!) hubcaps, headlights, etc. A neat detail to add to your vehicle are license plates. You can make these with an ink jet printer. Keep in mind that years ago states issued new plates, often in different colors - every year. A little Internet research will help you find something appropriate.

— Marty McGuirk

Q: I'm modeling the Midwest in 2002. Is it appropriate to have wooden grain elevators in small towns?

A: Grain handling was consolidated starting in the mid-70s, so by 2002 wooden elevators would definitely be a rarity. Any that were still standing would likely be surrounded with more modern outbuildings. Class 1 railroads lost interest in handling a few cars at a time in the '70s so small elevators would likely be served by a small regional railroad – if they had rail service at all.

— Jeff Shultz, Joe Brugger

TIPS

Spray bottle!

While scenicking a module, my normal spray bottle started giving me trouble. So I set off to find a replacement.

A problem with normal, hand pump spray bottles is you get a fine mist at the start of a spray cycle – provided you squeeze hard – but about half way through droplets start coming out along with the mist. These have the effect of artillery shells on the not-yet-glued-down-scenery, leaving craters behind.

While shopping I noticed the bottle pictured to the left. You pump up the bottle to pressurize it, then when you press the trigger it produces a fine mist. Since it doesn't depend in individual hand squeezing to atomize the water, it avoids the artillery bombardment problem. Its misting is adjustable and it holds a liter of water so I don't need to run to the faucet as frequently. In fact the new bottle lets me do scenery in about 1/3 the time as before. And my hands aren't as sore from squeezing!

— Chris Pearce

Reader Feedback *(click here)*

GET $25 PER TIP

We pay $25 USD for each tip we publish. So send in your modeling tips to *Model Railroad Hobbyist* and we'll get your payment to you upon acceptance.

Only a few minutes effort can fund your next piece of rolling stock – or even pay for an entire train if you send in several tips and we publish them!

Plus, we pay a bonus of $10 per photo we use with the tip. ■

LASERMODELING 3

A.R. GILMORE GRAIN & FEEDS

H.O. SCALE

This laser cut, highly-detailed, craftsman kit is an exact replica of the feed and seed distributor built in the early part of the 20th century and is still in existence in Lakeville, NY.

KIT HIGHLIGHTS

- Precut textured timbers
- Fully detailed interior
- Northeastern Scale Lumber
- Many original and S.S.L. metal castings
- L.E.D./Fiber option lighting
- Tichy windows and doors
- Hydrocal base casting
- Full-color detailed instruction manual
- Vehicles and figures not included

PRICE $125.00 (plus S&H)

Order Online Today!
www.lasermodeling3.com
PayPal MasterCard VISA

www.laster modeling3.com • 1 University Drive, Geneseo, NY 14454
• Phone: (585) 243-3480 • Fax (585) 243-1513 • lm3llc@gmail.com

ADVERTISEMENT

Because a little protection ... goes a long way!

RAIL ROAD CROSSING

Crossings, Block Signals, accessories and more

click for more ...

INTERNATIONAL N J INC.

www.njinternational.com

N. J. International (480) 219-4135

signals@njinternational.com

Model Railroad Hobbyist - HOBBY MARKETPLACE

Small Rock Outcroppings

An easy method to stain cast plaster rocks ...

by Charlie Comstock

Reader Feedback (click here)

Sometimes the ground pulls back or erodes away revealing what lies below. This may include small boulders that fell or washed down from higher locations, were covered with silt over time, and now have been revealed. Here's how I model small rock outcroppings. Figure 1 shows a few finished rocks mounted on a piece of 1x4 lumber with scenery.

Casting Boulders

The first step in 'planting' boulders or outcroppings is making the rocks themselves. I use a Woodland Scenics mold to cast mine (figure 2 shows mold 'Boulders C1232') in US Gypsum No.1 casting plaster. You can use Plaster of Paris instead. Don't try casting rocks in spackle, it's too soft. Figure 3 shows a selection of 'boulders'. I dunk the mold in water before starting, then I add about 8 ounces of plaster into 7 ounces of water, stirring well and pour it into the molds. I use a piece of scrap cardboard to squeegee the plaster into the mold's boulder cavities trying to make the bottom of the boulders flat. I wait for the plaster to get hot which means it's setting then wait another few minutes before prying the boulders out of the molds.

You can see (sort of) in figure 3, that the bottoms aren't perfectly flat. I drag the boulders across a piece of 80-grit sandpaper to make the bases flat (Figures 4 and 5). This step is only needed if you'll be gluing the rocks to a flat surface.

OK, this is supposed to be a One Night Project and yes, it could be done. But letting the plaster dry completely will make surface details less likely to wash off in the next steps.

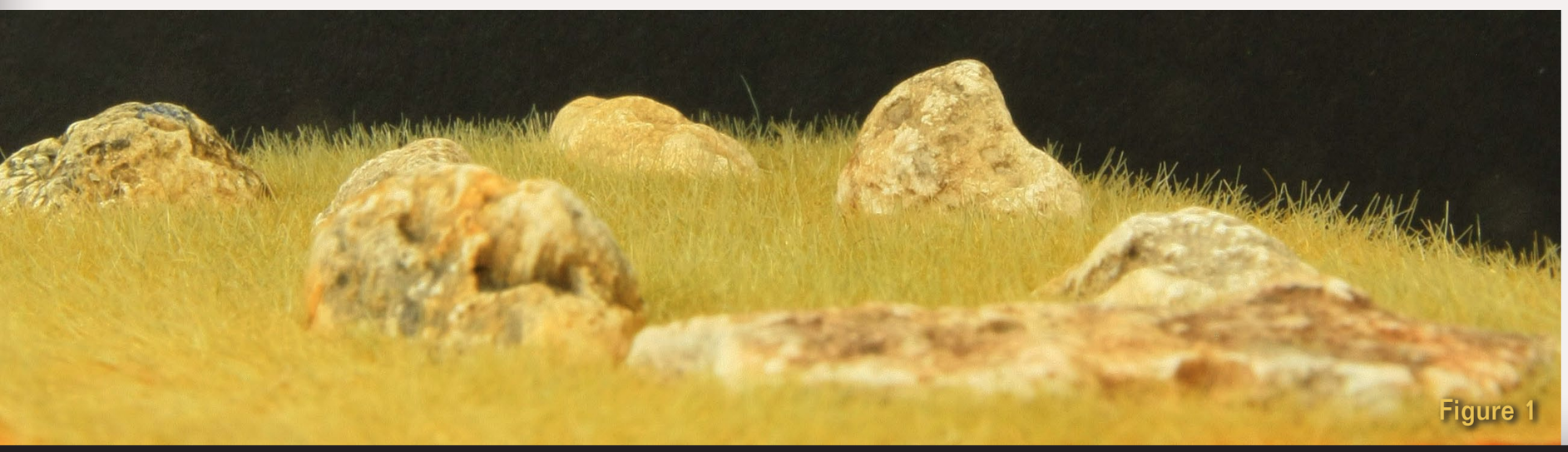


Figure 1


Figure 2


Figure 3


Figure 4


Figure 5

Figure 6a


Figure 6b


Figure 7


Figure 8


Figure 9

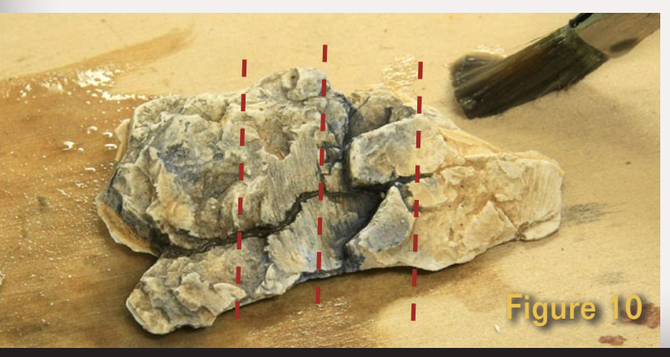


Figure 10

Splashes of Color

Figure 6 shows the Acrylic paints I use. Colors include Mars Black, Raw Umber, Raw Sienna, Burnt Umber, and Blue. The tray used to hold shrimp dumplings. I squeeze a small blob of each in the bottom of my mixing tray's cups.

I dip a $^1/_2$" brush into the water, then mix in a tiny bit of a color wiping in another cup. I add more water until the paint is diluted enough, then I kind of splash it on the boulders. Neatness doesn't count. In figures 7, 8, and 9, I'm adding black, a mix of Burnt Umber and blue, and Raw Sienna. It's surprising but blue is a useful color! Just don't use too much. Don't worry about getting colors mixed together, sludge is good! Figure 11 shows the paint tray afterward. If you run out of a color add more water and another tiny dab of paint to the 'cup'.

Figure 10 shows a rock with four different layers of paint wash added on top of each other. From right to left: Raw Sienna, blue, burnt umber, and black.

Don't be alarmed if the rocks seem dark, they'll lighten up as they dry.

When the colored boulders have dried glue the rocks in place. I prefer white glue, but hot glue works too.

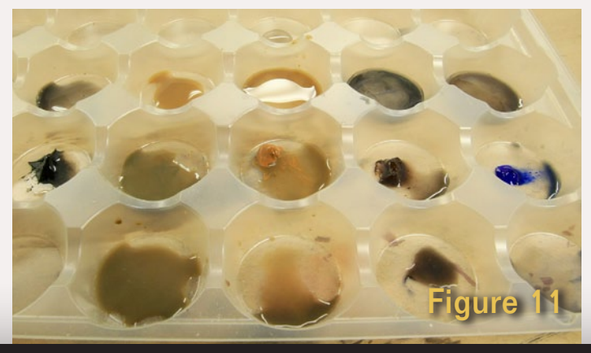


Figure 11

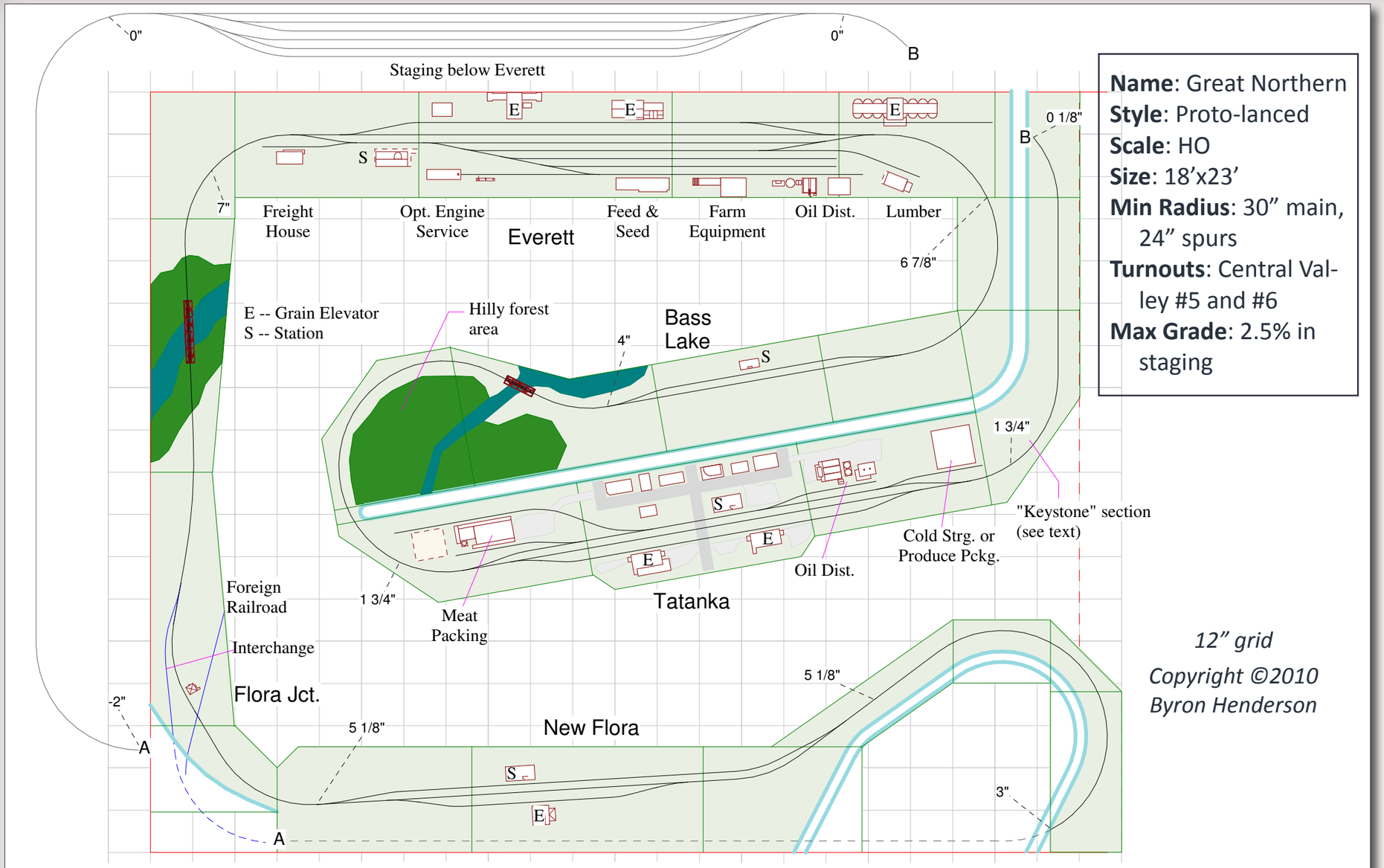
Relaxed and Realistic Great Northern in HO

Proto-freelance granger layout in sections...

— by Byron Henderson
www.layoutvision.com

Figure 1: While this photo looks like the Everett crew returning to the yard from Flora Junction with interchange from the Northern Pacific, it's actually the Lake Superior Railroad Museum's restored EMD NW-5. Dave Schauer caught the historic consist crossing the Knife River in Minnesota in September, 2006. The NW5 was EMD's first answer to Alco's RS-1, but only 13 were built, 10 of which were purchased by the Great Northern.

Reader Feedback
(click here)



Name: Great Northern
Style: Proto-lanced
Scale: HO
Size: 18'x23'
Min Radius: 30" main, 24" spurs
Turnouts: Central Valley #5 and #6
Max Grade: 2.5% in staging

12" grid

With the opportunity to design a new layout for a roughly 400 square foot space, most designers try to pack in the maximum number of towns and elements possible. But my custom model railroad layout design client had a unique request for this layout: only include the elements typical of a layout half the size, and then use the remaining space for broader curves, more space between towns, wider aisles, and a more relaxed feel reflective of the Upper Midwest.

The Great Northern Railway served many small agricultural towns in North Dakota and Minnesota, the area my client wanted to represent. Proto-freelancing allowed me to incorporate the client's desires, which included a couple of towns to be worked by local freights, a larger town with a yard, and interchange with another railroad.

This relaxed approach means that for once we can opt for broad 30" minimum radius curves on the layout, with #6 turnouts chosen to match.

Elevators Galore

A plethora of grain elevators is one of the striking characteristics of many real-life towns in this area (Figure 3). In many real-life GN locations, these seemed to be opposite the passing siding and station, with the grain elevator track separated a fair distance from the main track.

Given the constraints of a model railroad (particularly layout depth), I was able to achieve only a modest distance between the elevator tracks and the main tracks, but enough to be noticeable. I also tried to leave enough room for cars to be rolled beyond the grain loading area, a typical real-life feature.

What's in a Name?

Choosing place names on a freelanced or proto-freelanced layout is an opportunity to add realism -- or make some other kind of statement. In the '50s and '60s, joke and pun names were popular, but the humor sometimes wore thin after a few years.

Many real-life place names seem to fall into a few categories: geographical features, names of founders or other important people, words from indigenous or first-settler cultures, and names reflecting later immigrants' homelands. While the custom layout design client always has the final choice, I suggested names from each of these categories for the locations on the layout, as can be seen in a quick tour around the track plan.

Emerging from staging (at the lower right corner of the layout diagram), trains enter New Flora, which we imagine was named by newcomers after a town in Norway.

Figure 2

Figure 2: The layout will also feature passenger traffic like this F-unit-led train captured at Willmar, MN by Jim Hinkhouse in May, 1968. Note the characteristic grain elevators just visible peeking up behind the train.

Byron Henderson is a custom model railroad layout designer from San Jose, CA. Byron is a member of the Layout Design SIG and Operations SIG, and is the editor of the LDSIG's *Layout Design Journal*.

Railroad-served facilities include only the typical grain elevator and GN station (AMB's Laserkit HO Great Northern Depot is a perfect match for real-life stations in the area and was used here and in Tatanka).

Just beyond New Flora is the crossing of a foreign railroad, with an interchange track that could be used for passive interchange. Or, if extended behind a backdrop, a Northern Pacific (or other favorite railroad) train might be staged for an active interchange run to Everett.

Ops Focus at Everett

A very gentle curve and a river crossing lead us to Everett (named after an imaginary founder). Everett sports three good-sized elevators, a small classification yard, and a number of local industries. The yard can be used for local industry classification and/or for set-outs and pick-ups by through trains. Everett is laid out square with the room to give it more "heft" as a place.

We're a little challenged here by the 30" maximum depth of easy reach, so the station is slightly squeezed to one end of town. Since op sessions will be fairly relaxed, there's no need for a dedicated yard switching lead, although one could be added with some slight modification in the area of the freight house (and moving the river crossing).

The layout's early-diesel era excuses us from having visible locomotive turning facilities (and the space they demand). But I've drawn an optional small engine service facility that could be used by a locally-assigned switcher.

Let's go Fishin'

Leaving Everett, the line descends to Bass Lake. The nearby namesake lake is imagined to have been a popular resort destination, justifying the station. The shoreline and creek crossing help justify the curves and grades here, and some low forested hills help de-emphasize the turnback curve.

The indigenous Ojibwe (Chippewa) called the once-plentiful bison "Tatanka". The bison may be gone, but the town of Tatanka hosts a number of agriculturally-oriented businesses, including the ubiquitous grain elevators. I've drawn in a small downtown area for some visual variety and modeling opportunity.

Sections and Staging

My client asked that the layout be designed in sections to maximize the ability to re-use portions in the future. Some designers define a standard section size and shape for their sectional layouts. This can ease benchwork construction, but can also limit track planning flexibility by creating too many seams (or seams in the "wrong" spots), limiting the placement of turnouts.

In this case, my client was willing to build sections in a variety of sizes as best suited the design. The only requirement was to keep benchwork angles in increments of 5 degrees and maximize the use of 45-degree and 90-degree angles where possible. I tried to keep each section in the range of 12 square feet of surface area, to make moving easier.

The Tatanka/Bass Lake sections are intended to hang from a 2X4 stud or knee wall. In order to create an angle for this peninsula that best used the available space, a somewhat oddly-shaped "keystone" section is needed at the base of the peninsula.

Most of the rest of the suggested sections are rectangular. As the client builds, he may opt for combining some of the smaller sections (such as the lower right corner of the track plan) into a single larger section for ease of construction -- although this may mean that the resulting larger section cannot be used as-is in a new home.

Staging tracks probably will be supported along the wall on simple shelf brackets below the main layout sections. With the exception of the main staging yard, most of this staging benchwork and trackage probably will be "disposable" in the event of a move.

Figure 3

Low-key but Engaging Operations

While the operating crew will not be large in number, the layout supports a variety of traffic. Passenger trains should look great on the broad curves, and there's work for local freight jobs as well as through freight trains setting-out and picking-up cars for a possible dedicated switcher at Everett.

Figure 3: Typical Upper-Midwest arrangement with multiple grain elevators along a widely spaced track (left), separate from main track and siding (center and right). This is Sisseton, South Dakota on the Milwaukee Road, photographed in 1939 by John Vachon. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection, LC-USF33-T01-001660-M5 DLC.

Keeping things relaxed and realistic should make for a great operating and viewing experience along the Great Northern!

Reader Feedback (click here)

Modeling a Modern Boom Car:

A kitbashing project to learn with

– by M. R. Snell

Photos by the author

Matt tells how he modeled an unusual piece of MOW (maintenance of way) equipment using an easily obtained Proto 2000 mill gondola, some styrene shapes and various detail parts.

Figure 1

For those of us who like to venture trackside to observe the prototype, modeling challenges abound in almost all the equipment we see. Recently during a maintenance project one unique piece of equipment appeared along the Norfolk Southern's CNO&TP line – a crane boom car built from a gondola no longer suitable for revenue service. Unlike the heavy cranes and boom cars many of us are familiar with – most of which are now museum pieces – this was a medium-duty American crane similar to the Walthers model, complete with a modern day application of a boom car.

Upon looking over the gondola, it became apparent that this conversion was done by NS shop forces and the same could be done in model form using a combination of kitbashing and minor scratchbuilding. The home road conversion also allows for imperfections, making this a perfect candidate for those who may be looking to develop new skills yet are hesitant to tackle that first project for fear of imperfect results.

Reader Feedback (click here)

Step 1: Getting Started

We'll begin our boom car project with a Proto 2000 mill gondola. Although slightly different than the prototype, the Proto 2000 model features removable drop ends, saving the work of cutting these from a one piece molded body. It is available in kit and R-T-R form. The first step in modeling the converted gondola is to remove the drop ends. Then rough up the molded floor planking with a file, giving it the well-used look of a gondola retired from revenue service (figure 2).

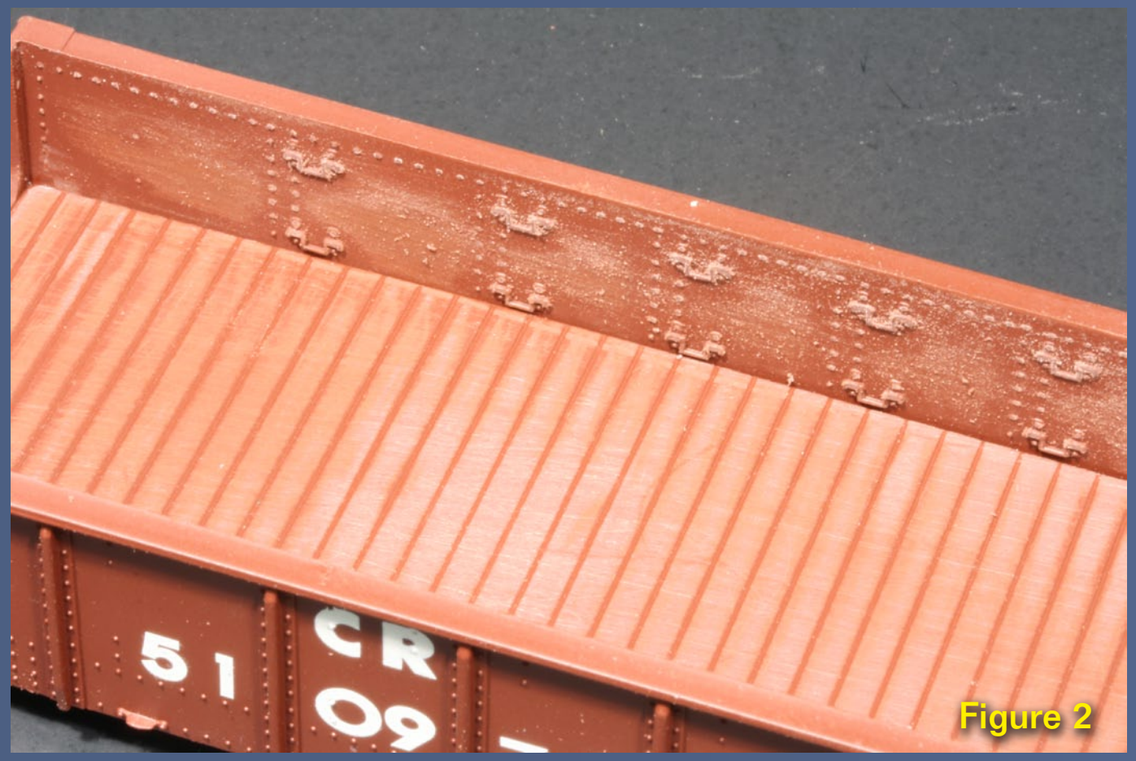


Figure 2

Prior to cutting into the carbody, several preparatory steps will insure that we can modify it cleanly and evenly. A floor overlay made from .010 plain styrene, cut to fit the interior and taped to the floor of the gondola, will act as a stop for the saw, preventing the saw blade from damaging the floor. The second preparatory step will assist us in creating an even cut across the carbody. Tape placed across the top of the gondola and stretched down each side where the cuts are to be made can be used as a guide for alignment with the saw guides in the mitre box. The final step is to place the gondola in a mitre box, flush against one side. Secure it by clamping it to the side of the mitre box. Insuring it will not move will prevent jagged or uneven cuts.

Figure 3


Figure 4

Figure 5

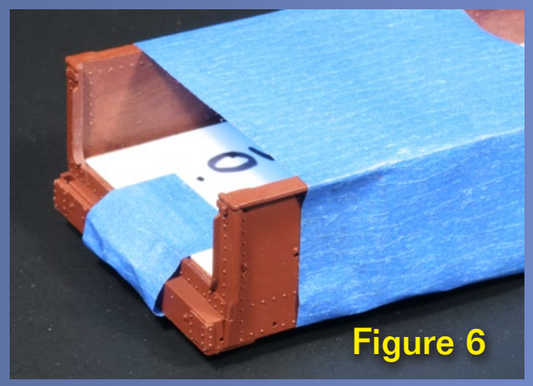


Figure 6

STEP 2: Cutting the Sides

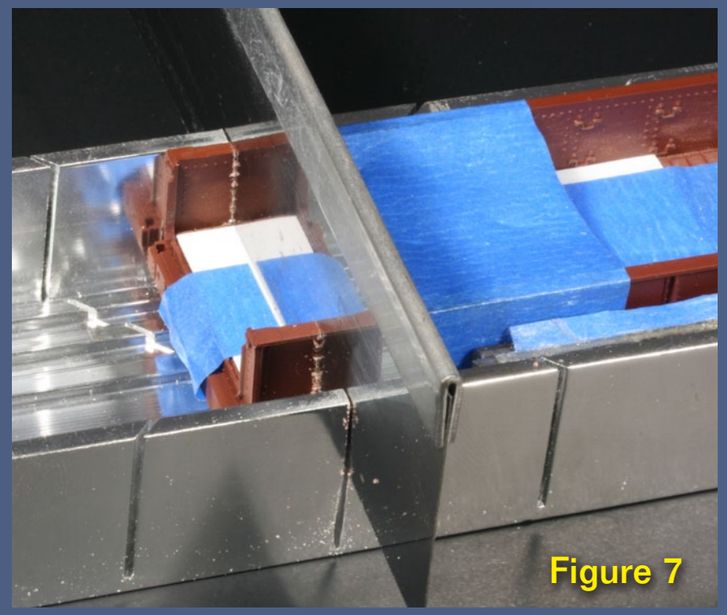


Figure 7

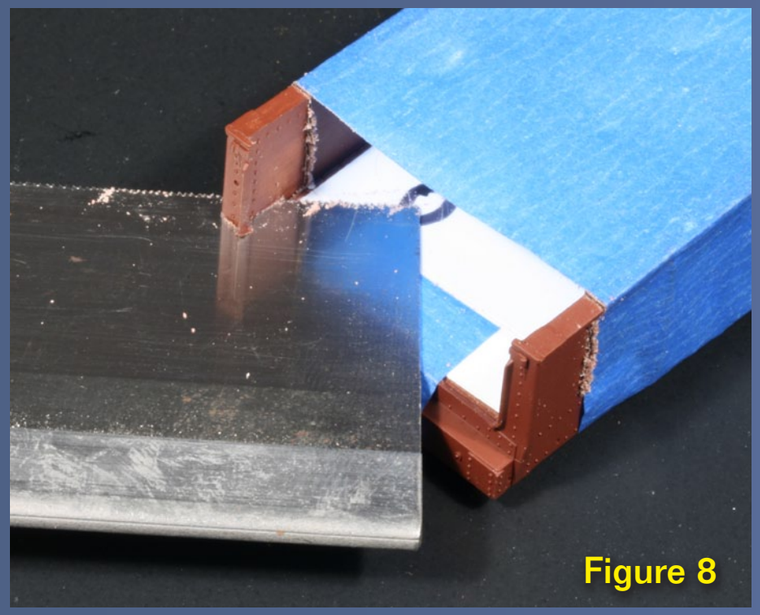


Figure 8

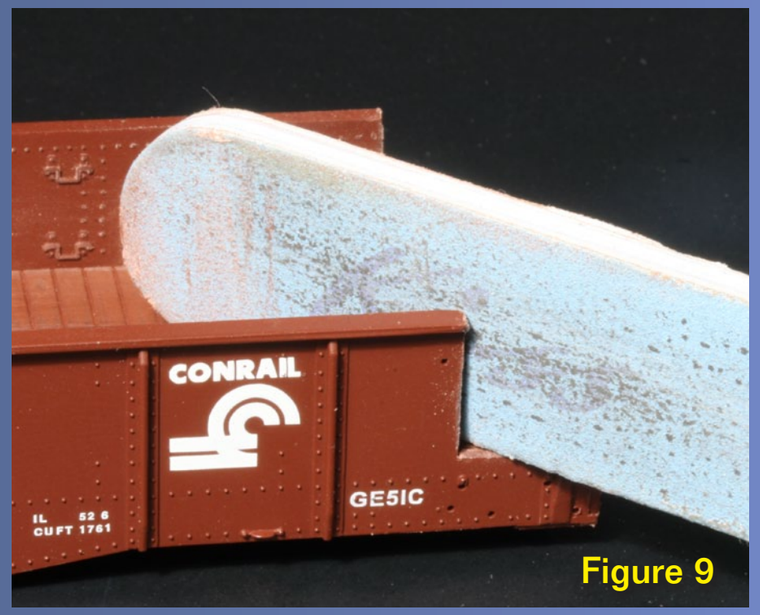


Figure 9

With a fine tooth razor saw, begin by cutting at an angle through the saw guides in one side of the mitre box. Once the cut is deep enough to allow the saw to cut through the opposite side of the gondola, level the saw out until it is cutting evenly through both sides of the gondola. Continue to cut through the sides until the saw stops at the overlay placed on the floor. Then the car can be removed from the mitre box and this can be repeated for the opposite end or the car (Figure 7).

With the vertical cuts made, a horizontal cut at each end is required to remove the end portion of the gondola sides. Remove the gondola from the mitre box and place it onto a level, non-slip surface. Then hold the saw flush against the car floor and begin cutting into the car sides at an angle, aligning the side of the saw blade with the flat surface of the floor. After several slow passes the vertical and horizontal cuts will meet, allowing the end portions of the gondola sides to be removed (Figure 8).

Cutting with a razor saw will generally leave a fuzzy edge that can be cleaned up with gentle filing and trimming with a sharp hobby knife. Inexpensive manicure files are available in grits from rough to extra fine. They are wide enough to address the entire cut, making it easier to smooth the fuzzy edges evenly (Figure 9). To clean up the fuzzy edges while squaring up any uneven


Figure 10

areas, begin by filing with a medium grit, trueing up the cuts as necessary to insure they are even with the floor. Then file each cut edge with a finer grit to remove any fuzzy edges..

STEP 3: Building the Boom Rest

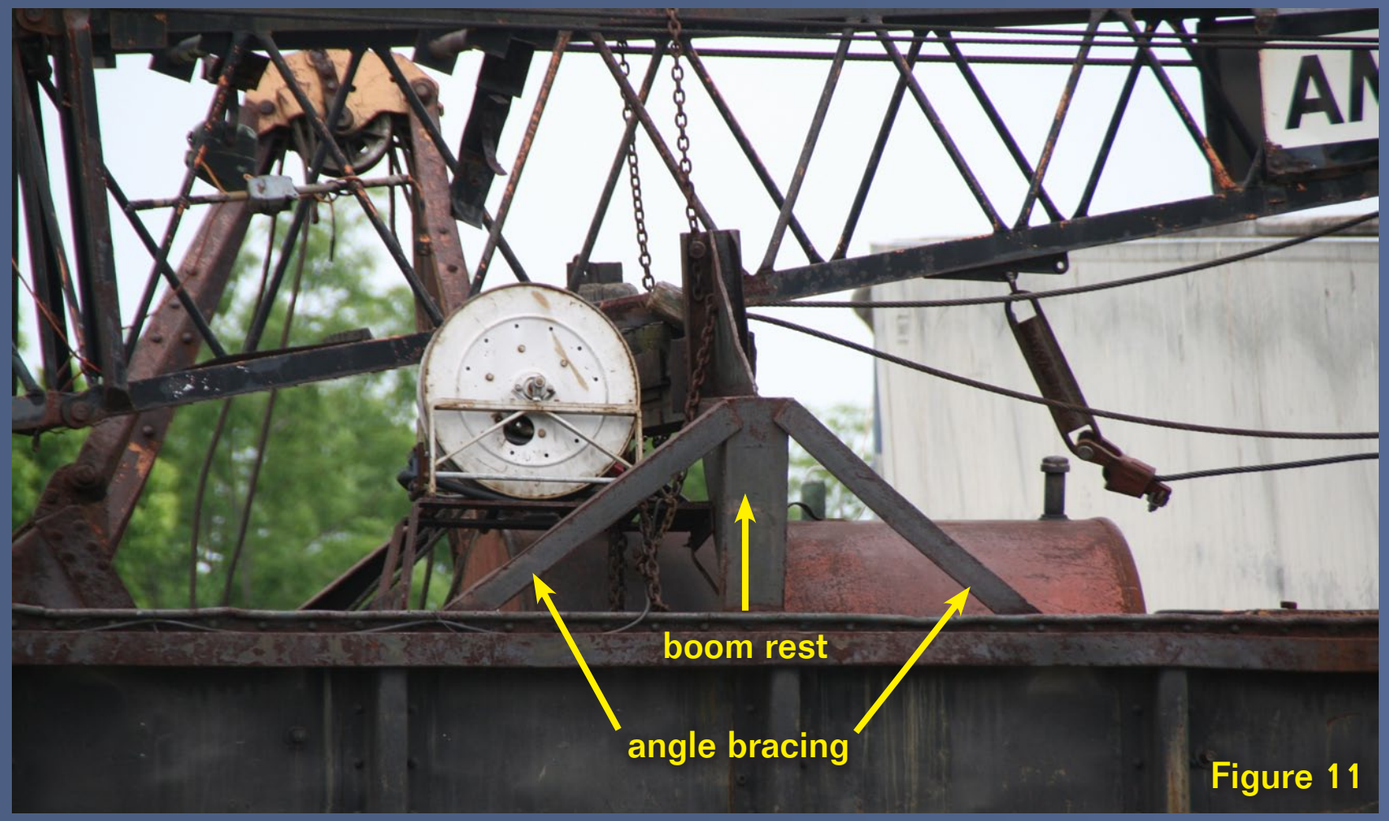


Figure 11

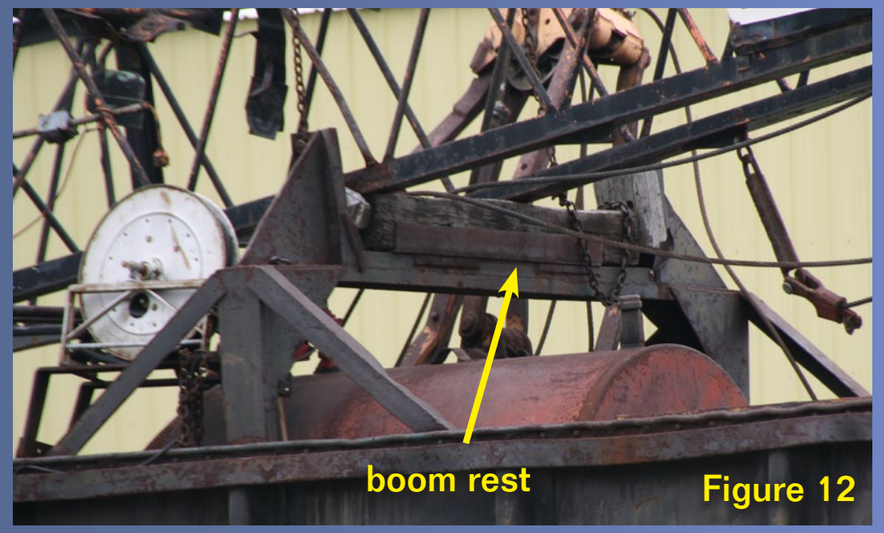


Figure 12

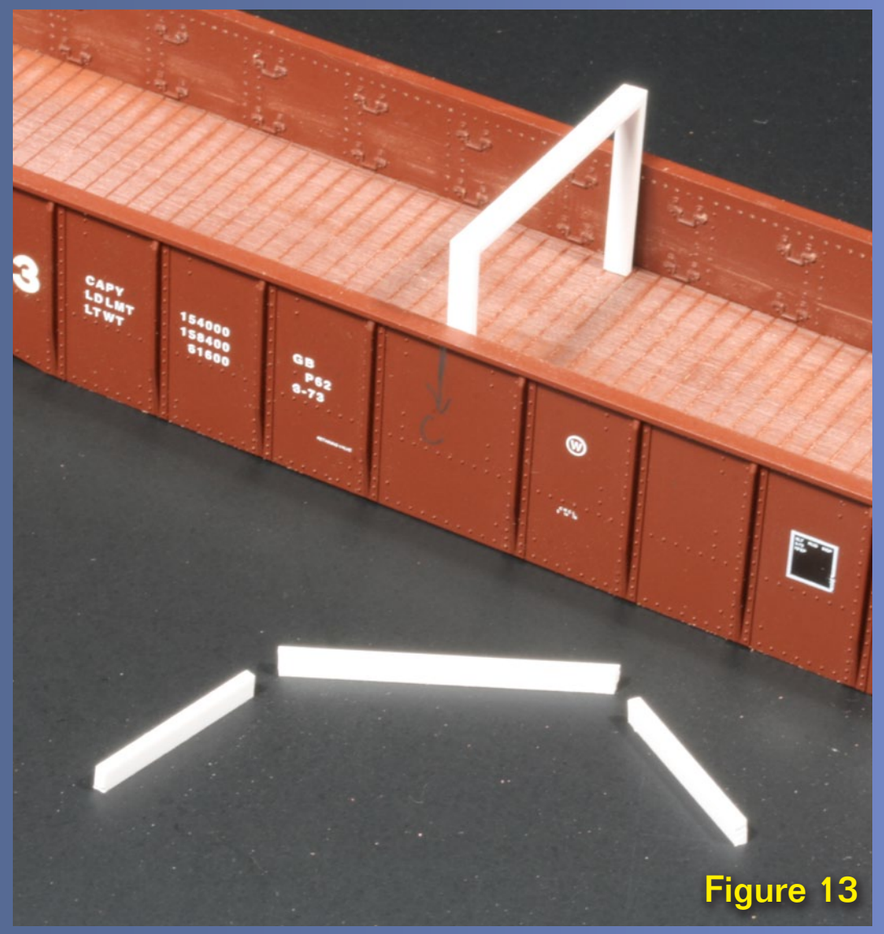


Figure 13

Now that the gondola body modifications are complete, we can construct the boom rest in the center of the gondola. The homemade boom rest of the prototype gondola is constructed of three pieces of straight steel forming an upside down "U" braced with angle steel on each side, creating an "A" frame. This assembly can be replicated using styrene strip and angle shapes, both of which are available from Plastruct and Evergreen Scale Models.

We'll start with the upside down "U" shape, constructing it from Evergreen 4x8 strip styrene. Using an X-Acto #18 chisel blade, cut two lengths of 5 scale feet for the uprights and one length of 8 ½ scale feet for the cross member. Cement the cross member between the uprights. Then place this rather flimsy assembly into the center of the gondola and secure it to the interior walls with small pieces of masking tape to insure each upright will not lean inward (Figures 13 and 14).

To increase the strength of this assembly, place triangle braces at each of the corner joints to reinforce the joints between the uprights and cross member. Triangle braces can be cut from .010 sheet styrene by first cutting a small square of styrene and then placing it on a cutting mat with $^{1}/_{8}$" grid lines and cutting across the grid at an angle, using an X-Acto #18 chisel blade.

STEP 3: Building the Boom Rest - continued

The four triangle braces can now be glued to the "U" assembly, one at each outer corner (Figure 14). Once the cement has fully dried the strengthened assembly can be untaped and set aside. Now remove the gondola's factory paint. I use Chameleon or Scalecoat 2 paint stripper.

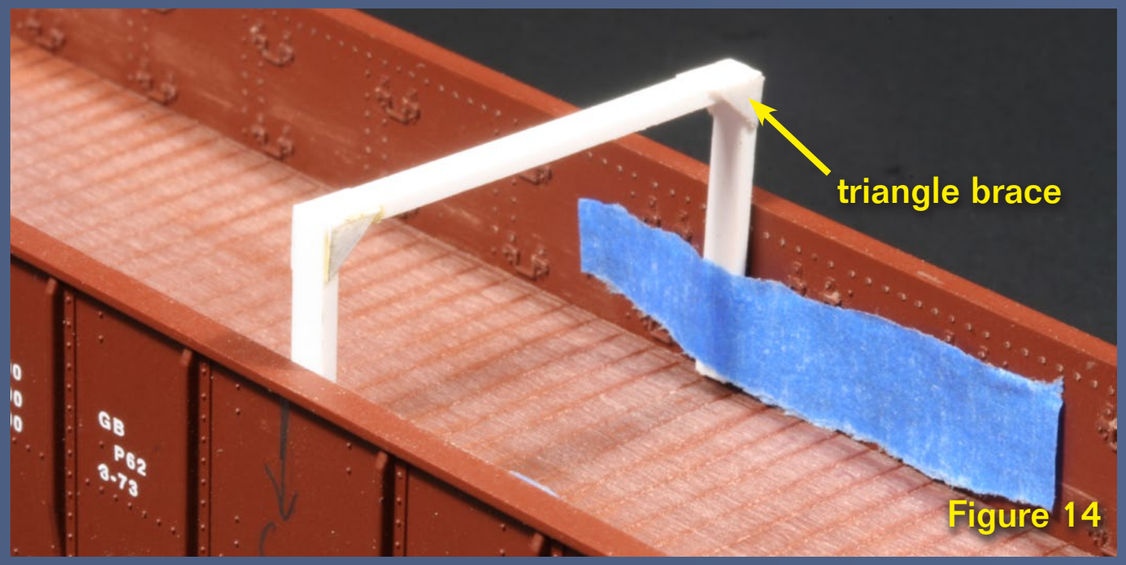


Figure 14

Once the paint is removed and the model cleaned, permanently attach the boom rest by gluing the uprights to the gondola sides. Then add the angle bracing, transforming the upside down "U" into an A-frame. Cut four 7 scale foot lengths of Plastruct "L" angle. Then cement the first extending from the top of one upright to the floor of the gondola. Once dry file the top of the angle flush with the top of the cross member. Then add the second angle, again filing the top once the cement has dried. Repeat for the other side of the boom rest (Figures 15 and 16).

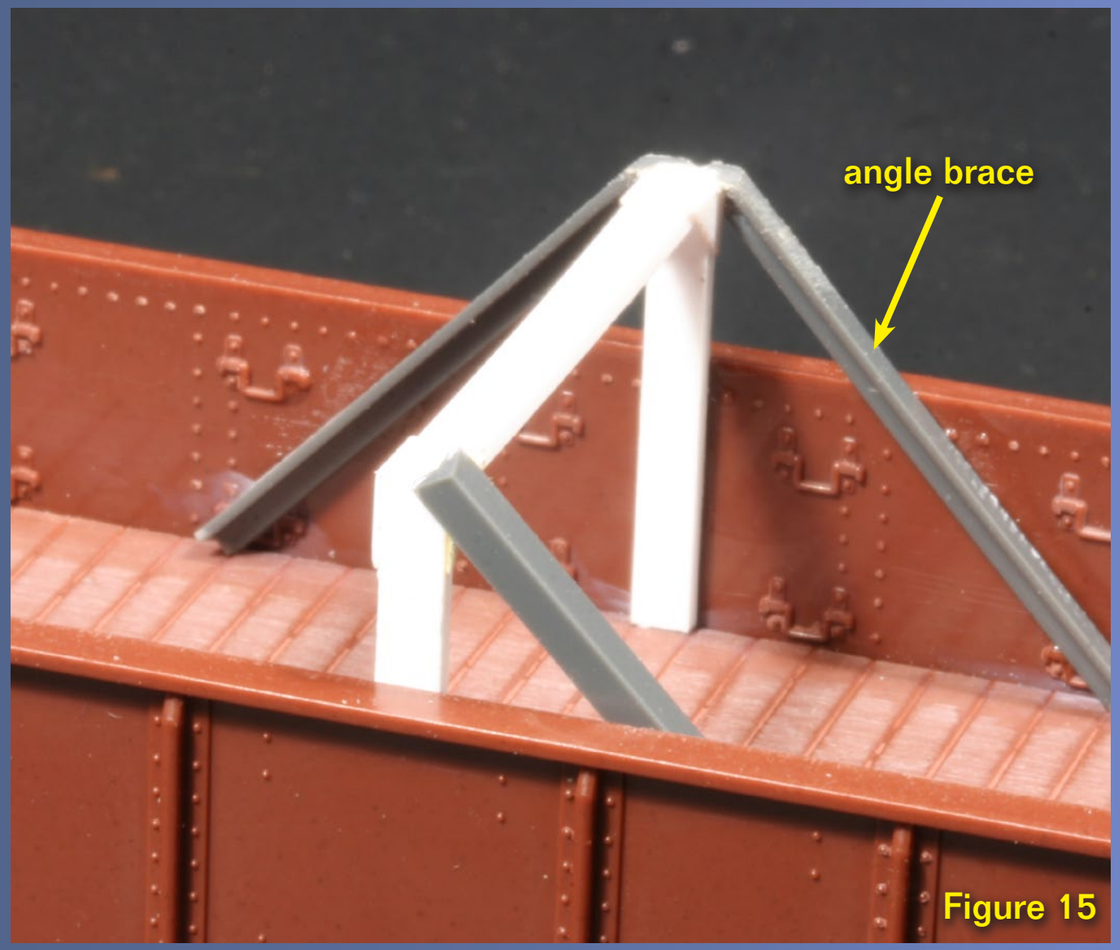


Figure 15

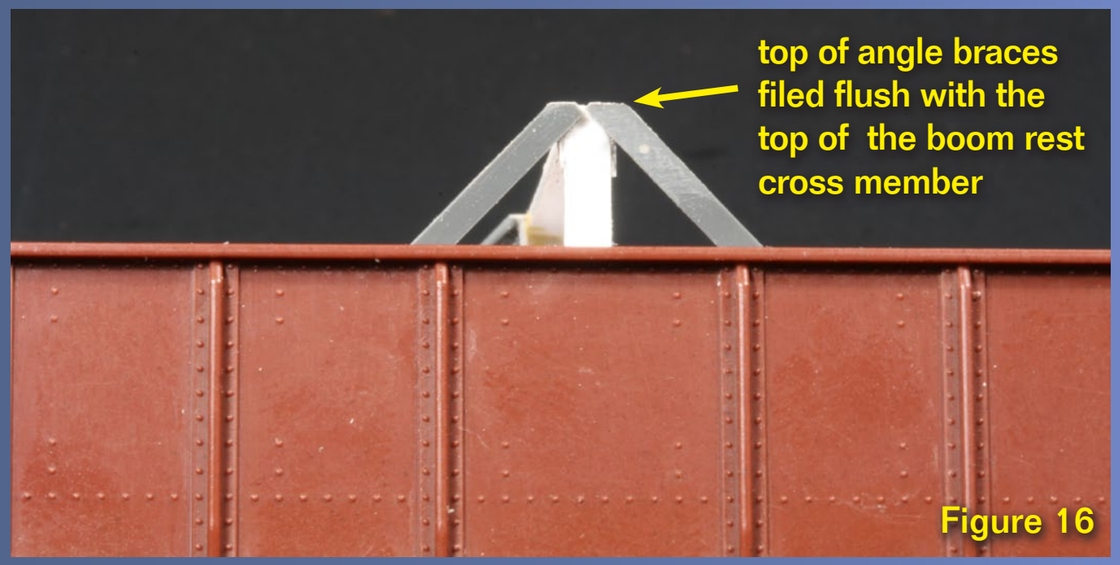


Figure 16

STEP 3: Building the Boom Rest - continued

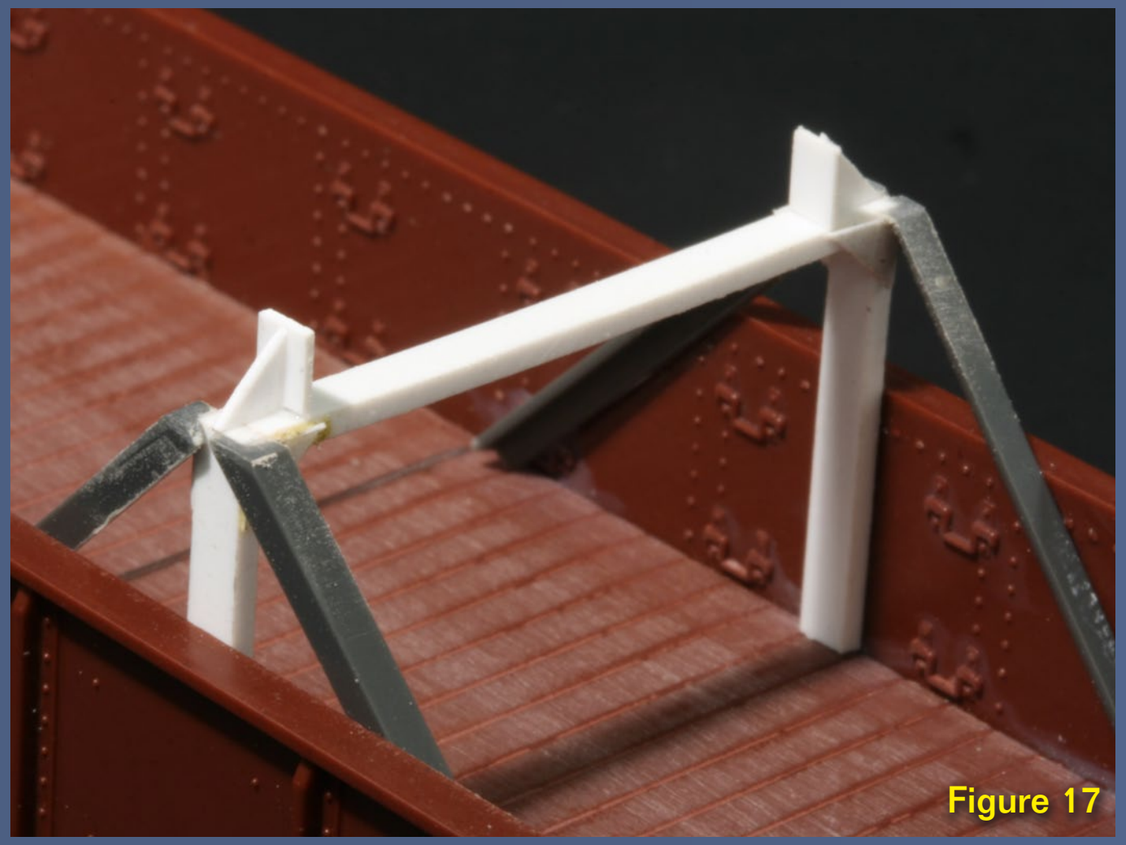


Figure 17

To prevent the crane boom from sliding off the boom rest while in transit, upright steel plates extend from the top of the cross member close to each end. To achieve the look of thicker steel, .015 sheet styrene can be cut into 2' tall rectangles and cemented to the top of the upright. Reinforce them with a triangle brace, also cut from .015 styrene sheet in a similar fashion to the triangle braces used earlier.

Figure 18

Completing the boom rest is a wood block along the top to cushion the surface the boom sits upon. Keeping this wood block in place is a strip of steel extending above both sides of the cross member. This can be added using .010 x .060 styrene strip with scale lumber placed between the retainers. Scale strip lumber is available in many dimensions and a 4x8 strip can be used to represent a newer wood block. The look of a used block can be achieved by ripping an 8x8 in half. When ripping the strip lumber, cut it with a #18 chisel blade and allow a slightly uneven cut to achieve the look of wood which is old and has been damaged by the weight of the steel boom pressing down upon it.

STEP 4: Adding Grab Irons and Basic Details

Figure 19

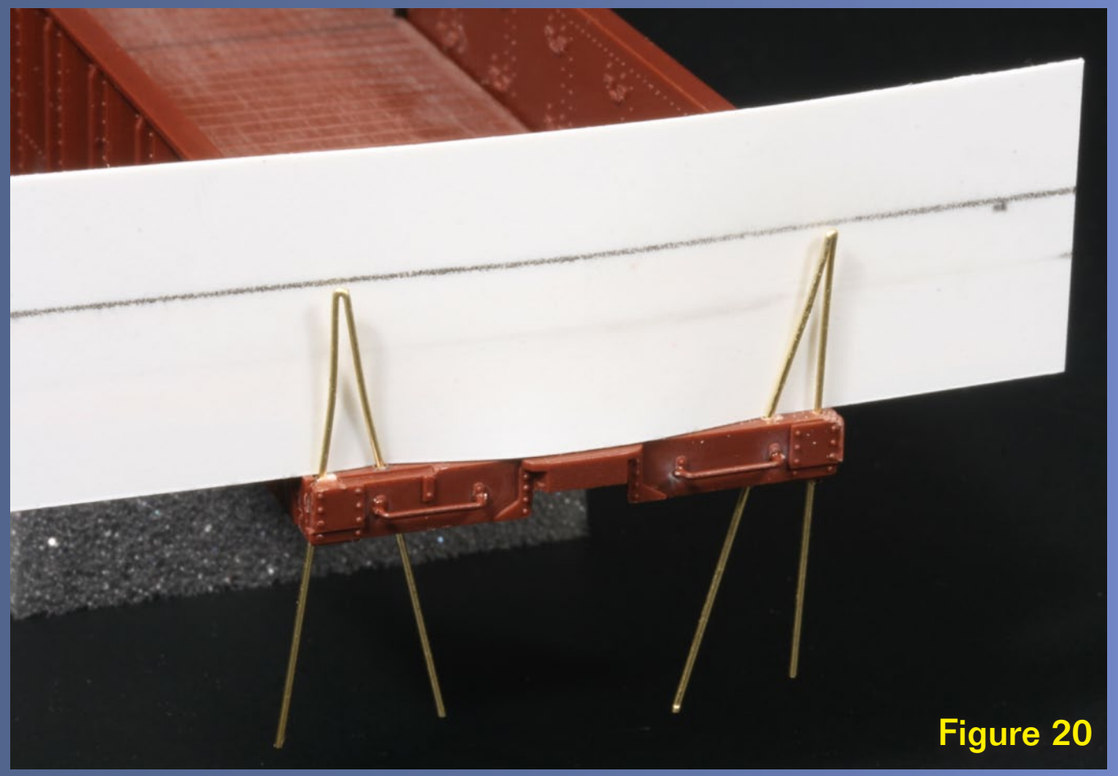


Figure 20

To fabricate and install the triangular hand rails, begin by cutting four 4" lengths of Detail Associates #2506 .019 brass wire. Bend these in half, crimping the top together with pliers. Fill the square hole in the gondola end (where the brake chain casting included with the model would go) using .040 x .040 styrene strip. Then drill a #74 vertical hole at each of the outer ends of the gondola. Drill a second hole a scale foot from the first, this time drilling at a slight diagonal angle since these holes will hold the angled leg of the hand rails. Now insert each of the fabricated hand rails into the gondola ends, allowing them to form a triangle as they are pulled through the holes.

Prior to cementing each hand rail in place they should all be aligned to insure they are even in height. I made an alignment gauge from a piece of scrap styrene. Cut a rectangle of thin styrene, mark a pencil line across it, then place this behind the set of hand rails at one end of the gondola. Move the hand rails up or down until the top of each is even with the line of the gauge. Then cement these in place from the underside of the gondola using ACC and cut off the excess brass rod extending below the underframe.

STEP 4: Adding Grab irons and Basic Details - continued

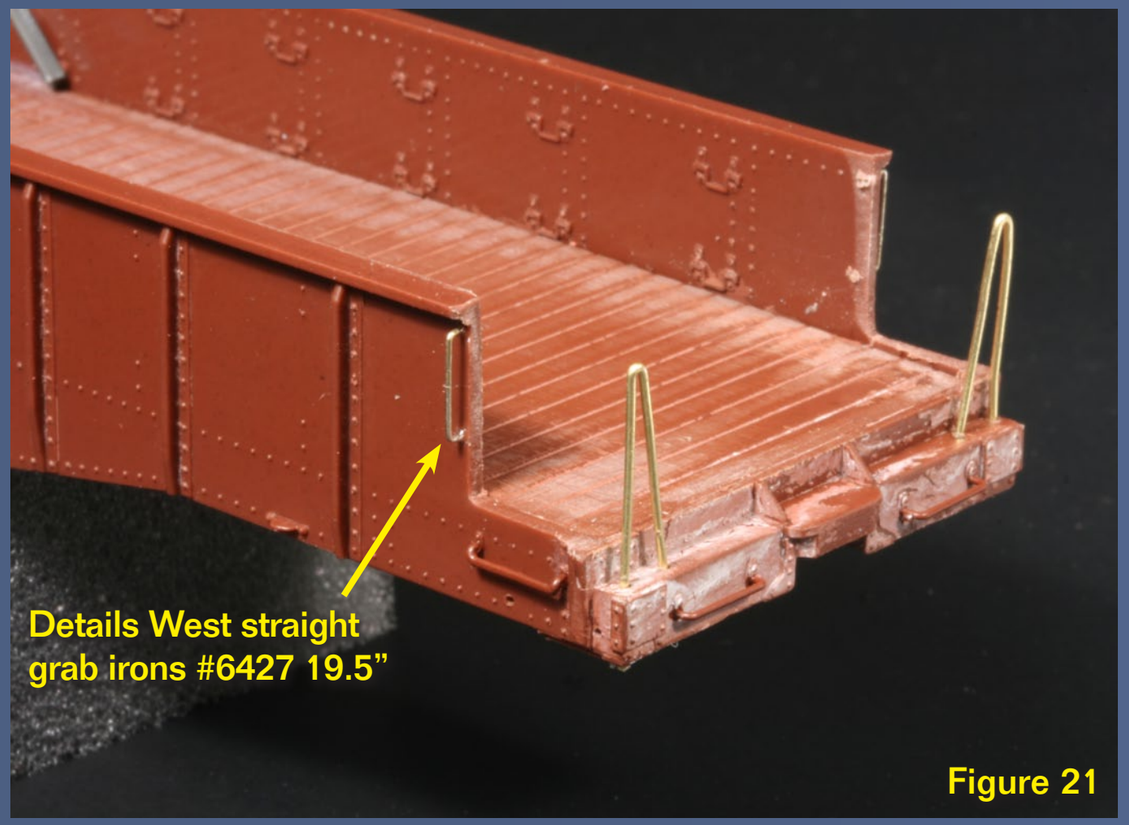


Figure 21

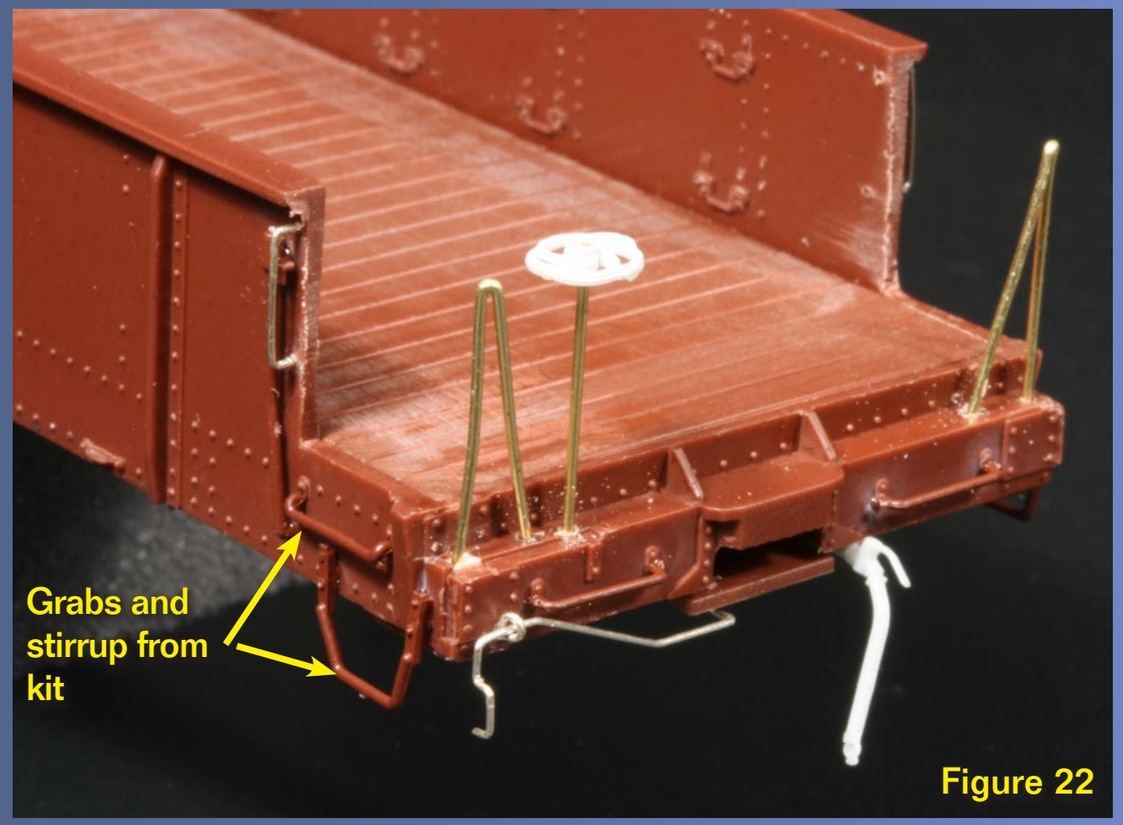


Figure 22

Detail Associates #6427 19.5” straight grab irons can now be installed into holes drilled beside the cut edges of the gondola sides (Figure 21). Begin by drilling a #80 hole near the top of the gondola side, adjacent to the edge of the cut that was made earlier. Using small wire cutters, cut one mounting leg of the grab iron shorter than the other. Then insert the long leg into the hole allowing the shorter leg to rest upon the side of the gondola. This will show the location of the second mounting hole which can now be drilled through the side of the gondola. Then the second mounting leg can be inserted through the hole. To complete the installation apply a small amount of CA type cement to each mounting leg, push the grab iron into place and cut the mounting legs flush with the interior wall surface using small wire cutters.

For the horizontal grab irons on the gondola sides and ends, use those included with the kit. Place a drop-style grab iron into the holes molded into the right side of the carbody. Then into drill two #76 holes into the left side of the carbody and install a second grab iron. Two straight grab irons can now be installed in the holes molded at each end of the car. Then add a brake wheel to the “B” end of the car.

This car features a brake wheel mounted on a stand, rather than the car side mounting included with the kit. Brake wheels are available from a variety of manufacturers. Making a stand mounted brake wheel is as simple as drilling a hole in the center of the brake wheel, mounting it on steel or brass wire and inserting this into a hole drilled into the carbody.

Complete the basic detailing of the gondola with detail castings for cut bars and brake hoses at each end. Finally, mount the very delicate stirrup steps included with the kit at each corner. Now it’s off to the paint shop where the entire car will be painted black, matching the utilitarian paint job applied to our prototype car.

STEP 5: Painting and Detailing the Boom Car

I used Floquil to paint my model, but acrylic paint will also work. Be sure to observe appropriate safety measures when painting a model – a paint booth is a very good idea.

Remove the wood boom rest and airbrush the entire gondola, including the underbody, with Engine Black and let dry. Then brush paint the grab irons, hand rails, and coupler cut bar handles with Railbox Yellow to increase their visibility, a common safety feature among many railroads. Complete the brushwork by painting the trainline airhoses with Grimy Black and add silver gladhand tips. Drybrush the interior deck of the gondola with Weathered Black to simulate an older well-used wooden deck. Spray the entire gondola with an overcoat of Testor's Glosscote to prepare for adding decals (decals adhere best to glossy surfaces).

The graphics on this car are very simple because it is a non-revenue Maintenance Of Way car. Decals consist only of a road number, lube plate, and FRA mandated reflective safety striping. Microscale's White Gothic alpha-numeric decal set provided 12" characters suitable for the road number. The lube plate was from a freight car decal set. Add reflective striping from Microscale's #4389 Reflector Stripe decal set. Apply double stripes at each end of the gondola matching the stripes on the prototype car.

Now it's time to focus on the barren interior of the gondola. We'll add details that will make this car truly interesting. The first detail is the chain stretching across the boom rest. This chain secures the boom when the crane is not in use. Chain is available in multiple link sizes. Be careful. Too much paint and small model chains become 'rusted' in one position, losing their flexibility. Avoid this problem for places where the chain needs to flex by using chain that is pre-blackened by its manufacturer.

A-Line's #29219, 40 link per inch chain is the right size to represent the chain used on the boom car and sturdy enough to withstand some handling – it has to be removed when the crane boom is not secured on the boom rest. Installing the chain across the boom rest requires two different mounting styles, permanent on one side and a removable mount on the other. Create the permanent mount by drilling two #80 holes into the top of the boom rest. Insert a length of thin brass wire through the end link and bend it into a "U" shape that can be inserted it into the holes and cemented in place (Figure 23).

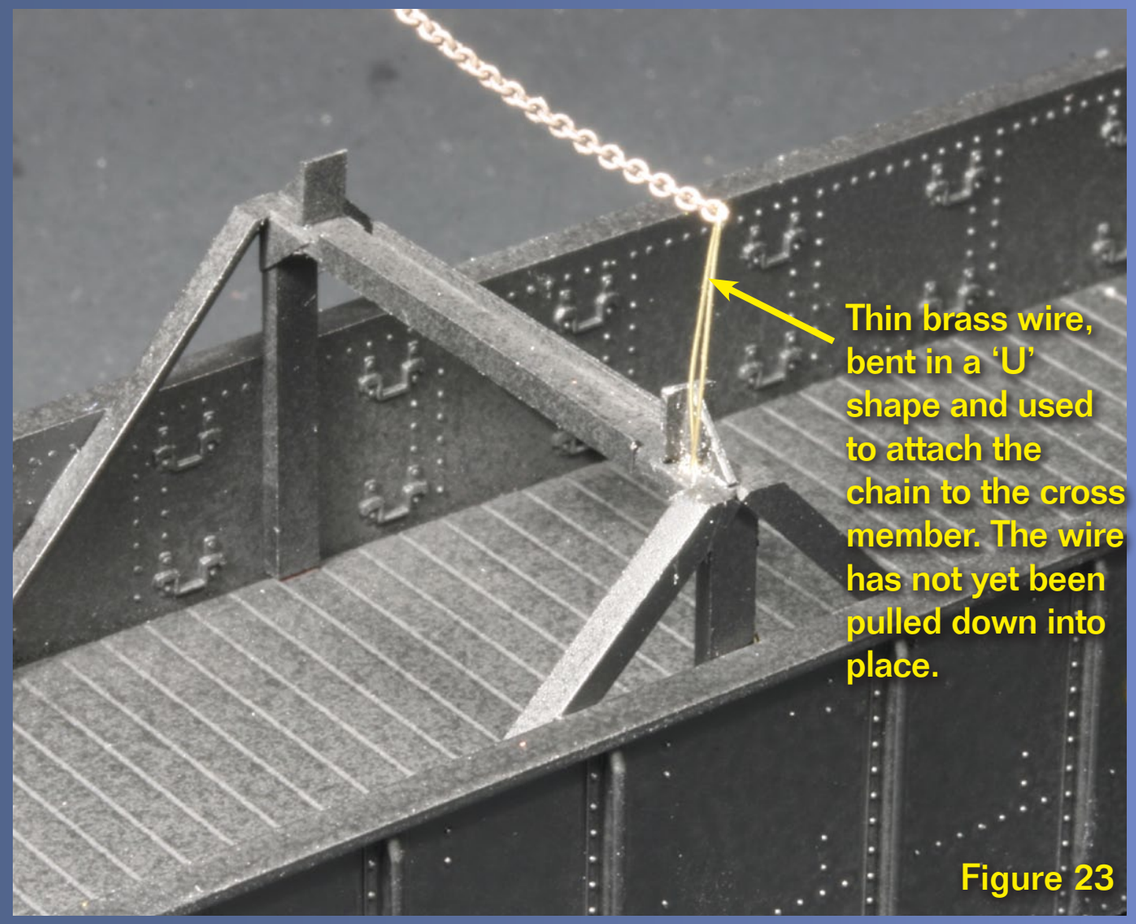


Figure 23

The opposite side of the boom rest requires a removable mount sturdy enough to prevent the chain from slipping off when the car is in use. To create this, the boom was placed onto the boom rest and the chain was stretched over the boom to the mounting location. Once again this same type of mount was used, but the brass wire was not cemented into place. Instead one leg of the wire was left long enough to bend back over the top of the chain, across the cross member of the boom rest. This will enable the chain to be removed from this side of the boom rest, allowing the crane boom to be removed from the boom rest (Figure 24).

STEP 5: Painting and Detailing the Boom Car (continued)

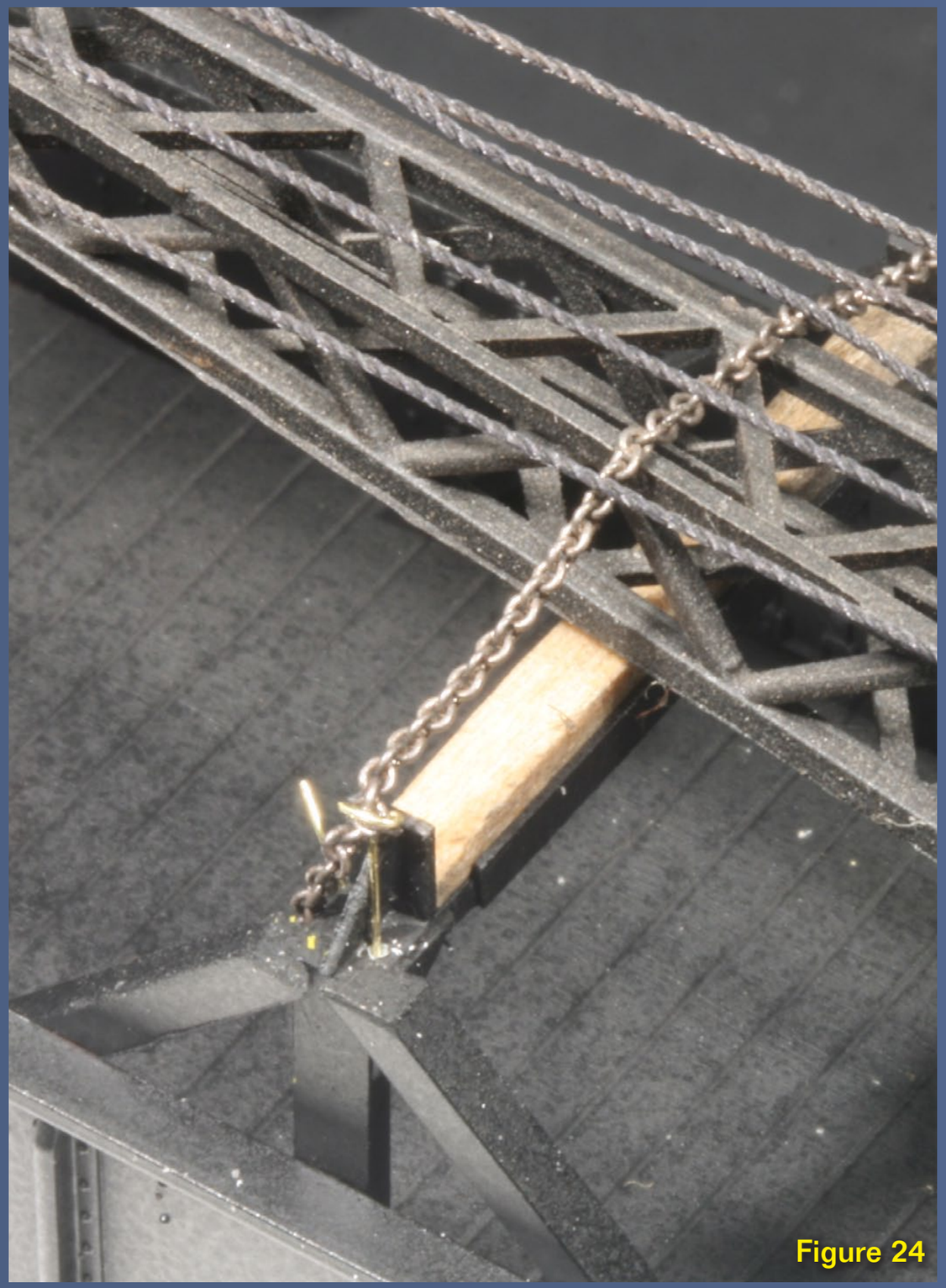


Figure 24

Now we'll scratch build a few details for the gondola's interior: a large fuel tank, filler hose on a reel, and a block and tackle.

I made my fuel tank by cutting a length of hollow brass tubing and capping the ends with .015" styrene. I used ACC to cement the styrene in place, then filed it to match the tank's circular contour. I completed my tank with a filler cap, and a brace of .040" x .040" styrene under the tank to keep it from rolling.

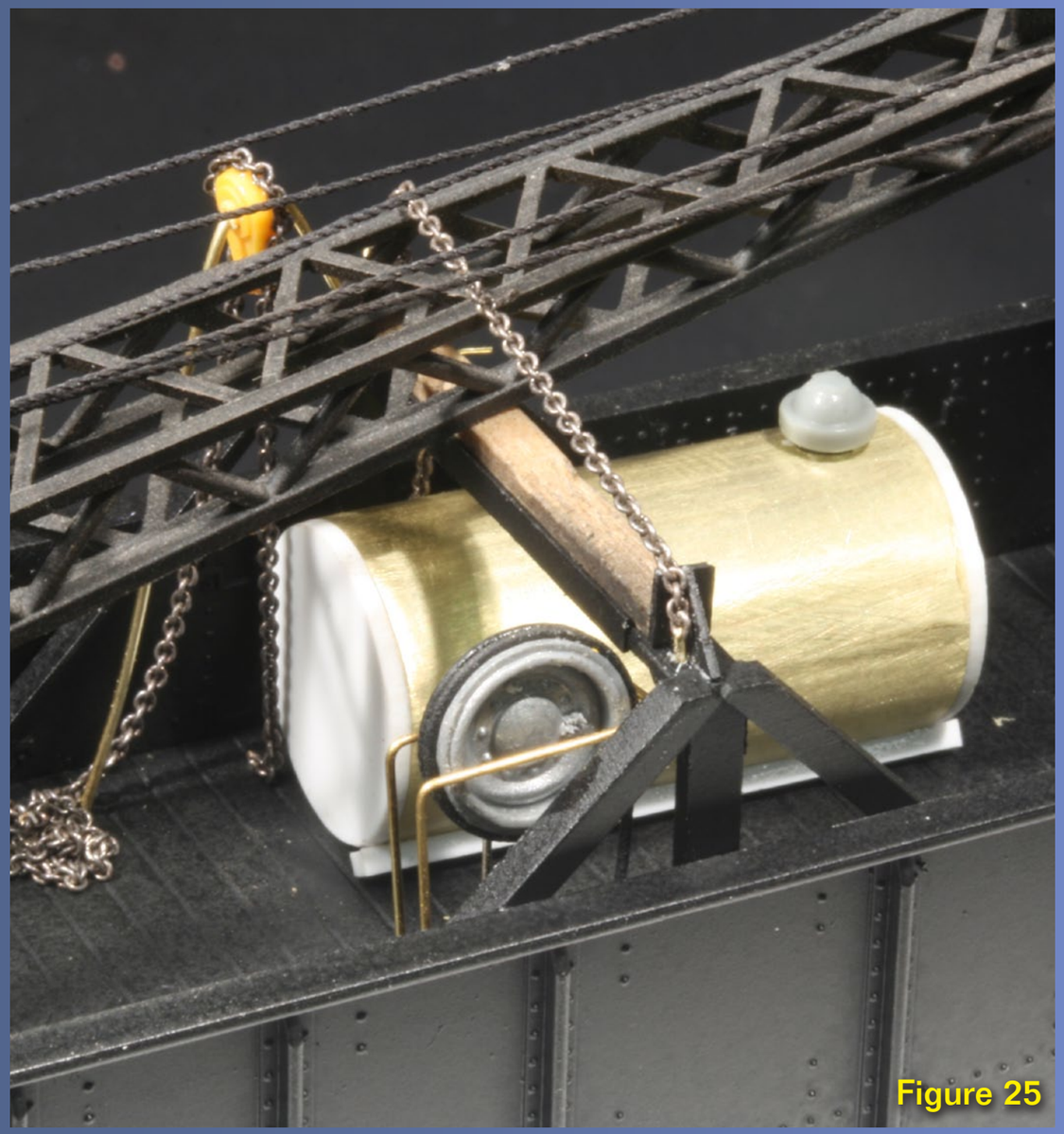


Figure 25

STEP 5: Painting and Detailing the Boom Car (continued)

The hose reel is a wheel hub from a tractor trailer mounted on a stand and surrounded by a frame. Beginning at the wheel hub, cement thin black wire to the edge of the hub, then drill into the rear and mount the hose assembly onto a length of .080 steel wire bent into an "L" shape. Drill a hole in the gondola's floor. Use thick brass wire to form a frame around the hose reel and glue it into the hole in the floor.

Opposite the hose reel is a block and tackle assembly utilizing a pulley assembly from the scrapbox. Mount this freestanding detail part onto a steel wire extending from the floor of the gondola. Bend the wire so one end is mounted to the floor while the other end of the wire rests upon the outer edge of the boom rest. Once it is in place cement a 5" length of chain across the top, allowing the chain to dangle free and rest on the floor of the gondola.

The remaining detail items within the gondola interior are suited to a car in maintenance service. I placed two sizes of large toolboxes along one side of the gondola. I also added several oil highboys on the opposite side. Most cars of this type will have some welding equipment. I represented this with a crate of oxygen and acetylene bottles next to a welding hose. Rounding out the collection of stuff in the boom car are a selection of hand tools suitable for trackwork, several lengths of chain, wooden blocks used for bracing while lifting and an electromagnet (included with the Walthers American crane).

Since the crane and boom car are permanently assigned to each other, the prototype has a bridge plate between them, allowing the operator direct access to the gondola. I modeled this with rectangles of .040 styrene, covered with a thin layer of mesh grating. The plates on the gondola and crane are at different heights to prevent them from hitting while on a curve.

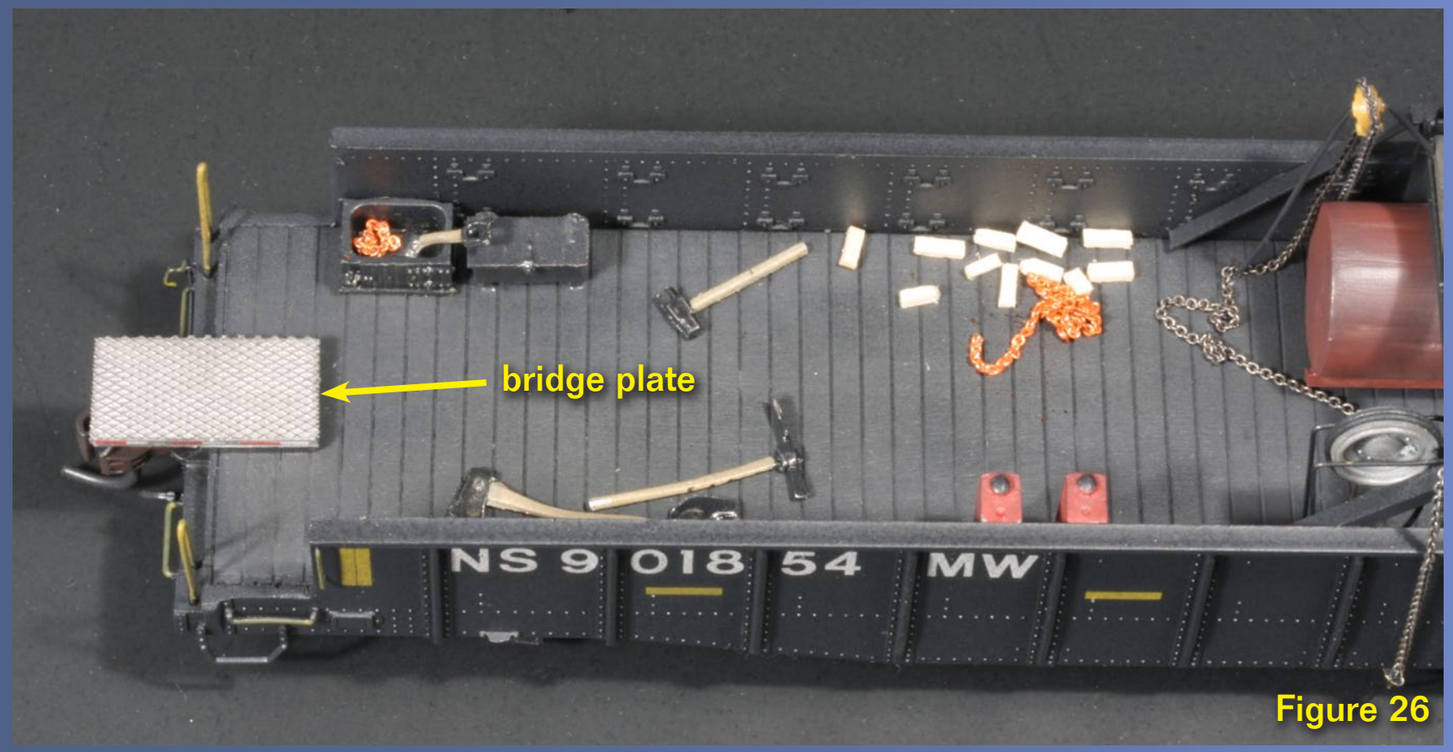


Figure 26

Figure 27

STEP 6: Constructing the Crane

While the Walther's American crane represents a different type than the exact prototype I wanted to model, it provides a good stand-in as this particular model of crane is also used by the Norfolk Southern. Unlike the Walther's Norfolk Southern model which is black, most Norfolk Southern maintenance equipment is orange, a holdover from the days of the pre-merger Norfolk & Western and Southern Railways. I chose to use the already orange Walthers model of a CSX crane.

I carefully removed the CSX markings by wet sanding with 1500 grit sandpaper, leaving an unmarked orange body. Then I assembled the crane following the instructions. Several details needed changing to make it look more like a piece of N&W MOW equipment (Figure 29).

I replaced the single chime horn of the Walthers model with a Norfolk Southern style horn. Carefully pulling upward on the horn allowed its removal and replacement with a Details West #251 Nathan K5 low profile horn, one of the styles used on locomotives of the Norfolk Southern.

Since self-propelled track equipment is radio equipped to allow the operator to receive track warrants from the railroad dispatcher, I added a whip style radio antenna atop the cab. I made mine from #80 wire installed into a hole drilled into the cab roof. When the glue dried I painted it silver with a black base.

I also changed the exhaust manifold and muffler. This detail can be easily made by inserting a thick brass wire into a thin hollow brass tube and bending the ends to match the "L" shape of the exhaust. I painted my exhaust using a mixture of Grimy Black and Rust and installed it into a hole drilled atop the engine compartment of the crane.

I also added a vertical grab iron adjacent to the operator's cab door.

The finishing touch were the white panels featuring the "AMERICAN" name on the boom (Figure 1). I made these panels using .015x.156 styrene strip. I applied crane markings using Microscale's reflective stripes and a combination of White and Black Gothic alpha-numeric decal sets, using individual letters and numbers.

Figure 28

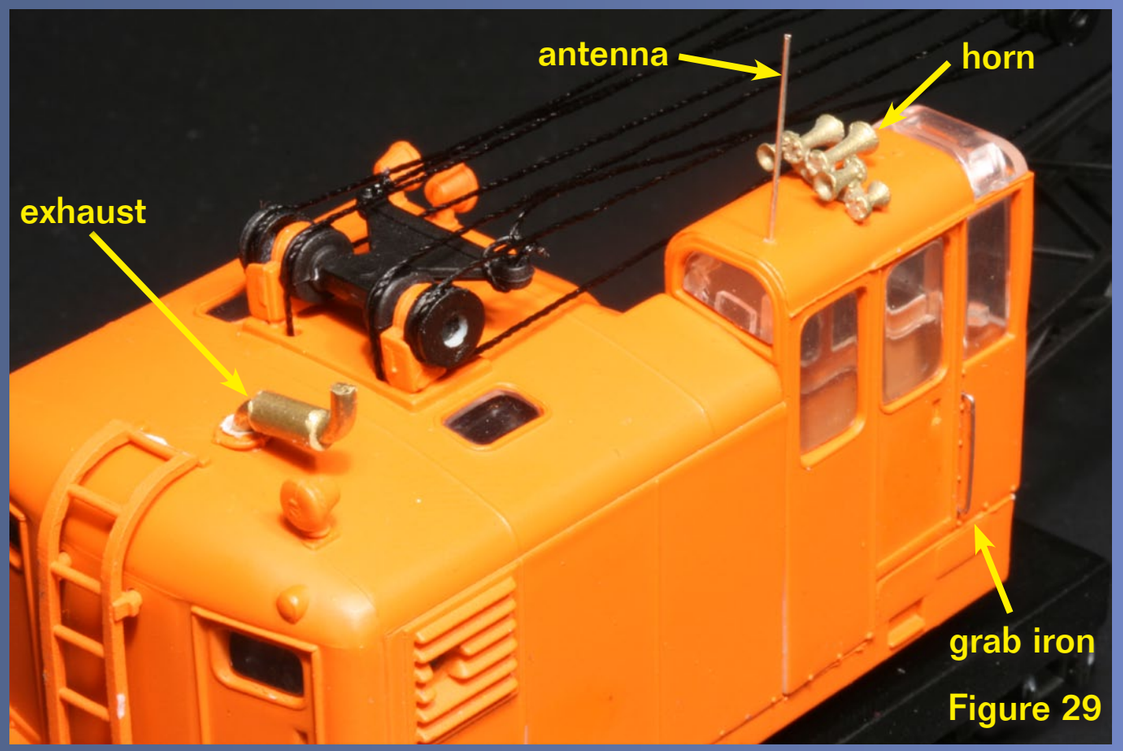


Figure 29

STEP 7: Completing the Crane and Boom Car

Figure 30

No model is complete without some form of weathering and while tastes in weathering vary, maintenance equipment is often heavily weathered, as its purpose is entirely functional. I gave both the crane and boom car an overspray of Grimy Black working from the bottom upwards, applying heavier weathering towards the bottom of both pieces. This gave a feeling of dirt and grime built up over years of hard work on the railroad. Once this had dried, I applied a second coat to the horizontal surfaces where dirt would settle, such as the cab roof, the decks of both the crane and boom car, and the bridge plates. In addition to the coat of grime I painted specific portions of each piece, including the couplers and trucks, a rusty color. I gave the lower edges of the boom car a light overspray of rust to blend the rusty parts into the black carbody.

Kitbashing and scratchbuilding enable us to customize our model railroads, adding unique items to our rosters and layouts. A simple project like this one lets you explore new techniques and the end result will be a something unique, a car not available anywhere else!

Reader Feedback (click here)

PARTS LIST

Proto 2000: 52'6" Drop End Mill Gondola Kit

Walthers: American Crane

Evergreen Scale Models:
#103: .010 x .060 Styrene Strip
#142: .040 x .040 Styrene Strip
#117: .015 x .156 Styrene Strip
#8408: 4 x 8 Styrene Strip
#9010: .010 Styrene Sheet
#9015: .015 Styrene Sheet

Plastruct #90002: L-angle

A-Line #29219: Pre-blackened Brass Chain (12" Long) – 40 Links per Inch

Detail Associates:
#2206: Round Eye Bolts
#2502: .008 Round Brass Wire
#2506: .019 Round Brass Wire
#6427: 19.5" Straight Grab irons
#6026: Freight Car Air Hoses
#6215: Freight Car Coupler Lift Bars
#251: Nathan Air Horn

Durango Press #84 Acetylene tanks

Evergreen Hill #651 Oil High Boy

K&S
#505: .078 Music Wire
Hollow Brass Tubing

Kadee #3021: Brake wheel

Kappler #1175: 8x8 strip wood

Precision Scale
#3315 small toolbox
#31524 large toolbox (x2)

Scale Scenics #3500: Aluminum Micro Mesh

Selley Finishing Touches: #140 tool set

SS Ltd:
#2154 crate
#2312 Welding Hose

Microscale:
#90101: Railroad Gothic Alphanumeric Decal Set - White
#90102: Railroad Gothic Alphanumeric Decal Set – Black
#4389: Yellow Reflector Stripes

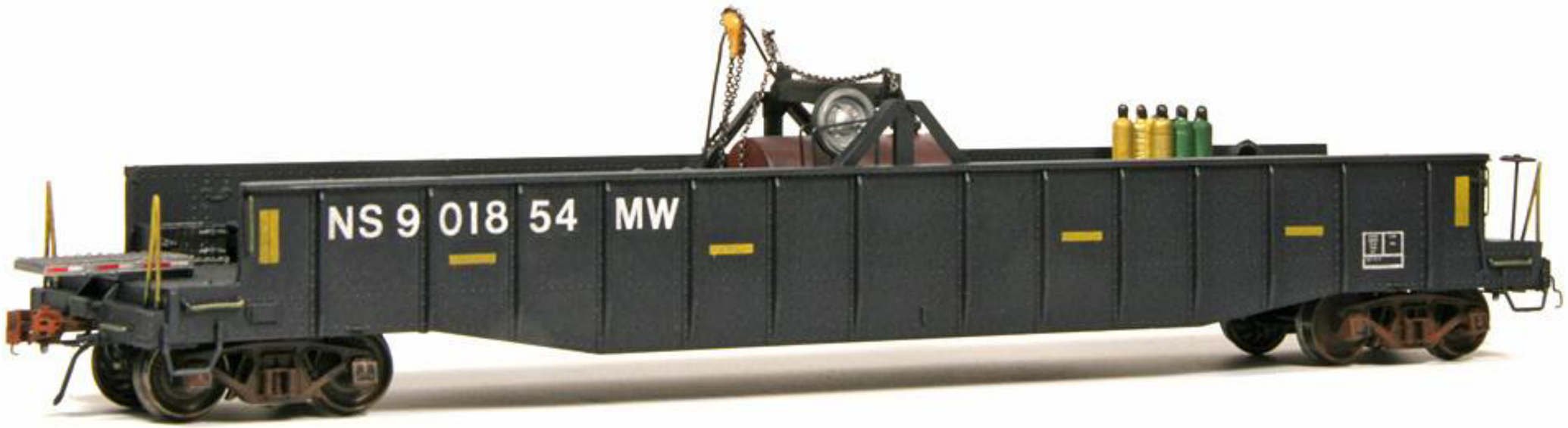


FIGURE 31: The finished NS Boom Car. Click the image to rotate it a full 360 degrees.

New Year's Sale!

50% off on ALL DVDs

NEW YEAR'S SPECIAL!

Get all 10 DVDs for $99!

(a $160 savings)

$29.95

$14.95

$19.95

$9.95

Click to learn more ...

Do more. Spend less.

model-trains-video.com

Erik Kalinski's

Pacific & Northwestern

The Northern Exposure Line

Article and photos by Erik Kalinski

Figure 1: The sawmill at Holly's Woods lumber is in full operation.

Erik Kalinski is building a railroad modeled after a rather unusual prototype – the fictional town of Cicely, Alaska, and its surroundings, home of the *Northern Exposure* TV show ...

When I meet my fellow railroad modelers it seems one question comes up more often than others – what makes a model railroad realistic and believable? Is it the prototype modeling approach where we adhere to an actual time and place on a real railroad?

Fact of Fiction?

There are many views regarding the design and construction of realistic layouts. Ultimately I think believability depends on the views of the modeler and visitor and how they interact.

I've been involved with model trains since my youth. In the last 25 years I've built several layouts with different themes. With each, I improved my modeling skills, and ultimately found my views of what makes a realistic model railroad undergoing a revolution. Those changes didn't happen over night of course – although I feel that a new idea sometimes comes like a lightning strike. I began to ask "is there such a thing as a prototype layout?"

In the ultimate sense, all layouts are fictional. Regardless of whether we choose to model from our imagination or a real time and place, compromises are forced on us by constraints of time and space and prevent our modeling an area with complete accuracy.

Even though our models are dynamic and some people attempt to mimic a real railroad's operation with realistic paperwork and timetable details, ultimately we're creating a picture frozen in time (even though some parts of it move).

So in my mind every layout is fiction and I regard all the debates between the prototype and freelance modeling as pointless.

I do admit that in many places my view is not popular, especially among those who strive for prototype accuracy in their layouts.

An Unusual Prototype

If I were asked what movie I would take with me if I was going to be stuck on a desert island, my answer would undoubtedly be: *Northern Exposure* although it's really an early '90s TV series and not a movie. As you may guess, my family are die hard fans of that show, considering it to be the best TV show ever made.

This layout is where my model railroading met my love of this show. I decided to recreate the fictional town of Cicely Alaska, the setting for the show. I don't recall anyone modeling this TV show before, but then not as many people seem to be as crazy as I am about both

Figure 2: Looking down the main street in Cicely.

Figure 3

subjects, the Northern Exposure show and model trains, as I am.

Simply put, I decided to build an exact replica of a non-existing town (which doesn't have a railroad) and blend it into my existing layout. This seemed like a piece of cake, but as usual, what looks like a piece of cake, hardly ever turns out that way.

This idea had been building inside me for a long time before I was conscious of it. At first I just thought of it as an interesting mental exercise where I thought about how it might be accomplished. The project remained in the subconscious planning stage quite a while. Then I got serious about actually building it.

Research

The first step was to watch the whole *Northern Exposure* series again (oh darn! We do it frequently anyway). Then I started digging on the internet looking for photos of Roslyn, Washington – the real city that represented the fictional town in the TV show. I found out there are thousands of other die-

Figure 3: It took a lot of patience to convert this Kato SD45 into a high-nose unit and super-detail it.

hard fans of the show, a bit of a revelation, at least we weren't alone! I collected hundreds of photos and studied them, seeking details which might be useful for the buildings and scenery. The main problem was that on the

Model Railroads are like MOVIES!

(or why I built this layout the way I did)

Creating a model train layout reminds me in many ways of making a movie. There are movies that are pure fiction, and there are movies based on historic events or people. I argue there's no such thing as a *true* movie. They all include at least some elements of fiction. A movie is always the interpretation of events or characters by the director and actors – there are often as many views as there are people involved!

The bottom line is we usually don't know what really happened or who said what – our perception is always based on interpretations in media, books, or newspaper reports. All that of course means nothing in relation to the quality of a movie – some are great while others are lacking. The quality of the viewers' experience doesn't depend on the accuracy of the film's history. We can believe the story, identify ourselves with the situation or characters, and it doesn't matter whether the story told is historical or about something which happened on another planet, thousands of light years away...

There is often a lot of in-depth research by the movie makers, especially in historical movies. But the audience will become most immersed in a movie that LOOKS like it's the real thing, even if it is not (as long as it's close – setting the New York Trade Center disaster in South Africa would perhaps stretch re-

continued on next page

Figure 4: It's always June on the P&NW, a good alternative to winter, the other season. A pair of P&NW SD45's lead a coal train out of Ridge Rock.

internet most pictures are low resolution, making for smudged details in enlargements. Back to the TV show's DVDs I went, watching the episodes again and again. At the end, I still had holes in the information that I needed to fill with guesswork. But I figured that except for the die-hard fans of the show, most people wouldn't notice.

Obviously, every structure on the layout had to be built from scratch – my hope that I could rework some commercial kits was shattered soon after I started.

At the very beginning I realized that I would need to be very careful where the town would be positioned. If I wanted it to be recognizable, its orientation would be important. I started running into many places where I was forced to compromise.

The biggest compromise was the main street and the positioning of buildings along it. In the 'real' Cicely, the buildings shown in the show are on both sides of the street. It took me the longest time to decide how on earth I could do that and still make everything visible. The solution I came up with was to model one side of the street; all the major buildings would be on the same side of the street regardless of their TV location.

There was another problem I had to deal with – I didn't have unlimited space in my train room, and had to

ality more than most people would tolerate). But within reason, whether we like a movie or not mostly depends on whether we were touched emotionally by it and whether it appears plausible to us.

And now, if we take a look on our model trains, we recognize the same pattern. When looking at a layout, all that it takes in our mind to admire it overall is whether it LOOKS believable and if it we receive some emotional impact from it. Whether it's accurately built for the time and place represented are not usually part of our initial reaction unless we're familiar with the location and enough details are provided to move us back in our personal histories. Whether a layout is operated in a prototypical manner can't even be determined except by careful observation over a period of time.

I argue the realism of the layout is created in our minds and is based more on our own experience, knowledge and perhaps personal preference than the facts of the *true story* built into the layout itself. That's why, in my opinion, there are some very well-made layouts which look gorgeous and are packed with details, but which leave us emotionally untouched. In such cases we often can't pick out anything specific we don't like – the layout simply doesn't have the feel of believability.

This is also true with movies. Some movies are close to perfect technically. The details are there, everything is in place, yet, they don't hold our attention and imagination. The minute the

continued on next page

Figure 5

Figure 5: An ancient H16 pulls a freight into Rock Ridge yard. This inexpensive Bachmann model proved itself a smooth runner with enough space for a sound decoder and speaker inside the body.

compress some distances such as the width of the street. Some buildings, such as the Cicely Community church and the Roslyn Cafe, got placed in "improper" locations. And a number of structures were omitted. I pray that true connoisseurs of the show will forgive me for these compromises.

The town in the show doesn't have a railroad passing through it so it was obvious that Cicely should be away from the rest of the layout, but still connected and blended in somehow. Luckily, I remembered an episode where a train was shown not that far from the town. I used that as a starting point.

Work Starts in Cicely

The work in Cicely started with blending the town with my existing and nearly finished D&RGW layout. I figured the rocky scenery on the existing layout would work fine with only a minor change or two. At least I thought so ...

I needed to make a few changes to the existing trackage near Cicely. Then, I found a few more changes were needed, and a few more. Finally a year and half later I had completely rebuilt the layout – nearly every rock was moved and everything done anew. So much for

credits start rolling we're thinking of something else. In contrast, there are other movies, which are completely improbable or impossible – but they're done so well, that we sink into the depths of the personalities of the characters.

I believe the same thing can happen on some model railroads. Even though they may not represent exactly a specific railroad or town, we're simply blown away by it – usually, because there are many details placed in plausible locations (and details DO make the difference) and also because there is some internal logic in the layout, which we recognize. It simply LOOKS so real, that it becomes real to us.

This seems like a pretty long introduction to the HO layout I built over the last 2 - 3 years... But I felt it necessary explain the motives and viewpoint that lead me to build the layout as it is, and which may explain the reasons why I made the choices I did.

Of course the picture of the layout we have in our minds when we start building can differ significantly from the end result. Our skills, experiences and circumstances dictate compromises we have to make along the way.

I guess we're pretty happy with our work when it's finished. After all, we can't get rid of our inner ego. Ultimately it is only when the layout is viewed by others that we can tell if we succeeded with our creation.

minor changes! I'd never planned to do so much work and many of my modeler friends thought I was nuts to tear up my existing layout and scenery. Afterward, only small portions of the existing tracks remained untouched on the new layout

I hit the internet again, this time searching out and studying innumerable pictures of Alaska, looking for some suitable scenery for my railroad and yes, I watched episodes of the show, again. I've never been to Alaska, so these were my only source of information. How much I succeeded in making my Alaska look like Alaska remains to be judged.

Trackplan Simplification

My main interest in model railroading is not switching or operating sessions. When I was a kid I loved to watch long trains crawling by and this hasn't changed. My old layout included many switching opportunities and a yard that was rather large for the size of the layout. I simplified this quite a bit leaving only a few sidings and yard tracks (just in case I change my mind about operation at some time in the future).

This allowed me to broaden some of the curve radii and gave me extra space for the surrounding mountain scenery – I believe it dramatically improved the layout's overall view and feel. Now, when I look at photos of my previous layouts, I they seem overcrowded with too much of everything. At first overcrowding can seem attrac-

Figure 6

Figure 6: A pair of freights pass at Ridge Rock yard on the P&NW.

Erik Kalinski lives in Slovenia, a small country in Central Europe, with his wife and two sons. He was bitten by the train bug when he was young. Nearly 40 years ago he packed everything in boxes and his model railroading stopped for twenty years until his wife suggested he build a layout for their 6 year old son. After building a small layout, he was re-bitten by the model train bug and 18 years later he's still going strong.

His interests shifted from European prototypes to American, starting with the Union Pacific and ending up with the D&RGW. He started building his current, free-lanced layout about 3 years ago.

At one time he ran a model train shop specializing in American products and railroads. While running his hobby shop he received so many questions regarding model trains that he collected his e-mail answers and turned them into a brochure (in Slovenian). It's now available on the internet for free.

Erik currently owns a company that produces hi-fi amplifiers, speakers, and CD players under the System Fidelity brand. His other interests include (no big surprise) home theater.

tive, but attractive isn't necessarily the same as realistic.

Adding a Second Level

That was also around the time I started to think about a second level. My layout isn't very big and I have the common model railroader disease which causes us to have far more engines and cars than our layouts can accommodate in a reasonable manner. I wanted a loop of track, going through the scenery, where I could run a steam powered sightseeing tourist train. Of course, I would name it the *Northern Exposure Line*.

I'd not been a fan of separate second levels, but I really wanted the additional track. Adding the extra loop of track required another small (ha ha) rebuild to install it and blend it in with existing scenery. For one thing, since it was a bit more than a foot above the first level I needed to dramatically increase the height of my mountains. The second level is actually an ordinary oval of track not connected to the first level – there was simply no room for a helix or other interconnecting track between the high and low tracks.

Scenery

I like using real rocks for building mountains. I love all the cracks and small details on the natural rocks, and especially the fact they don't repeat as is the case with plaster rocks cast in rubber molds. Real rocks also come

Continued on page 60

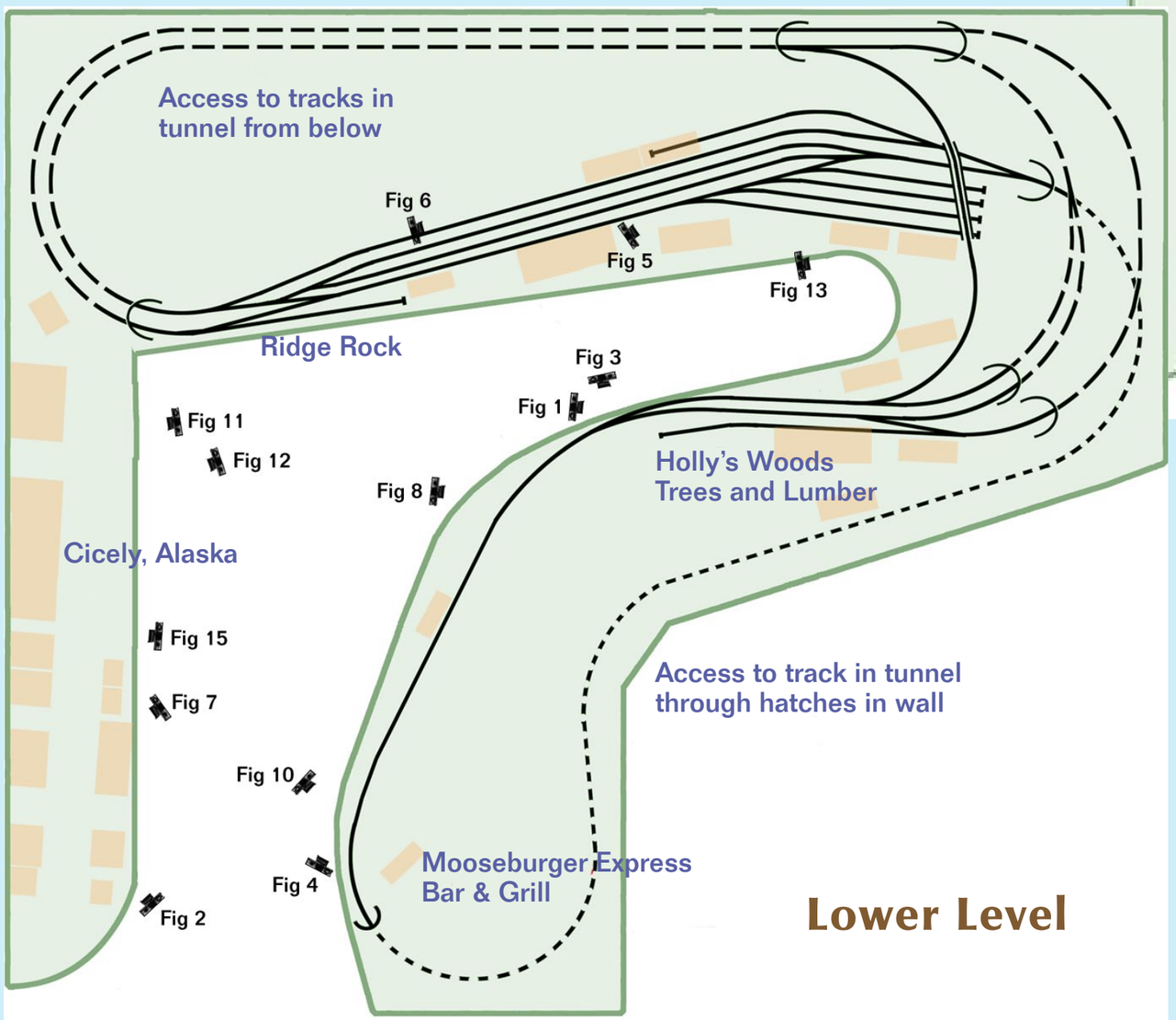
Figure 7: The famous Roslyn Cafe mural wasn't easy to build. It actually exists today in Roslyn, Washington, the real home of the TV show.

Figure 8: The El Diablos riding on a sunny day. Most of the bike models are different commercial products except for the chopper, which was made from scratch. Most of them have working lights.

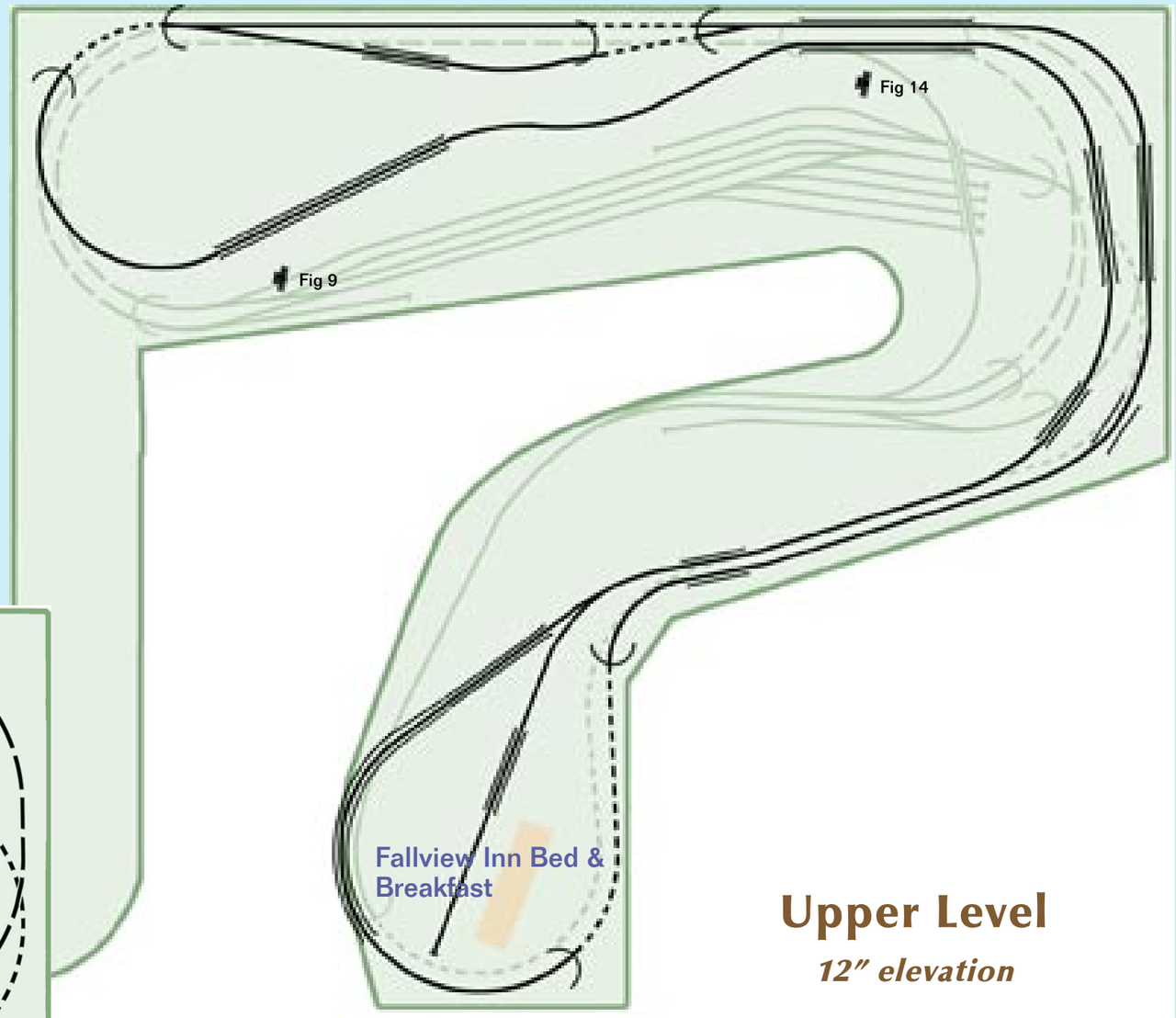
Erik Kalinski's

Pacific and Northwestern

The Northern Exposure Line



Lower Level



Upper Level

12″ elevation

Layout Statistics

Name: Pacific & Northwestern RR - The Northern Exposure Line
Locale: Borough of Arrowhead Alaska
Era: June 1995
Scale: HO
Room size: L-shaped, 14x11 ft
Layout style: Two independent loops
Mainline length: About. 60ft
Min. Turnout: #4
Minimum radius: 20″
Max grade: 2% main line
Rail size: code 100
Benchwork: T-girders
Scenery: Styrofoam base with real rocks and dirt
Backdrops: homemade photo back-drops
Control: Digitrax Zephyr DCC

Figure 9

Figure 9: A well-preserved 4-8-4 pulls the scenic train filled with eager passengers through a steep rock canyon amidst spectacular Alaska scenery. Erik uses real rocks for his rocks.

Figure 10: An antique passenger car is home to *The Mooseburger Express Bar & Grill*. Tourists love the kitchen's offerings.

Figure 10

Continued from page 58

already colored in natural shades. I wash them with India ink diluted with alcohol to blend them together. I don't know how many rocks I've used, several hundred pounds for sure. I'm glad I built sturdy benchwork when I started. Somehow it doesn't seem like overbuilding any longer!

I've never been fond of flat, painted backdrops, so I put a lot of effort into making the majority of mine three dimensional in order to add the appearance of extra depth to the layout. I made large areas of backdrop from plaster molds – they're less than $^1/_2$" thick, but super detailed.

I did make the backdrop behind Cicely very thin by using photo murals which consume almost no space at all. This backdrop area includes a number of light bulbs behind the photos of the town. It looks pretty spectacular at night (figures 11, 12, and 13). Most of the photos I used in the backdrops I shot myself in the mountains of Slovenia. Then I had a local printer make murals for me. These worked out well and look quite Alaskan to me, at least when compared to the TV show.

I was surprised by the 3D backdrops – they look spectacular in person but are not that photogenic! The level of detailing on the backdrop is distracting when seen in a photograph. If I redo the backdrops, I'll probably stick with photo murals.

Since the TV show itself was set in the '90s, that's the era on my layout. For some reason I decided that it's June 1995 (after I read an somewhere that there are only two seasons in Alaska – June and winter).

Railroad Equipment

I didn't want to use a real railroad for my fictional layout although an obvious choice might have been the Alaska Railroad. Instead I decided to create my own. After a lot of thinking (it sometimes feels I spent more time thinking than building!) I came up a name for my new railroad, the Pacific & Northwestern. The name sounded railroad-like to me and as far as I know, it hasn't been used before. While I was being creative I also devised a set of color schemes for the P&NW.

I spent a lot of time with my airbrush painting the locomotive fleet. I wanted the railroad to have some history, so there are three paint schemes from different periods; the age of the locos determined which scheme they received.

I didn't repaint my two D&RGW SD9's. I really love the Rio Grande paint scheme; in my eyes it's the most beautiful of all. I just added some stripes and Pacific & Northwestern decals. It would appear the P&NW bought those machines from the Rio Grande but only repainted the logos.

I use a Digitrax Zephyr with two extra throttles to power my trains. It has

worked well for me. All of my engines are equipped with sound decoders. It took some ingenuity to install speakers in locomotives which weren't designed to have a speaker inside. To the horror of some of my modeling pals, I took apart a Kato SD45 and rebuild it as a high nose to make the space needed for the speaker. I know of course, that a high-nose SD45 was quite a rare beast, but the Pacific & Northwestern Railroad seems to prefer high-nosed locomotives.

While disassembling the engines for painting I replaced all the light bulbs with white LED's and added working ditch lights (that was a lot of work!) where appropriate using rule books from the early nineties as a guide.

I made all the decals for the locos (and the town of Cicely) with my computer. For white text I had a friend print them on his ALPS printer. The colored decals I printed on Micro Mark white decal film with my ink jet printer. It took quite a while but they came out great.

Night Time

As can be seen in figures 11, 12, and 13, I like to shoot photographs of the layout at 'night'– somehow I feel it adds more drama to the photos. This required me to put a lot of work into properly lighting the buildings, streets and eventually the vehicles.

I was running trains at 'night' one time, when it struck me that none of the cars on the roads had their headlights on! All these cars on the streets in the dead of the night, and they were driving without their lights on?

The combination of my fumble fingers and limited sight due to my age made it very difficult to add lights to all those cars. This was especially so because model cars aren't made with lighting in mind – making space for four micro LED's and a resistor while at the same time keeping the interior intact for the driver and passenger figures was quite a challenge. The biggest problem I faced was actually light leaking out the bottom and sides of the cars – it took a lot of patience to close all those tiny gaps and cracks. My biggest help came from two things: stubbornness and self-criticism!

The hardest challenge was the final project – installing a working headlight and tail light on two motorcycles. Besides a lot of bad language (which I usually try to avoid), it took quite a few burned out surface-mount micro LED's before I was happy with the result... It's purely coincidental that the instruments on one of the bikes are illuminated!

Totem Poles

The totem poles arrived after my wife asked "What about the totems...?" Of course she was right. Cicely, Alaska had to have at least one of those. Back

Figure 11

Figure 11: Several small mirrors are used in Cicely to increase the feeling of depth. There is actually only one car in this photo! I kit-bashed two car fronts together so the reflection in the mirror would appear to be a different vehicle. All the figures are painted different-ly, front and back. The illusion works perfectly.

Figure 12: Cicely, Alaska, at night, Note the building interiors, lights in the vehicles, and the lights built into the photo backdrop.

Figure 12

Figure 13

Figure 13: A Pacific & Northwestern SD45 rumbles over a bridge above town. Night time in Ridge Rock shows off the many lights Erik has installed on his layout.

to the internet I went to research totem poles. I collected some pictures and tried to make one from modeling clay – like the kids use in school. But I couldn't make it thin enough – the first one looked like it has been made from a giant sequoia. Finally I gave up on the clay and tried carving a totem pole of balsa wood. After painting and weathering I thought it looked pretty good (figure 15). A funny thing happened when I was carving it – my 13 year old son saw it and asked "What about the fish? There should be a fish on the totem pole in Cicely!" So I added a fish. Those familiar with the TV series will know what this is all about.

The Future

The layout isn't finished yet. I'm looking at ways to strategically place some speakers and add sounds for the forest, waterfall, and saw mill scenes – and maybe even some sounds from the TV show.

That is more or less the story of my *Northern Exposure* layout. Did I succeed in recreating the appearance and the atmosphere of my 'prototype' town, Cicely, Alaska, and its surround-

Figure 15

Figure 14

Figure 14: A high-nose SD45 rumbles through the upper-loop scenery. The P&NW slogan says it all, "*To the last frontier!*"

Figure 15: Erik carved this totem pole, located in downtown Cicely, from balsa wood. His son insisted he needed the fish near the bottom. Erik researched totem poles to learn about their symbology before tackling this project.

ings? Some visiting friends who are familiar with the Northern Exposure TV series were blown away.

I have to say, I've never approached the construction of any layout as loose and easy-going as I did this one. None of my previous layouts were as much fun for me to build as this one, either. Even the planning and research for it was at least as fun for me as the actual building. The result is, *Northern Exposure* lives again for me, at least in my basement.

Reader Feedback (click here)

Weathering with Chalk and Alcohol

It takes longer to dry than to do ...

by Charlie Comstock

Reader Feedback *(click here)*

I've weathered cars with chalk powder for a long time. But only recently, I heard of using it mixed with alcohol instead of dry. I decided to give this technique a shot. It turned out to be very easy.

I assembled the stuff needed (figure 2): Alcohol, an old cup, powdered chalk in various weathering colors, a couple of brushes, and a freight car. I chose a single sheathed boxcar that would be pretty dirty by 1952, the year I model.

I poured some alcohol in the cup, then dipped the $^1/_2$" brush in it. Next I touched the brush to the dark gray chalk powder and started 'painting' the model (figure 3). I covered the roof, then did the car sides. Neatness does NOT count.

After the dark grey, I used a bit of black chalk to represent decades of soot. The car will look very dark at this point (figure 4). I wanted this car to appear dusty, so I used some lighter gray chalk, too. I used a smaller brush to add rust around

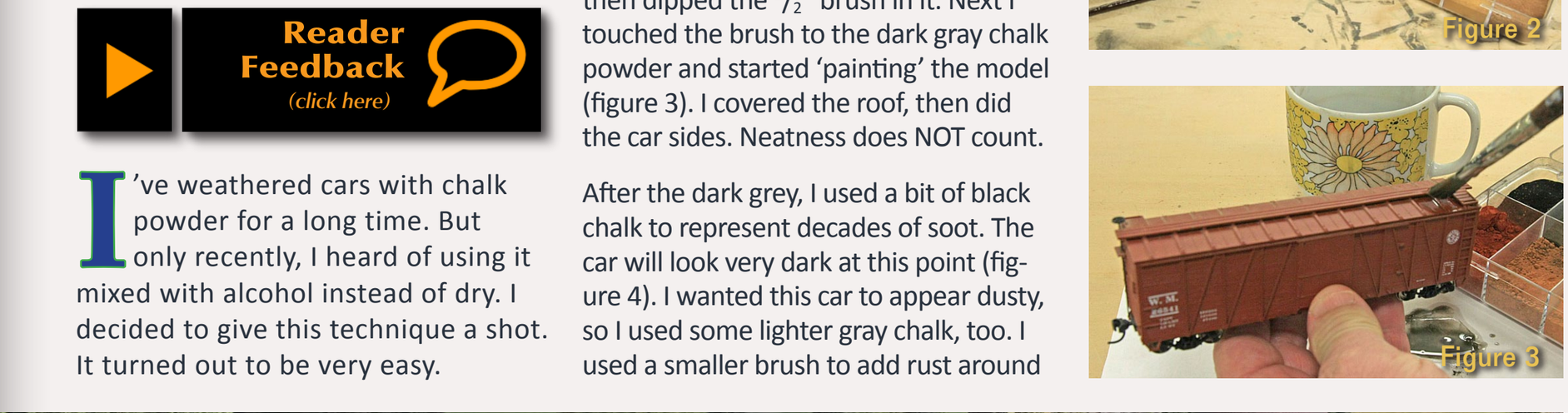


Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

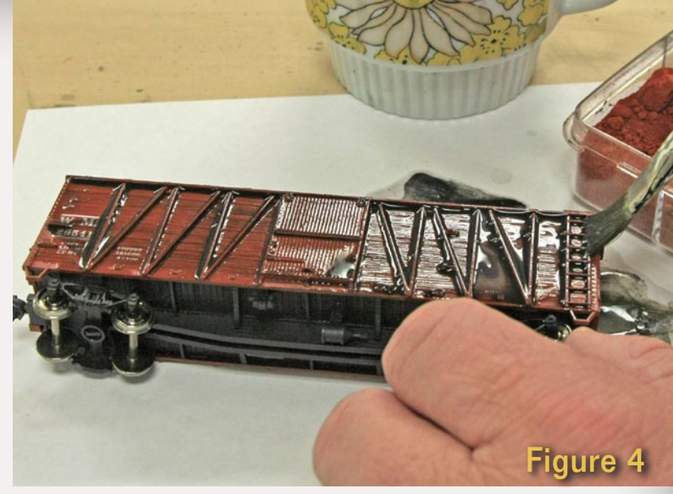


Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

Figure 11

the iron fittings and on the trucks (figures 5 and 6) before blending the colors with the 1/2" brush (figure 7). Blending removes excess chalk. Keeping the car vertical lets gravity assist the process.

Figures 8 to 11 show the car lightening as it dries. If there's too much color, brush the car with plain alcohol to wash some of it away. If there's not enough weathering just add some more!

Once completely dry (several hours), you can optionally overspray it with Dullcote. Experiment with this step, Dullcote will change the color of the finish. I skip this step. Figure 1 shows the finished car in its natural habitat. ☑

Computerized Window Treatments

Realistic curtains make your buildings look inhabited!

— by Rick Wade
photos by the author

Reader Feedback
(click here)

Adding highly realistic curtains to windows ...

I've tried many methods to add convincing window treatments to my structures. Since I can be lazy, I'm always looking for shortcuts. I found that using my computer to make curtains is fast, easy, and cheap (did I mention I was also cheap?).

I'm not going to show you how to become a graphics software expert – you'll need a working knowledge of Photoshop or whatever graphics editing program you'll be using. The basic steps will be the same no matter which software you use. For this example I chose to use a Design Preservation Model, #118 – 1st National Bank by Woodland Scenics®.

A Simple Process

- I scan the walls of the building on a flat bed scanner.
- I edit the scanned image adding a set of rectangles marking the locations of the windows needing curtains.
- I search the internet for suitable pictures of curtains.
- I crop and resize the curtain photos to the right size and paste them into the rectangles.
- I print out the resulting image and use a sharp X-acto knife to cut out the area between the curtains, touching up any white edges with an appropriately colored pencil.
- I add glazing, then glue the cut-up image(s) of the curtains in place behind the proper walls.
- Then I assemble the building.

Curtain Tips

You'll need a flatbed scanner large enough to hold the largest wall from your building. Flat bed scanners are

Continued on page 69

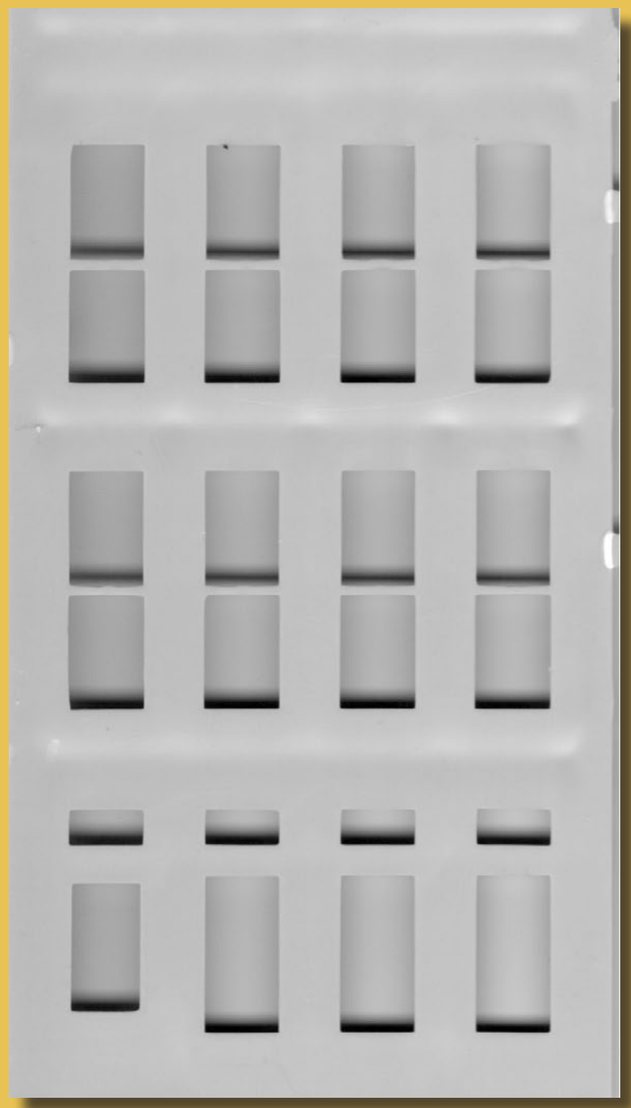


Figure 1

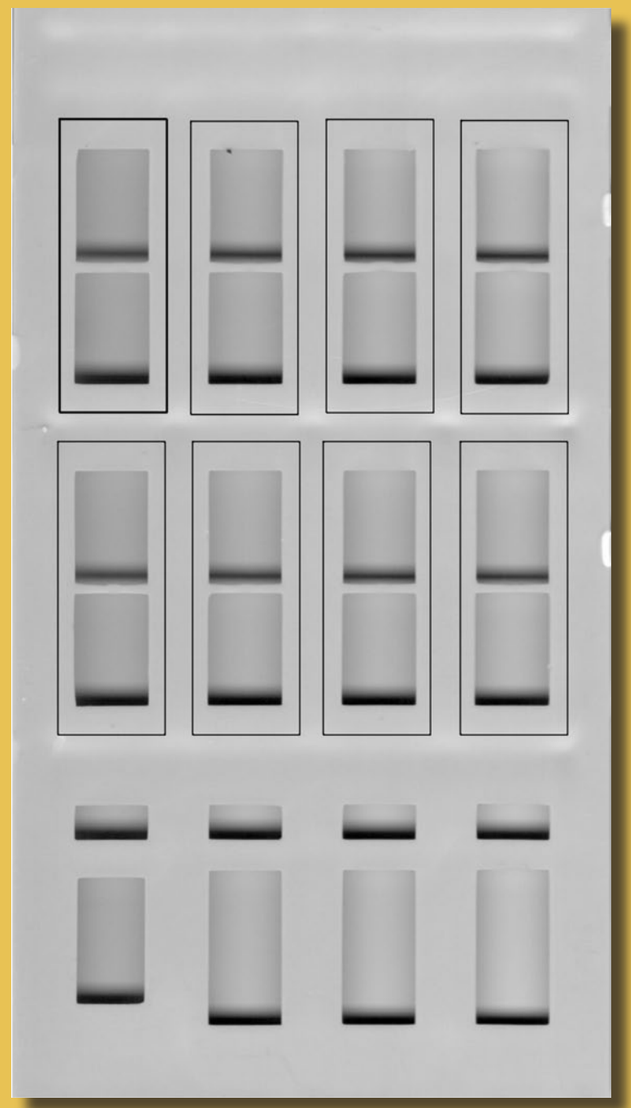


Figure 2

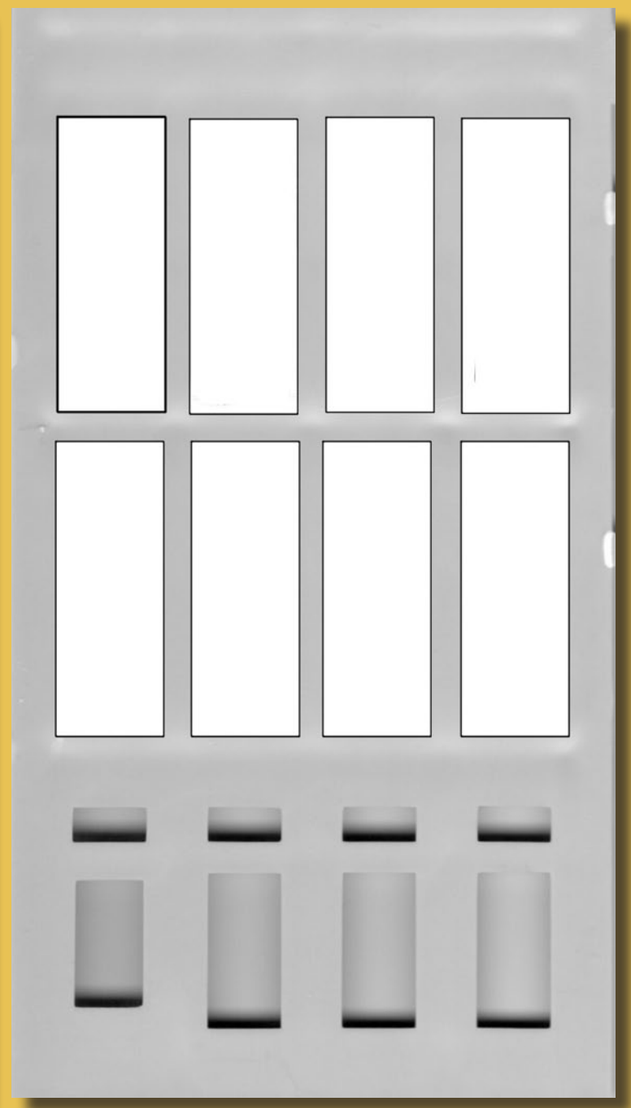


Figure 3

Figure 1: I scanned the walls of the building (prior to assembly!) with the interior side of each wall facing down. I used 300 dot-per-inch (dpi) resolution.

Figure 2: Using my graphics software I drew a black box around a window leaving borders on all sides. Then I copied and pasted the rectangle to all the other windows on the second and third floors. The first floor will be a retail store and won't have curtains in its windows.

Figure 3: I used the "select" tool to select the areas inside of the black rectangles and deleted those areas.

Figure 4

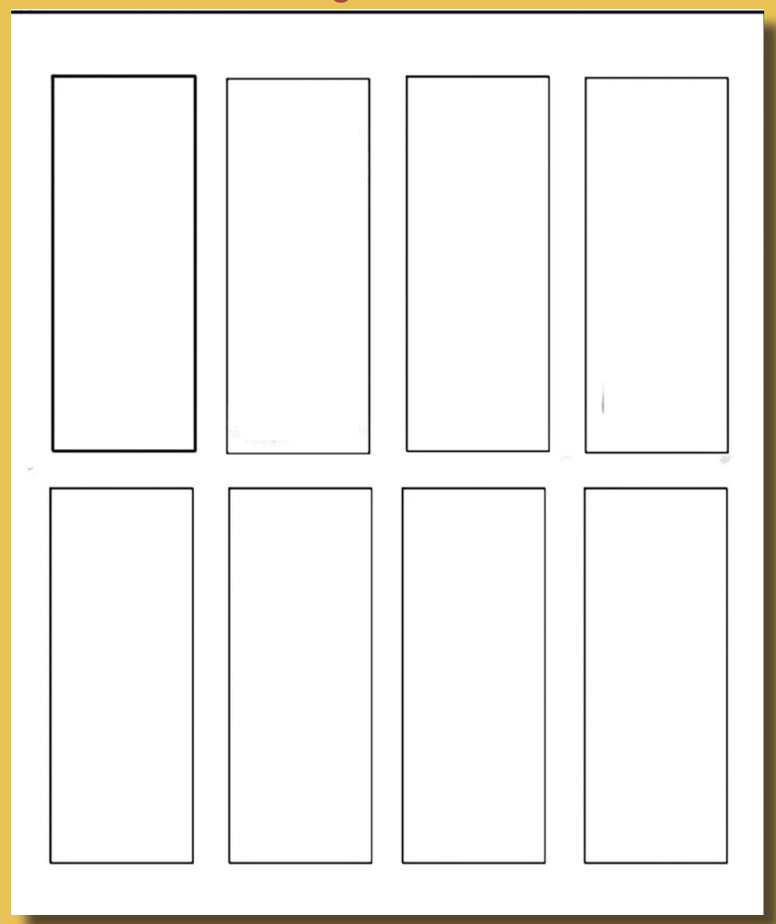


Figure 5

Figure 4: Using the selection tool I created a rectangle around the entire outside of the window rectangles and used the delete tool to remove everything except for the rectangles.

Figure 5: I Googled “Curtains” on the internet and came up with gazillions of pictures of curtains. I right-clicked and selected Save As to grab the ones I liked – making sure that the pictures weren’t copyrighted.

Figure 6: I used copy and paste in my graphic editor to grab a curtain image and place it within the bounding rectangle in the wall image. I needed to do some resizing to make it fit.

Figure 7: I repeated this process for the other third-floor windows. I moved some of the parts of the curtains around so they weren’t all identical – a reality killer.

Figure 8: I picked a different set of curtains for the second floor windows and copied and pasted them in place. Note that I’ve not yet cut away the ‘outside’ image between the drapes. I’ll cut this out later.

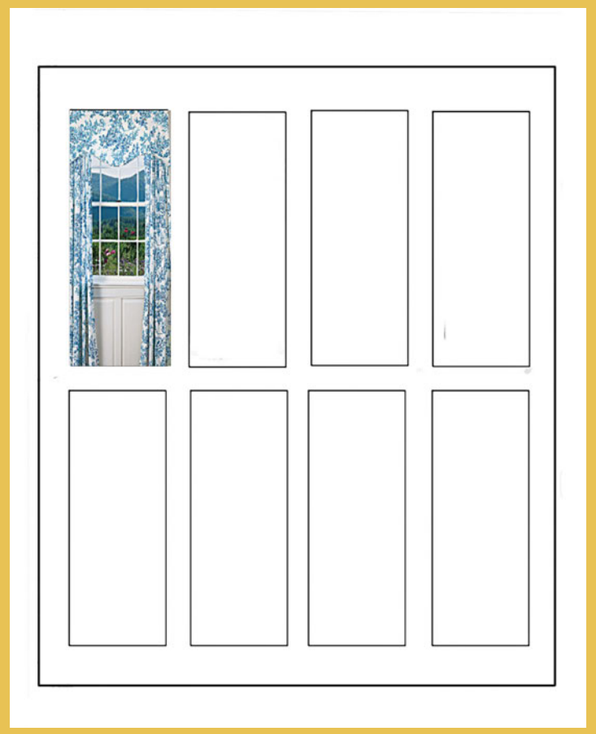


Figure 6

Figure 7

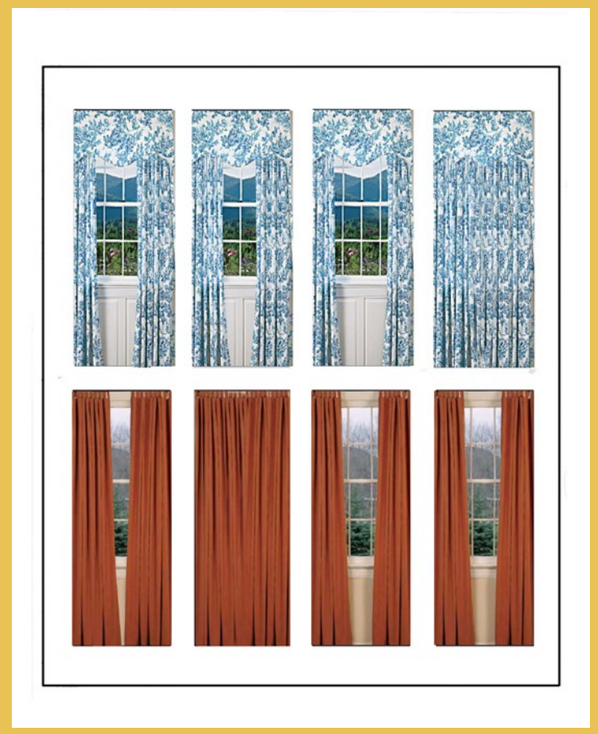
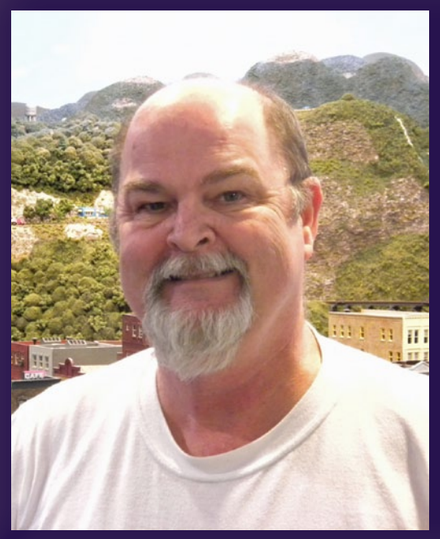


Figure 8

Figure 9: I made a duplicate of my curtain image (left) and flipped it horizontally (right). I added some wall color to the flipped image (Side B). By gluing the two images back-to-back before installing them inside the walls, anyone looking through the front windows and seeing the all the way to the back windows will see the 'inside' of the back window's curtains. This step is optional.



Rick grew up in Louisville, Kentucky in the '50s and '60s with L&N trains passing only 200' behind his house. He was 8 years old when he and his dad built his first HO layout.

A spell of boredom in 2006 due to a drought and lack of water to boat on led to his building a DPM 1st National Bank kit. Another kit or two and he was hooked. Again.

Rick's Richlawn Railroad is named after his childhood neighborhood. He belongs to the NMRA Piedmont division in Atlanta, Georgia and looks forward to having op sessions on his layout in the near future.

Continued from page 67

called that because their bed – a sheet of glass – is just that, flat. You lay the item you want scanned on the bed and use the import function in your image editing program to activate the scanner.

There are literally an unlimited supply of curtain images on the internet. Google is your friend.

Before you start installing curtains in windows, take some time to think about what the interior partitioning of the building will look like from the outside. Now is a good time to think about your building and its rooms as you may want to use different curtains for different rooms. Consider all sides and floors of the building as you are doing this to make a realistic presentation. You may want to pretend you're an interior decorator and pick a color scheme for each set of rooms.

Curtains shouldn't all be exactly the same. There are a couple of tricks to alter their look to make them slightly different:

- Use your graphic program to fill in the curtains to make them appear closer together
- When I do the cutting out, I cut them a bit differently.

I altered three of the curtains in figure 8) with the "clone" tool in my graphics editor.

The backs of single-sided curtains are white, so be sure that nobody can see all the way through the building.

You don't want someone looking in a front window and seeing the unsightly white color of the backs of the side or back wall curtains. This is a real problem with buildings having interior lighting.

Or you can avoid this issue by making a duplicate copy of the curtain image, flipping it horizontally, adding a suitable wall color (or wall paper pattern), and gluing it back-to-back with the original pattern (see figure 9 - I did a horizontal flip on the "Side A" graphic and added wall color as "Side B" which will face the interior of the building where it might be seen if someone peaks inside through another window. This step is optional and if nobody can see your interior walls, then don't bother with making a Side B.

Test Fitting

Before printing my window curtains on expensive, high-quality paper, I make some quick prints in economy mode to ensure everything fits properly. For some reason which I can't explain, sometimes the scale is slightly off and I need to adjust the output scale so the print size is correct.

Don't use glossy paper – most curtains aren't shiny. Matte finish paper is the right stuff for the final images.

If you are making double-sided curtains (both Side A and Side B), very carefully align and glue the Side A

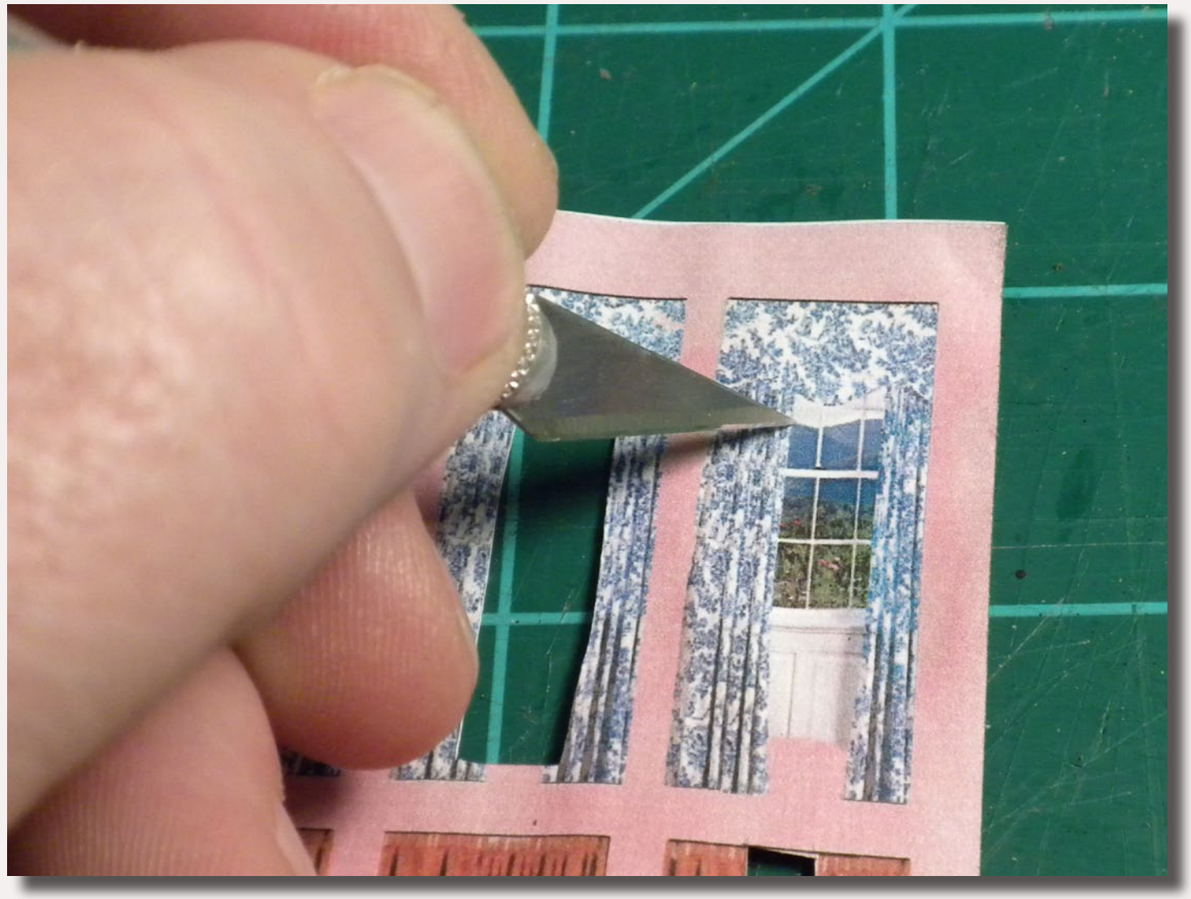


Figure 10: I use a sharp X-acto knife to cut out the space between the curtains. During the cutting process you can get a little variety in the curtains by cutting a little more than the area between the curtains. Be careful! Cutting too much will ruin your work!

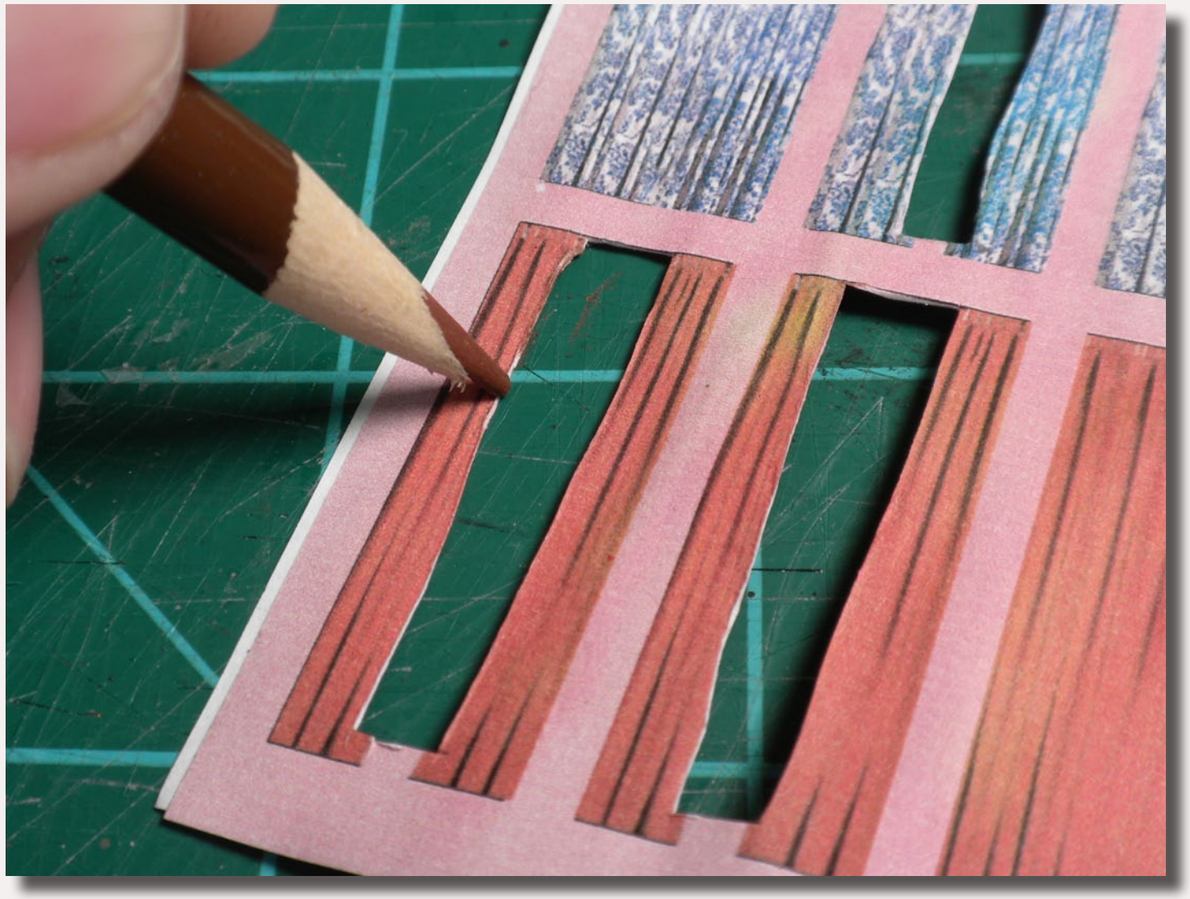


Figure 11: Sometimes cutting through the paper leaves a white border. I use colored pencils to color the white area the same color as the curtains.

and Side B sheets together back to back (printed side facing out) using a paper-safe glue; that is, one that won't cause the ink colors to run. Rubber cement works well. If the glue causes a little wrinkling that's OK. After all, curtains aren't flat.

Glazing

I install clear window glazing on the inside of the wall before fastening the curtains in place, using a styrene-safe adhesive and taking care the glue doesn't ooze onto the styrene window frames. I use one big piece of glazing to cover all windows.

It's Curtains for ya ...

Once the glazing's glue has set *completely*, I use double-sided tape to attach the printed curtain sheets to the wall glazing, with the interior "painted" wall (Side B) facing inside. The stuff I use goes by the name "Terrifically Tacky Tape" (which is available through amazon.com). I attach it to the glazing then remove the red liner (that protects the second sticky side) from the other side, carefully line up the curtains and press them gently in place.

You can use other methods to attach the curtains, but be careful with the alignment of the printed sheets. If you're using glue be very careful it doesn't leak onto the window glazing making an unsightly and oozy mess.

Conclusion

Using computers to create window curtains and drapes is a fast and fun way to get the job done quickly and will enhance the livability of the structures on your layout for all your model citizens! ☑

Reader Feedback (click here)

Craftsman Structure
CONVENTION
CSC2011

November 2nd - 5th, 2011
The Holiday Inn - Mansfield, MA

The ONLY Show
Exclusively for
Scale Model Structure Builders
& Collectors

Sponsored by Model Railroad Hobbyist Magazine

www.csc11.net

Rotary Knob Turnout Controls

for Blue Point and BullFrog switch machines

— by Galen Gallimore
photos by the author

Reader Feedback
(click here)

There are many methods and mechanisms for controlling turnouts, ranging from motorized, DCC-controlled machines such as the popular Tortoise, to a simple bent wire, spring-action 'finger' control. Recently, two new entries in the manual turnout control market caught my attention; the BullFrog from Fast Tracks and the Blue Point from New Rail Models.

I am drawn to this type of machine by the design simplicity, power routing capability, and reasonable cost. I don't want to spend a lot, plus I like the hands-on feeling of actually 'bending the iron'. On my new layout the track height is too high to reach into the layout comfortably to operate a ground throw, so that option was out. These new controls seemed to be a fitting solution, but one thing bothered me.

Figure 1

Building intuitive, fascia-mounted, manual turnout controls ...

Both the BullFrog and the Blue Point turnout controls are elegant in their design simplicity and effective at throwing a turnout. If they have a flaw, I'd have to say it's the push-pull motion. So, I set my mind to develop an alternative approach. I think I found a fairly simple solution

Design Goals

I set out to change the switch machines' push-pull motion into rotary motion. I wanted a, fascia-mounted knob that would point to the selected route on a fascia track plan as the knob was twisted.

The primary drawback of the push-pull mechanism is the interpretation required. Does pushed-in mean a turnout is set for the normal route or the reverse? Without actually looking at the track, how do you tell?

I wished to avoid Rube Goldberg-style engineering. We modelers come up with some crazy solutions to tricky problems that may, in the end, require more work than they are worth.

I considered using the Blue Point's DPDT switch – one pole for turnout frog power and the other for a fascia turnout position indication, but I wanted to avoid the extra wiring required by indicator lights.

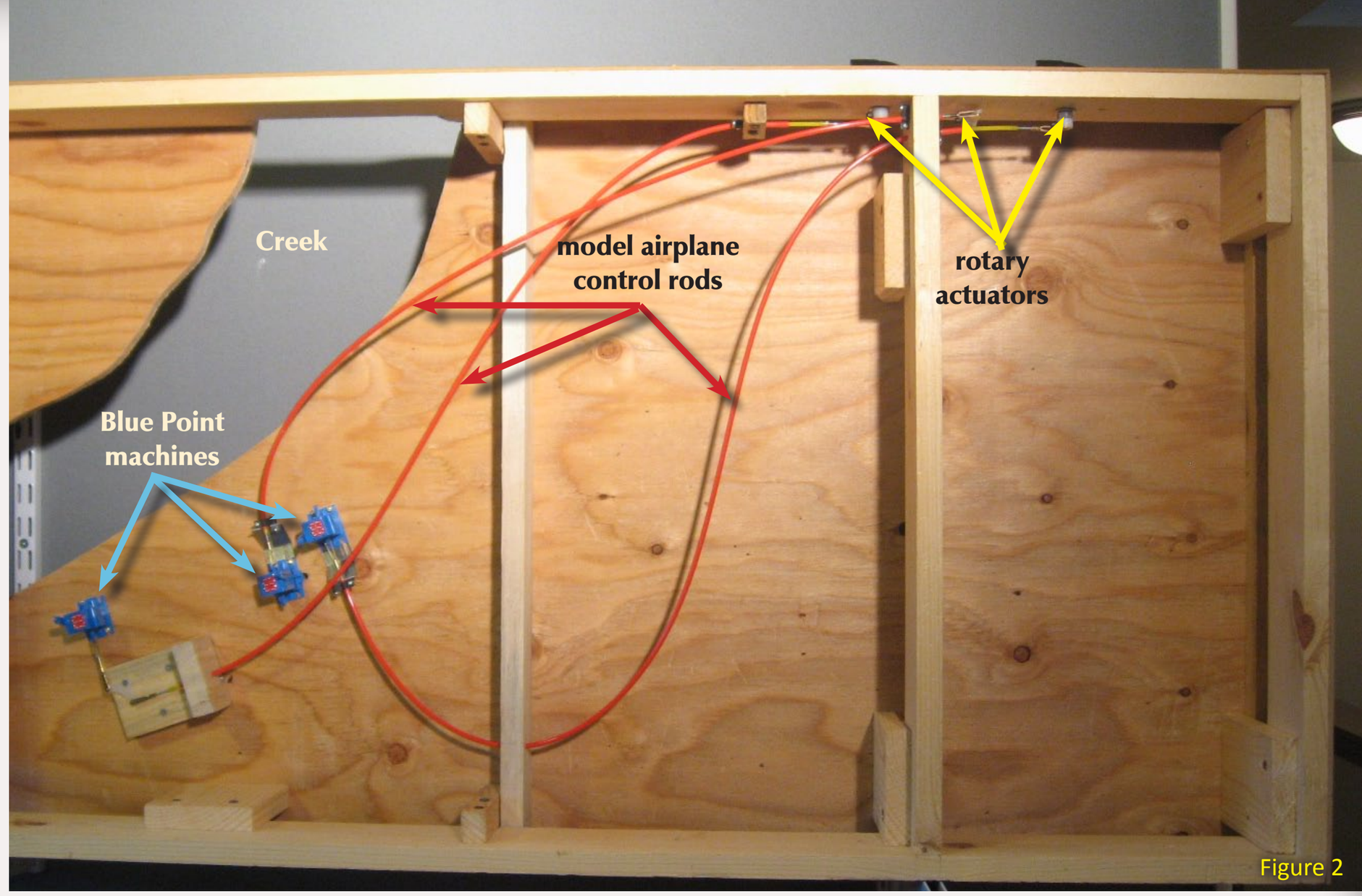


Figure 2

Figure 2: My manual turnout system installation, shown from beneath the benchwork, uses three model airplane control rods, three actuators, and three Blue Point switch machines. The creek running through the scene precludes mounting the controls on the fascia directly in front of the turnouts.

I wanted to keep the price reasonable and use readily available materials. Reasonably-priced knobs with pointers are available in many styles at electronics stores such as Radio Shack, Fry's, or online retailers such as Allied. I made sure the knobs I selected had a set screw.

The Solution

I found the solution in a strange and arcane world – the RC aircraft section of my local hobby shop. I usually don't linger in those aisles on the way to the trains. That all changed, however, when I explained my needs to the man behind the counter. I'm sure glad I did.

It turned out I was looking for 'control rod', a nylon tube-within-a-tube combination that model airplane builders use to connect servos to elevators and ailerons. It's a bit like an old fashioned choke cable, but requires much

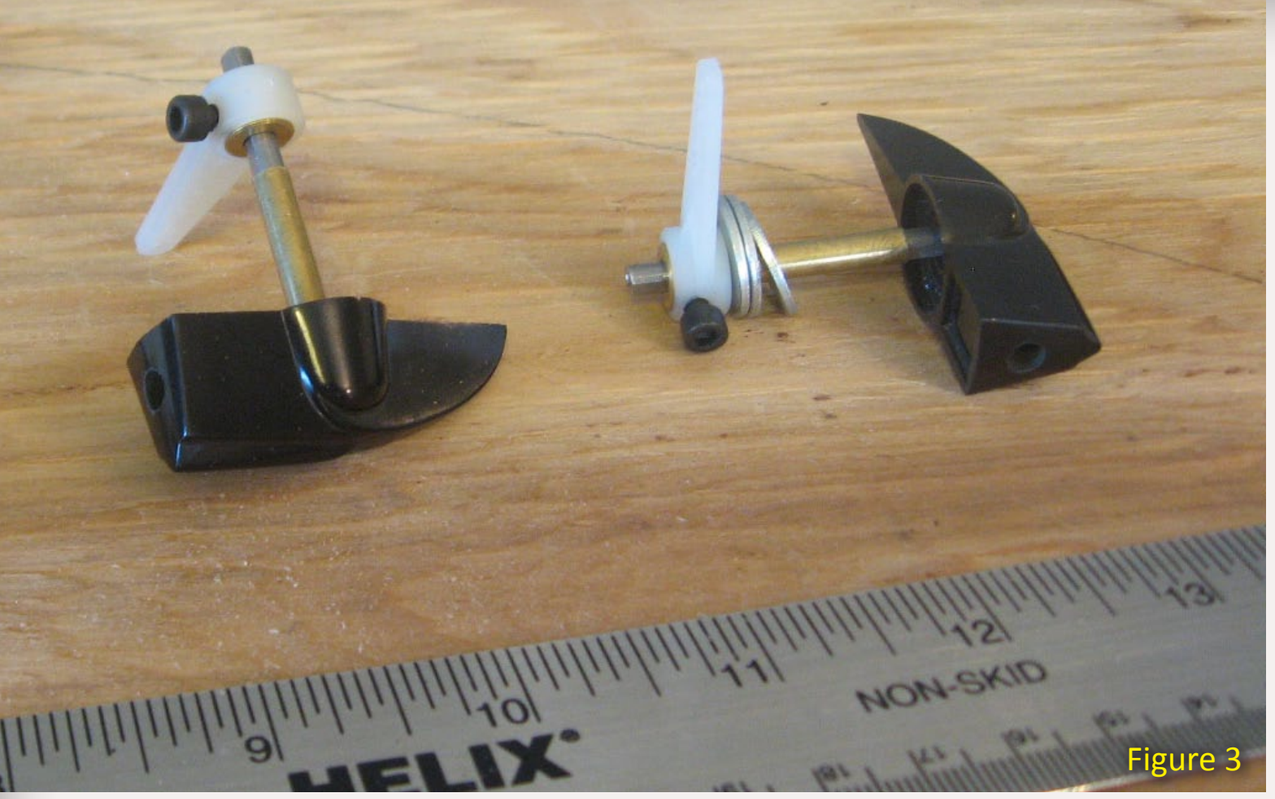


Figure 3

Figure 3: Unmounted rotary knob assemblies. These are the secret to converting knob rotation into a push-pull action at the switch machines. Shown are my 'chicken head' knobs, $^{5}/_{32}$" shaft, brass tubing sleeve, washers and nylon steering arm.

Figure 4: If the knobs are near each other on the fascia, you may have to do as I did and provide some separation around the steering arms. This is an easy adjustment using a longer shaft and a small nut to space the steering arm farther from the layout framing

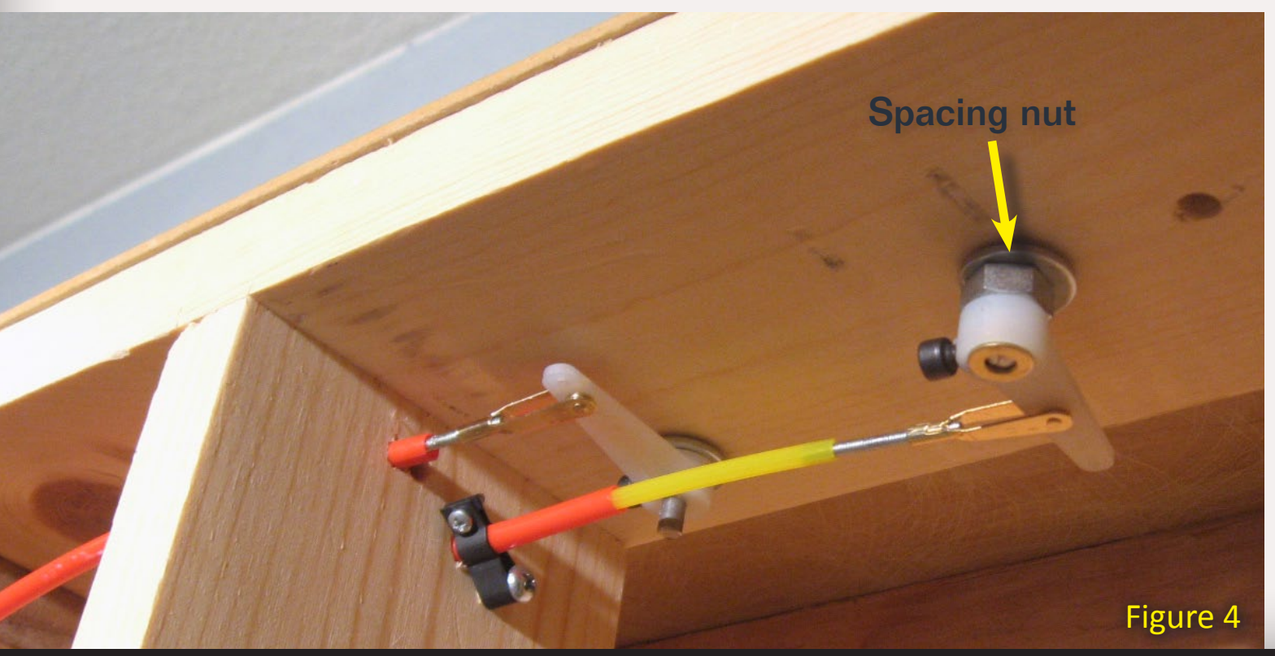


Figure 4

less force to actuate. He also showed me a wall of little plastic and metal parts such as clevises, bell cranks, and steering arms.

I used the parts I purchased on this and a few other trips to connect the knobs on my fascia to the Blue Point switch machines. Figure 3 shows two unmounted rotary knob assemblies. Pictured are the knobs, $^{5}/_{32}$" shaft, brass tubing sleeve, washers, and steering arms. This assembly is the secret to converting the push-pull motion into rotary motion.

Building the Controls

Whether you use a Blue Point or a BullFrog, the method for connecting the control rod to the knobs on the fascia is the same. I chose Blue Points because they require a shorter throw distance, however the amount of throw can be changed by connecting the control rod to the steering arm at different points. Closer to the center shaft results in less throw, farther from the center shaft makes the throw distance longer. Since I'm translating rotary motion into linear travel the throw distance is also changed by the amount of rotation you plan for your knobs. You'll probably want to experiment with different steering arm attachment points and knob rotation to find what works best for you.

Follow the installation instructions for your switch machines. What happens beneath the turnout remains essentially the same as a 'regular' installation with only a couple minor adaptations depending on the routing of the control rod to the machines. The Blue Points come with a separate kit to attach the control rod to a bracket that aligns it with the turnout machine. Again, follow the instructions for mounting the bracket.

Preparing the knob and steering arm will require only a couple additional tools and once you've done one or two, shouldn't take all that long.

Measure the thickness of the layout frame and fascia. I'm using 1x4 dimensional lumber for the frame and $^{1}/_{8}$" hardboard for the fascia panel. If you are building a separate panel, I recommend making sure it's sturdy and can withstand the stresses put on it by turning the knob. You may need to reinforce the panel with sections of dimensional lumber.

Measure the depth of the mounting hole for the knob you'll be using. Add this measurement to the thickness of your panel/frame and add $^{1}/_{2}$" more to mount the steering arm. Cut a section of the $^{5}/_{32}$" brass rod to this length (about 2" for me) to be the rotary shaft. If you cut the shaft with a motor tool and cutoff disc instead of a hacksaw, be sure to wear appropriate eye protection. File the ends of the shaft to remove any sharp points or edges. Refer to the cross section view (figure 5).

Note, if your knobs are close to each other, try making one of the shafts

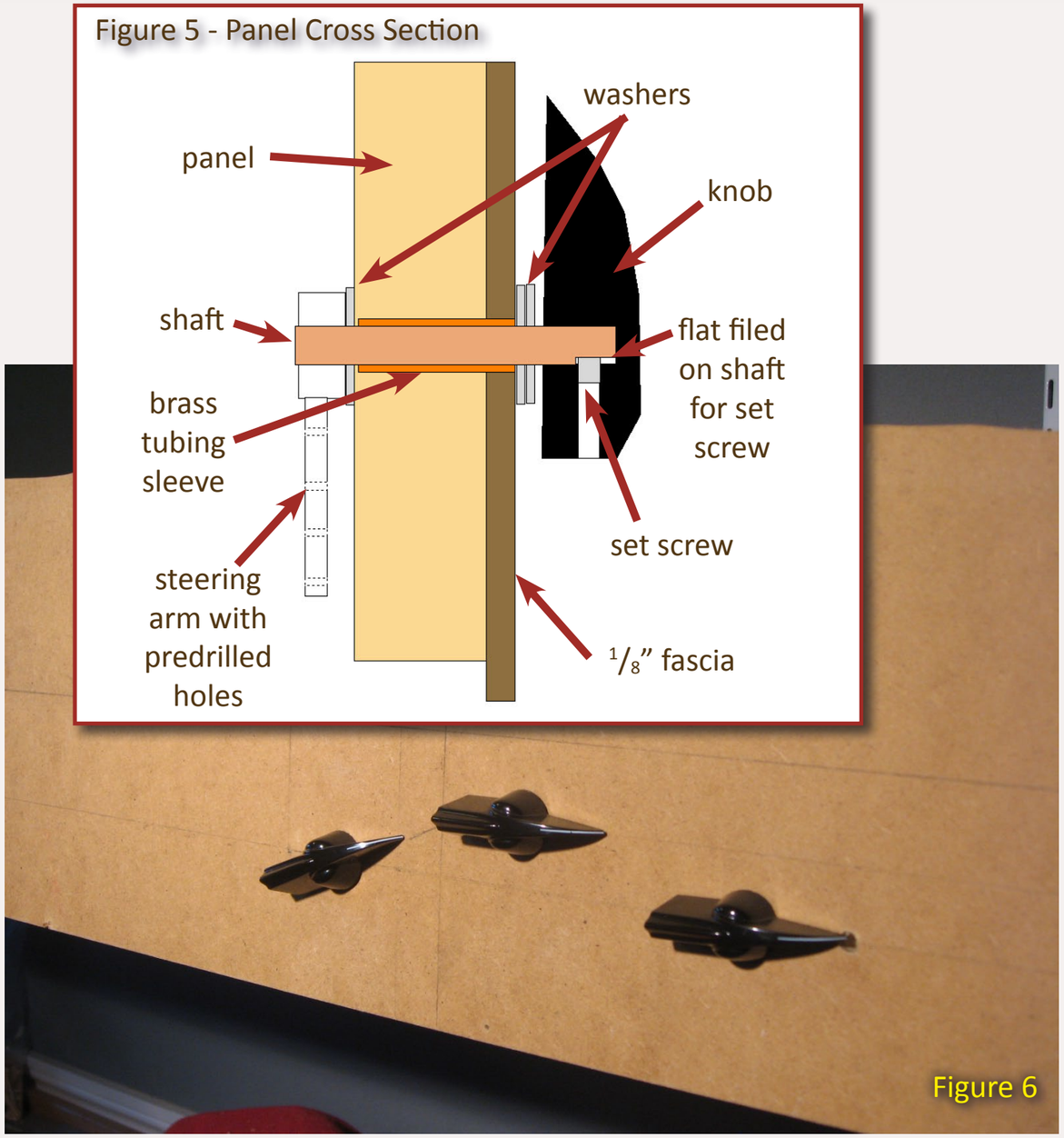


Figure 5: Cross section view of panel and rotary assembly. The tube acts as a bearing to keep the rotation of the brass shaft wobble-free.

Figure 6: I made a rough pencil sketch of the track diagram. Once installation is complete, the knobs will be removed, the fascia painted, the striping applied, and the knobs replaced. I recommend installing one knob completely in order to determine how far it will rotate. This makes it easier to lay out the track diagram accurately.

a bit longer so the control rod for a knob can be routed 'over' the steering arm of another knob (see figure 4).

Next, clamp the shaft securely in a vise. If you don't have a vise, a pair of Vise Grip pliers will work. Now file a flat spot on each end of the brass shaft. These will allow the set screws to hold the knob and the steering arm to securely in place while you are twisting the knob. For most turnouts the flat spots will line up with each other. However, if a knob is pointing on a diagonal (instead of left or right) the flat spots will need to be offset to keep the steering arm at the optimal angle, up or down, behind the fascia.

While you have your hacksaw handy, cut a length of $^{3}/_{16}$" x .014 brass tubing to the depth of your framing and fascia/panel. This will be the sleeve for the steel rod.

The location of the knobs is determined by the configuration of the control rod. Translating the knob's rotary motion into linear travel requires that the control rod be parallel to and directly behind the panel (see figures 2 and 4).

If a turnout will be very close to the layout edge, a bell crank can translate the linear motion 90 degrees and avoid extreme contortions of the control rod that lead to excessive friction in its operation.

Figure 8 shows how I installed a bell crank at a Blue Point machine to avoid routing the control rod beneath the creek. Try to keep the control rods short and avoid tight radius curvature.

I determined where my turnout control knobs would be located. I sketched a rough version of the track diagram on the fascia, noting the site of each knob assembly (figure 6) and making sure there was space behind the layout frame for the arms, rods and tubes. The rotary motion isn't extreme but the steering arms will need some room to move.

Before you start drilling holes, be sure the direction you turn the knob relative to the fascia diagram matches how the turnout points are thrown. For example, turning a knob counter-clockwise should align the turnout to the left route. If it does not, you'll need to flip the steering arm from down to up (or vice-versa) and turn it over so the set screw of the steering arm will still align with the flat spot you filed on the shaft. This may affect where you place the knob on your panel so take the time to think this through BEFORE you drill holes. In my case, some steering arms point upward, and others point downward (see figure 4).

Once you're happy with where the knobs are located, drill a hole to hold the brass tubing. Use a bit that is the same or slightly smaller than the outside diameter of the tubing. Enlarge the hole slightly with the drill and carefully tap the piece of tubing into place (figure 5) so it's flush with the fascia. If you have enlarged the

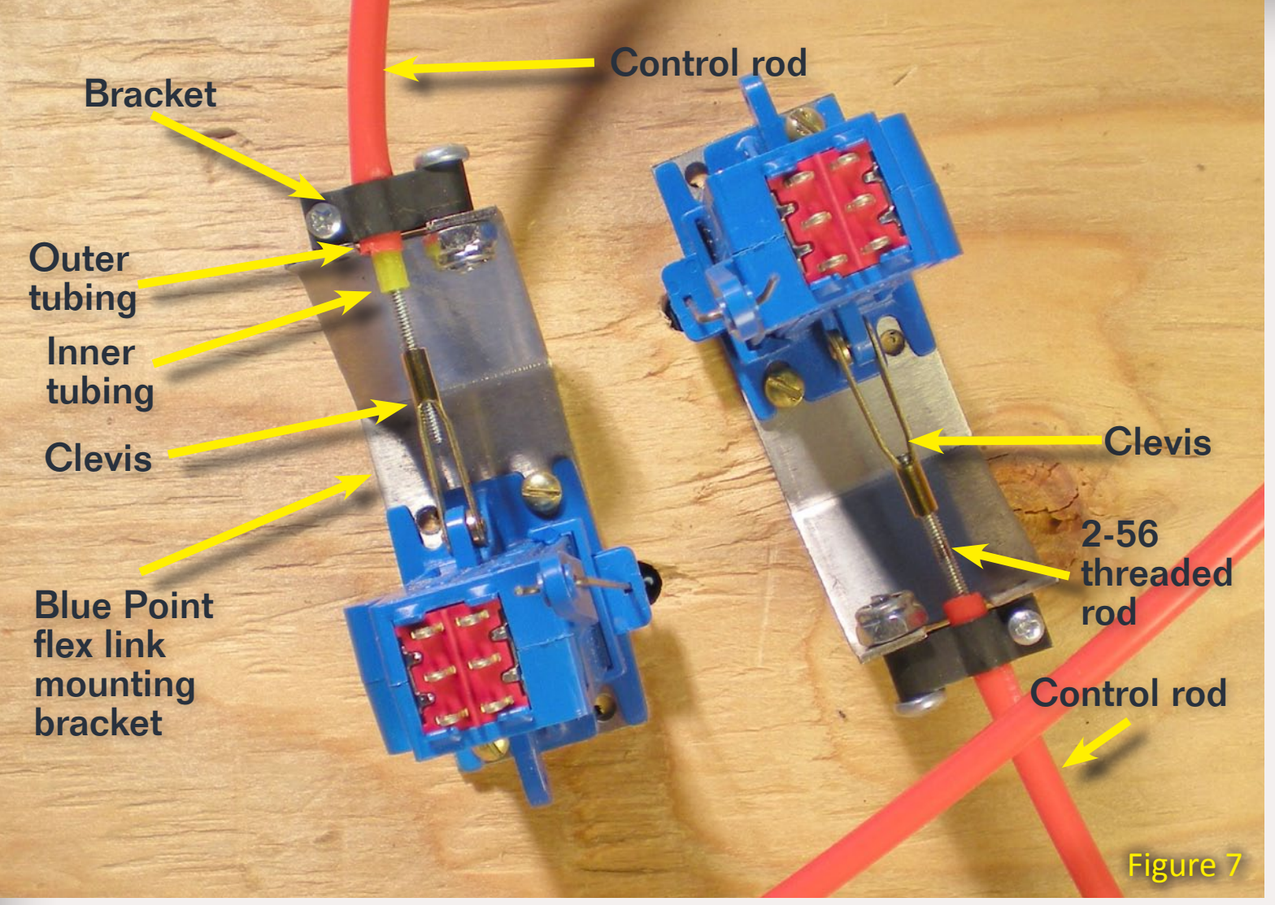


Figure 7: This close up of the Blue Point machine installations shows the Blue Point flex-link mounting brackets I used to hold the control rod outer tube (red) firmly in place. Note the clevises and the 2-56 threaded rod used to connect the control rods to the Blue Point machines.

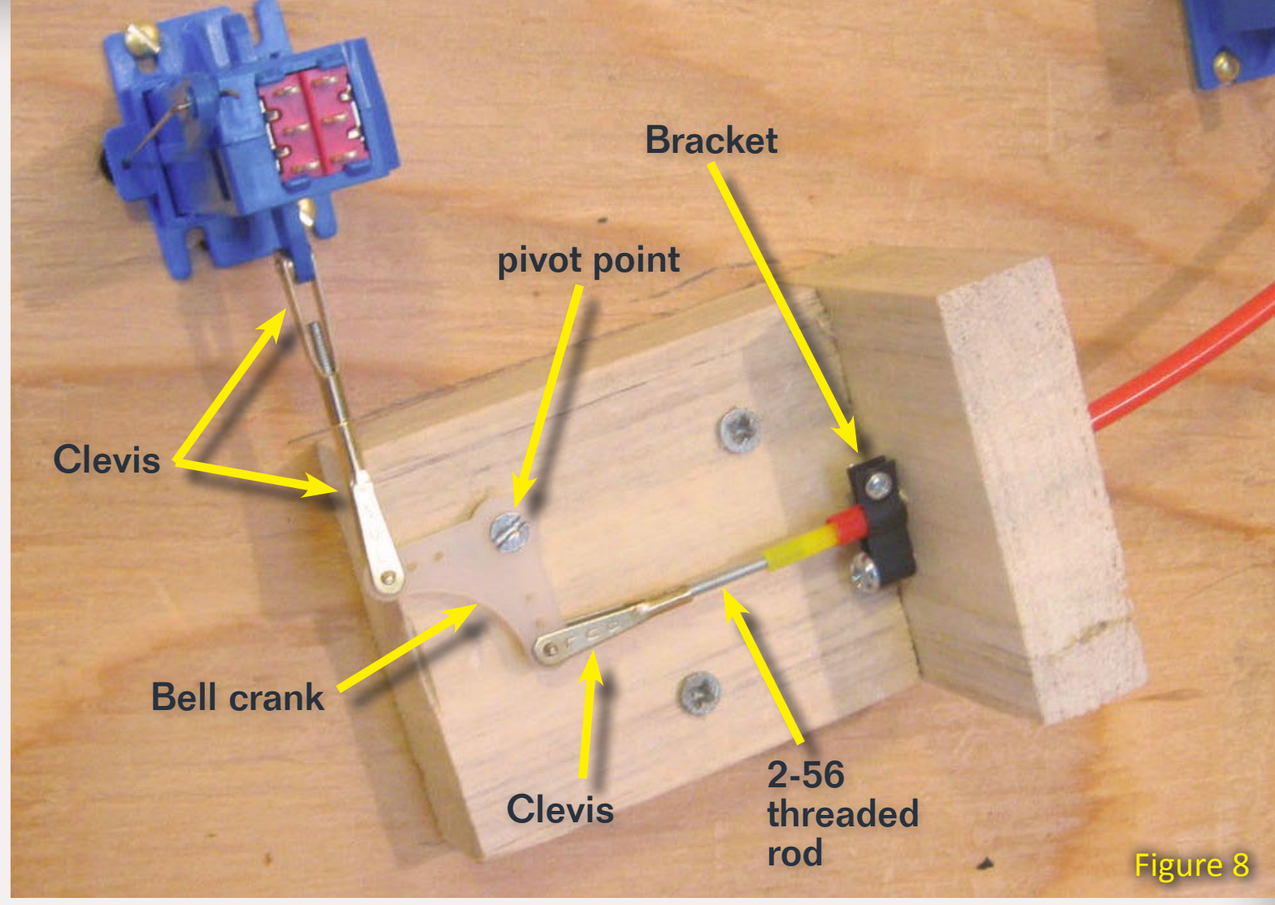


Figure 8: A nylon bell crank creates a 90 degree 'bend' in the control rod in order to reduce the amount of tubing required. Two clevises back-to-back were used to link the turnout machine to the bell crank (although a short link of stiff wire could be used to conserve space further). Note also that the Blue Point Flex Link mounting bracket has been replaced with an L shaped bracket made from short pieces of 1"x 3".

hole just enough, friction should hold the tubing in place. If you were a bit heavy handed, you may need to glue the tubing in place with a bit of epoxy. If you want the fascia to be removable don't get the epoxy on it .

Slip the knob onto to the end of the shaft and tighten the set screw securely to hold it in place. Place a washer or two over the shaft and slide the shaft through the tube. I needed two washers due to the recess in the bottom of the knob. You need a small gap between the knob and the panel to avoid scratching the diagram. Attach a clevis to the steering arm (figure 4). The steering arm comes pre-drilled with four holes. You can adjust the amount the knob needs to rotate to throw the turnout by attaching the clevis either closer to or farther from the center. This happens because the distance the switch machine throw rod travels is constant. I attached the clevis to the second knob from the end for standard turnouts and all the way next to the center for wye turnouts.

Slip a washer over the shaft, then slide on the steering arm and tighten its set screw, making sure it's aligned with the flat side of the rod. The Du-bro 166 steering arm uses a set screw that can be thumb tightened, but I recommend tightening it with a small hex (Allen) wrench.

Measure and cut the outer and inner control rod tubing. The inner tubing will push the rotary knob assembly out of line if the outer tube is not secured. I secured mine using the black metal clamps provided with the hardware kit for the Blue Point knob assembly. In order to use these I had to first mount a block of wood with an $^{11}/_{64}$ hole drilled through it, in a place where the control rod would pass through (see figure 9).

At this point, secure the knob to the fascia with masking tape. I align mine for the straight route. Be sure to line the turnout machine the same way

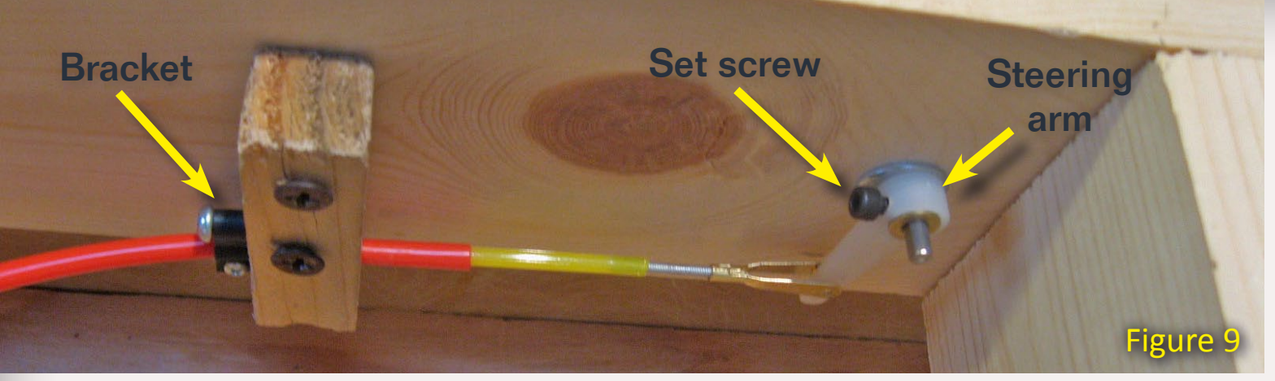


Figure 9: A small block provides a place to mount the small metal tubing bracket. This bracket would be attached to the layout framing or fascia in a standard push-pull installation. Making this bracket (and consequently the tubing) secure is paramount to a successful installation.

before you cut the inner control rod or you may come up short.

Finally, screw the 2-56 threaded rods to the inner control rod. It's actually easier to hold the threaded rod with pliers and screw the tubing onto the threaded rod, as the Blue Point instructions indicate. Thread the inner rod into the outer sleeve. If you have not secured the outer red sleeve to the turnout bracket yet (figure 7), now is the time. Screw the threaded rod into the clevis at the turnout machine first; screwing it in as far as it will go. Align the other end with the clevis at the steering arm and screw it in so that the amount of threaded rod in each clevis is approximately the same. As you unscrew one, you're attaching it to the other. Tighten down the outer control rod tube with the small screw in the black metal brackets.

If the friction in the tubing is too strong you may have trouble turning the inner tubing in order to screw the threaded rod into the steering arm clevis. This was the case with one of my turnouts where there was a tight bend in the tubing. Optionally, you can remove the clevis from the steering arm, screw it to the threaded rod, then carefully reattach it to the steering arm.

Now test your new turnout control to make sure it works. If the knob becomes misaligned with the fascia track diagram check that the control rod brackets are tightened and the set screws on the knob and steering arm are tight. Minor adjustments can be made by loosening one control rod metal bracket, pulling or pushing the control tube/rod assembly, and retightening the bracket. If the motion feels stiff the metal brackets may be too tight; loosen them until the motion feels unrestricted.

I installed the controls on an unfinished fascia first in order to accurately mark the striping for the track diagram to match the rotation of the knob. It's a simple matter to unscrew the knobs from the rod, paint and prepare the fascia, then reattach the knobs.

If the problem of push-pull motion vexes you as much as it did me, I hope you'll find my solution helpful and easy to install on your layout. ☑

Reader Feedback (click here)

Galen Galinore has been around trains since birth. He started building model railroads as a teenager in HO and N and managed to keep on modeling throughout college and seminary.

Galen is a Lutheran Pastor currently serving a church in Spanaway, Washington. His wife supports his hobby and his two young sons both love trains. His fifth and current layout features the Ocali Creek Railway, an HO scale standard gauge, freelanced short line in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and its connection to the Big Tujunga Lumber Company, also freelanced.

He spends time online at www.the-gauge.net and the MRH forum using the moniker, 'ocalicreek'.

Parts List:

New Rail Models (www.newrailmodels.com)

- Blue Point Turnout Controllers and Flex Link Kits

Du-bro (www.dubro.com/hobby)

- 1 1/4" Nylon Steering Arm, Cat. No. 166
- 90 Degree Nylon Bellcrank Assembly (QTY/PKG: 2) - No. 167

Sullivan (www.sullivanproducts.com)

- Gold-N-Rod Control rod Set, Nylon Type, #503 Red/Yellow, 36" long (Includes 2 Red Sheaths, 2 Yellow Rods, 2-56 Gold-N-Clevises w/Retaining Clips, Rubber Nuts (not needed for this application) and 2-56 studs)
- Additional clevises – may not be necessary if you purchase the New Rail Models Flex Link Kit and a pack of control rod that includes clevises

K&S Engineering (www.ksmetals.com)

- Stock #508 5/32 Music Wire
- Stock #129 3/16 x .014 Rd Brass Tube

The Allegheny Midland – Lessons Learned Book

First Look

Reader Feedback (click here)

Things that Tony Koester learned the hard way ...

– by Jeff Shultz

In early 1973 Tony Koester began developing a model railroad, in 2000 he tore it down. In the 27 years between, the Allegheny Midland became one of the best known model railroads in existence. Drawing on, and working with, Allen McClelland and his legendary Virginian and Ohio Railroad, Tony's "Midland Road" was the subject of countless articles and columns in multiple model railroading magazines and books, firmly establishing such concepts as "prototype freelancing" and "beyond-the-basement operations" in the model railroading lexicon.

Now Tony is working on his next layout based on the Nickel Plate Road's St. Louis Division. He's taken the time to look back at the Allegheny Midland and describe how it became what it was, including prototype research, missteps, good and bad decisions, and changes in both the layout and the hobby along the way.

Subjects covered in the book include:

- Choosing an era for your layout.
- Fitting a model railroad into the real world.
- Providing sufficient staging tracks.
- Creating believable locomotive rosters.
- Realistically operating a model railroad.
- Adding "signature" scenes and structures.

The Allegheny Midland – Lessons Learned," published by Kalmbach Books, is 95 pages long with hundreds of illustrations and photos. It's available though most bookstores and hobby shops with an MSRP of $21.95. ☑

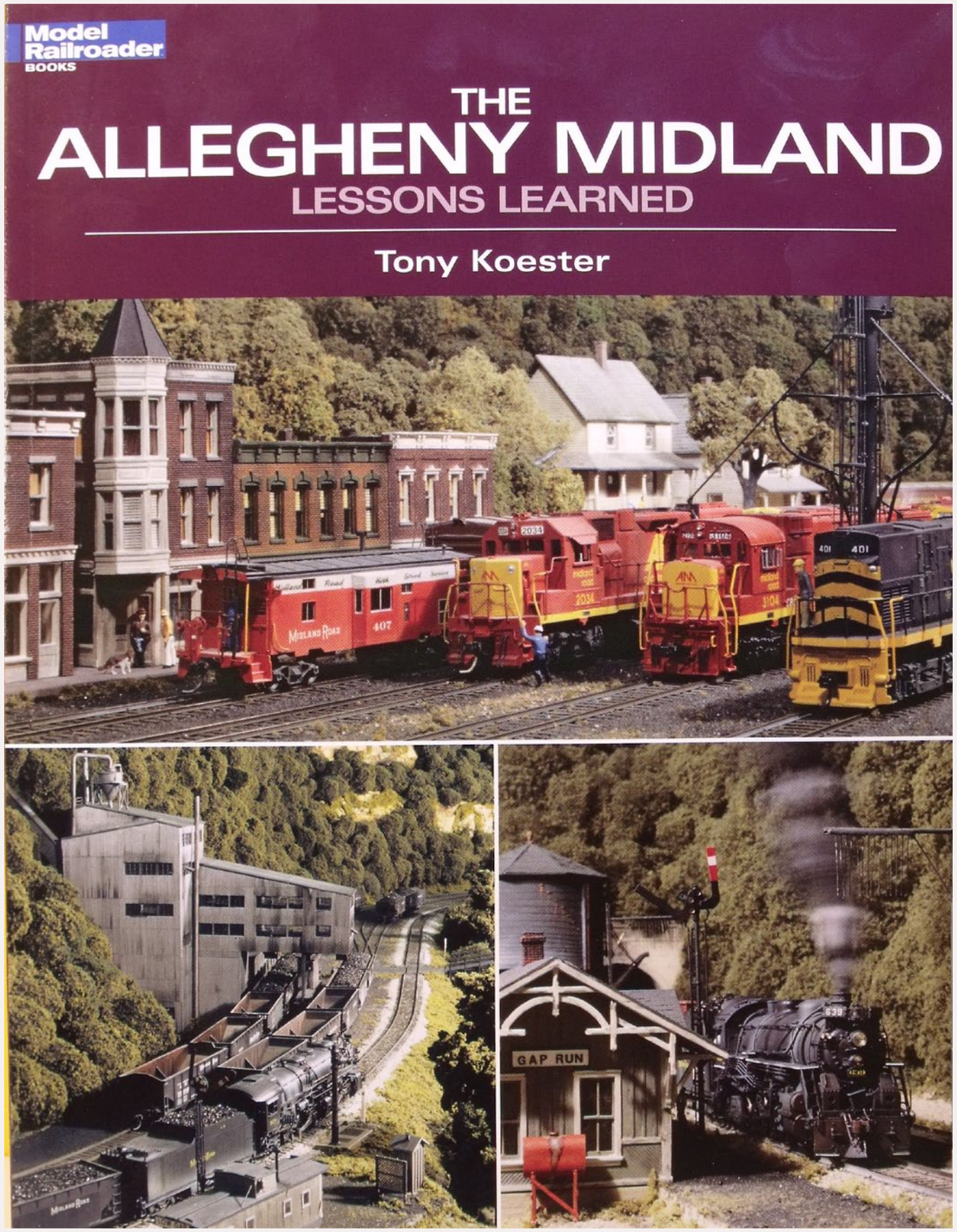


Figure 1: The Allegheny Midland - Lessons Learned book by Tony Koester. Kalmbach Books.

Athearn Genesis SD70ACe

http://www.athearn.com/Products/Default.aspx?ProdID=ATHG68620

First Look

Reader Feedback (click here)

The updated SD70ACe ...

-by Josh Baakko

Introduced in 2003 as four demonstrator locomotives, The EMD SD70ACe became the successor to the popular SD70MAC. EMD built 20 pre-production units for CSX in 2004, with full production coming in 2005. Equipped with a 16-cylinder 4300hp prime mover and certified for EPA Tier-2 emissions standards, it has sold over 1000 units to prototype railroads in five countries in five years! It comes equipped with AC traction, and EMD's now-popular 710 engine. The SD70ACe rides on HTCR or HTSC trucks. According to EMD, two SD70ACe's can do the work of three SD40-2's.

The Athearn Genesis HO scale model is based upon the molds that Athearn bought from Tower 55. The first run comes decorated in BNSF, KCS Southern Belle, Union Pacific, Union Pacific/Missouri Pacific heritage scheme, and undecorated but detailed for all three of the paint schemes listed above. Each paint scheme is sold in 4 different road numbers except the UP/MP scheme which only has a single road number on the prototype. This model is available with Tsunami sound and DCC for $289.98, and DC power without sound for $189.98.

On October 18th Athearn announced the second run. Only one SD70ACe was included, the Union Pacific/Western Pacific Heritage scheme. At the same time, they announced several of the DC version of the prototype, the SD70M-2, listed in the following paint schemes: Canadian National, Florida East Coast (FEC), and Norfolk Southern. Prices remain the same.

Athearn has noted on their website that some people were not satisfied with the sound levels, and offered

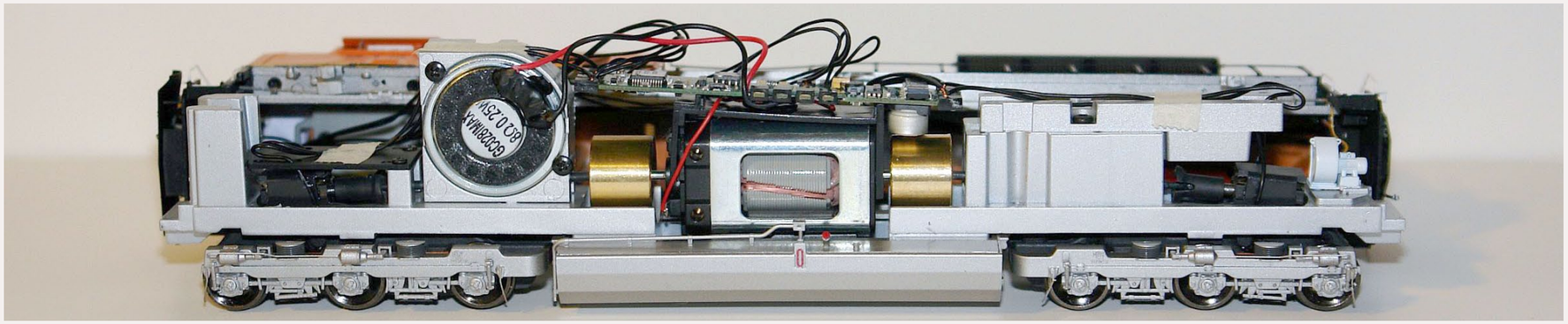


Figure 1: Chassis with shell removed, Tsunami Sound and DCC model shown.

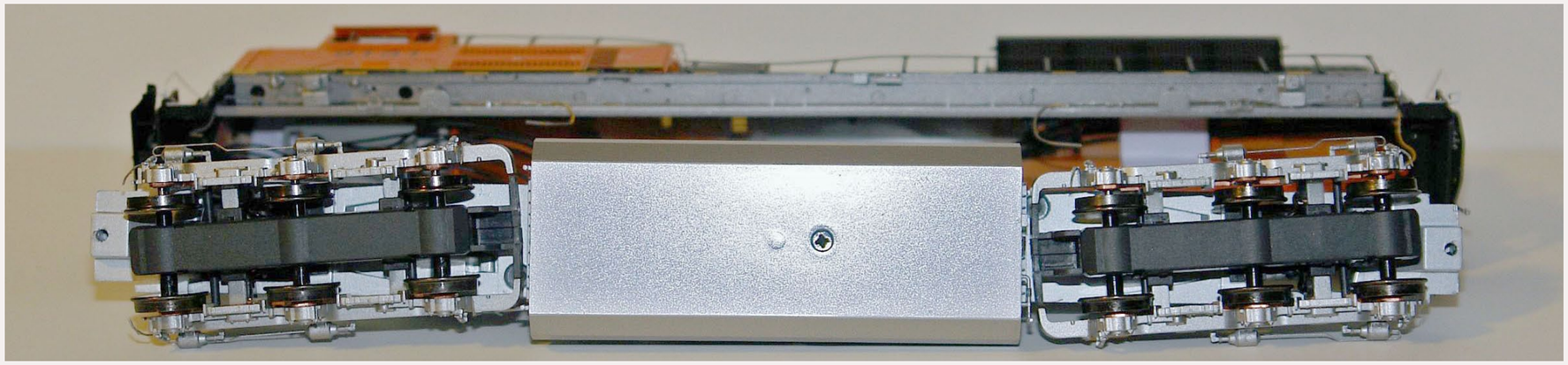


Figure 2: Bottom of chassis, showing standard Genesis trucks.

the following solution (from Athearn's website):

- CV 128 = 230 Master Volume
- CV 129 = 255 Horn Volume
- CV 130 = 80 Bell Volume
- CV 131 = 150 Prime Mover Volume
- CV 143 = 50 Channel 14 Mixer (Poppet)
- CV 153 = 7 Equalizer Control
- CV 156 = 165 250Hz Cut/Boost
- CV 157 = 140 500Hz Cut/Boost
- CV 158 = 160 1 KHz Cut/Boost
- CV 159 = 145 2 KHz Cut/Boost:
- CV 160 = 200 4 KHz Cut/Boost
- CV 161 = 7 Reverb Control Register
- CV 162 = 180 Reverb Level
- CV 163 = 32 Reverb Delay Time
- CV 164 = 32 Reverb F.B. Gain Level
- CV 169 = 10 Reverb Ch. 7 Mixer Level

Reader Feedback
(click here)

About our narrow gauge and branchline columnist

Lew Matt is a published writer, photographer, and illustrator whose work has appeared in many model railroad hobby magazines.

Click here to learn more about Lew.

THE LITE *AND* NARROW: Butch Curll's East Broad Top

Ramblings on Narrow Gauge and Branchline Modeling

Reader Feedback (click here)

Take a look at a great narrow gauge modular railroad ...

Butch Curll is a member of the Mid-Atlantic Narrow Gauge Guild and has his focus on the 3' gauge East Broad Top RR (EBT) in On3. Butch faithfully attends the annual meets with his son Robert; together, they set up their modules with other members. Butch has a 5' X 5' corner, 2 - 30" X 4' modules, 2 – 18" X 4' modules and a 2' X 2' spacer module. When all of Butch's modules and the other modules are joined together, the EBT themed layout is very large and beautifully detailed. (Over many years we have watched Robert grow in annual spurts, reaching manhood and becoming a dedicated firefighter, who continues to share his father's hobby.)

The Mid-Atlantic Narrow Gauge Guild (MANGG) is a loose knit group of narrow gauge enthusiasts who reside mostly in the Mid-Atlantic states, but travel from as far north as Canada, west from Ohio and Kentucky and South Carolina. Their interests are varied, but all focus on narrow gauge. Most are modelers who build in Nn3, HOn3, HOn30, Sn2, Sn42, Sn3, On3, On30, Gn15 and Fn3 scales. Others are arm-chair modelers or those interested in riding and preserving the narrow gauge railroads that still exist in the United States. The MANGG organization has no officers, no dues and all are welcome to the monthly local and annual narrow gauge meet in May at Kimberton, Pennsylvania, just west of historic Valley Forge. For more information and a membership application, contact Bruce Saylor at http://midatlanticng.org .

Continues on page 83

Figure 1

FIGURE 1: EBT 2-8-2 #16 started life as a Sunset brass loco that Butch painted and lettered for the EBT. The lettering is dry transfer material he purchased from Bruce Saylor.

Figure 2

FIGURE 2: EBT #802 side drop hopper. This started life as a Quality Craft 3-bay hopper kit. Butch kitbashed this car just as the EBT modified their 2-bay hoppers and made the side discharge car. These were used in service to carry slag and ballast and are numbered 800 to 809.

Figure 3a

Figure 3b

FIGURE 3a: EBT #182 started life as an single sheathed wooden box car kit from Quality Craft Models. It was modified from the original design by adding roof hatches. This car was used by EBT to haul water. The railroad waterproofed the car, sealed the doors and added the roof hatches.

FIGURE 3b: This view shows the detail of the added roof water hatches to EBT #182.

Figure 5a

FIGURE 5a: EBT #170 is a double sheathed box car built from a modified Quality Craft Model kit, painted and decaled for EBT.

Figure 5b

FIGURE 5b: This view shows the added detail of the end brace used to strengthen the car.

Figure 6

FIGURE 6: EBT #1063 4-bay hopper was kitbashed from Quality Craft Models 3-bay hopper kits. There are two different varieties of the 4-bay hopper. In one version the bays face each other in pairs and the other is called the saw tooth, where the bays all face to the center of the car.

Figure 4

FIGURE 4: EBT #167 is a single sheathed wooden box car kit from Quality Craft Models. This car is typical of the type used on the EBT. The lettering is dry transfer.

Figure 7

FIGURE 7: EBT #118 is a completely scratchbuilt flat car typical of the railroad. Butch built, painted and decaled this car. The trucks are a white metal casting from the Hobby Barn in Massachusetts.

Continued from page 81

Butch enjoys scratchbuilding and kitbashing. Most of his EBT models are built this way, in faithful scale. Not all the prototype EBT cars are available commercially but must be kitbashed or scratchbuilt. EBT was unusual, as narrow gauge railroads go, as it used steel revenue cars very early in the 20th century, right along side the large standard gauge road with which it interchanged. Steel cars present a little more challenge to scratch build than wooden ones.

Article continues on page 85

Figure 8a

Figure 8b

FIGURE 8a: EBT #1074 4-bay hopper was kitbashed from Quality Craft Models 3-bay hopper kits.

FIGURE 8b: Shows the interior of EBT #1074, 4-bay hopper.

Figure 9

FIGURE 9: EBT #175 tourist open passenger car with a roof. This car was kitbashed and scratchbuilt from strip wood and uses the roof and floor from a Quality Craft Models outside braced wooden box car kit.

Figure 10

FIGURE 10: EBT #119 is a completely scratchbuilt tourist open passenger car built on a flat car. Butch built, painted and decaled this car. The trucks are a white metal casting from the Hobby Barn in Massachusetts.

Figure 11

FIGURE 11: EBT #638 2-bay hopper. Butch kitbashed these cars from Quality Craft Models 3-bay hopper kits. The car was painted and lettered with dry transfers.

Figure 12

FIGURE 12: EBT #27 caboose was scratchbuilt, painted and lettered with dry transfers by Butch Curll.

Figure 13

FIGURE 13: EBT #856 and #908 at the coaling station. Butch made these cars from C&BT plastic kits with scratchbuilt raised sides. The coaling station is scratchbuilt from photos and measurements taken along the EBT.

Figure 14

FIGURE 14: This is a helicopter view of #856 and #908 to show the interiors of the cars to illustrate the bolting plates and bracing.


Figure 15


Figure 16

FIGURE 15: This house was scratchbuilt by Butch in the late 1980's, from plans of a company house located in the Michigan Peninsula, published in Railroad Model Craftsman magazine.

FIGURE 16: This view shows the garden behind the house of Figure 15.

Article continued from page 83

The EBT built a small fleet of all steel 2-bay hoppers at the beginning of the century and then later rebuilt them as side dump ballast or slag cars, while it produced 3-bay and 4-bay hopper cars for hauling coal out of central Pennsylvania.

Another unusual EBT car was a wood sheathed box car, #182, which was converted into a tank car by sealing the door, waterproofing the inside and putting hatches in the roof. EBT did some other kitbashing of their own by converting their 3-bay hoppers into 4-bay hoppers, then eventually rebuilding the 4-bay hoppers back into 3-bays. These are some of the models that Butch has faithfully reproduced from drawings, measurements and photos.

The EBT carried passengers and may be one the oldest of the tourist railroad lines. Butch scratchbuilt and kitbashed several of the flat cars that were converted to open-air passenger cars for tourist use. Butch also enjoys scratchbuilding historic buildings to use along the EBT line on his modules.


Figure 17

FIGURE 17: This school was scratchbuilt by Butch from dimensions and photos of the building that stands in Whitpain Township, Montgomery County, PA. The building is an historic structure and is located just west of US 202. http://www.wvalleyhs.org/schoolhouse_history.html.


Figure 18

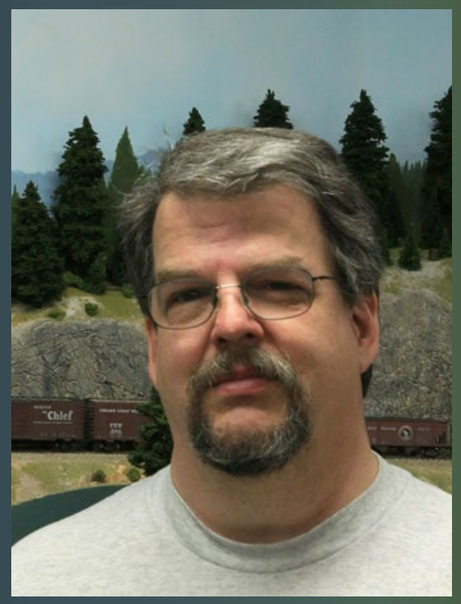
FIGURE 18: This gas station was scratchbuilt in the 1980s from plans that appeared in Railroad Model Craftsman. The original building is located in Erie, PA.


Figure 19

FIGURE 19: This is a photo by Allen Underkofler taken at the Mid Atlantic Narrow Gauge Guild meet in Kimberton 2010. Butch is on the left and his son Robert is on the right, as they turn the modules from transport mode to viewing mode. This photo appears on the MANGG web page.

Reader Feedback *(click here)*

About our layouts columnist



Charlie Comstock is our layouts editor and columnist.

Click here to learn more about Charlie.

Charlie Comstock is ...

UP THE CREEK: Designing a Small Division Point Yard

A regular report on the construction of a 1950s-something layout

Reader Feedback *(click here)*

Bear Creek will become the main yard on the BC&SJ when the peninsula is completed. What will it take for this yard to handle the railroad's traffic?

When construction is complete on the BC&SJ, my early '50s HO scale layout, there will be a bit over five scale miles of mainline track and another 1 $^1/_2$ miles of track in the Deschutes, Siskiyou, and Albany branch lines. There will be seven towns online and four staging areas representing other points east, west, north, and south.

The crews at Bear Creek yard will need to be on their toes to move the cars coming through their yard off to the right places in a timely manner. An efficient yard design is obviously needed or BC&SJ op sessions will get tied in knots while trains queue to get in and out of the yard.

I followed these principles while designing the yard at Bear Creek:

- Trains must be able to arrive and depart from the A/D (arrival/departure)

Figure 1

Figure 1: South Jackson yard on my current layout doesn't look like much. I call it my scrap-box yard because I threw it together in a hurry using pieces from my scrap-box, turnouts, plywood, track, wire, all salvaged from my previous layout. Despite its appearance (or lack thereof), it provides enough (barely) tracks to keep the partially built layout running until I get the time and $$ to get the rest of the layout finished, at which time South Jackson will get a 'real' yard.

Brandon Thompson (in the black shirt) is the yardmaster. Despite his expression (someone must have made a real bone-head mistake), running a yard can be gratifying and quite a bit of fun. Norm Alexander (foreground) is the road engineer.

tracks without fouling the switch leads at either end of the yard. This lets the switch crews work even when trains are coming and going.

- The A/D tracks must be as long as the longest train served by the yard to avoid time-consuming doubling of trains in or out of the yard.
- All class tracks have direct access to the main track, letting them be used as A/D tracks in a pinch. However, doing so, may foul the switch lead at that end of the yard. This will require the use of #8 turnouts in the yard ladders so a big 2-10-2 or 4-8-8-2 can negotiate its way in and out of the class tracks.
- Provision for two switch crews, one at either end of the yard, able to work independently. There will be too much work for a single crew to handle. If things get really nasty, a third crew can be added at the west end of the yard using the siding as a switch lead.
- A storage area for home-road empties. I'm planning a car demand scheme where a (virtual) 'freight agent' receives empty-car requests from the foremen at rail-served industries. These requests turn into an order for an empty car to be added to the local freight that serves those industries. The yard master will get gray hairs if he can't quickly lay hands on the required car type.
- A dedicated thoroughfare track to move equipment from one end of the yard to the other when the other tracks are in use. For example: a eastward train terminates at the yard. The locomotive cuts off and uses the thoroughfare track to reach the engine service area which is at the west end of the yard. While this is happening, a switch crew grabs the terminated train and starts classifying its cars.
- Plenty of classification tracks. A busy yard needs enough class tracks so the yardmaster isn't constantly stepping on himself. The BC&SJ has too many destinations for each to merit its own

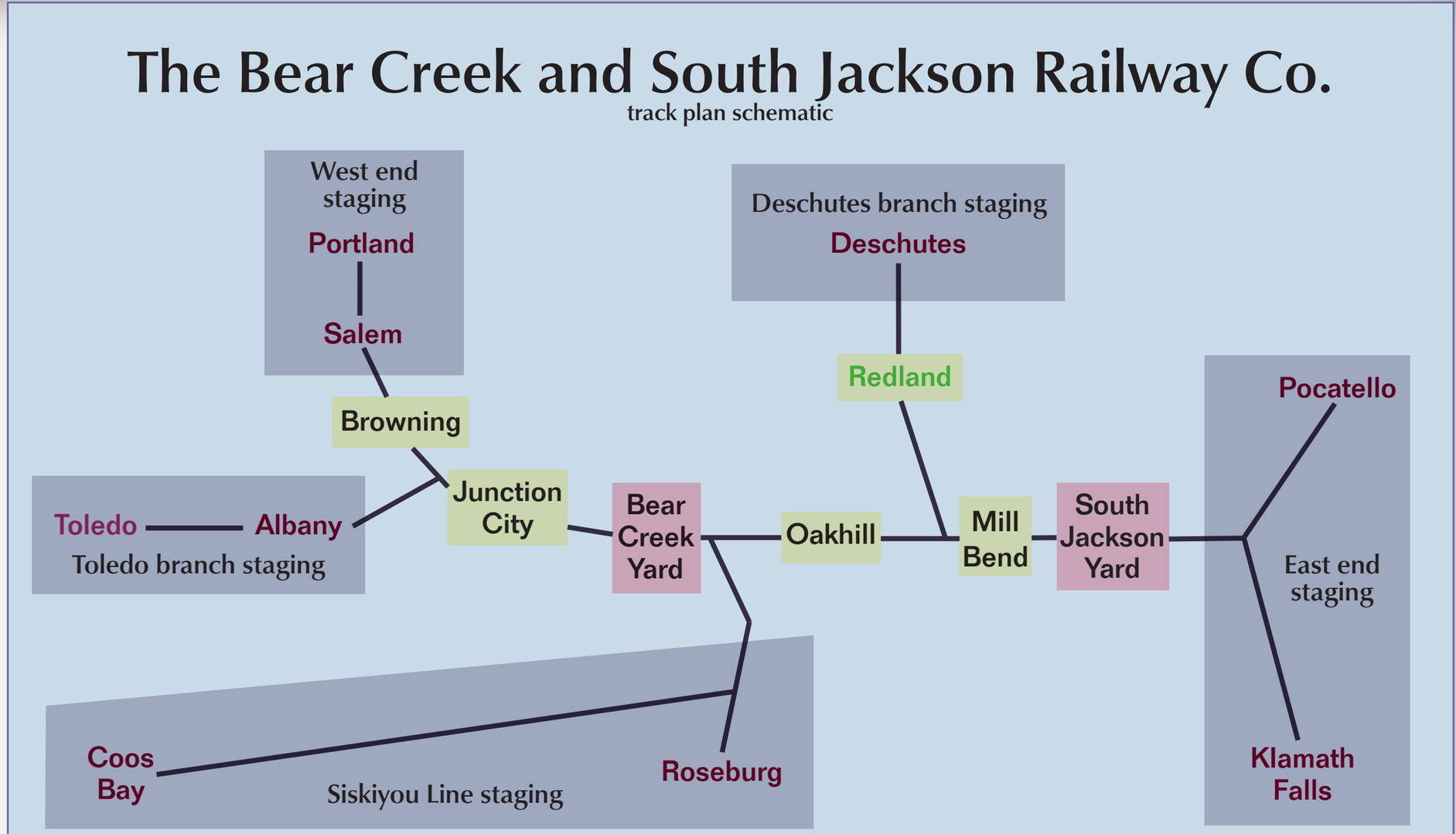


Figure 2: A schematic diagram of BC&SJ trackage when the layout is completed. The areas in the dark blocks are staging. There will be seven modeled towns, lots of destinations for the Bear Creek yard crews to consider when sorting cars.

Car blocking on the yard tracks

In a well run-yard, each track has cars blocked for the same or similar destinations. Bear Creek will need to maintain blocks for:

- Salem/Portland
- Browning
- Toledo/Albany
- Junction City
- Coos Bay/Roseburg
- Oakhill/Mill Bend/South Jackson/Redland/Deschutes (all these cars are sent to South Jackson yard for reclassification)
- Pocatello/Klamath Falls

track, so some tracks will hold multiple blocks. The blocks are kept separate from each other on a class track ("Car Blocking for the yard tracks" on the previous page). The exact blocking scheme will vary depending on the number of cars headed to each destination and the schedule of upcoming trains.

- Provide a station track so passenger trains stopping at the Bear Creek depot don't block the mainline.
- An engine facility for steam and diesel locomotives.
- Other yard tracks include an ice track to service non-mechanical reefers and a RIP (repair-in-place) track for cars needing minor repairs.

Yard Priorities

Model railroads usually have higher traffic densities than the prototype. Let's face it, we like to run trains. Compounding that problem are our always too-short mainlines. Trains quickly

Figure 3: The Bear Creek and South Jackson Railway Co. Zoom in on the track plans with your pdf reader to view the details better or click here for a pdf format trackplan.

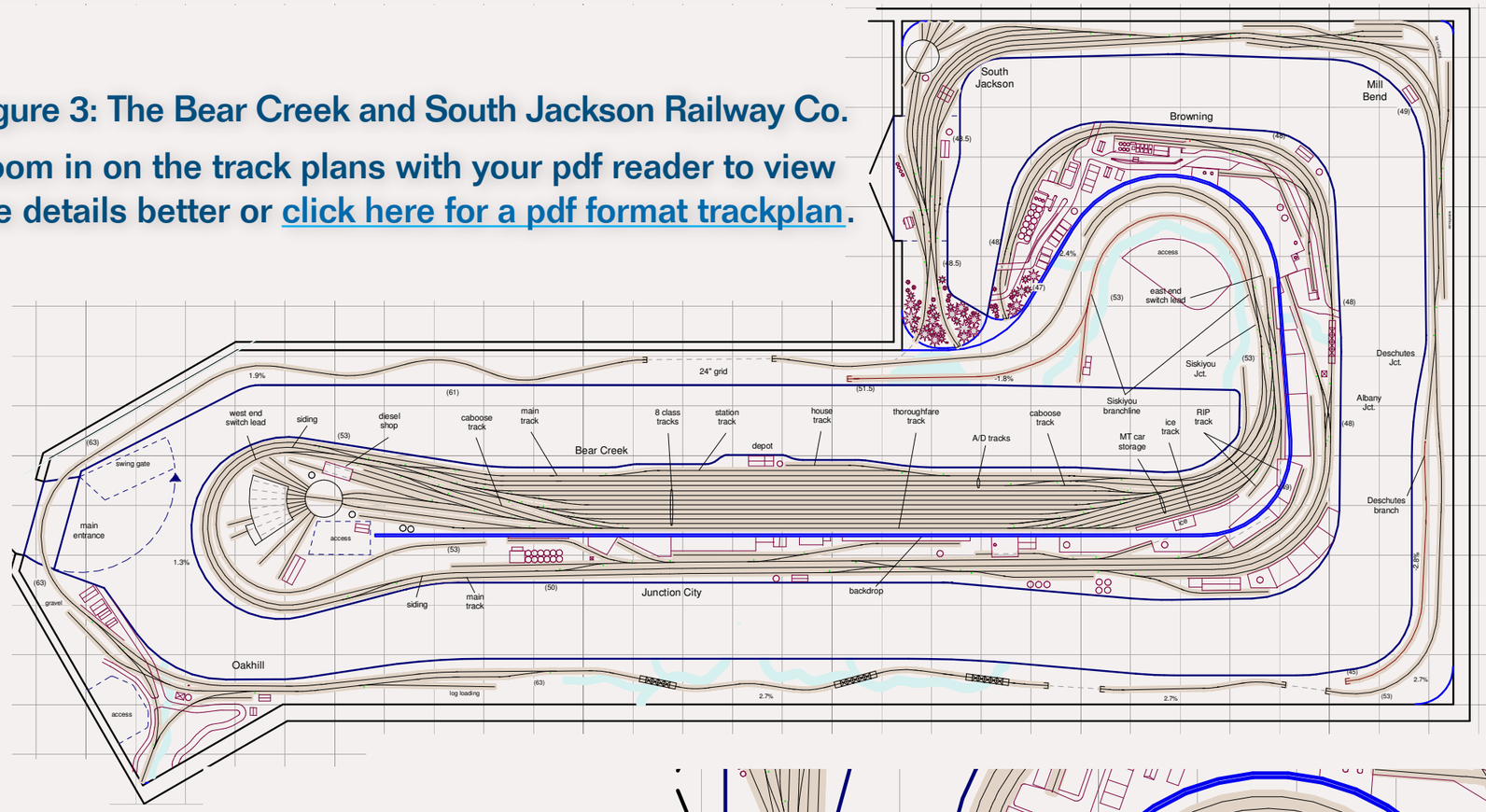


Figure 4: Bear Creek yard magnified. Note the switch leads at both ends. Although it requires lots of turnouts and some complex track, trains can arrive or depart from A/D tracks without fouling a switch lead. Each class track has direct access to the main.

eat up their mainline run, then arrive in the yard. We can't 'kick' cars (give them a shove and let them roll to a stop) on our models so we have to flat switch our yards. This makes classification slower than the prototype. Oops ...

In a large yard on a busy mainline, a priority is to never stop the switch crews from classifying cars. This means having dedicated switch leads that aren't fouled by passing mainline trains. It also means having separate A/D tracks where trains can arrive or depart without fouling the switch leads.

Once a train terminates on a yard (preferably on an A/D) track, the motive power cuts off and heads for the engine service area. While this happens a switch crew can couple onto the caboose and take it to the nearest caboose track, then return and pull the body of the train onto the switch lead, clearing the A/D track for another train to use. The yardmaster has the train's paper work and tells the switch crew the track and block for each car.

Switch leads long enough to hold an entire train help keep classification humming by avoiding doubling in and out of the A/D and class tracks.

Another frequent operation is a block swap where a passing train drops off a number of cars and receives some cars in return. Both switch leads have direct access to the main track allowing block swaps to happen on the main as well as either A/D track.

Building trains is as important is breaking down trains. Each train carries cars bound for certain destinations. The cars in the yard must be classified (pre-sorted) by their destination. A trim (switch) crew grabs cars from the appropriate pre-sorted blocks, and places them on an A/D track. The switch crew sticks a caboose on the rear of the train and it's connected to (virtual) yard air to pump up the train line. While this is happening, the hostler pulls motive power assigned to the train and moves it to the head of the train. Easy-peasy (in theory anyway).

Even easier is when a class track already contains all the cars needed for a train. Just add water... er, caboose and locomotive, and instant train!

Making things a bit more complicated are helper operations. When an overweight train arrives at the yard, a helper must be moved from the service area into the train.

Yard Crew Positions

Running a big yard takes teamwork.

The yardmaster talks with the dispatcher and keeps a weather eye on the train lineup making sure there are enough open tracks for arriving trains. He also plans how blocks are stashed on class tracks.

A switch(er) crew runs a switch engine and bangs cars. Switch crews are either trimming, that is building or breaking down trains, classifying – sorting cars by destination, or sometimes switching any local industries.

Hostlers move motive power between trains and the engine service area.

In a small yard one person can do all this, but I've found that to be hectic when things get a bit busier. I expect there will be enough to keep a yardmaster, two switch crews, and a hostler busy at Bear Creek.

Yard Design References

These online references may be useful to modelers designing their own yards:

- The 10 Commandments of Yard Design by Craig Bisgeier
- Operations Special Interest Group
- A Little Love for the Yard by Byron Henderson

Figure 5

Figure 5: Terry Roberts and Mike Davison working in (the much smaller) Bear Creek yard on my previous layout (May 2002). I learned a lot about yard design and operation in that yard...

Conclusion

Bear Creek will be a large yard for a model railroad. Is it perfect? Probably not. I'm hoping it is good enough. I fully expect when I finally get started with construction (real-soon-now), I'll see better ways of building it. There's something about seeing actual benchwork that gives me new, improved ideas.

Reader Feedback (click here)

About our prototype modeling columnist

Marty McGuirk is an avid transition-era freight car modeler and Central Vermont fan. He founded the CV Historical Society in 1989, and currently models the railroad's northern division mainline in HO scale as it looked in the 1950s.

Click here to learn more about Marty.

Photos and illustrations by the author unless otherwise credited.

GETTING REAL: Railroad Historical Societies and You

Adventures in Prototype Modeling

Reader Feedback (click here)

An essential resource for the prototype modeler ...

Congratulations! You've just decided to become a prototype modeler. Now what? The obvious first question for a new prototype modeler is what prototype(s) are you going to model? This is followed by the choice of an era. These are perhaps the two most important things that set a prototype-based layout apart from a freelanced one.

If you haven't already, you will soon find that the key to answering those two questions, and all the ones that follow from them, is information. One of the best sources of information for a prototype modeler is a railroad historical society.

Luckily, there are historical societies for many of the most popular railroads. The size of the railroad has little, if anything, to do with the size or relative activity level of the historical society. If, you're interested in a particular railroad you will find the members of the historical society and the access to the society's archives and information are an invaluable resource.

What can you get out of these groups? The most common, and visible benefit of membership is a

Figure 1

FIGURE 1: The former Central Vermont Railway station in St. Albans, Vermont still serves as a railroad headquarters. Rail America, the owner of the former CV line, has its eastern U.S. dispatch center in this building. The reason the CV Historical Society holds its convention in New England every fall should be obvious from the vibrant foliage!

quarterly publication. Think of it as a magazine devoted entirely to your favorite railroad! As you might expect, some are slicker and more professional than others, but they all share one trait – an enthusiasm for the subject matter. Such enthusiasm makes it possible to forgive the occasional typo and/or slightly fuzzy photo reproduction although many such magazines look quite professional.

Membership often gives you access to original maps, charts, building plans, locomotive diagrams, and photographs. Even if you have to pay for some of these items, membership in the society frequently offers a significant discount. And if you're planning a prototype-based layout, having access to such original source material is invaluable.

Perhaps the best benefit of joining a railroad historical society is the most intangible – simply getting to know people who are as enthused, and often more knowledgeable about your favorite prototype road as you are! The best way to meet those folks and learn from them is to attend the society's convention.

Historical Society Conventions

Many groups sponsor at least one annual convention. Since each is a little different, rather than offer a generic description I'll share some details from the most recent one I attended, the Central Vermont Railway Historical Society's 2010 Convention which took place in St. Albans, Vt., in early October.

We've had these conventions for going on 21 years – ever since the second year of the group's existence. The locale of the convention changes from year to year, alternating between a site on the former mainline along the Southern Division (in Connecticut and Massachusetts) and along the Northern Division, essentially, in the railroad's home state of Vermont. This year we returned to the CV's headquarters town of St. Albans. Next year, the convention will be in Amherst, Massachusetts. But no matter where, the when doesn't change. They are always in the autumn. The reason should be obvious (figure 1).

The convention maintains the same format from year to year. Even more amazingly, the same core group of four or five dedicated members has arranged for every convention, with some assistance from a few local members who live near the convention locale.

The convention usually starts on Friday evening with an after-dinner slide show ("bring your 25 favorite slides" has always been popular – and has unveiled some wonderfully rare shots over the years!). This year's, Friday activities were a bit unusual since the society members were invited to head across the Canadian border to visit the Vermont and Essex Model Railroad Club

Figure 2a

Figure 2b

FIGURE 2a,b: Model displays are always popular at these gatherings. These models were built and displayed by John Williams, who has a new CV model or two (or three) to share each year!

in a Montreal, Quebec hobby shop. This wonderful HO scale layout features key CV scenes, accurately modeled. Robert Moeller reported on this portion of the convention:

"The first floor has a small hobby shop, all model-railroad oriented, with the focus on New England and Canadian equipment. A spiral stairway leads downstairs to the layout entrance. The layout focuses on the CV from St. Albans (Italy Yard, roundhouse, shops, train station and trainshed) south through Essex Junction, the granite quarries in Barre, the station in White River Junction and finally Bellows Falls.

They have a library, a model-making work area, a simulated baggage room, a staging area, and a restaurant that seats 25-30 people. We enjoyed a great French-Canadian meal with wine and videos of CV steam. They are working on a second layout that will go from St. Albans north into Canada and represent Quebec. The CVRHS brought some gifts and we received a book about the layout, along with a folder containing layout photos."

That evening, after returning south of the border, members were treated to a guided, in-depth tour of the St. Albans dispatching facility (figure 1), that is used by Rail America. The CV itself was purchased by RailTex Corporation in 1995 and renamed New England Central – Rail America later acquired RailTex. Today, all of Rail America's railroads east of the Mississippi River are dispatched from St. Albans, Vermont.

On Saturday, the group convened in the St. Albans Historical Society Museum. The CVRHS has a long-standing relationship with the museum, and the Society maintains its archives in this building.

Although historical society conventions, including this one, share some traits with typical model railroad conventions, there are some differences. For example, although there may be a clinic on modeling, it's typically not intensive "how to" discussions because some members of the audience have no interest in modeling. But modelers and models are welcome, and displays of locomotives, cars, and structures are always popular with both modelers and non-modelers alike. (figure 2)

At the CVRHS convention we learned a long time ago to set up a "photo display table." (figure 3)

This allows members to bring those timetables, rulebooks, and photos to share. We usually end up with several photo tables! One thing I thought was interesting was the display of the "Rocket" sign that was placed on the RS11 or GP9 that powered the train in the 1970s (figure 4).

I thought it was neat to see the original "CV Rocket" poster displayed next to a photo of the Board of Directors with the same poster hanging on the wall behind them! (figure 5).

Another common, and very popular feature at virtually every CVRHS convention is the panel of former railroaders. The convention committee decides on a theme. This year it was the Central Vermont's "Rocket" fast freight service from the late 1970s. The committee rounds up three or four former employees who can shed some light on the subject. While I wasn't expecting the discussion to be all that interesting to me, the panel proved me wrong. These guys (fig. 6)

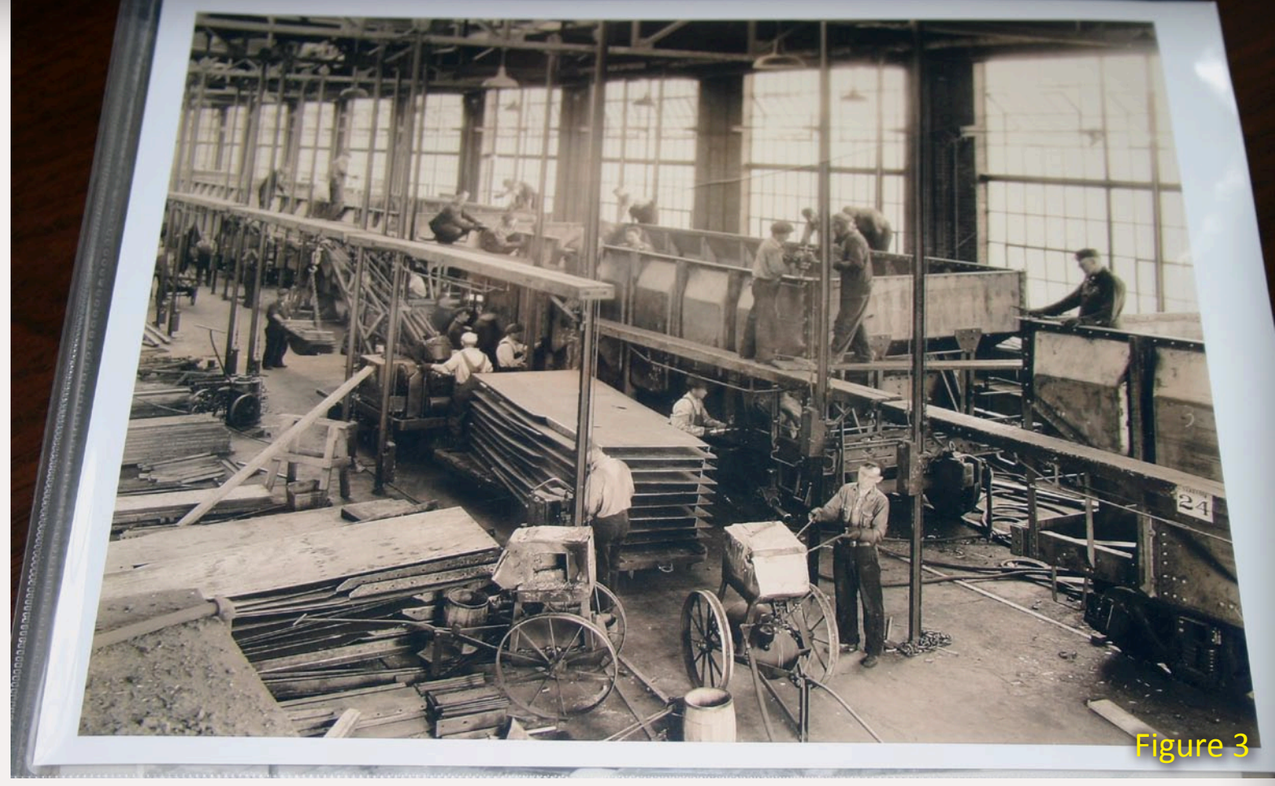


Figure 3

FIGURE 3: A popular feature is the photo table, which includes a variety of photo albums members bring to show and share. I thought this photo (one of a series) showing how the railroad replaced the flat panels with blister panels in the 20000-series hoppers (see *Getting Real* in the April 2009 issue of MRH) was particularly interesting.

FIGURE 4: This metal sign was hung from the locomotive handrail on the CV's Rocket piggyback train service. It served nicely as a background. Frankly, it's heavy enough that it could serve nicely as a picnic table!

Figure 4

Figure 5a

Figure 5b

FIGURE 5a,b: In the '30s the CV offered an overnight "fast freight" LCL service called the Vermont Rocket. The poster is an original print promoting this service. Note what's hanging on the wall behind those railroad execs!

knew the stories behind the stories, and loved telling tales!

This year's panel was no different from any other year. At first they didn't say much, if anything. But, after some gentle prodding and targeted questions from Jim Murphy and Alan Irwin, it was tough getting them to stop talking! The stories and insight are always great – it's no wonder the annual "Old Fart Panel" (hey, that's what these guys call it!) is always a highlight!

As a transition era modeler, a highlight of the convention for me was Dwight Smith's talk. Dwight took his first CV photograph in 1940 and he shared a number of pictures of the CV/B&M "joint line" in New Hampshire and Vermont with the group – some great views of CV steam in action! Only one diesel in the lot – and since it was an Alco the other steam era modelers sitting around the table with me decided to make it an honorary steam engine!

No CVRHS convention would be complete without the annual afternoon walking tour of the local right of way. Our tour this year focused on the St. Albans engine house (fig. 7) – which includes a still-functioning turntable and roundhouse. We checked out the motive power that was in town (fig. 8) and got a detailed tour of the facility from the current NECR shop foreman, who showed us how they turn locomotive wheelsets.

I had a great time at the convention – not only did I manage to pick up some neat models for the layout (including a brass PFM CV van), I met some new folks and saw a number of old friends. Although, I have to wonder, how is it that everybody but me gets older each year? (figure 9)

Although Sunday wasn't an official convention day, the weather was absolutely wonderful and the colors spectacular. So my wife and I spent the day leaf-peeping. We started at the fully restored Waterbury station (fig. 10) and spent a wonderful day driving through the Vermont countryside. I took lots of great "backdrop inspiration" photos for the layout.

All in all, a great time. Can't wait for next year!. ☑

Reader Feedback (click here)

Figure 6


Figure 7

FIGURE 6: This year's subject for the former employees roundtable discussion was the CV "Rocket." These guys knew all the background behind this attempt to pull trucks off the roads and onto the rails. Shown here, from left to right:

Paul Larner - *former CV trainmaster and retired ATK engineer*

Jack Bliss - *former CV marketing department, then northern representative for Quaboag Transfer*

Bob Coon - *retired CV conductor*

Carleton Grave - *retired CV engineer and union representative who negotiated the innovative Rocket crew contracts. That contract made the Rocket possible.*

What a great group!

FIGURE 7: Although the famed "Eric Stevens" coaling tower (from an MR article back in the early 1950s) is long gone, the CV engine house and turntable are still used every day.

FIGURE 8: The newest engines in the shop and yard were the two FEC GP40s (one shown inside the house) that Rail America had transferred to NECR. Although the variety of power was neat, I miss the bright green and yellow GP9s and RS11s with their bold CV "pregnant tapeworms."

Figure 8

Historical Societies on the Web

Many societies offer free access to some information via their web sites. One of the best is the Keystone Modeler, which, as the name implies, covers a variety of topics dealing with modeling the Pennsylvania RR. While you may not give a fig about a Pennsy station, the article on modeling it may contain just the right construction tip for your next model, no matter the prototype. Even better, since the size of the PRR's freight car fleet meant that every layout set anywhere in the U.S. should have more than a couple of PRR freight cars on the roster, the modeling information on the freight cars alone make it well worth the price of admission (free). The PRH&TS keeps about a year's worth of issues on line at a time – the back issues are available on CD at a reasonable price.

Check out the Keystone Modeler at:

http://www.prrths.com/Keystone%20Modeler/Keystone_Modeler.htm

Some other railroad historical societies have taken the same approach, offering modeling information in an online publication. The ones I'm aware of include the B&O Modeler, the ACL/SAL Modeler, and the C&NW Modeler. There may be more, but these four have the volunteer staff, active enough modeling community, and information to offer online publications on a regular basis.

Another online resource many historical societies maintain is a presence on Yahoo! Groups. Many railroads have one or more Yahoo Groups devoted to them. In some cases these are not officially affiliated with a historical society but are still valid sources of information.

Figure 9

FIGURE 9: Retired New Haven (and Conrail) engineer Pete McLachlan has been a regular attendee at the CVRHS conventions and willingly shares his photos and experiences with our members. I won't confirm or deny anything, but rumor has it he gave a cab ride to a then very annoying youngster (yours truly!) in his RS-3 in the distant past . . .

Figure 10

FIGURE 10: A sunny autumn day in Vermont. We started at the restored Waterbury station (where my wife purchased an overpriced cup of coffee – the station is the home of Green Mountain Coffee) and spent the day touring the countryside.

About our N-scale columnist

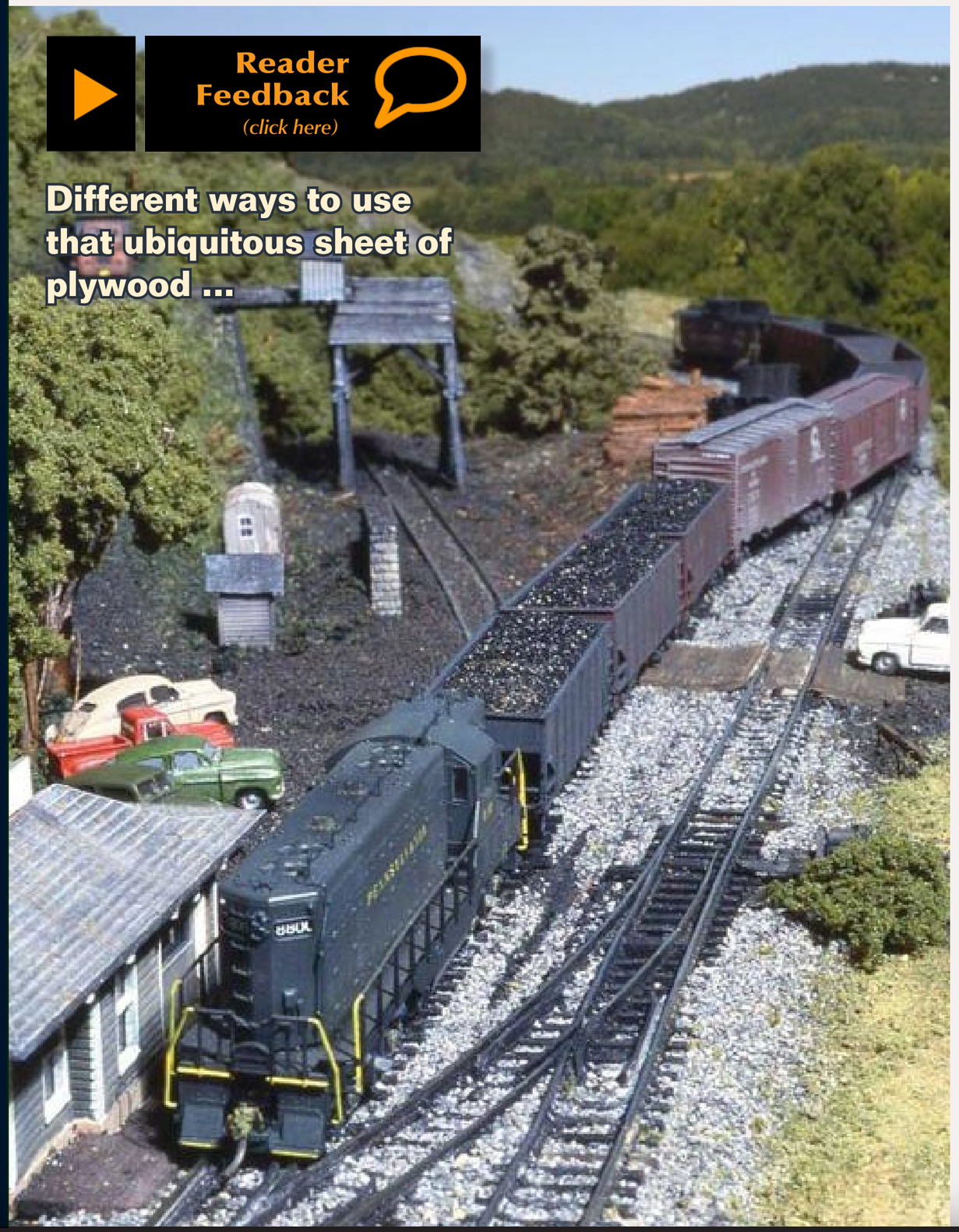
John Drye is our N scale editor and columnist.

Click here to learn more about John.

COMME-N-TARY: N Scale Layout Ideas

What can you spell with a 4x8 sheet of plywood?

Modeling in the hobby's most eNgaging scale



One of the reasons for N scale's popularity is the scales' trade-off among space, selection and reliability. A scale of 1:160 allows for a reasonable amount of railroad in 32 square feet. Motive power and rolling stock availability continues to expand, and the equipment runs well with a little effort.

Island Layouts

A recent CommeNtary article suggested some layouts for a 3 x 6 space. Such an "island" design has the advantage of portability—it can fit into almost any room, and even a few closets! It is small enough to complete in a reasonable amount of time.

My own 3 x 6 island was up and running in less than six months and continues to acquire details and structures. It is large enough to allow a variety in operations. My Edsall Industrial RR serves a power plant with a (short) unit train along with half a

FIGURE 1: Even small layouts offer lots of modeling potential. Here a PRR GP7 approaches the coal loadout on an earlier version of the Laurel Creek layout. Short cars and small diesels are one of the keys to fitting lots of railroading into a small space.

dozen other industries and continues to provide an enjoyable source for local switching operations.

Island designs usually make a complete loop for continuous running feasible, if desired.

However, island designs do require aisle space on at least three sides, usually at least a couple of feet, so they do not always make the most efficient use of a limited space.

The Layout Alphabet

On the other hand, a 4 x 8 sheet of plywood can be cut up to provide a variety of layout designs often described by the shape of a letter they resemble: “F”, “C”, “G”, “L”, “M” or “P”, for example.

A four-by-eight sheet of plywood is easily cut into segments 6” to 24” wide and up to 8 feet long. This is plenty of room for N scale layouts. Segment length can be easily adjusted to accommodate available space. Such shapes lend themselves to switching layouts although an “L” with loops at each end could accommodate continuous running.

An “L” or “F” shaped mining branch plan could include a few marshalling tracks along one of the long sides plus several tipples. The “C” or “G” shape lends itself to a flat Junction in a Midwest or Southeast setting with the two railroads crossing in the middle. Operational features of such a layout could include an interchange and a few industries; the two lines each run into hidden staging along the legs. A logging short line design can include a port or pond at one end with minimally-maintained trackage to logging sites. An urban switching plan might include a small yard connected to hidden interchange tracks (multi-story buildings are perfect) and spurs to multiple industries or one big one. A “P”-shaped design could include a roundhouse and turntable at the “thick” end and can focus on the operations and maintenance of steam locomotives. Here are a couple of examples of the layout alphabet.

Laurel Creek and Western

The Laurel Creek and Western uses the “G” shape to represent a short line or branch line serving a few coal customers and interchanging with a Class I mainline railroad at the town

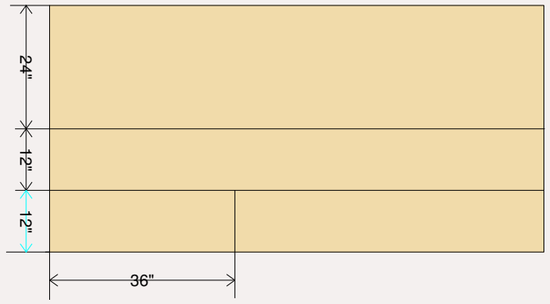


FIGURE 2: Plywood cutting pattern for the LC&W railroad.

of Laurel Creek. The location is somewhere in the Appalachians and the Class I could be the C&O, N&W, B&O, PRR or NYC. The time frame is the late ‘50s or early ‘60s.

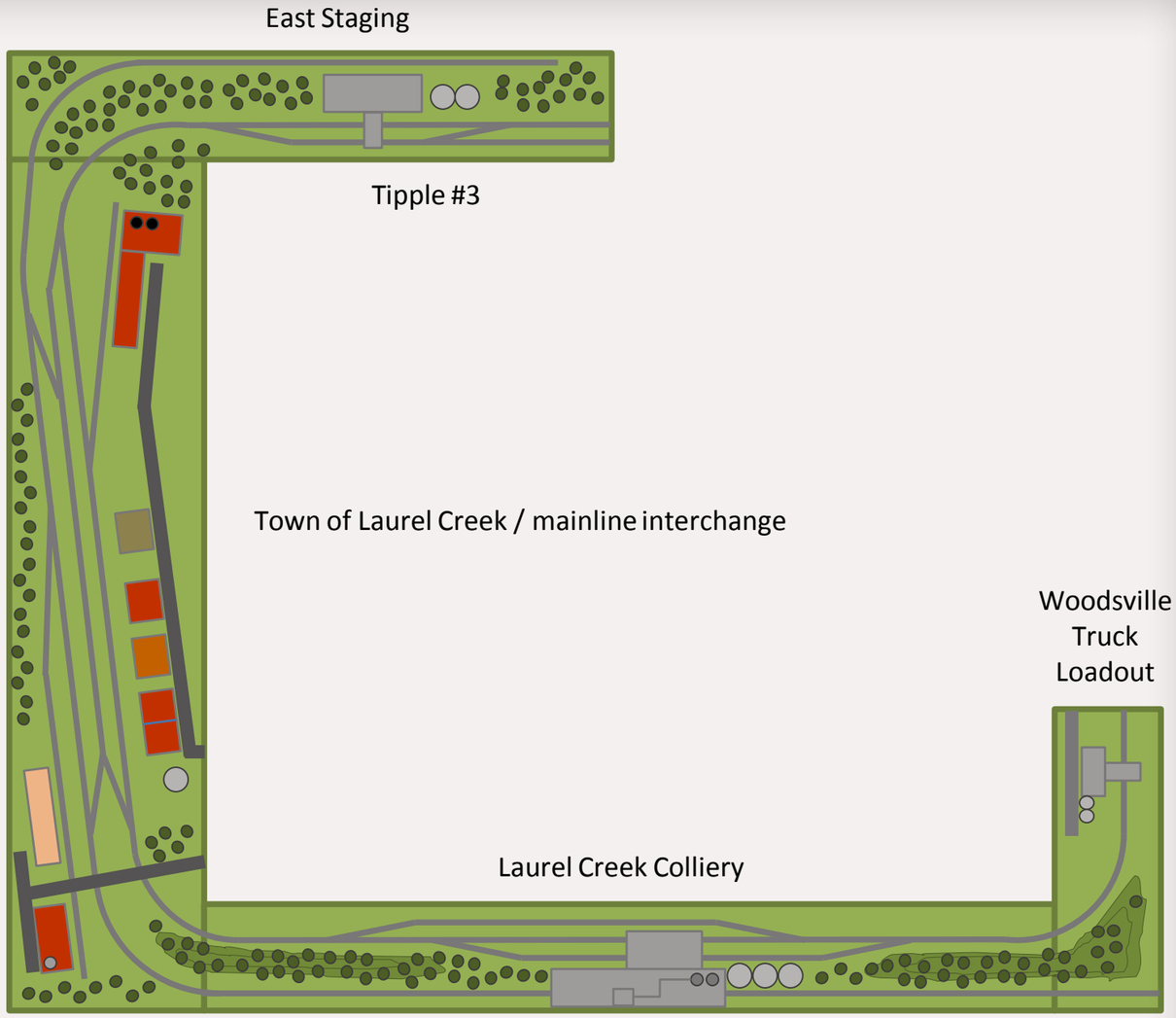


FIGURE 3: Laurel Creek and Western railroad

This era, with smaller cars and four-axle locomotives, allows motive power and rolling stock selection from a wide variety of manufacturers. The town structures include a few industries that can be built from a variety of kits or modular components. The town also includes a few stores that could be built from a number of kits. The colliery, tipple and loadout do not match any specific kits but could easily be kitbashed from Walther’s New River Mine.

Cutting the 4 x 8 sheet of plywood involves only three saw cuts as shown in Figure 2.

The LC&W Trackplan includes three coal loading facilities on two branches. The largest is the Laurel Creek Colliery and is the railroad’s chief customer, loading upwards of a dozen cars daily. The colliery includes two loading tracks and a runaround allowing access to the Woodsville Truck loadout at the end of the branch. The truck site sees only a car or two most days. A second branch

serves Tipple #3, providing justification for another mine run handling half a dozen hoppers.

The black diamonds are collected in the small marshalling yard in Laurel Creek for pickup twice a day by mainline freights. The town also includes a few industries, switched by either the mainline or branch locomotive. There are no engine facilities on the layout, so the branch engine is fueled by a tanker truck and travels to the nearest mainline facility for other than minor repairs.

The mainline freights originate from the West staging track located behind Laurel Creek Colliery. The track is hidden behind the colliery and low wooded ridges. There is room on the staging track for two mainline freights, spotted nose to tail. Operations begin early in the morning when the first freight departs staging to drop off empties in the marshalling yard. There is often a car or two to spot at the industries in Laurel Creek and a few loads to pick up. After doing its work, the morning freight continues to East staging and terminates.

Next up is the morning run to the Laurel Creek Colliery. This mine run, powered by a single first-generation diesel, picks up the empties from the yard and heads up the branch to work both facilities, returning with loaded hoppers around lunchtime to spot them in the yard.

The noon mainline train is now clear to depart from West staging. Its chief purpose is to spot another half dozen empty hoppers at Laurel Creek. It picks up the loads in the yard and runs around to return to West staging. Finally, the branch line switcher makes the afternoon run to Tipple #3 and returns more coal to Laurel Creek.

This 9’ x 11’ layout could fit into most spare rooms and would provide operational enjoyment for a crew of 3 or 4. There is enough extra room at either end of the central section and at the colliery so that a foot or two could be cut off to fit along a shorter wall.

Lafayette Junction

Lafayette Junction represents the crossing and interchange between a pair of Midwestern railroads in the ‘70s or ‘80s. In this period mergers have begun to create lots of fallen flags, but CNW, IC(G), MILW, SOO, L&N, N&W and others still provide an interesting list to choose from.

The era suggests early second-generation four-axle locomotives suitable for these secondary lines. Most rolling stock is still 50 feet or shorter. Selection is tremendous, with great mod-

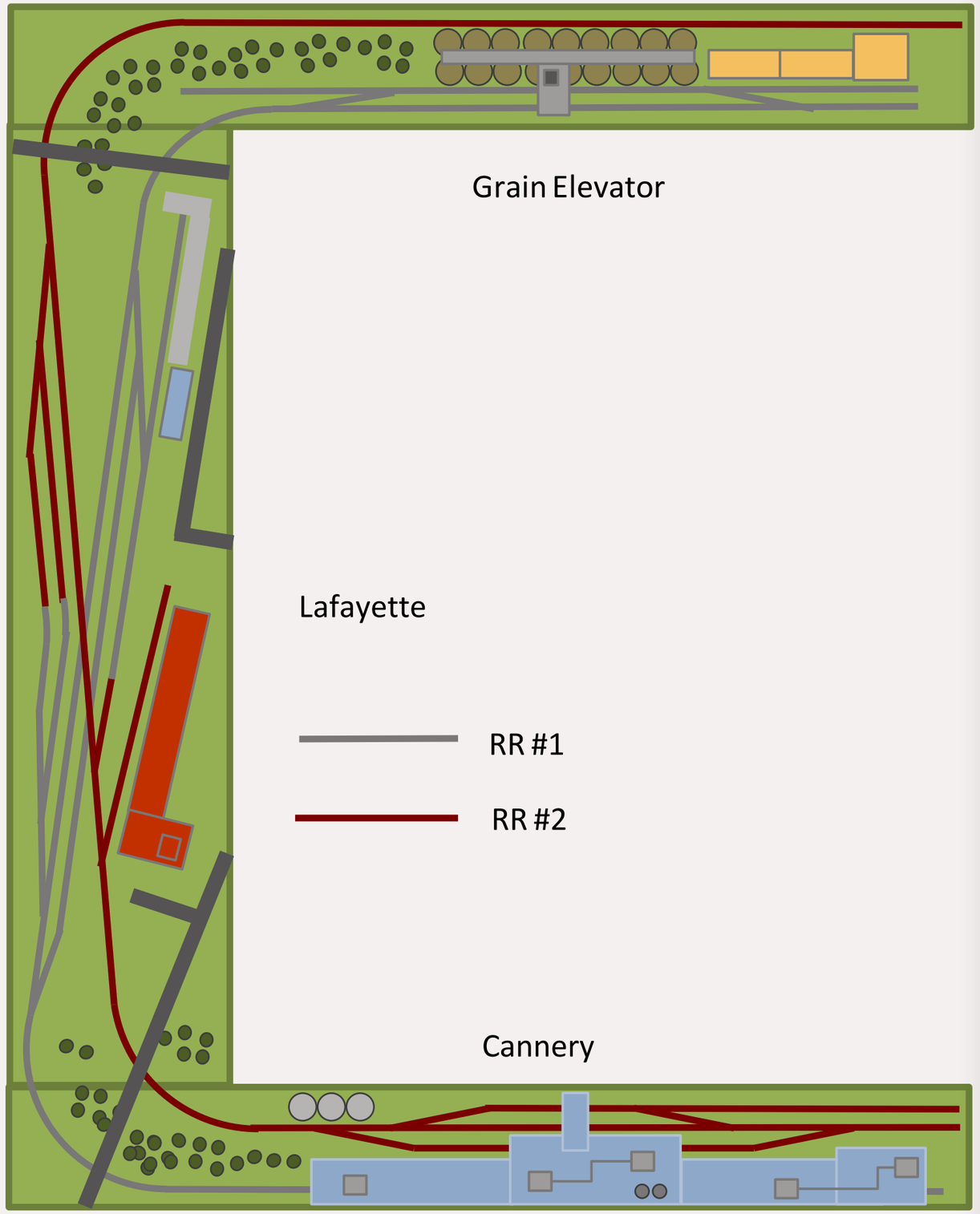


FIGURE 4: The Lafayette Junction railroad.

The plywood cutting directions for this layout are simple – a single strip 24” x 8’ and two 12” x 8’ strips.

els of Geeps and U-boats as well as a variety of grain hoppers and other rolling stock.

Lafayette Junction focuses on the junction and small interchange yard for a wealth of operations potential. The interchange is located on the outskirts of town. In addition to the crossing and small interchange yard, the Lafayette area also includes a couple of industries common to the Midwest. These could be a farm implement dealer, a lumberyard or a feed and seed distributor.

Each railroad also serves a large customer just outside Lafayette. These could be any industry appropriate to the Midwest. The track plan shows a canning plant and a grain elevator, but alternatives include light manufacturing plants such as appliances, chemical or fertilizer processing, or distilling. Each of these industries would provide enough trackwork for interesting switching opportunities and handle a variety of car types. The two big industries can be kitbashed or kitmingled from commercial products. They both are sizable structures that provide lots of modeling opportunities.

Operation begins with one of the two railroad's local freights exiting the staging track hidden behind the industries and a line of trees. The local handles traffic at the interchange, first dropping off cars for the other road to pick up, then spotting cars as required at the industries in town. Then the train heads to the elevator or cannery to work the sidings there. The interchange yard provides the tracks needed to block cars for specific locations at each facility. After switching the plant, the local returns to the interchange yard to drop off additional cars destined for the other railroad and returns to staging.

The process is repeated for the other railroad and the other industry.

Another operation plan allows for a third train. In this case, one or both plants are assigned their own switcher. Each plant's locomotive picks up cars left at the interchange yard, blocks them, then returns to their industry.

This layout is 8' x 10' and also could handle a crew of 3 or 4. As with Laurel Creek, a foot or so could be shaved off the design to fit in a smaller space.

Alphabet Layout Benefits

Both the Laurel Creek and Western and Lafayette Junction railroads get the layout out of the middle of the room to leave more space for crewmen. It also allows the space to be shared for other uses (such as a guest bedroom) which can sometimes be a key factor in railroad right of way acquisition.

So, consider what you can 'spell' in your available space and get started!

Tips for reading MRH:

- *Clicking an article on the cover will take you directly to that article.*
- *If you're using Adobe Reader to read MRH, holding down ALT and hitting the left-arrow-key will take you back to the previously viewed page (like a browser 'back' button).*
- *Looking for a particular advertiser? Click Index (at the bottom of each page). In addition to our article index, you'll find an alphabetized List of Advertisers on that page.*

Model Railroad Hobbyist newsletter™

February 2011

Reader Feedback (click here)

The Old Yardmaster

The latest model railroad products news and events

PRODUCTS FOR ALL SCALES

Oso Railworks, Inc. (www.osorail.com) is selling a reprinted edition of *"Everett & Monte Cristo Railway,"* the definitive book that tells the story of the independent mining and logging railroad that was later acquired by the Northern Pacific. Priced at $39.95, the new book includes more than 200 historical photos in its 234 pages. The soft cover on the reprint is the only discernable difference from the first edition. The book (ISBN 9-780982-2558-2-7) is available now from local hobby stores.

Benchmark Publications has released a hard-cover version of *"Model Railroading With John Allen,"* by Linn H. Westcott. This 160 page 9.5" x 11.5" edition has 16 additional pages of material that did not appear in the soft-cover versions released by Kalmbach Publications in 1981 and 1996. New material appearing for the first time in Benchmark's edition includes information and reproduction of John Allen's photos for Pacific Fast Mail catalogs and advertisements, plus a comprehensive listing of Allen's published articles and photographs from 1945 through 2007. Linn Westcott gets credit for this book, but he died unexpectedly in 1980 before it was anywhere near completion. Bob Hayden, then editor of Kalmbach's *Finescale Modeler* magazine, took over and organized Westcott's accumulated notes. Another individual who does not receive adequate credit for his contribution to the book is Andy Sperandeo. While stationed at an Army base near Allen's home in California, Andy became a regular operator on the Gorre & Daphetid and used his personal experiences to prepare the section of the book that covers the highly-structured operating sessions Allen conducted on the G&D. The book has an MSRP of $63.95.

The popular magazine index sponsored by **Kalmbach** is once again available at http://trc.trains.com/magazineindex. Kalmbach magazines in the database include *Model Railroader, Classic Toy Trains, Garden Railways, Trains,* and *Classic Trains*. Others are *Railroad Model Craftsman, Mainline Modeler* and the *NMRA magazine.*

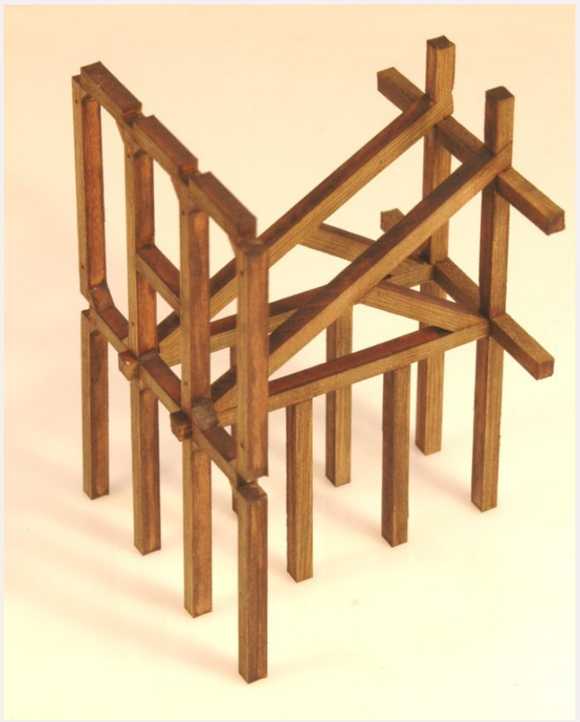
Looking for a glue to handle hard-to-bond plastic surfaces such as handrails and truck sideframes? **Loctite®** has a new, inexpensive glue called Loctite® Super Glue Plastics Bonding System. It is available at most hardware and home improvement stores for $4. The glue is a two-part cyanoacrylate adhesive specifically formulated for use on Plexiglass™, polycarbonate, polystyrene, PVC, polyethylene and polypropylene. Our thanks to MRH reader Rick Gilmore for bringing this handy product to our attention.

Western Pacific fan and modeler **Peter Arnold** released a two-CD set of photos that covers a range of equipment in WP's freight car fleet. The 504 images in the two CDs focus on equipment from the 1960s into the 1990s. Numerous images of subsidiary Sacramento Northern and Tidewater Southern cars are included. The original photos were scanned at approximately 400-500 dpi, resulting in a quality image that can be printed as large as 8" x 10" with exceptional results. The two-volume set is available at $35 (plus shipping) from Peter Arnold, 440 Hillcrest Dr., Prescott AZ 86303-5813.

O SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

Atlas O (www.atlaso.com) is scheduled to deliver a new run of GE U23B 2250 hp diesels in March. In addition to the Reading & Northern version pictured

here, road names for the O scale ready-to-run model include C&O (black), C&O – Chessie System scheme, Penn Central, Santa Fe (blue with yellow lettering), and Western Pacific (black with orange lettering). The WP and C&O models will ride on Blomberg trucks. Other road names come with GE FB2 trucks. Both 2-rail and 3-rail versions will be offered.

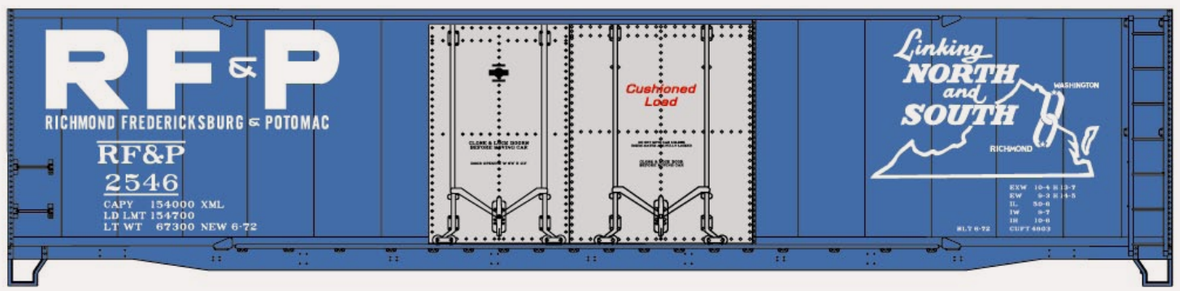


Anvil Mountain Models (www.anvilmountainmodels.com) has easy-to-assemble laser-cut kits for trackside Ore Bins in both HO and O scale (An S scale version is scheduled for release soon). Although we have not had an opportunity to inspect one of the kits, we understand no cutting is required because all wood components are precut by laser for simple and accurate assembly. The O scale kit sells for $39.95 while the HO version is $19.95.

IMA brand On30 rolling stock kits are now available from David Mason who purchased the IMA product line from Bill Orlando late last year. Kits for a passenger coach, boxcar, flat car, stock car and reefer have been updated with new laser-cut components and detail parts from Grandt Line and Tichy. The kits are a general design and are intended for modelers with scratchbuilding or kitbashing experience. Trucks and couplers are not included. In an effort to keep the price of the kits low, assembly instructions are available from the company web site at www.on30ima.com. Note that shipping is free to the lower 48 states.

Train Troll (www.traintroll.com) has released two additional kits for On2/On30 modelers including a 28' Wiscasset Waterville & Farmington boxcar #309. The restored prototype is currently running at the WW&F Museum in Alna, Maine. The kit includes an embossed roof that represents the steel and tin roof from the 1929 rebuild. The kit is priced at $44.95 less trucks and couplers. Also new is a body kit (less trucks and couplers) for a Wiscasset & Quebec 28' flat car at $29.95 each or $55.95 for a two-pack.

HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

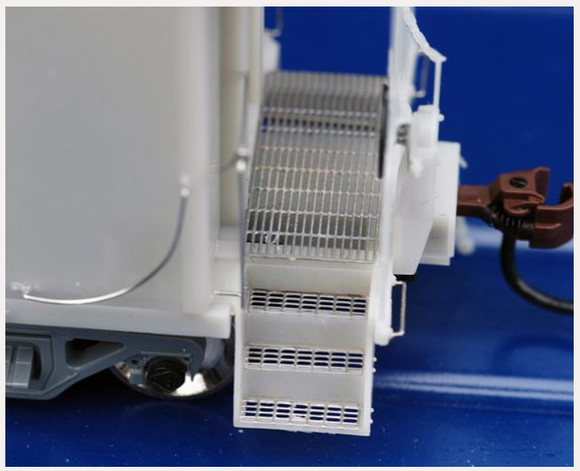


Accurail (www.accurail.com) has released an HO scale kit for a Richmond Fredricksburg & Potomac 50' double plug-door steel boxcar (above). Additional

models released this month include a three-number set of Western Pacific 41’ steel gondolas; USRA 55-ton twin hopper cars decorated for Pittsburgh & Lake Erie and New York Central; 40’ double-sheathed wood boxcars decorated for Delaware & Hudson, New York Ontario & Western, and Spokane Portland & Seattle; a Virginian 40’ wood stock car; and a Pere Marquette 50’ riveted double-door steel boxcar.

Also new from Accurail is a three-pack of Great Northern 40’ wood refrigerator cars that feature unusual Glacier National Park graphics around the road’s traditional goat herald (see previous page). The HO scale three-car set has a MSRP of $42.98. Contact your dealer for availability.

Atlas Model Railroad Company (www.atlasrr.com) is planning another run of its NRE GenSet road switcher for release in August. Introduced in 2006 by Illinois-based National Railway Equipment Company (NRE), the GenSet utilizes several smaller diesels to generate electricity as needed by traction motors resulting in a substantial reduction of both fuel consumption and exhaust. Priced at $120, Atlas’s HO scale ready-to-run DCC-ready models will come decorated for Union Pacific (the above photo is from an earlier run), BNSF, CSX, NRE Demo, San Diego & Imperial Valley, U.S. Army, and Norfolk Southern.



Here’s a peek at preliminary test samples of **Athearn’s** (www.athearn.com) forthcoming Genesis C-50 series bay-window caboose (top of next column). This is a class C-50-4 caboose with “flying-saucer” antenna mounted on a diagonal-panel roof. Later prototypes were built with an X-panel roof as seen below in the -9 version.

Known as the “Urban Guerrilla,” Southern Pacific outfitted its C-50-9 for police service with spotlights on top of the bays (simulated non-working), R/V style air conditioners, and an additional equipment box next to the battery box. Note the X-panel roof. Athearn also has plans for plain vanilla versions of the C-50-9 caboose.

Close-up views of etched-metal end-platforms compares C-50-4, previous page left, with C-50-9 on the right. Athearn's extended production schedule includes C-50-4, C-50-5, C-50-7, C-50-8, and C-50-9 versions of the bay-window caboose.

Due to lack of pre-orders and dealer interest, Athearn has cancelled plans to release its 48' wedge trailer in some new decorating schemes announced last October. Involved in the cancellation are items #91060 through 91065.

Bowser is looking for photos to help in preparing artwork for a new series of Baldwin VO-1000 diesel locomotives. Anyone who has photographs or knows of photo links for Western Pacific (silver and orange #581 to 585), Sacramento Northern (same scheme as WP), Great Northern (green and orange #132 to 144), Milwaukee Road 900 series, NC&StL #15 and #36, SP&S, and C&NW like #1037 without the rebuilt hood, are asked to send Lee English an email at bowser@bowser-trains.com.

Three variations of the above Blue Coal 70-ton offset-side triple-hopper are available now in HO scale kit form from **Bowser Manufacturing** (www.bowser-trains.com). Cars for Reading, NYO&W, and Lehigh Valley all display the Blue Coal billboard herald. Other car kits released this month include PRR 40' turtle-roof boxcar with circle keystone as built in 1934, 100-ton hopper cars decorated for PRR and Conrail "Quality," and 70-ton twin-bay covered hopper cars decorated for Milwaukee Road and Lehigh New England. Bowser kits consist of a one-piece plastic molded body, details parts, car weight, knuckle couplers and trucks with RP-25 wheels.

New HO scale vehicles due early this summer from **Classic Metal Works** (www.classicmetalworks.com) include a series of 1941-46 Chevrolet trucks with the famous "waterfall" grille. Body styles will include half-ton pickup (next column left), medium-duty flat bed, tank truck, box delivery, refrigerated box delivery with tandem wheels (next column right), and a semi-tractor with a fifth wheel with both single and double tandem-wheels. MSRP prices will range from $14 to $18 depending on the body style.

Also coming from CMC is this 1953 Ford Courier sedan-delivery. It will be available for Swift Premium, Railway Express Agency, a generic ambulance, and in four authentic Ford factory colors, all with an MSRP of $13 each.

Con-Cor International is considering re-running its HO scale North Shore ElectroLiners if sufficient pre-orders are received. The initial production run sold out quickly in 2009. Tentatively, a second run would consist of an ElectroLiner four-car set in two different road numbers at about $460 per set, plus an extra coach at $140. Visit www.con-cor.com for additional information or to place a reservation.

Digital Fox has the unusual-looking Conditionaire covered hopper cars that were designed to transport perishable produce such as potatoes, carrots and

citrus fruit. The ACF center-flow 3-bay cars were fitted with an air conditioner and coated with polyurethane insulating foam. To create the HO version, Digital Fox applies a special coating to an Accurail 4600 cu ft car kit before final paint and lettering. To download an order form or for a list of stocking dealers go to www.digitalfox.com.

Fos Scale Limited (www.foslimited.com) has two new HO scale craftsman kits including Jimmy Dee's, a three-story bar and grill that features clapboard structure with an exterior staircase. The large color mural and laser-cut roof sign are included, along with the sidewalk section. Other components include Tichy doors and windows, Northeastern Scale lumber and cast metal details. The finished model has a footprint of approximately 2.25" x 7.25" deep. The kit is priced at $99.95.

Also new from Fos is an HO kit for a small cab stand and repair shop called Blue Bird Taxi. It occupies a footprint of about 3" x 3" and features the same

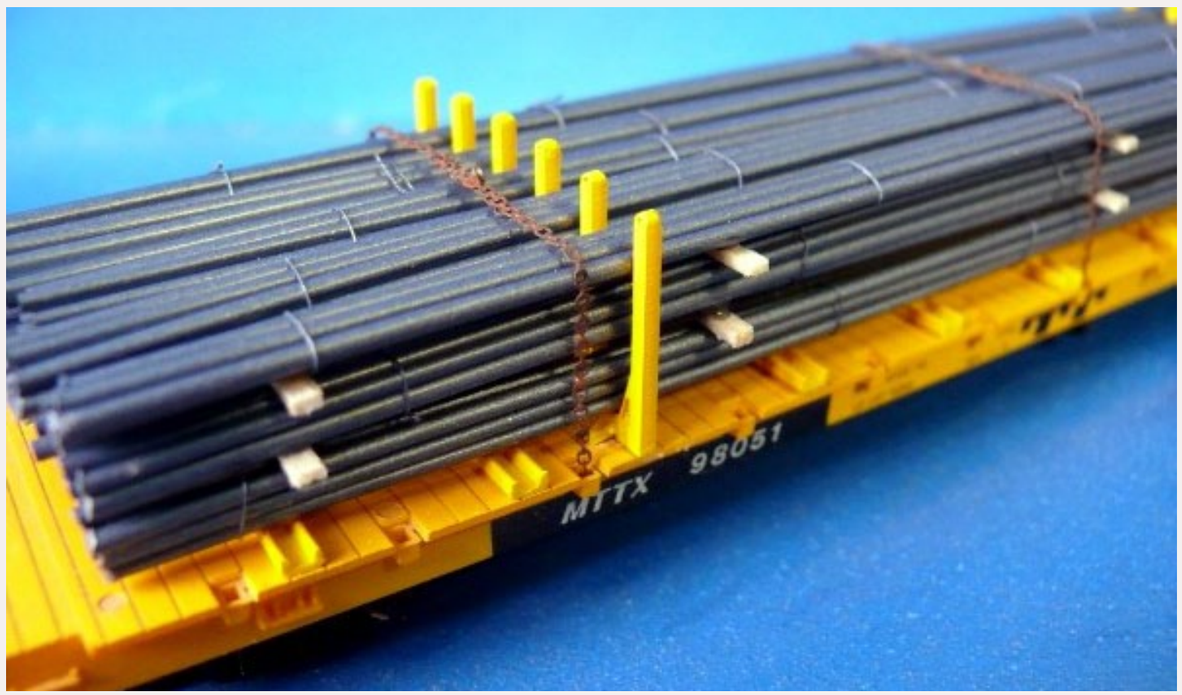
type of construction and component mix as Jimmie Dee's. Blue Bird Taxi is priced at $47.50. Both kits are limited run editions with only 100 of each scheduled for production.

ExactRail (www.exactrail.com) has released another group of road names for its HO scale Pullman Standard 7315 waffle boxcar including the Milwaukee Road car shown here. Other roads are ATSF, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific,

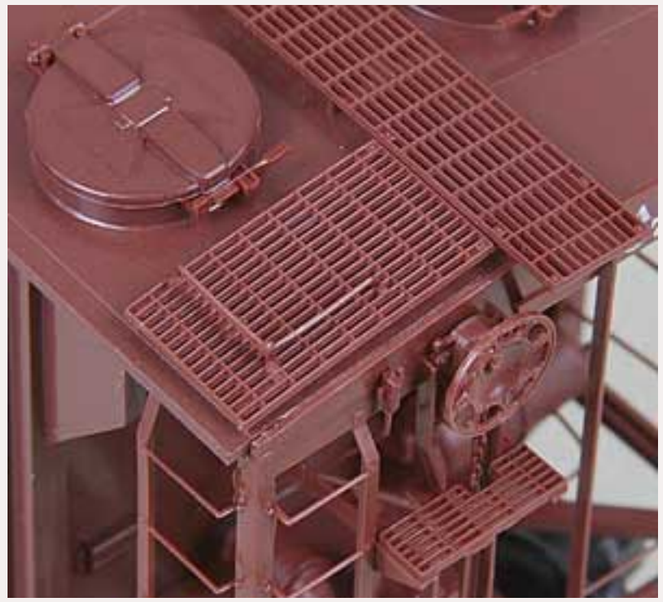
Close-up view of end detail on ExactRail HO scale P-S 7315 waffle boxcar.

GTW and Norfolk Western. The Platinum series ready-to-run car is priced at $32.95 and features Kadee #58 couplers and ASF 100-ton Ride-Control® trucks with 36" machined metal wheels.

InterMountain (www.intermountain-railway.com) is modifying the tooling for its HO scale class AC-12 Cab Forwards so they will be capable of producing class AC-8, AC-10 and AC-11 variations of these Southern Pacific steam locomotives. Speaking of AC-12s, of the nine different road numbers on the recently completed run, the most popular road number was 4294, the last existing prototype AC-12 which now resides in the California State Railroad Museum at Sacramento. The Old Yardmaster suggests you include a close look at that very impressive locomotive during the NMRA Convention this summer.



HO scale kits for the finger rack and rebar load pictured here are available now from **JWD Premium Products.** In addition to the Athearn/MDC 60' flat car shown, the load kits are also compatible with MTH 60' flats and Atlas Trainman 68' flat cars. The kit includes 15 bundles of steel rod, two cast resin finger racks, nine cast resin deck U-channels, basswood for the load dividers, a photo etched brass detail sheet, which includes three sets of tie-down chains and the angle brackets, and special TTJX decals. The kits are $24.98 each and may be ordered direct at (www.jwdpremiumproducts.com).

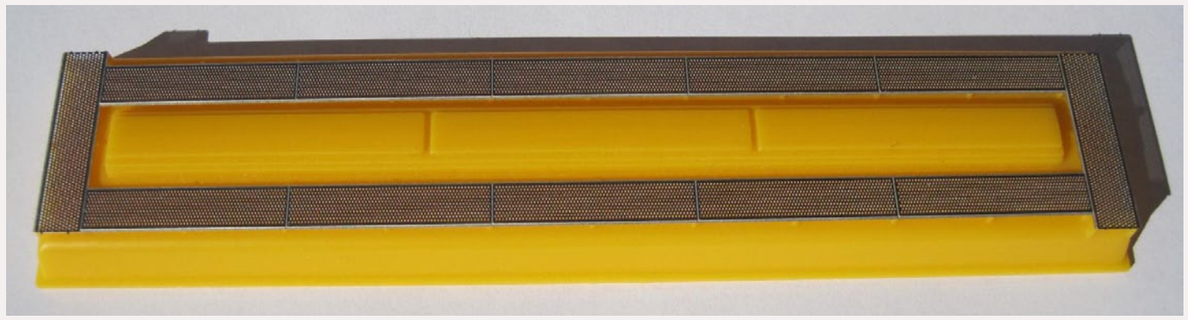


This close-up photo shows some of the exceptional detail on **Kadee Quality Product's** (www.kadee.com) HO scale PS-2 twin-bay covered hopper car. A ready-to-run version with hat-rib side braces decorated for Baltimore & Ohio in the 1955 as-built gray scheme will be released this month. Other newly released Kadee models include a St Louis Southwest 40' boxcar with an 8' Youngstown door, and a Great Northern 50' boxcar with 10' Youngstown door and cushion underframe decorated in the 1966 as-built Great Northern green paint scheme. All of the cars mentioned feature Kadee's new two-piece self-centering trucks.

Kato USA has an unusual offering of undecorated kits for its HO scale ES44AC locomotive. Three different cab styles are available in this limited program that includes all of the parts needed to assemble an ES44AC "GEVO" diesel. Kit

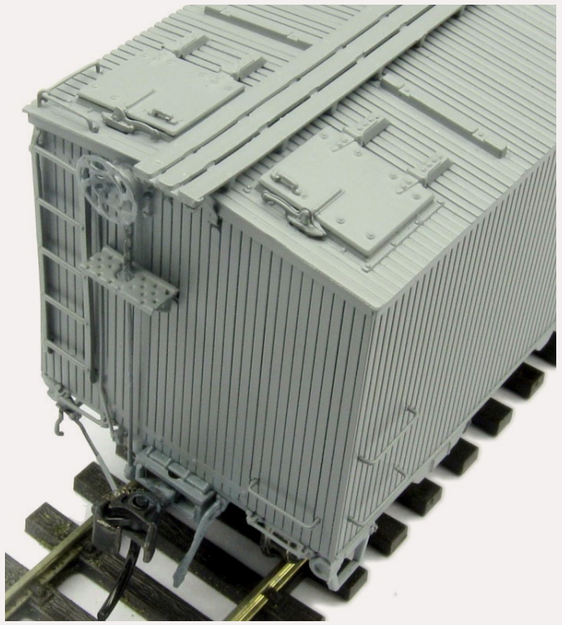
#921710P includes a complete undecorated body shell with a UP-style cab, Kit #921711P is for the CP-style cab, and Kit #921712P is for a BNSF-style cab. Each kit also includes a complete GE 4400 series mechanism, a GE late-type fuel tank, a pair of GE Hi-Adhesion trucks and a Kato jewel case without foam inserts. The kits are available from Kato Parts (www.katousa.com) at $110 each prepaid to anywhere in the world.

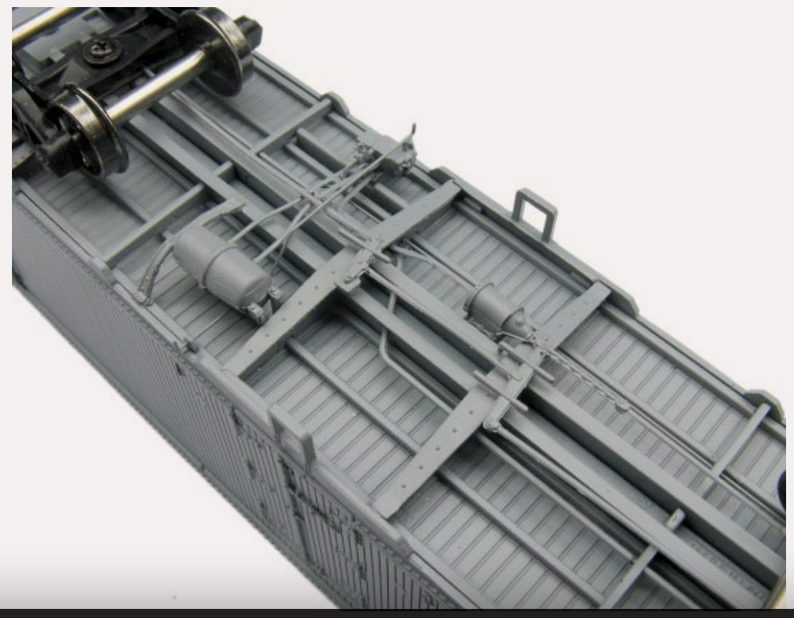
Tool specialist **Micro-Mark** (www.micro-mark.com) has a "Track Cleaner On A Stick" that simplifies cleaning HO gauge track in hard-to-reach locations such as on thru-bridges and inside tunnels. The tool consists of a .75" round rubberized cleaning head impregnated with silicon carbide particles. The head is mounted on a slender aluminum handle that can be extended from 10" to 30" in length. Micro-Mark item #82992 sells for $19.95.



Plano Model Products (www.planomodelproducts.com) is selling an etched stainless-steel replacement walkway for McKean HO scale hopper cars. Zoom in on the above photo for a close look at the detail of the Gypsum diamond pattern. This neat item sells for $8.

Rapido (www.rapidotrains.com) showed pre-production samples of its highly-anticipated HO scale GATC wood reefer car at the RPM meet held last month in Cocoa Beach, Florida. Although still in the final stages of development, the model promises to faithfully replicate the 37' prototype class RSM meat reefers General American Transportation Corporation built between 1937 and 1941. Rapido consulted with an impressive group of freight car experts in developing the model including Ed Hawkins, Richard Hendrickson, Frank Peacock, Jerry Stewart and Pat Wider.

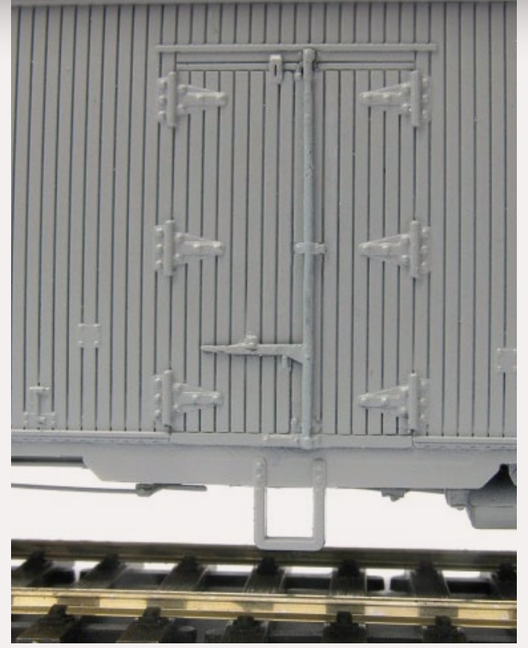




The wood sheathed body and roof give the car the look of an earlier era, however, the reefers were entirely modern for their time. They were constructed on a steel underframe of similar construction to boxcar underframes of the period and featured AB brakes and Barber S-1 trucks.

Steel ice hatches with unique latches and Equipco brake wheels and gear housing contrast with the tongue and groove body sheathing and wood running board. For those interested, the prototype was thoroughly documented in Railroad Prototype Cyclopedia #14 available at www.rpcy-cpub.com.

Rapido's determination to replicate all undercar details is evident in this photo that shows AB brake equipment and a steel underframe similar to boxcars of the era. Additional details including brackets and rivets will be included in the final tooling.



Note the tabbed side sill and heavy wood reefer doors hung on three hinges utilizing the GARX triangular hinge design. Rivet and bolt-head detail are yet to be finalized in the tooling. The ready-to-run models will be priced at $39.95 and if all goes well in the next few months, production models may be ready by the time of the NMRA convention this summer. Since Rapido schedules production runs based on orders, now is the time to contact your dealer and make a commitment. Visit www.rapidotrains.com for a list of road names.

Photo by David Hussey

Rapido also showed this pre-production sample of its HO scale GMD FP9A at the Cocoa Beach meet. Noting that there are significant differences between the FP9As built by EMD (Electro-Motive Division of GM) in La Grange, Illinois and those built by GMD (General Motors Diesel Division) in London, Ontario, Bill Schneider of Rapido said their forthcoming HO model will be the first correct plastic model ever produced. In addition to the extended length of the FP9A body, additional spotting features of the Canadian-built version include the fuel tanks, end door, rooftop fans, piping on the roof-mounted cooling coils, grab iron locations, and winterization hatches. Dealer orders for the FP9A are being booked now for Algoma Central (silver, red and yellow scheme in three road numbers plus no #), Canadian National (1954 scheme in six road numbers plus no #), Canadian National (1961 wet noodle scheme in six road numbers plus no#), VIA Rail Canada (six road numbers), VIA Canadian National (wiped-nose scheme in two road numbers), and undecorated. DC versions of the locomotive will have an MSRP of $169.95. DCC units with Soundtraxx Tsunami sound will be $299.95. Incidentally, the special Soundtraxx units will have the unique sound of Canadian air horns.

Rapido No Warp Grills®. Rapido will introduce a new design concept in its FP9A that prevents the etched metal grilles* along the side of the locomotive from warping. Called No Warp Grills®, the etched metal grill (sp) slides into a groove incorporated in the side of the injection molded body. A video demonstrating the effectiveness of the No Warp Grills® is available at: www.youtube.com/user/rapidotrains#p/u/0/_R4dlk_zb9Q.

* Rapido founder Jason Shron admits that “grills” should be spelled “grilles” but, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, he explained that because his company is Canadian, he was concerned they might be confused with a French pastry chef named Gilles, in which case Rapido’s product logo wouldn’t work. Jason asked rhetorically, “How, exactly, do you warp a pastry chef? So we left out the ‘e’.” The Old Yardmaster suspects it is nothing more than a marketing ploy – and a successful one at that.

Replacement power trucks for Rapido’s HO scale Turbo Train are available direct at factory cost. They are priced at $10.75 per set plus shipping and handling. Each set includes two power trucks with improved gear ratio. Rapido cautions that this is not a simple replacement and strongly suggests that only experienced modelers with advanced skills should attempt to make the change. Even then, there is always a risk that a model may be damaged during the installation procedure.

Sidetrack Laser (www.sidetracklaser.com) has released an HO scale kit for this Yardmaster’s Office. The kit is part of the company’s easy-to-build Trackside Series and features laser-cut structural components and building details, Northeastern Scale Lumber doors and windows, a standing-seam metal roof and cast details The pickup and track section are not included. The kit is available now at $48.95. Owner Larry Cantrall will display the full line of Sidetrack Laser kits at several forthcoming California shows including O Scale West in Santa Clara and Great Train Expo in Sacramento and Anaheim.

After eight years of concentrating on S scale products, Jim King, of **Smoky Mountain Model Works** (www.smokymountainmodelworks.com), says he is ready to focus on producing HO scale resin kits. He will still produce some S scale items but HO will take precedence. Toward that goal King has purchased the HO line developed by Burl Rice, which will be converted to one-piece resin body kits. Next up will be a Southern Railway 60000-series gondola built in 1953 and lasting into the 1990s in MOW service. The decal sheet will cover three car number series in both Roman and block lettering styles. Orders are being booked now for delivery this spring.

Sound & Northwestern (www.snwlines.com) has released an HO scale kit for a Sears catalog house that was listed in the famous catalog from 1919 to 1929. Called "The Rodessa," the multimedia kit includes components laser-cut from styrene, micro-plywood and Lazerboard. Cast resin details are also included in this advanced-level kit composed of over 180 parts. It is available for $63.95 direct from the manufacturer.

Here is a preview look at a new HO scale resin tank car **Sunshine Models** will introduce early this month at the Great Scale Model Train Show in Timonium, Maryland. This pilot model of the GATC tank car was built by Frank Hodina who created the masters for the Sunshine kit. For additional information including how to order visit www.sunshinekits.com.

Tangent Scale Models begins its 4th year of operation with the release of its Pullman Standard PS-2CD 4740 covered hopper car in five new paint jobs including the TLCX Farmers Grain Dealer Association with FGDA football logo shown here. Other new decorating schemes for the acclaimed HO scale ready-to-run car include TLCX Tabor & Company (blue body), TLDX Kellogg Grain in

the original 1967 green body with yellow lettering, TLCX Highland Feeders, and CB&Q in the original 1967 gray with "Burlington Route" herald. The cars are priced at $42.95 with discounts offered for quantity purchases. An undecorated kit is also available with either Apex or Morton running boards. To order go to www.tangentscalemodels.com.

This pulpwood flat car will be available from **Walthers** (www.walthers.com) in late March decorated for Canadian National as well as Georgia Pacific, CP, TTX, Southern, and Wisconsin Central. The HO scale ready-to-run cars have an MSRP of $19.98 each.

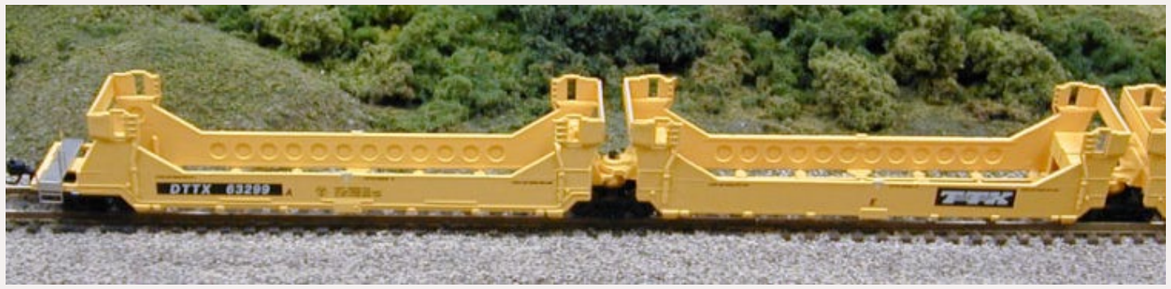
Walthers is quoting a late March delivery date for a new series of six Front Runners and trailers (next page) with an MSRP of $29.98 each. TTUX Front Runners will come with 45' trailers decorated for BN, FEC and DRGW as seen above. TTOX Front Runners for ATSF, BNSF and TIP will have 48' trailers.

Walthers is preparing a limited run of the Proto2000™ EMD class 16 F3 warbonnet diesel in both A-B and single A sets. The big attraction here is the metal finish that does a good job of simulating the look of stainless steel. The ready-to-run HO scale models will be available with DCC and sound as well as for standard DC operation. These iconic Santa Fe locomotives are an obvious match for Walther's series of Super Chief cars.

N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

Atlas plans to deliver the next release of its N scale General Electric Dash 8-40C/CW diesel locomotive in August. The production run will include two limited edition models, as shown on the next column, decorated for GE demonstrator "Web W. Morse" and CSX-Spirit of America. Standard versions will include BNSF-Heritage 3 (orange/black/yellow), Conrail (blue/white), Santa Fe (silver/red/yellow warbonnet), CN (black/red/white), CN-15th Anniversary (black/red/white), Union Pacific (yellow/grey/red), CSX-YN2 (gray/blue/yellow), and CSX-YN3 (blue/yellow). Three undecorated models will be available in the distinct body styles of Conrail, ATSF and CSX/UP. The limited edition models will have an MSRP of $149.95 (standard DC) and $189.95 (with DCC decoder installed). Standard and undec models will be $5 less.

Bluford Shops (www.bluford-shops.com) is taking advance orders for delivery this summer on a new production run of N scale 70-ton 3-bay hopper cars. Road names in this release will include Atlantic Coast Line, C&IM, Norfolk & Western, and Canada Southern. The ready-to-run cars have an MSRP of $18.95 and will be available in six different road numbers.



Deluxe Innovations (www.deluxeinnovations.com) is booking orders for delivery this summer of early Gunderson-built 5-unit Twinstack bulkhead well cars. The last production run of these models was more than eight years ago. Each five-car

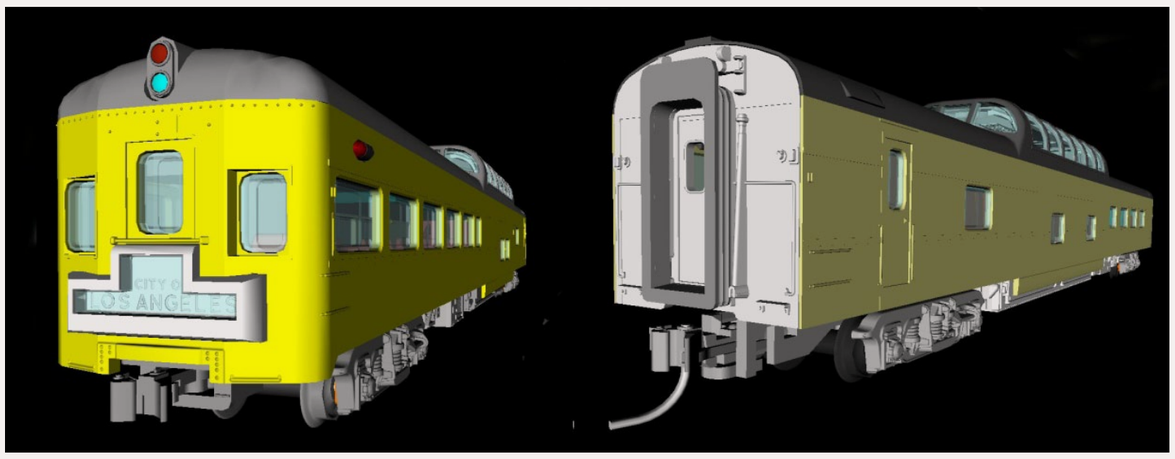
Send us your product announcements

If you are a hobby manufacturer with a product announcement, just click here and submit your announcement to us.

Our website and free magazine reach continues to grow, so get on board with this new media train that's hard to stop!

set of the ready-to-run N scale model will be priced at $89.95. Road names will include DTTX with four different numbered sets, Sea-Land with NYSE reporting marks in two numbered sets, and two numbered sets with BNSF reporting marks patched over the original BN marks.

ExactRail (www.exactrail.com) has released its N scale PS-2C 4427 covered hopper in several new road names including the Pillsbury car shown here. Other roads in this release include D&RGW, Union Pacific, Burlington Northern, and ATSF. The cars feature McHenry knuckle-sprung couplers and Athearn 100-ton trucks with 36" machined metal wheels. The car has an MSRP of $24.95. Although factory stock may already be depleted on some of the roads mentioned, those interested should check the above website which includes a list of dealers that stock ExactRail products.



Kato USA (www.katousa.com) has released these computer-generated graphics as a preview of their N scale 11-car City of Los Angeles train set scheduled to be released in late March. On the left is an end view of the COLA dome-lounge-observation car #9003. On the right is a similar view of COLA dome-diner #8004.

Also scheduled for release in March is another round of Kato's N scale "bull-dog nosed" E8 and E9 diesels that EMD produced with the shorter F7-style front end, single headlights and straight pilots. First up will be E8A units with non-dynamic brakes decorated for Amtrak Phase 1 and Penn Central. They will be followed in mid-year with Union Pacific E9A units (above), with dynamic brakes. Powered B units will be available in all three roadnames. The ready-to-run models feature directional gold-white LED headlights and illuminated number boards. The locomotives are compatible with Digitrax DN163K0A and Train Control Systems K0D8 series DCC decoders. All units carry a $95 MSRP.

Micro-Trains (www.micro-trains.com) is selling this N scale SOO Line 100-ton three-bay covered hopper with elongated hatches and wheat-stalk herald for $24.40. The prototype was built in late 1967 and remained on the Soo Line until the 1990s.

Also new from Micro-Trains is the Conrail 60' boxcar (next page) with dual 8' Youngstown plug doors, and waffle sides with exterior posts. Lettering includes

the white logo and an excess-height mask on the ends. The prototype was built in 1978 by Berwick Forge & Fabricating. The N scale ready-to-run model sells for $23.20.

Walthers (www.walthers.com) is scheduled to begin shipping this N scale Greenville 100-ton hopper car this month. The model features a well-detailed one-piece body, a heavy diecast underframe, and working knuckle couplers. Road names include the Southern scheme shown here plus Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, Wisconsin Central, Granite Rock, Golden West and undecorated. The ready-to-run model has an MSRP of $16.98.

NEW MULTIPLE-SCALE DECALS

Jerry Glow has completed decal art work for a post-war Northern Pacific boxcar. The decal features the NP herald and "Main Street of the Northwest" slogan. The art can be viewed at http://home.comcast.net/~jerryglow/samples/NPcar.jpg. The decals are available in most popular scales and can be ordered by contacting Jerry at gerryglow@comcast.net.

Microscale (www.microscale.com) has released N and HO scale decal sets for Seaboard Coast Line 40' and 50' general service freight cars; Denver & Rio Grande Western 50' single and double door boxcars including high-cube and insulated cars; Chicago & North Western 40' and 50' brown boxcar sets that include multiple heralds and data for both yellow and white lettering variations; and an Ann Arbor set suitable for locomotives, cabooses and freight cars. Still on the drawing board but due soon are new decals for Great Northern gray covered hoppers and Western Pacific steel cabooses.

Rail Yard Models (www.railyardmodels.com) has multiple road names for HO scale decals for a variety of modern freight cars such as Union Tank sulfuric acid tank cars, Fruehauf 52-6 gondolas, P-C 4785 covered hoppers (20 roads), 50' X58 boxcars (11 roads), NAC PD-3000 covered hoppers and more.

INDUSTRY NEWS

New Site Pending for RPM/Naperville Meet
Illinois, Naperville – Joe D'Elia, producer of the RPM/Naperville Meet, is currently negotiating with several hotels for a new home for the event. D'Elia, who took over the long-running RPM meet last year from founder Martin Lofton, recently learned that the Holiday Inn in Naperville had been shut down and the staff dismissed. No information was available on if, or when, the hotel might reopen. D'Elia told MRH he is confident that the event will continue to be held in late October in the same general area as in the past.

Jim Boyd 1941-2010
New Jersey, Newton – Noted railroad editor and photographer Jim Boyd has died at the age of 69. Memorial services were held in Newton on January 6th. Born in Dixon, Illinois, young Boyd grew up within sight of steam operations on the Illinois Central Railroad and became a life-long photographer of all things having to do with trains. In the 1960s he worked for ElectroMotive Division of GM, first as a field technician and later in the dream job of delivering new EMD locomotives to customers. He began his long-time association with Carstens Publications as a contributor before becoming a full-time employee. He worked on several magazines including *Flying Models* and *Railroad Model Craftsman.* Beyond his sometimes gruff exterior, Boyd was known as a helpful teacher to many aspiring writers and photographers. He was the first editor of *Railfan* magazine on its introduction in 1974 and continued to serve as editor of the expanded *Railfan & Railroad* magazine until 1998. He served as editor emeritus and author of the popular Camera Bag column until recent months. His legacy will continue for friends and rail fans through the more than two dozen hardcover railroad pictorials he authored, including several published by Morning Star Books.

Micro Engineering Embezzled
Missouri, Fenton – An office employee of Micro Engineering, Inc., has been arrested and charged with stealing $25,000. Authorities said the suspect had been an employee for the last eight years during which she fraudulently removed checks from the business account, forged checks, and later cashed them for personal benefit. Investigators suggest the fraud could surpass $200,000. Micro Engineering manufactures structures, bridge components, Flex-Trak© and turnouts in several scales as well as the Wheel Works brand of HO and N scale vehicles. Micro Engineering is operated by founder Bob Rands and his son Ron.

Historical Model Donated By Mark Morgensen
Montana, Harlowton – An HO scale brass model of a Milwaukee Road EP-3 electric locomotive has been donated to the Upper Musselshell Historic Society by Mark Morgensen of Precision Scale Company. The handcrafted model is valued at $2000. The prototype EP-3 was an electric locomotive that pulled passenger trains over the electrified portion of the Milwaukee Road in the Rocky and Cascade Mountains. The museum's more than 550 models are said to be the largest collection of HO scale Milwaukee Road models open to the American public.

ExactRail gets new CEO
Utah, Orem – ExactRail has named John Pestana president and chief executive officer (CEO). The title was previously held by co-founder Chris Clune, who will give up day-to-day operations of the company to focus his attention on product development. Founded in 2009, ExactRail has rapidly built a reputation for producing accurate HO and N scale freight car models. Prior to launching ExactRail with Clune, Pestana was the co-founder of Omniture, a student-run software company that Pestana helped build into a worldwide, publicly traded company with more than 1,200 employees. Omniture was sold to software giant Adobe in 2009.

Branchline Train's HO Stock Purchase
New Jersey, Hillside – Atlas Model Railroad Company has purchased all of the inventory, parts and tooling of Branchline Trains' HO scale rolling stock including the Yardmaster series of freight cars and the upscale Blueprint series of passenger and freight cars. On-going negotiations were concluded earlier this month with the sale effective January 24.

Atlas currently offers a broad selection of products for model railroad hobbyists including locomotives and freight cars in O, HO and N scale plus passenger cars in O scale. The acquisition of Branchline passenger cars will be Atlas' initial entry in that product category. Branchline rolling stock is manufactured in the US although on occasion, some piece parts produced here have been sent to Asia for final assembly. Atlas generally contracts its manufacturing to specialty firms based in Asia. ☑

...

Selected Events
February 2011

CALIF., MONROVIA, Feb 17-19, 26th Annual Sn3 Symposium, includes layout tours. Speakers include John McKenzie, Lloyd Lehrer and Steve Harris. Double Tree Hotel, 924 W. Huntington Drive. Info at: www.sn3-2011.com.

CANADA, ONTARIO, Copetown, February 20, 2011 Copetown Train Show presented by Canadian Association of Railway Modellers, Copetown Community Centre, 1950 Governor's Road (east of Hwy 52). Info at www.caorm.org/copetown/.

GEORGIA, ATLANTA, Feb 12-13, World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, at Cobb Galeria. Info at www.wghshow.com.

MARYLAND, TIMONIUM, February 5-6, Great Scale Model Train Show & Railroad Marketplace, Maryland State Fairgrounds. Produced by Howard Zane and Ken Young. Info at www.gsmts.com.

MINN., MINNEAPOLIS, Feb 19, Gopher Rail 2011, sponsored by RR Club of Univ. of Minn., 1701 University Ave SE, Speakers include Arlyn Colby, Steve Glischinski, Greg Smith, Mike Bargmann, Bill Knebler.

OHIO, MENTOR, Feb 19-20, Winter Open House, Western Reserve Model RR Museum, 7230 Justin Way. Info at www.wrmrrm.org.

OREGON, PORTLAND, Feb 19-20, Great Train Expo, Portland Expo Center. Info at www.greattrainexpo.com.

March 2011

CALIF., SANTA ROSA, NMRA PCR 67th Annual Convention, Finley Community Center, 2060 W. College Ave. Info at www.pcrnmra.org.

CALIF., STOCKTON, Mar 12, Winterail 2011, 3rd Annual Railroad Photography Exposition & Railroadiana Show, Scottish Rite Masonic Center, 33 W. Alpine Ave. Info at www.winterail.com.

GEORGIA, PORT WENTWORTH (SAVANNAH), March 25-26, Savannah Prototype Modeler's Meet, Port Wentworth Community Center, 102 Turnberry St. Info at www.savannahrpm.com or send email to Bob Harpe at rharpe@comcast.net.

ILL., LOMBARD, Mar 11-13, Chicago O Scale Meet, Westin Lombard Yorktown Center. Info at www.marchmeet.net.

OHIO, CANFIELD, March 24-26, Midwest Narrow Gauge Show, South Range Middle School Building, West South Range Road. HQ at Hampton Inn, Route 11, Canfield.

OREGON, ELSIE, Mar 5, 2011 Pacific Model Loggers' Congress, Camp 18 Restaurant & Logging Museum. Includes clinics and model contest. Info from www.pacificmodelloggerscongress.com.

PENN., GREENBURG, March 25-26, RPM-East. Seminar presenters include Keith Albright, Art Biehler, Jim Dalberg, Keith DeVault, Paul Dolkos, Gary Dunmire, Bruce Elliott, Dick Flock, Nick Fry, Steve Funaro, Paul Gallick, Eric Hansmann, Roger Hinman, Bob Karig, Larry Kline, Ramon Rhodes, John Roberts, Steve Ross, Jim Ruffing, Stan Rydarowicz, Mike Schleigh, Chip Syme, John Wesner and Tom Wilson. Sheraton Four Points Hotel. Info at www.hans-manns.org/rpm_east/2011.htm.

PENN., MONACA, Beaver County Spring Model Train Show, Center Stage, 1495 Old Brodhead Road. Info at www.bcmrr.railfan.net.

Future 2011

CALIF., SACRAMENTO, July 3-9, NMRA National and National Association of S Gaugers Combined Conventions, Sheraton Grand Hotel. Info at www.x2011west.org.

CALIF., SACRAMENTO, July 7-9, National Train Show, Sacramento Convention Center. Info at www.x2011west.org/trainshow.html.

COLORADO, LITTLETON (DENVER), June 10-13, 5th Annual Rocky Mountain RPM Meet, Littleton Baptist Church, 1400 W. Caley Ave. Info at http://rocky-mountainprototypemodelers.org.

ILLINOIS, NAPERVILLE, Oct, Naperville RPM Meet. Specific dates and location are pending.

MAINE, GRAY, April 2, 4th Annual Maine Narrow Gauge Show, Gray-New Gloucester High School, 10 Libby Hill Road (off route 26).

MASS., MANSFIELD, Nov 7-9, Craftsman Structure Convention, Holiday Inn. Info at www.csc11.net.

MASS., PEABODY, Oct 13-15, The Fine Scale Model Railroader Expo, Holiday Inn. New event includes extended paid clinics from experts including Lou Sassi, Dave Frary, Bob Hayden, and Bob Mitchell. For clinic costs and additional details visit www.modelrailroadexpo.com.

N. CAROLINA, HICKORY, Sep 7-10, 33rd National Narrow Gauge Convention, Hickory Metro Convention Center, featuring layout tours, clinics, vendor displays, prototype events and narrow gauge camaraderie. Headquarters hotel (Crown Plaza) has sold out. Visit web site at www.narrowgauge2011.com for information on alternative hotel space.

OHIO, MARION, May 20-22, Central Ohio Prototype Modelers Meet, Marion Union Station.

PENN., KIMBERTON, May 19-22, Annual Mid-Atlantic Narrow Gauge Meet, Kimberton Volunteer Fire Department Building.

PENN., HERSHEY, June 22-26, National N Scale Convention. Harrisburg/Hershey Sheraton Hotel, 4650 Lindle Rd., Harrisburg. Info at www.nationaln-scaleconvention.com. ■

About our news and events editor

Richard Bale writes our news column under the byline of *The Old Yardmaster.* He has been writing about the model railroad trade for various hobby publications since the 1960s.

He enjoys building models, particularly structures, some of which appeared in the June 2006 issue of ***Model Railroader*** magazine.

REVERSE RUNNING: Buying your way into model railroading?

Stepping outside the box with a contrary view

Reader Feedback
(click here)

— by Joe Fugate

RTR – Ready To Run – is the topic of discussion now and then on various online forums about the hobby. The opinions vary, but the most common view is concern for how the hobby is moving away from the satisfaction of "building it yourself" toward becoming a hobby you buy your way into.

Let's step back and examine this. Today, HO makes up about 60% of the hobby, with N being about a third of HO. Next comes O scale at about a third of N, followed by S, which is roughly one-third of O. Then what's left is Z, G, TT, OO and a few other minority scales.

HO, O, and OO scale have a rich history in the hobby going back to the first half of the 20th Century. S and TT came along a bit later, while N, G, and Z are late 20th Century developments.

Regardless of the scale, we find that when the older scales started, you had to build nearly everything! And I mean everything. Wheel sets, rail, power packs – none of it existed at first. By the late 1950s with the application of mass production to the hobby and the public's craze over train sets, debates started that RTR was going to ruin the hobby!

That's right! This debate has been around for a long time.

Are you "buying your way into the hobby" when you buy a DCC system? Shouldn't you build it yourself? What about buying that F7 to which you then spend hours applying extra detail and even more time weathering to look like a specific prototype loco? Come on – it was ready to run! Shouldn't you build it yourself from scratch? And don't wimp out by purchasing a pre-made chassis!

If you look at the newer scales like N, G, and Z, there is no RTR versus build-it-yourself debate. Nor does this debate rage on in S scale, where you've always had to build a lot yourself. No, the RTR debate is largely confined to the oldest of scales – HO and O – the scales that were birthed in build-it-yourself.

I maintain the "buy your way into the hobby" is hand-wringing over a non-issue. We all buy our way into the hobby unless we start by mining and smelting the copper, iron, and zinc ourselves, and drill for crude oil, refine it, and manufacture the plastic. Hey wait, can we use tools that we bought? Oh bother, how do you build a refinery? Even the most rabid scratchbuilders are paying others to do some of the advance work! So it's really a matter of degree rather than an absolute.

In the final analysis, we all pick a level of "buying our way" into the hobby. I can buy my way into the hobby at the motor and bare chassis level, I can buy my way into the hobby by extensively bashing a commercial kit, or I can buy RTR and super-detail it some or not at all.

If you're having fun with model trains, is there really any reason to start splitting hairs over how much you paid someone else to do some of the work for you? At the end of the day, isn't a hobby really about doing what you enjoy? If you paid someone else to do the bits you don't like, what of it?

Thank goodness I can buy my way into model railroading. My layout is far too big for me to be building everything on it all by myself! I'll let someone else extrude the rails in my flex track! ☑

Having fun with trains!

Coming in the March 2011 issue

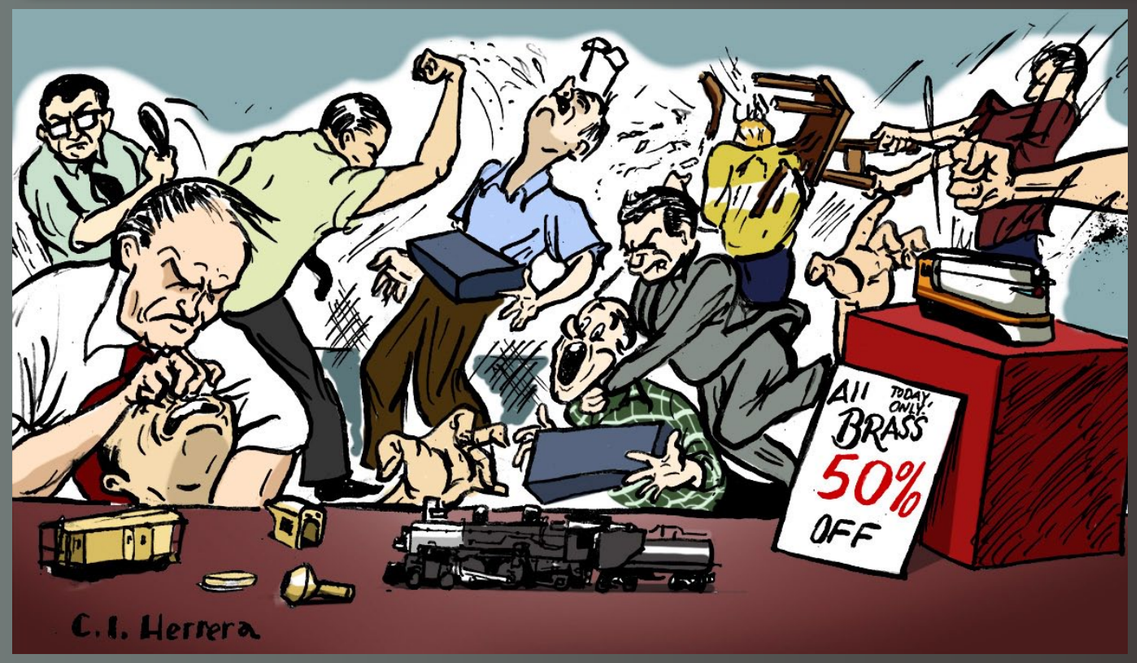
- Kermit Paul's Lone Pine and Tonapah Railroad
- Track is a model, too!
- Modeling a NS high side gondola
- Tips for getting the most from historical societies
- West Goffs signal switch equipment
- Coffman clamps
- Building a billboard kit

... and lots more!

Derailments, humor, and Dashboard on next page ▶

Derailments

humor (allegedly)



Q: What kind of track side industry usually has the most car spots?
A: A paint-pellet factory! (blap... blap... blap blap blap... blap blap...)

A passenger was riding a mixed train, but the ride was so rough he had to hold on for dear life to stay in his seat. Finally he managed to get the attention of the conductor. “Hey, what gives? This has got to be the roughest section of track I’ve ever been on! Is something wrong?”

The conductor said, “Nope, it’s beer season. That’s why.”

“Huh?”

“The rest of the train is carrying hops to a brewery!”

Casey drove an engine, the engine had a bell. Casey went to heaven and the engine went not much of anyplace on account of it being a switcher and they just sorta hang around the yard all the time moving cars back and forth. But it sure did ring the bell a lot. Come to think of it, while Casey may’ve been driving that engine, that bell drove Casey absolutely nuts!

Got a good bit of humor? If you’re the first to submit it and we use it, it’s worth $10!

Reader Feedback *(click here)*

DASHBOARD

Toggle Full Screen

⇩ Printer-Friendly Version

⇩ Download PDF Version

Exit Document