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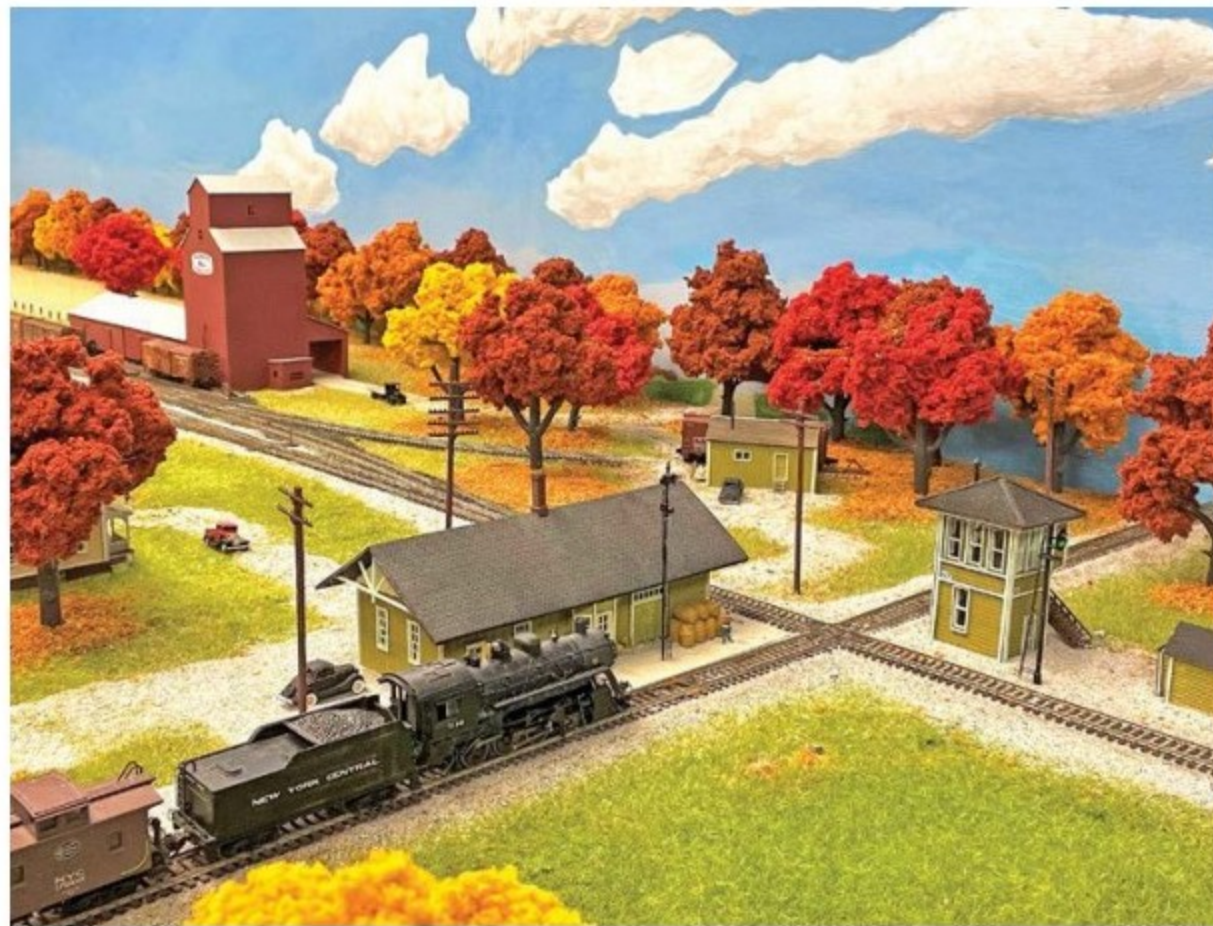
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This HO track plan is based on the Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville in 1960

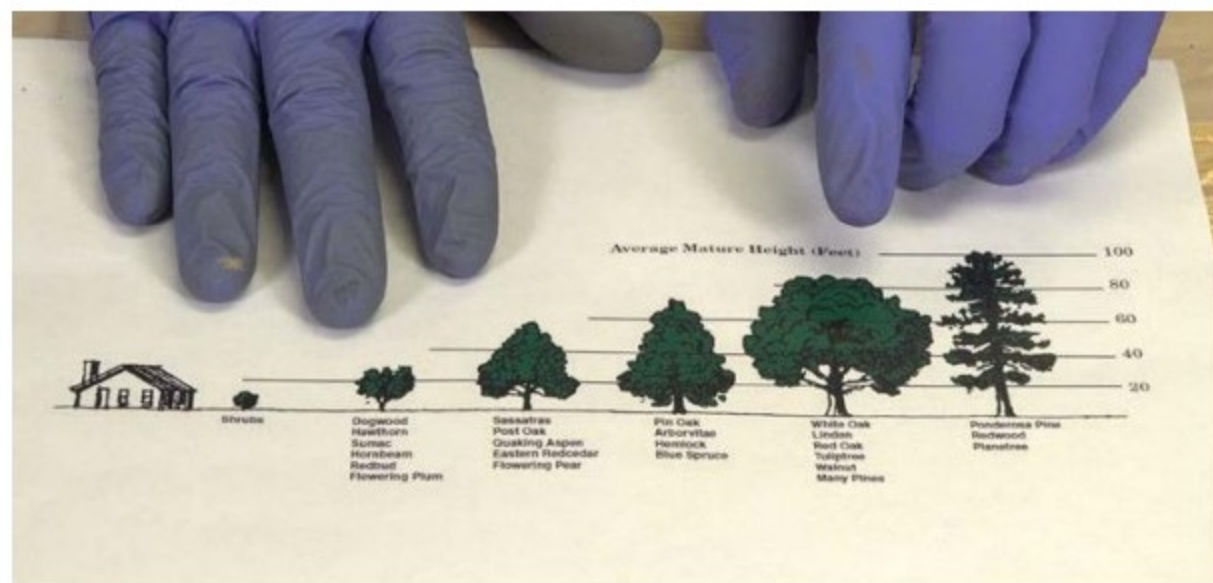
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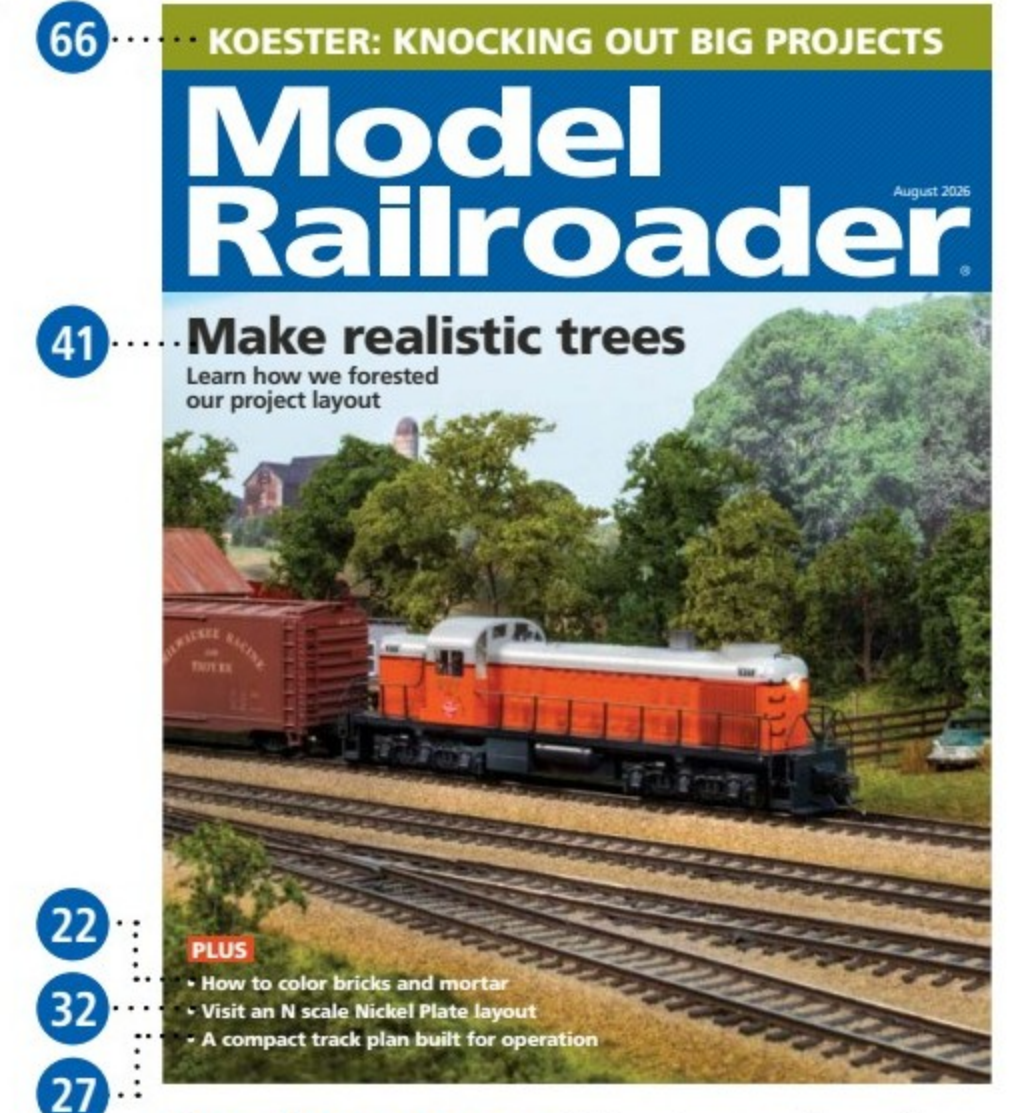
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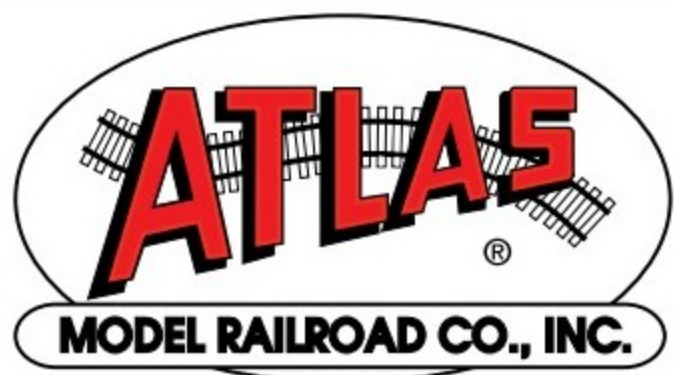


On the cover: We turn back time to when a Milwaukee Road local plied the rails of the East Troy Industrial Park. Cody Grivno photo



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Building a layout on a budget

We all know that model railroading takes time and money, but that doesn't mean you have to break the bank to have a layout. Lucas Iverson looked through our huge collection of track plans and layout stories, including some of our project layouts, to find model railroads that can be built on a modest budget.

Ron Stallman started with a traditional 4 x 8 sheet of plywood, then added on and revised over several years to build his Santa Fe Shortline. Check out Trains.com for more ideas from Lucas!



More on the East Troy Industrial Park project

In this month's issue, David Popp shows how he made trees for our East Troy Industrial Park project layout. If you want to learn more about the project, including watching videos of the construction, check out the series East Troy Industrial Park on Trains.com Video!



Looking back at a great layout

Jim Hertzog has shared the construction of his HO scale Reading Co. Shamokin Division layout many times over the years. We take a look back at one of the early stories that helped introduce the railroad to MR readers.

Jim's layout shows what can be done with a focused approach of getting the coal out of Pennsylvania's anthracite region and off to market. Editor Eric White was recently able to operate on Jim's layout, and reports it runs as good as it looks! See more on Trains.com.



N scale nostalgia sparked by gift

Former Classic Trains Editor Brian Schmidt is also an N scale modeler. He recently was given a collection of N scale models from the scale's early days, which inspired him to look into N scale history as he assessed the models in the collection, including freight cars, locomotives, and structures. Read about Brian's journey on Trains.com!

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Model railroad social time, AKA operations

Although you're reading this in August, or maybe July, I'm sitting down to write it just a couple weeks into May not long after returning from a trip east to run trains on some model railroads.

Model Railroader has long been a proponent of building layouts, and the question becomes, what do you do with it when it's built?

For many, the answer is to operate it. Operation can take many forms. For some, operation means collecting a bunch of rolling stock, hooking it up to a locomotive, and sending it around the layout. Many people call this railfanning a layout.

Others go to the opposite extreme and run their layouts as closely as possible to how the full-sized railroads did it. Though this can seem daunting when you're trying to figure it out while reading an article, once you have the trains in front of you it makes much more sense.

Both ends of the spectrum are fun, and however you do it, I hope you're enjoying it!

A recent experience running on Dave Barraza's Long Island Rail Road opened my eyes to the fun of commuter operations. Keeping an eye on the signals and the clock to get to the next station on time kept me on my toes!

I also got to run on Jim Hertzog's Reading Co. Shamokin Division, Tom Piccirillo's Somerset County Traction System, both of which have been covered in *Model Railroader*, and Jim Leighty's Central New York & New England, which will appear in an upcoming issue.

Each experience was different, though all used radios to talk to a dispatcher. The Reading and LIRR operations were modeled more faithfully on their prototypes, while the others took prototype elements and adapted them.

Of course, we pay a lot of attention to the trains when

we talk about operating, but one of the things that brings people back to these events is the friends made there.

None of us were regular operators on these layouts, so all of the owners had experienced crew members there to help us. We were free to make our own mistakes, and to tease each other when we did.

As long as we didn't put trains on the floor, everything was good. Sometimes we got in each others' way — a local tying up the main to switch cars or a yard suddenly having to deal with too many trains at once — but the mood was light with lots of banter.

It's this social interaction that's fun, and the layout owners get to see their creations come to life. If you've ever wondered what an operating session might be like, check out opsig.org. Members of the group post notices of upcoming operating sessions, and the open sessions are always welcoming new people.



Speaking of people who like operations, we learned our own Tony Koester, author of *Trains of Thought* and our consulting editor, is the first recipient of the St. Louis RPM Modeling Community Outstanding Service Award for contributions to the hobby. Tony was honored in July for his work in promoting the hobby, and his deep interest in prototype modeling and operations. Congratulations Tony!

Model Railroader

Model railroading is fun!

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HO scale



General Electric Dash 8-40CW diesel locomotive. New paint schemes on this six-axle road locomotive from Atlas include Illinois Central (blue with Canadian National "wet noodle" herald), CSX (YN3 with CSX.com), and Union Pacific (1,000th Dash 8 built). New road numbers are offered on models decorated for Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; Conrail (Quality scheme); CSX (YN2); LMS; and Union Pacific. The HO

scale Master Line model, offered in one to three numbers per scheme, features a plastic body, die-cast metal chassis, factory-installed and painted crew figures, and body-mounted metal couplers. Direct-current models with a 21-pin plug for DCC decoder retail for **\$209.95**. Versions with an ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder are priced at **\$329.95**. Atlas Model Railroad Co., 908-687-0880, shop.atlasrr.com

HO scale locomotives



• **2-8-0 steam locomotive.** Southern Pacific; Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; Canadian Pacific; Central of Georgia; Denver & Rio Grande Western; Louisville & Nashville; Pennsylvania RR; and Western Maryland. Two road numbers per paint scheme. Plastic body, die-cast metal frame, wire grab irons, five-pole motor with flywheels, 8-wheel drive and electrical pickup, light-emitting-diode lighting, and McHenry scale couplers. Minimum radius, 18"; recommended radius, 22". Direct-current model with 21-pin plug, \$239.99; with SoundTraxx Econami sound decoder, \$309.99. Athearn Trains, 800-338-4639, athearn.com



• **Bombardier LRC diesel locomotive.** VIA Rail (1981+ gray, blue, and yellow and 1980/1981 blue test schemes), Amtrak (phase 3), and Bombardier Transportation (gray test scheme). One to three road numbers per scheme. Improved body shell tooling, metal couplers, and wheel face profile; optional

bug deflector; etched-metal grills; and metal grab irons, handrails, and lift rings. Full lighting package with head-lights, ditch lights, marker lights, backup light, track lights, and strobe lights. Without sound, \$249.95; with ESU LokSound sound decoder and MoPower capacitor, \$359.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com



• **Electro-Motive Division FL9 diesel locomotive.** Steam generator-equipped: Conrail; Penn Central; Metro-North (blue-and-yellow patchout and beachball schemes); and New York, New Haven & Hartford. HEP-equipped: ConnDOT (New Haven McGinnis scheme) and Metro-North (beachball scheme). Two to four road numbers per scheme. HEP-equipped features: Morrison-Knudsen or Chrome Crankshaft body details, modernized underbody components, and front and rear m.u. and HEP receptacles. Steam generator-equipped features: Short, long, or no cab grab irons as appropriate; Hancock Airchime with deflector on front and without on rear; and steam generator details. Suggested minimum radius, 22". Direct-current model, \$239.95; with ESU LokSound sound decoder, \$349.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com



• **Electro-Motive Division GP60.** BNSF Ry., Denver & Rio Grande Western, Norfolk Southern, St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt), Southern Pacific, and Union Pacific. Four road numbers per paint scheme (two each in DC and DCC). Prototype-specific details; etched-metal lift rings; and heavy, die-cast metal underframe. Direct-current model with 21-pin DCC plug and factory-installed 28mm round speaker, \$249.98; with ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder, \$359.98. Walther's Proto. Wm. K. Walther's Inc., 414-527-0770, walther's.com

HO scale freight cars



• **FMC 4,700-cubic-foot capacity three-bay covered hopper.** Primed for Grime: Northwestern Oklahoma RR, ATHX Leasing, Caney Fork & Western, and Webb Asset Management. Standard schemes: Burlington Northern (Fort Worth & Denver reporting marks), PLM International, and Procor. Two single cars and one three-pack per scheme. Etched-metal running boards and

crossover platforms, two outlet gate variations, and wire grab irons. Single car, \$44.99 (Primed for Grime, \$49.99); three-pack, \$114.99 (Primed for Grime, \$129.99). Athearn Trains, 800-338-4639, athearn.com



- **Bethlehem 3350 quad coal hopper.** Seaboard System (1986+ repaint), CSXT (1990-1991+ Louisville & Nashville patchout), and Louisville & Nashville (1974 delivery orange, 1976 delivery with white slant lettering, and 1991+ with CSXT stencils). Twelve to 24 road numbers per scheme. Also available painted black but unlettered in multiple body styles. Prototype-specific details, 100-ton Barber S-2 trucks, and Kadee scale couplers. \$58.95. Tangent Scale Models, 828-412-3886, tangentscalemodels.com

HO scale commuter/passenger



- **Standard and CEM bi-level commuter cars.** Standard bi-level cars: GO Transit (single accessible coaches also available), Metrolink (coach [standard and converted cab car]), Northstar, SunRail (single cab cars and coaches only), Trinity Railway Express, Tri-Rail, and West Coast Express. CEM bi-level commuter cars: Altamont Commuter Express, Coaster, GO Transit, and Sounder. Both versions available as single coaches and three-car sets (cab car and two coaches) unless noted. Cab cars are pre-wired with speaker and 21-pin socket for DCC and sound. Inside-bearing trucks with metal wheelsets and detailed underbody. Single coach, \$129.95; single cab, \$149.95; and three-pack, \$409.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com



- **Bombardier LRC cars.** VIA Rail (Coach — 1981+ delivery, 1998+ Canada, 2013+ Renaissance, and 2018+ “The Future is on Board” schemes. Business class with 2+1 interior seating — 2013+ Renaissance and 2018+ “The Future is on Board” schemes. VIA 1 car — 1985+ delivery scheme and 2001+ swoosh logo) and Amtrak (coach, phase 3). One to

four road numbers per scheme. Wire grab irons, diaphragms with etched-metal end gates, and improved metal couplers. \$139.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com

N scale locomotives



- **Reading Co. T-1 4-8-4 steam locomotive.** Reading Co. (in-service scheme), American Freedom Train (restoration appearance), Chessie System Steam Special, and Reading & Northern (modern appearance). One to two road numbers per scheme. Die-cast metal locomotive body and chassis and smoke unit. Minimum operating radius, 9.75". Stealth (DC, no sound), \$359.99; with dual-mode Paragon4 sound decoder, \$449.99. Broadway Limited Imports, 386-673-8900, broadway-limited.com



- **Electro-Motive Division SD70MAC.** Metra (SD70MACH), Alaska RR, BNSF Ry. (including SD70MACe rebuilds), Burlington Northern, Colorado Pacific RR, CSX (SD70AC [standard and rebuild]), and Kansas City Southern (SD70MAC rebuild). One to four road numbers per paint scheme. Heavy, die-cast metal chassis and multiple nose and

cab variations. Direct-current model, \$189.95; with ESU LokSound sound decoder and MoPower capacitor, \$299.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com

N scale freight cars

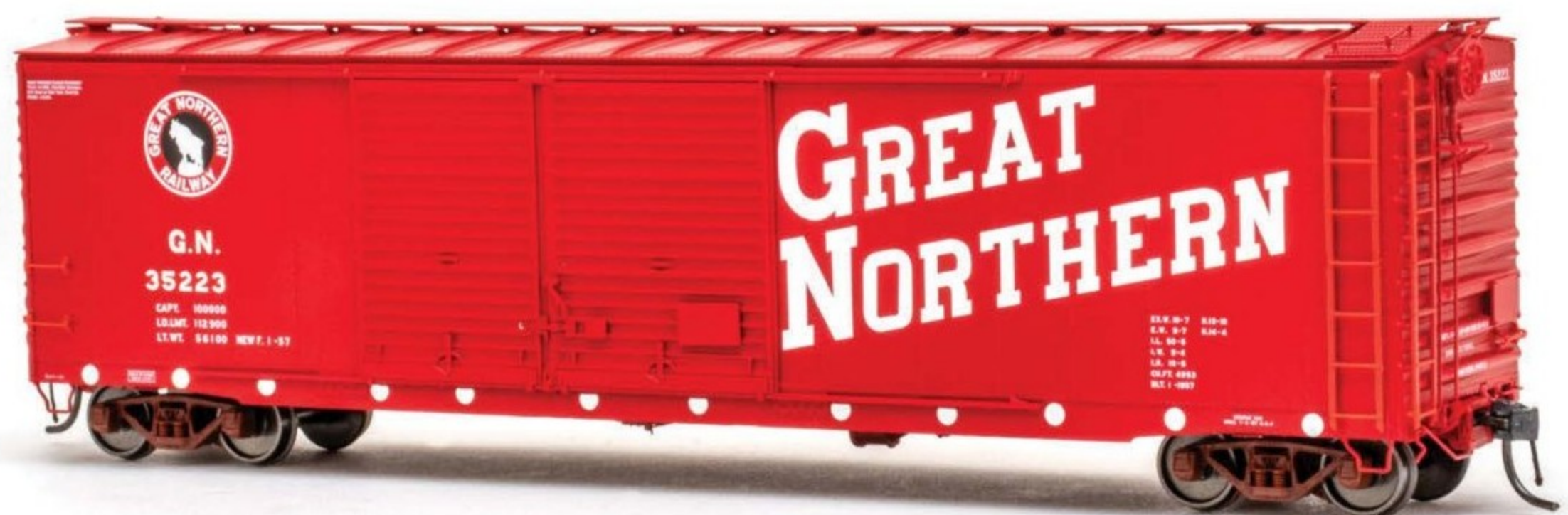


- **Union Tank Car Co. 33,000-gallon LPG tank car.** Chevron Phillips Chemical Co., Enbridge Energy, General Electric Rail Services, Procor, Trinity Industries Leasing, and Union Tank Car Co. Two single cars and one three-pack per scheme. Photo-etched metal walkways, double-shelf couplers, and 100-ton trucks. Minimum radius, 9¾". Single car, \$44.99; three-pack, \$111.99. Athearn Trains, 800-338-4639, athearn.com



- **Greenville 100-ton twin hopper.** New paint schemes: Hanson, Southern Pacific, Southern Ry., Trumix, and Wheeling & Lake Erie. New road numbers: Wisconsin Central. One to three numbers per scheme. Freestanding brake appliances and roller-bearing trucks. \$30.95. Master Line. Atlas Model Railroad Co., 908-687-0880, shop.atlasrr.com

HO scale



- **St. Cloud (Minn.)-built 50-foot offset double-door boxcar.** Road names on this Moloco boxcar include Great Northern (Vermillion Red, Big Sky Blue, and 750,000th car over Gavin Yard [Minot, N.D.] hump); Burlington Northern; and Spokane, Portland & Seattle. The HO scale boxcar, based on a GN prototype, is offered in one to six road numbers per paint scheme; undecorated kits are also available. Product features include welded Stanray R3-4 ends; car-number-specific handbrakes; wire brake rods, air pipes, and stirrup steps; 50-ton trucks with metal wheelsets; and Kadee scale whisker couplers. Factory-assembled and painted boxcars sell for **\$74.99**; undecorated kits are priced at **\$57.99**. Moloco, molocotrains.com

In Memoriam

Richard (Rick) D. Hunter,
1950-2026

Richard (Rick) D. Hunter, owner and operator of Hunterline, passed away on May 10, 2026. He was 76 years old.



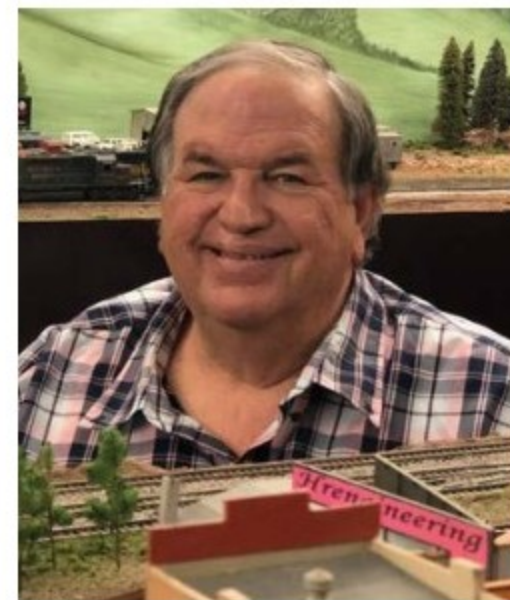
Rick was well-known throughout the model railroad community for the kits and stains that he produced under the Hunterline banner, a company he ran for 30 years. For many years Rick and his wife, Maureen, would travel to model railroad shows throughout the United States and Canada in their RV. In addition to selling Hunterline products, Rick and Maureen would do kit-building demonstrations at their booth during train shows. He was also

a member of the Cambridge Model Railroad Club.

Away from work, Rick was a fan of the National Basketball Association and always made sure to catch his grandson, Will Riley, in action.

John Vavra,
1953-2026

John Vavra, whose Santa Fe Lines layout was featured in the December 2021 issue of *Model Railroader*, died on April 17, 2026. He was 72 years old.



John's 20 x 22-foot walk-in layout was set in northern Arizona and southwestern Colorado circa 1994. It featured the Atchison, Topeka & Santa

Fe in HO scale and Durango & Silverton in HOn3. Images of his layout also appeared in Trackside Photos.

Though John lost both of his legs as a result of sepsis, he didn't let it stop him from working on his layout. His three-page article "Building downtown Silverton, Colo." appeared in the May 2025 issue. In the story, John explained how he built the 24 x 30-inch module at his workbench and added streets, structures, and lighting. Friend and fellow modeler Steve Bradley installed the finished module on the Santa Fe Lines layout and blended the town of Silverton into the existing scenery.

Professionally, John spent 40 years as a supermarket manager, retiring in 2012. He is survived by his wife, Vickie, two daughters, and granddaughter Ellie.



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Rapido Trains HO scale EMD SW9 switcher



A colorful assortment of HO scale

Electro-Motive Division (EMD) SW9 switchers is now available from Rapido Trains. Product features on the end-cab switcher include plastic and die-cast metal construction, road-specific details, and light-emitting-diode lighting.

Electro-Motive Division and its Canadian subsidiary, General Motors Diesel Division, produced the SW9 between November 1950 and December 1953. During that time, more than 800 end-cab switchers were built for railroads in the United States and Canada.

Our review sample is decorated as Boston & Maine No. 1224, part of the railroad's 1220 through 1226 series. The full-size unit was built by EMD in January 1952 under order number 6338. The B&M took delivery of five more SW9 switchers, numbered 1227 through 1231, in May 1953.

The 1224 wore the maroon-and-gold scheme into the early 1980s, when it was repainted into Boston & Maine's blue-and-black scheme. After Guilford acquired the B&M and subsidiary Springfield Terminal in June 1983, the SW9 became ST 1422 and was repainted gray and orange.

The Rapido SW9 has a plastic body and separate cab. The body is complemented with a variety of separate, factory-applied parts, including see-through, etched-metal radiator screens on the top and front of the hood; formed-wire grab irons; and a vent on top of the cab.

Prototype-specific details on the B&M model include a three-chime air horn on the front edge of the cab; twin-beam Pyle headlights; "trash can"-style spark arrestors; and full-length, deck-mounted side handrails. The side handrails are metal with plastic stanchions.

The windows on the rear of the cab afford a clear view of the interior. Details include the engineer's seat, low-voltage cabinet and seat, control stand, hand brake, and fire extinguisher. There's plenty of room to add figures. Tips for removing the shell can be found in the product manual.

The sample we received is decorated in Boston & Maine's maroon-and-gold paint scheme. The color-separation lines are crisp and the gold and white graphics are opaque. Graphic placement follows prototype images.

General characteristics, weights, and dimensions for the full-size EMD SW9 were published in the 1956 *Locomotive Cyclopedia of American Practice* (Simmons-Boardman Publishing Corp.). The Rapido model matches all published data. Nice work!

I did initial product testing at our workbench with an NCE Power Cab. The end-cab switcher, which has an ESU

LokSound sound decoder, moved at less than 1 scale mph at step 1. The model achieved a top speed of 58 smph at step 28. The prototype had a maximum speed of 65 mph.

Then I tested the switcher on our Winston-Salem Southbound Tar Branch. The compact model railroad has a mix of

handlaid and commercial track, including a No. 4 turnout and 30-degree crossing. The SW9 ran well. The train line hoses, which hang below footboard level on our sample, got hung up in the crossing and some turnouts. Modifying the parts will remedy that issue.

The Rapido Trains HO EMD SW9 is a well-detailed and proportioned model. Additional paint schemes (Canadian National [post-1954], Cambria & Indiana [bicentennial], and Soo Line [The Twin Ports two-pack]) are also available. —

Cody Grivno, senior editor

Facts & features

Price: Direct-current model, \$239.95; with ESU LokSound sound decoder, \$349.95

Manufacturer

Rapido Trains
382 High St.
Buffalo, NY 14204
rapidotrains.com

Era: November 1950 to present (varies based on paint scheme)

Road names: Boston & Maine; Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; Canadian National; Canadian Pacific; Erie Lackawanna; Illinois Central; Louisville & Nashville; New York Central; Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo; and Union Pacific. Also available painted (Industrial Blue, Industrial Yellow and black, and Industrial Red) but unlettered.

Features

- Body-mounted metal couplers, at proper height
- Metal wheels, correctly gauged
- Minimum radius, 18"
- Weight: 10.2 ounces



Trains.com members
can see the Rapido
SW9 in action with this
QR code.

Atlas N scale Gunderson 7538 boxcar



A Gunderson 7,538-cubic-foot capacity plug-door boxcar is now available from Atlas Model Railroad Co. The N scale model, part of the manufacturer's Master Line, features all-new tooling, body-mounted plastic couplers, and metal wheelsets.

Information on the Atlas website notes that BNSF Ry. ordered approximately 600 Gunderson 7538 boxcars in 2012. The Plate F, hi-cube car is used to transport paper and other bulk items.

The sample we received is decorated as BNSF Ry. 761410, part of the railroad's 761400 through 761999 series built by Greenbrier (Gunderson) at its Concaril, Mexico, plant during the first half of 2012. Cars from this series are still in service today.

The modern-era boxcar has a one-piece injection-molded plastic body. Molded details include the side and end ladders, stirrup steps, placard boards, billing card holders, and door hardware and tracks. Freestanding parts include the plastic brake wheel and see-through, etched-metal crossover platforms.

There is a formed-wire grab iron to the left of the plug door on both sides. Handle the car with care so you don't knock these delicate parts off. Don't ask me how I know this — in good news, I did find one of them.

Like the prototype, the roof has three X-panels on the A and B ends that book-end the seven diagonal panels in the middle. The roof is painted to look like new galvanized steel.

The underbody is a separate plastic part with molded floorboard, stringer, and brake pipe detail. A steel weight is

attached to the top of the molding with a pair of screws. The draft-gear boxes are molded.

The center sills, crossmembers, body bolsters, and draft-gear box covers are a separate molding. The control valve and angle-mounted air reservoir, along with the auxiliary and emergency reservoir pipes, are part of the same molding.

The brake cylinder, lever, and brake rods are freestanding underbody details. An etched-metal uncoupling lever runs from the corner of the car to the bottom of the draft-gear box cover on both ends.

Roller-bearing trucks are attached to the underbody with plastic pins. The plastic trucks are equipped with 36" metal wheelsets. One of the wheelsets was out of gauge on our model. I was able to bring it into gauge by gently twisting one wheel on the axle.

The model we received is neatly painted Mineral Red with white graphics and yellow FRA-224 sill stripes. Like the prototype, the tops of both ends are painted white and stenciled EXCESS HEIGHT CAR.

I found prototype images of other cars from this BNSF Ry. series online. Graphic placement follows what I saw on the full-size cars. All but the smallest printing is legible under magnification. The load limit and light weight are the same (206300), but the latter should be in the 79000 range. This could easily be corrected with paint and decals.

For dimensional information on the Gunderson 7538 boxcar I turned to the April 2023 edition of *The Official Railway Equipment Register*. The Master Line single-door car closely follows published data.

I put the boxcar in a train on our Milwaukee, Racine & Troy State Line Route layout to see how it performed in an operating layout environment. I ran the car in a freight and had it in a cut of cars while working the yard. The hi-cube boxcar had no trouble navigating the layout's 18" minimum radius curves and No. 6 turnouts.

In addition to the Gunderson 7538 plug-door boxcar, Atlas also offers the Gunderson 7550 double-plug-door boxcar decorated for Ferromex, General American Marks Co., and TTX Co. These contemporary freight cars are commonly seen throughout the North American rail network. If your N scale layout is set between 2012 and the present, a few of these boxcars will help reinforce your modeling era. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: \$42.95

Manufacturer

Atlas Model Railroad Co.
378 Florence Ave.
Hillside, NJ 07205
shop.atlasrr.com

Era: 2012 to present

Road name: BNSF Ry. (four numbers)

Features

- 36" metal wheels, one out of gauge
- Body-mounted plastic knuckle couplers, at correct height
- Weight: 1.2 ounces, correct per National Model Railroad Association Recommended Practice 20.1

Athearn HO scale NSC 6000 gondola



The much-anticipated National Steel Car 6,000-cubic-foot capacity gondola is now available from Athearn. The HO scale model, part of the manufacturer's Genesis series, is based on a contemporary prototype and features a plastic body, removable scrap load, and body-mounted McHenry lower-shelf couplers.

National Steel Car, based in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, introduced the 6,000-cubic-foot capacity gondola in the late 2010s. The full-size cars are used in scrap metal service. I often see them on the Canadian National Waukesha Subdivision and on the Wisconsin & Southern Northern Division.

We received a two-pack decorated as American Iron & Metal 20100 and 21225. The former, part of the AIMX 20001 through 20400 series, was built under job 7960/18 in 2020. The latter, from the AIMX 21001 through 21300 series, was constructed under Job P4255/21 in February and March 2022. Examples of the NSC 6000 gondola can be found throughout the North American rail network today.

The Athearn Genesis NSC 6000 gondola has a one-piece body with a separate top chord. The sides of the car have separate, factory-applied ladders and stirrup steps. Freestanding details on the car ends include formed wire grab irons; 18-hole end panels; plastic crossover handrails; and a see-through, etched-metal crossover platform. The B end of the car has an Elecon-National hand-brake and plastic brake wheel.

Underneath, the gondola has a one-piece plastic molding referred to as the underframe crossbearer. It consists of the center sills, crossmembers, body bolsters, and draft-gear boxes.

Because of the car's design, the brake system is easy to see, especially when viewed from eye level. Flexible engineering plastic was used for the molding that includes the brake cylinder, hand brake lever, dead lever, and brake rods. The part passes through U-shaped hangers.

Other factory-applied underbody details include the air reservoir, DB60 valve, surge tank, and reduction relay. The brake piping is a mix of plastic and metal components.

Newly-tooled Barber S-2-E 100-ton trucks with rotating bearing caps and separate brake beams are attached with screws. The sideframes have raised foundry data and printed data.

Our review sample features a smooth, even coat of black paint. Graphic placement matches a prototype image that I found online. All of the lettering is opaque and legible under magnification. I especially appreciated that the job number under the builder's logo in each corner is correct for car 20100.

The reporting mark and road number on the car sides are slightly different from the compressed typeface used on the full-size car. The load limit and light weight don't match car 20100, but are well within the range of cars in the 20001 through 20400 series. The bearing caps should be black, not blue.

The interior length is a scale 62'-11", and the width is a scale 8'-10". These are narrower than prototype dimensions (64'-0" and 9'-2"). This is fairly common on plastic models of open cars.

To see how the car performed in an operating layout environment, I put the NSC 6000 gondola in a train on our Milwaukee, Racine & Troy East Troy Industrial Park layout. The around-the-walls layout has 28" minimum radius

curves on the main, 18" minimum radius curves on spurs, and No. 5 minimum turnouts on the main. The car ran without issue, though the overhang wasn't very prototypical on some of the industrial trackage. This car will look best on broad-radius curves.

Athearn offers the NSC 6400 gondola in 10 paint schemes, including a covered version decorated for The CIT Group. If you model the contemporary railroad scene in HO scale, you'll definitely want to check out these new gondolas. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: Single car, \$64.99; two-pack, \$109.99

Manufacturer

Athearn Trains
2904 Research Rd.
Champaign, IL 61822
athearn.com

Era: 2020 to present (as decorated)

Road names: American Iron & Metal, IMRX, and Texas-Louisiana Producing & Carbon Co. Six road numbers per paint scheme (two each single cars and two-packs)

Features

- 36" metal wheelsets, in gauge
- Body-mounted McHenry lower-shelf couplers, at correct height
- Minimum radius, 22"; recommended radius, 24"
- Weight: 6 ounces with load, 5.3 ounces without (.6 ounce to heavy and .1 ounce too light, respectively, per National Model Railroad Association Recommended Practice 20.1)

Prefers 3D printing to laser cutting

I think your May article,

"Scratchbuilding in the Digital Age," by Steve Zapytowski was one of the best articles you have published in some time. Thank you. Eight pages of solid, useful information.

The author did an outstanding job explaining the differences and similarities between using a laser and a 3D printer for model railroading.

However, as a hobbyist 3D printer, I feel 3D printing has so many advantages I'd question the future of the laser cutter in the hobby.

My experience with a laser cutter as a model railroad tool was not positive. Like the author, I found trying to work around the joint issue for structure walls to be a problem. Steve's workaround he demonstrated in his article would certainly work, but everyone has to ask themselves if they're willing to invest that much time in building a model. Your workflow will certainly speed up cutting out walls for structures, but you still have a speed bump trying to conceal the corner joints of the walls.

With 3D printing, what you see is what you get. With a laser cutting, you're using a computer to cut out parts and then going to your workbench to file, assemble and glue. With 3D printing, you're using a computer to cut out, assemble and attach parts before printing.

I can use the CPU/graphics card of my computer with a laser cutter to get a jump start on scratchbuilding, or I can use the computer to cut and assemble with more precision than was ever possible with a laser cutter.

Some of the work hobbyists have done with 3D printing is amazing. Freight cars, passenger cars, structures, bridges, etc. have expanded the modeling possibilities.

The next time you need to scratch-build a new structure, give 3D printing a try. With 3D printing your injection molded structure kits on the layout may need to be moved from the foreground to the background in the near future.

Scot Mason
Albion, Iowa



Steve Zapytowski used 3D printing to create this figure of a sail maker. Reader Scot Mason argues 3D printing is more useful for modelers than laser cutting, which Steve also uses. Steve Zapytowski photo

In many respects, I agree with Scot. One's modeling techniques evolve over time, and what I presented in the article reflects what I was doing in the period before I wrote it. Since then, I have printed entire machines or structures in a single piece, indeed. The sail maker was the only time I used that tricky workaround for making corners. Since then, I've been using a much more mundane type of corner (butting the walls against a square corner piece), which many people use.

Modeling for me is as much about the doing of things as the end product. I've been a woodworker my entire life and enjoy the tactile experience of cutting, fitting, and sanding pieces of wood, even if sometimes I use a machine, regardless of what that machine is, to do that cutting. For recent models, I've been employing what I call hybrid parts: items that are both 3D printed and combined with stick building. Truly, one can gain satisfaction in this hobby regardless of the methods one uses.

Steve Zapytowski

Inspirational layout

Robert Bonham's Phree Lanz & Phanta Zee RR is exactly the type of layout I have been dreaming of to fill a gutted medium size double-wide mobile home. I too want to model the Union Pacific with its long passenger trains, but what really grabbed my attention was Robert's execution of the "Less is More concept" highlighted in *Model Railroad Planning 2026*. I noted in the layout drawing the roads and highways actually go all the way around the layout so a vehicle can actually go from point A to point B, unlike so many other layouts, probably due to Robert's years in the trucking and transportation industry.

Plan B if my own layout dream doesn't come to fruition is to work with the Lancaster & Chester RR to establish a model railroad club with the goal of bringing its HO scale layout of the railroad in the former L&C Museum at the Lancaster, S.C., station back to life.

Thank you for the great article and congratulations to Robert for such a fine model railroad.

Pete Lewis
Lancaster, S.C.

Tariff impact

After reading the East Troy Industrial Park article entitled Easy Paper Backdrops Part 5 (May 2026) I placed an order with SceniKing at BPH Enterprises in Barrie, Ontario, Canada. These backdrops were just what I was looking for. I thought I should let you know about a message I got from BPH Enterprises today. They cannot or will not ship my \$375 order due to the tariff situation.

They comment on the fact that even if they knew how much in tariff I would have to pay (it seems to vary from day to day and minute to minute) they would have to work through a third party in Utah and they find the USPS forms confusing. Therefore, they are suspending shipments to U.S. customers for the foreseeable future. This is disappointing but it seems that the word should get out.

Michael Owen
Apple Valley, Minn.

Sources for figures

The May 2026 issue of *Model Railroader* featured an article on a diorama of Eagle River, Wis., built by Mr. Glen Johnson and set in 1910.

In the article he laments that he could not find any period appropriate HO scale figures. Actually, these are available from the Andrew Staddon Co. in the UK (www.ACStaddon.co.uk). The Edwardian figures cover the exact period of the diorama. I used these extensively on my HO scale Duluth South Shore & Atlantic layout set in 1905 running from Trout Lake to St. Ignace.

Nothing says 1910 like bowler hats on men, full length skirts on women and sailor suits on little boys.

My builder's notes says there was a mention of this company in the March 2020 issue of *Model Railroader* [Don Ball's "Add interest with mini-scenes" article — Ed.].

*Tim Tilson
Fairfax City, Va.*

Model railroading on a budget

I am 69 years young. I have a large inventory of HO equipment, but no layout yet. I enjoy your magazine immensely. One thing I think is not stressed enough in your publication is how to get into the hobby without breaking the bank.

I realize that you have to support your advertisers and distributors, but I feel not enough is said about buying at train shows where items can be purchased in quantity at very reasonable prices. This in turn helps a person get more for their dollar and might help them to build that model railroad of their dreams.

I myself buy items on shopgoodwill.com and at my local hobby shop to get good deals to save money on my purchases. Just my "Train of thought."

*Kurt Gallagher
Grand Haven, Mich.*

Trains for tots

Our organization has enjoyed your magazine for many years. Thank you for promoting model railroading! We at the Nashua Valley Railroad Association are also doing our very best to promote the hobby. And specifically, to get young people (and their families) to enjoy our hobby. As part of this effort, our association implemented a new program this year called "Trains for Tots."

The object of our program is to purchase and donate small starter train sets (the wooden variety) to various charities with these sets aimed at children ages 2 to 5. The charities would then distribute the sets to needy children for the holidays. Our hope is to get young children into the hobby early and on a small scale.

From there, we hope parents/guardians will encourage their children as they get older and the child's love for model trains increases as they grow. We believe we cannot grow our hobby without getting young people involved. And if more adults exposed their young people to things like model railroading, the young people would not be out getting into trouble.

Funding for this program was made possible through a combination of our member's private donations as well as association funds. The train sets were donated to a variety of local charities which included (but was not limited to):

Marine Corps Toys for Tots
Boys and Girls Clubs
Salvation Army
Other local charities

Our program greatly exceeded our expectations and we hope to greatly expand next year's efforts!

If any of your readers would like to sponsor a similar effort to promote the hobby in their communities, feel free to contact us and we can provide advice accordingly.

*Peter D'Olimpio, Secretary
The Nashua Valley Railroad
Association Inc.
2 Shaker Road, Suite E205
Shirley MA 01464*

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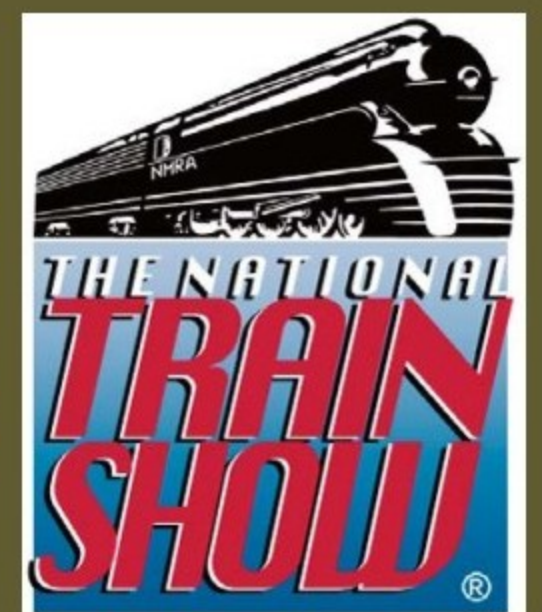


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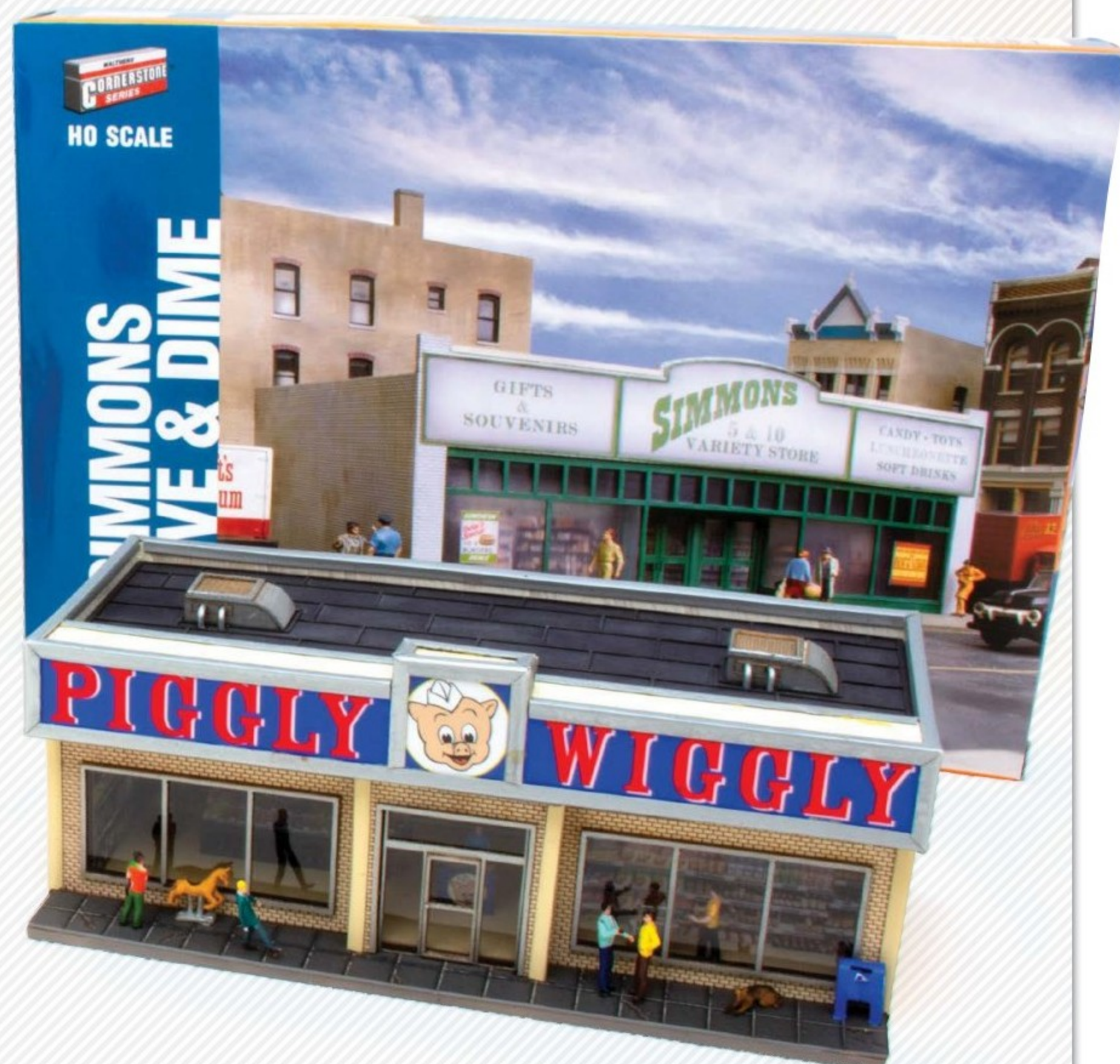
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Kits from Wm. K. Walther's Inc. and factory-assembled buildings from Menards are a few options for single-story, Main Street-style structures. You can also make your own using modular components from Design Preservation Models (Woodland Scenics). Cody Grivno photo



Sources for single-story structures

Q My question is a bit different and has to do with how to suggest structures to manufacturers. For example, there are a lot of Main Street-style stores that are two- and three-story structures, but none that are a single story. Yet if you look at many small towns, there are a lot of single-story buildings mixed in with the two-story structures. We need some of those.

Jim Burns

A Thanks for writing in, Jim. The best way to share product suggestions with hobby manufacturers is using the "Contact Us" link on their websites. Most companies have a form you can fill out. A physical address is often listed, too, if you prefer to reach out via regular mail. Some companies may provide a phone number as well.

Your observation about Main Street-style structures is a good one. As older multi-story buildings were torn down because of age, redevelopment projects, or fire, they were sometimes replaced with single-story structures. In my hometown, there were at least two three-story downtown buildings that suffered fire damage in the 1960s and were converted to single-story structures.

You didn't specify your modeling scale, Jim, but I was able to find single-story buildings in HO scale. Wm. K. Walther's Inc., in its Cornerstone Series of structures, offers a hobby shop, hardware store, and convenience store kits. The Simmons Five & Dime kit shown above is listed as discontinued on the manufacturer's website.

You could modify any of these kits into other businesses beyond those depicted on the box.

Downtown Deco has single-story buildings that would look right at home in a Main Street scene. The cast-Hydrocal kits are offered as individual buildings and in blocks. The Lennox Glass kit is detailed to look like the adjacent building was demolished, which would give a downtown scene an added touch of history. See my article "Build a cast Hydrocal structure kit" in the March 2024 *Model Railroader* to learn more about assembling a Downtown Deco kit.

If you'd rather go with ready-to-use buildings, check out J. Frank's Grocery and Smith Brothers TV & Appliance from Woodland Scenics. Both structures are available in N, HO, and O scales.

Midwest home-improvement chain Menards also has some single-story structures in HO and O scales, including Main Street USA Block No. 1 and Grandpa Jack's Hobby Shop. It also offered a Piggly Wiggly grocery store, shown above. Though it's out sold out, the grocery store occasionally shows up at model railroad swap meets and online auction websites.

If you can't find what you're looking for from one of these companies, then consider using modular components like those offered in the Design Preservation Models (DPM) line by Woodland Scenics. For single-story structures, look for parts labeled dock level, street level, and one-story wall sections. The modular parts are produced in N, HO, and O scales.

Q What layout is behind *Model Railroader* Senior Editor Cody Grivno when he hosts the “Cody’s Office” videos on Trains.com?

James Macko

A The layout in the background is the Winston-Salem Southbound Tar Branch. The 2'-9" x 8'-2" HO scale model railroad, which has a 35" folding staging yard, was our 2018 project layout. The four-part series on building the layout appeared in the January, February, March, and April 2018 issues of *Model Railroader*.

The January article was the kickoff story and featured background on the layout, the track plan, and photos of the finished model railroad. The February installment covered benchwork and track. In March, we turned our attention to structures, specifically Editor Eric White’s scratchbuilt cold storage warehouse. The project layout series wrapped up in April with information on photo backdrops, lighting, and scenery.

In addition to the four-part layout series, there were Step by Step articles



“Cody’s Office” is a monthly video program on Trains.com featuring new products, a modeling tip, and viewer mail. The layout behind Cody is the HO scale Winston-Salem Southbound, *Model Railroader*’s 2018 project layout.

based on projects related to the Winston-Salem Southbound. I wrote about detailing, painting, and decaling Electro-Motive Division GP9 No. 1501 in the February issue and building wood caboose No. 664 in April.

The print content was complemented by several how-to videos, many of which you can find on Trains.com Video. Members of the *Model Railroader* staff covered topics like building benchwork, laying track, kitbashing structures, and more. We also brought in Consulting Editor Tony Koester to share his techniques for hand-laying track and setting up the model railroad for operations. Former MR illustrator Jay Smith showed how to use an airbrush to add clouds to the sky on our tempered hardboard backdrop. Gerry Leone explained how to add mini scenes to buildings and model and detail utility poles.

The Winston-Salem Southbound was one of a handful of layouts that came with us to our new offices after Fire-crown purchased *Model Railroader* in 2024. The model railroad was put to good use, serving as the primary HO scale layout for product review videos until phase one of the Milwaukee, Racine & Troy East Troy Industrial Park was completed. We still use the Tar Branch for review videos today.

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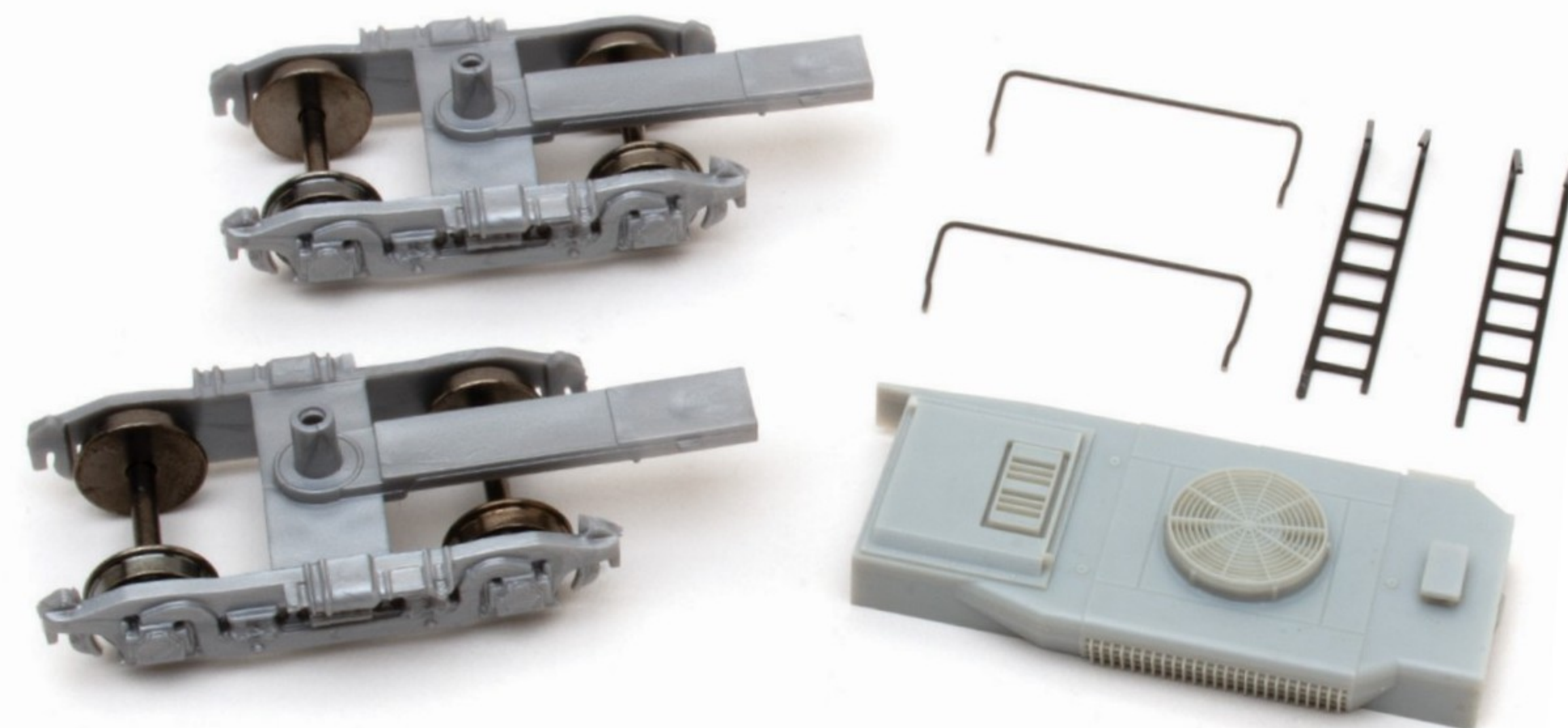
Q Does anyone know where to get replacement parts for Athearn blue box locomotives and rolling stock? Items I'm looking for include metal railings for locomotives and cabooses, stove pipes and ladders for cabooses, horn-hook couplers for locomotives, and any other small parts of that nature.

Big_Boy_Forever, via the MR Forums

A There are a few different places you can look. I'd start on the Athearn website (athearn.com). In the blue menu bar across the top of the page you'll find various categories. Hover over Maintenance Department, then click on Parts. There you'll find an assortment of HO and N scale items.

Here are some of the items I found that may be of interest to you: Brake wheel (ATH90600), plastic single-chime air horn for various locomotive models (ATH90604), plastic horn for various EMD diesels (ATH40001), and caboose ladders (ATH12504).

PPW/A-Line (ppw-aline.com) is another source for Athearn HO scale



parts. On the company's home page are several menus. In the upper right corner is one for Athearn products. Click on it to see the various categories, including parts for diesels, freight cars, intermodal equipment, and vehicles.

Of course, you can also find Athearn blue box parts at model railroad swap meets and online auction websites. And don't forget to ask at your local hobby shop. It's possible shops that date back to the blue box era may have an inventory of older parts.

Athearn discontinued its blue box line of locomotive and freight car kits in 2009.

However, parts for them can still be found from various sources, including Athearn, PPW/A-Line, hobby shops, model train swap meets, and online auction websites. Cody

Grivno photo





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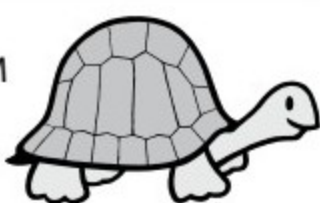
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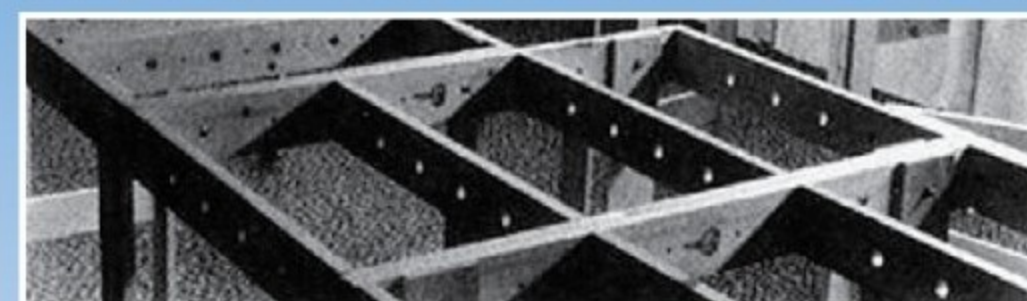
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How to color brick structures



Brick buildings are common in industrial areas. Coloring molded plastic models can be done with a few different techniques, and *Model Railroader* Editor Eric White shares a few he's used. Eric White photos

A question many readers want an answer to is how to color bricks. Most railroads pass by and serve multiple brick-built factories and warehouses, not to mention homes, apartments, offices, and restaurants in urban and rural areas.

My Pennsylvania RR Washington Avenue Branch runs through a veritable canyon of brick, so I knew I'd be replicating the material on most of the buildings for my little layout set in South Philadelphia. If you look at a brick streetscape, you'll notice variation not only from building to building, but within individual structures. It's that variation that I wanted to capture, so I chose to use a few different methods for coloring the bricks, and for creating the effect of mortar between the bricks.

One of the simplest and most economical ways to color the red on our brick structures is with spray paint, specifically paint labeled as red oxide primer. I use a few different brands to get a variety of colors. Spray paint works great on plastic. But there are also kits molded in plaster and resin, or you may

decide to create your own brick by carving plaster or using a laser engraver on specialty boards. Spray paint will work on all of these materials, though you may want to consider stains on plaster to get more interesting effects. You can find tips for using this method in the July 2013 issue of *Model Railroader*.



Eric used spray paints from Krylon and Rust-Oleum, Tamiya Panel Liner, Vallejo Model Air paint, and AK Interactive weathering pencils.

Besides red primer, other colors can be used. Anything from rust red through a nearly brown-red will work. Brick colors can be indicators of the region being modeled. Milwaukee is known as the Cream City because of the pale yellow color of many of the brick buildings in the area.

Most techniques I share start with spraying on the brick color, but you can also work the other way, and start with the mortar. Many people will use white for mortar. Sometimes, especially if there's a lot of lime in the mix, white can be a good choice. But most times, something a little off from white — either a pale tan or gray — will look better. Sometimes mortars are tinted. I've seen very dark gray mortar, as well as red mortar. Just like brick, there's a wide variety of "correct" colors.

In all of these examples, I built the brick walls and took some time to clean up the corners so the mortar lines wrapped around without any gaps. If the windows were separate parts, I left them off until the bricks were colored.

STEP 1 MORTAR FIRST



With this method, I started by painting the building with the mortar color, in this case, Rust-Oleum Painter's Touch 2X Ultra Cover 334086 Stone Gray ①. After assembling the walls as I wanted them for a coal and oil dealer, I sprayed the model with Stone Gray paint. The photo shows a sample wall in the same color.

The only downside to the mortar color I chose was that it's only available in a satin finish, so I had to add a coat of clear flat. I used Rust-Oleum Painter's Touch 2X Ultra Cover 334022 Matte Clear to avoid compatibility issues with the paint chemistry.

For the brick color I used AK Interactive's Rust & Streaking Effects weathering pencil set. It includes five shades of red, from red-orange through red-brown.

I found that by laying the pencils down and using the side of the exposed pigment, I could cover a wider area



more efficiently. I started with a lighter color, and made sure to get into the corners around the windows where the brick detail wrapped into the opening. Sharpening the points helped get into tight areas.

By using lighter colors first, I could overlay darker colors and get some variation in the shade of the brick. Of course, I also could highlight individual bricks with points of the pencils. ② Be careful when using the point not to let pigment get into the mortar recesses. This method was reasonably efficient for the size and shape of the building I was working on. For a really large structure, it might require more time than you want to give it.

Satisfied with how the brick looked, I applied another coat of flat clear, then I painted the doors, windows, and other details. Doing these steps earlier would've resulted in brick color getting on these areas of the model.

STEP 2 BRICK COLOR FIRST



For larger buildings, or buildings with significant brick detail, it's easier to color the brick first then add mortar later. ① I tried a few techniques for this using paint, washes, and joint compound.

Let's look at the somewhat unusual one first, joint compound. This is the stuff you buy either ready-mixed in plastic buckets, or mix up yourself from powder with water. Joint compound is designed to fill gaps and holes in dry-wall construction.



I first tried using this on the large building in the background of the lead photo. I painted the model with a brick red color, likely Rust-Oleum Painter's Touch 2X 339018 Flat Red Primer, then smeared a bit of joint compound across the brick. But the brick color had a flat finish, so it had a fair amount of tooth that stuck to the compound. In addition, the paint was soft enough that it stained the joint compound pink. In addition, the texture of the brick moldings at the top of each bay, along with the pilasters



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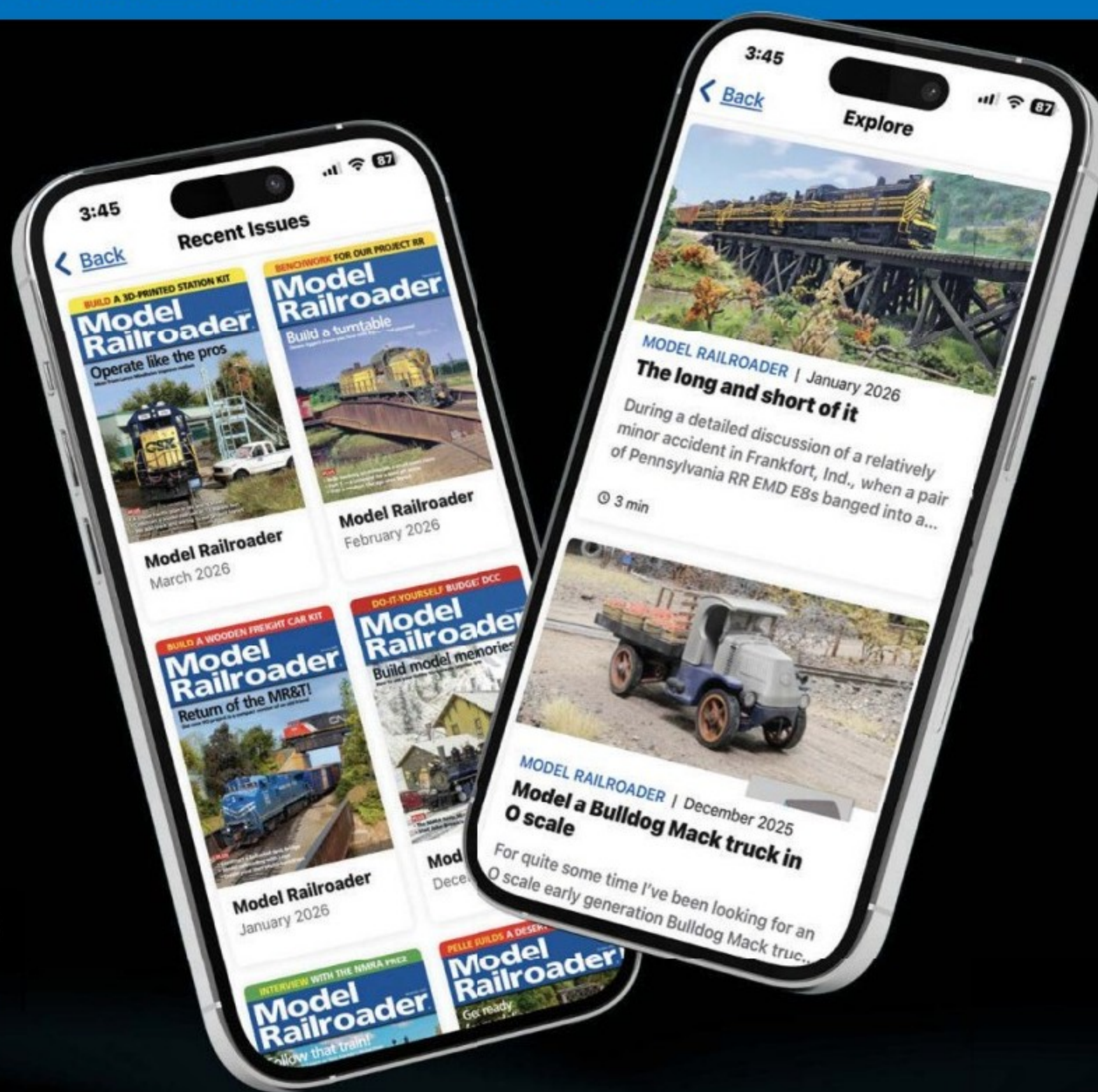
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STEP 2 BRICK COLOR FIRST (CONT'D)



molded as part of the wall, meant I was picking compound out of nooks and crannies all over the wall. At least I was able to wash most of it off with water and a toothbrush.

While the large building didn't work, I tried a smaller Design Preservation Models kit, Laube's Linen Mill, where I was able to mitigate some of the pink tone of the mortar with a wash of Tamiya Light Gray Panel Liner ①.

I tried the joint compound a second time, this time coating the red primer with clear gloss, and using a wall that was generally less detailed ②. I used the same Rust-Oleum Flat Red Primer as before, this time coated with Rust-Oleum American Accents 2X Ultra Cover 327864 Gloss Clear. After letting the paint dry thoroughly, I smeared joint compound over the surface.

Next, I cut a piece of stiff cardboard to use as a scraper ③. This allowed me to get into the corners around the pilasters. Once I had most of the compound off of the wall, I could see a thin layer start to glaze on the brick face. No worries! I used a dry paper towel to buff the thin glazed coat off the glossy brick and it looks great ④.

Manufacturers are offering much wider paint lines than in the past. Many offer ready-to-use weathering products or ready-to-spray airbrush paints. For these projects, I used Tamiya Panel Line and Acrylicos Vallejo Model Air paint. If you're going to use these, you need to pay some attention to paint chemistry.

Tamiya Panel Line is an enamel that's been thinned to a wash. It was developed to highlight panel lines in military models. But what is mortar other than lots of panel lines?

One downside to the Tamiya Panel Line is that the colors are somewhat limited. I used 87189 Light Gray. Since this paint is enamel, it softens the Rust-Oleum Flat Red Primer, which is also enamel. In order to protect the paint, I sprayed it with Tamiya TS-80 Flat Clear. This lacquer paint protected the enamel primer from the enamel panel line color. Applying the panel line colors over acrylics would also be fine.

The panel line color is thin enough I could flow it into the brick and capillary action would pull the color throughout the surface ⑤. Again, I painted the details after finishing the brick coloring ⑥.

The Vallejo Model Air could be applied similarly. It's sold ready to airbrush, so it's easy to flow it into the mortar lines as well. Since it's acrylic, it didn't interact with the Rust-Oleum enamel primer I sprayed on the Wm. K. Walther's Inc. row house kit ⑦. The Vallejo paint is a little thicker than the Tamiya Panel Line, so I had to carefully wipe the surface with a paper towel. Make diagonal sweeps across the surface so you don't pull the paint out of the mortar lines. Work in small areas so the paint doesn't start to dry on the surface. A couple of square inches at a time is a good working pace. With both of these methods, work on one side of the building at a time so the thin paint doesn't flow and pool anywhere.

Once you have all of the brickwork done, it's time to go back for any detail painting, such as lintels and sills, or windows if the building walls are molded in one piece.

Give these methods a try to see what works for you! **MR**



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There is no such thing as one model train for everyone. Model railroaders have different needs according to space, interest, and desired features. Märklin produces a wide range of high-quality model trains in Z, H0 and 1 gauge for beginners to experts.





A Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville train rumbles past the freight house in Johnstown, N.Y. Paul Boehlert designed an HO scale track plan based on the shortline railroad. Photograph by Jim Shaughnessy, collection of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art, www.railphoto-art.org

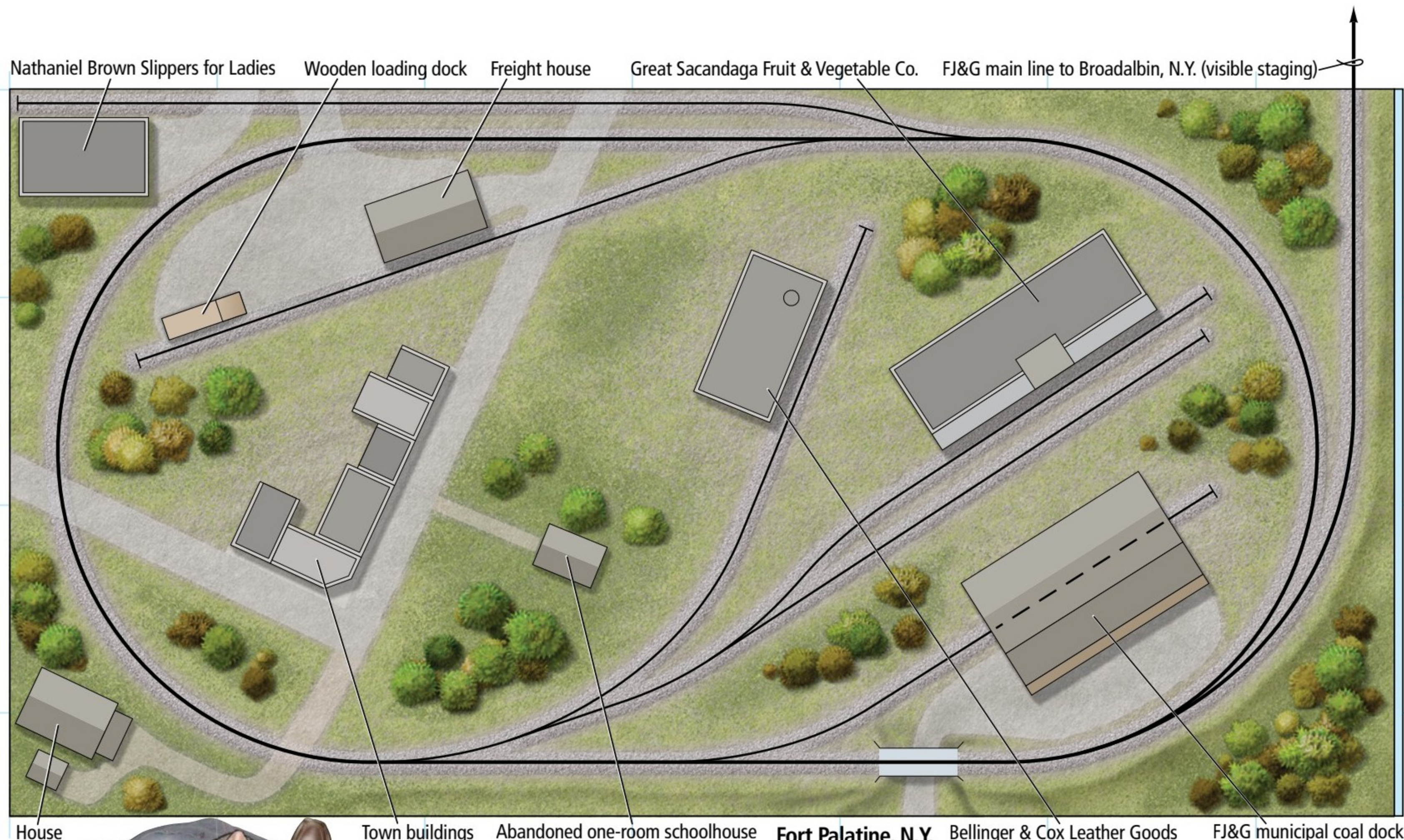
A short line in a small space

This HO scale track plan is based on the Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville in 1960

By Paul Boehlert

Though there have been many shortline railroads over the years, some seem to resonate with railfans and modelers more than others. One of those was the Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville (FJ&G) in east-central New York. Though an inter-urban in its early days, the line became well-known in later years as a dieselized freight railroad serving leather tanneries and other industries in and around its namesake towns. The August 1979 *Model Railroader* featured several articles on the FJ&G by Harold W. Russell.

I designed a compact, continuous-run HO scale track plan for the circa 1960 FJ&G that has a small footprint. The plan's 18" minimum radii are perfect for the short engines and cars used on the prototype during that time. Though it's simple enough to be a good first layout, don't underestimate its appeal. Experienced modelers will have a lot of fun building and operating the FJ&G, too.



Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville, circa 1960

HO scale (1:87.1), Room size: 3'-6" x 6'-8", Scale of plan: 1" = 1'-0", 12" grid
Numbered arrows indicate photo locations. Illustration by Kellie Jaeger

➤ Find more plans online in the Trains.com Track Plan Database.

The plan

The layout depicts the freelanced village of Fort Palatine, N.Y. The track plan is actually a smaller and simpler version of the Spokane Valley & Northern, an HO scale track plan developed by Jeff Wilson and Paul Schmidt that was published in the May 2002 MR.

My track plan is 3'-6" x 6'-8", rather than the original plan's 4'-0" x 8'-0". That might not seem like a big difference. But an island-style layout that's 6" narrower and 16" shorter than a 4 x 8-foot layout can be built in many spaces the larger model railroad wouldn't fit.

At the upper right of the plan is the staging track, where the train from Broadalbin, N.Y., enters the outskirts of Fort Palatine. If space is available, this track can be extended or become another layout area in its own right. There are six locations to spot cars: two makers of leather goods, a coal dock, a vegetable cannery, the town freight house, and a team track with dock.

No runaround track is included on the plan, nor is one needed. For a train from Broadalbin traveling clockwise around the oval, all the industry spurs are trailing-point. There's no need for the locomotive to run around cars while doing its work. When it's time to head

for home, the oval itself can be used to swap the locomotive and caboose to opposite ends of the train.

Building the layout

The 3'-6" x 6'-8" platform for this layout can be built using two plain slab doors, one 24" wide and the other 18" wide, fastened side by side and covered with a 2"-thick sheet of extruded-foam insulation board. This can be placed atop bookcases to provide storage and display space for your models, or on a simple set of legs with cross bracing. A 42"-wide scenic backdrop attaches to the end that goes against the wall.

Track can be a mix of code 83 sectional and flextrack. The plan uses dimensions taken from Peco 83 Line turnouts. You'll need one right-hand No. 5, five left-hand No. 5s, and one No. 7 left-hand curved turnout.

All of the turnouts are within a foot of the layout edge and can be lined by hand with mechanical ground throws or the factory installed over-center springs. There's no need for powered switch machines unless you prefer them.

A few years ago, Atlas offered its Alco S2 switcher decorated in FJ&G's handsome orange, black, and yellow paint scheme. Rapido's new General Electric

The track plan at a glance

Name: Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville

Scale: HO (1:87.1)

Size: 3'-6" x 6'-8"

Prototype: Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville

Locale: east central New York

Mainline run: 15'-7½"

Minimum radius: 18"

Minimum turnout: No. 5

Maximum grade: none

44-ton diesel locomotive could be painted and decaled as FJ&G No. 30, which was also on the property at this time. Caboose No. 3 was an ex-Delaware & Hudson wood car. A brass model of this caboose was made by Nickel Plate Products some years ago. Models turn up periodically on brass resale and online auction websites.

Photos and research materials for the railroad are easily available both online and in print. Several of the signature structures are documented well enough that scratchbuilding accurate models would be possible. Harold W. Russell's August 1979 MR article contains drawings of the enginehouse in Fonda, N.Y.; the depot and toolhouse in Broadalbin, N.Y.; flanger No. 2; and signs, snow fences, and relay boxes.



This photo of a Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville freight on its way to Fonda, N.Y., illustrates some of the 40-foot and shorter freight cars found on the railroad in the early 1960s. Photograph by Jim Shaughnessy, collection of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art, www.railphoto-art.org

Rolling stock can be almost any 40- or 50-foot freight cars. You'll need boxcars, open hoppers, refrigerator cars, insulated boxcars, covered hoppers, and tank cars. Some older boxcars can be used for transporting raw hides to the tanneries.

Operating the FJ&G

Like many operations-oriented small layouts, Fort Palatine is essentially a branch line bent around into an oval. Operating sessions are classic small-town industrial switching, with a few laps of the main thrown in to increase the distance between industries and make the fun last longer.

There's a bit of variety as well. By rule, there must be at least one car between any hide cars in a train and the engine or caboose to keep vermin from spreading. The coal dock has several bays for different grades of coal, so cars must be sorted into proper order and precisely spotted.

The massive Great Sacandaga Fruit & Vegetable Co. requires lots of pickups and setouts. Inbound traffic includes fresh produce, sugar, oil, and corn syrup, plus canstock and other packaging materials. Outbound loads include canned goods, fresh and frozen product, and scraps for animal feed. Servicing the cannery would be a big part of a typical operating session on the FJ&G.

Small space, big possibilities

This layout can fit nearly anywhere, including sharing a room with other family activities. It's simple to build and won't break the bank. So whether you're



Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville Alco S2 switchers 20 and 21 and a caboose rest outside the railroad's offices in Gloversville, N.Y., in 1970. Photograph by Jim Shaughnessy, collection of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art, www.railphoto-art.org

Industry recommendations

Great Sacandaga Fruit & Vegetable
0721 Atlas Middlesex Manufacturing Co.

FJ&G municipal coal dock
933-3045 Walthers Vulcan Manufacturing or
704 American Model Builders Transfer
Building

Bellinger & Cox Leather Goods
804 Korber Models S.M.I. Tool & Die

Abandoned one-room schoolhouse
2008 Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains Bairfield
School

Freight house
933-3533 Walthers Golden Valley Freight
House or scratchbuilt

Wooden loading dock
174 Blair Line wood loading ramp or 118 AM
Models short loading dock

Town buildings
Various — B.T.S., Walthers Cornerstone,
Woodland Scenics, etc.

Nathaniel Brown Slippers for Ladies
10600 Woodland Scenics Laube's Linen Mill
kitbash

House
933-3787 Walthers American Bungalow or
2056 Berkshire Valley (American Model
Builders) Drinkwater Place

looking to model a popular Northeastern short line like the Fonda, Johnstown & Gloversville, or a bucolic branchline on a Class I transcontinental, I think you'll find a lot to like in this small, but interesting, track plan. [MR](#)

Paul Boehlert is a college professor in upstate New York. He has written several articles on small layouts for Model Railroader magazine. His story "Layout in a weekend update" appeared in the October 2017 issue.

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Modeling **NKP'S FT. WAYNE DIVISION**

N SCALE

A surgical wake-up call gets things rolling — literally

By Tom Smith • Photos by the author



① Tom Smith chose N scale to allow long runs between towns and wide-open expanses of farmland scenery, even though the railroad is only 24" wide. The best way to show you what he has accomplished is to hop aboard a Piper Cub flying out of the grass crop-duster strip east of Payne, Ohio, and see the railroad from the air.

I GOT A FOOTHOLD in scale model railroading 30 to 40 years ago when I built a small layout based on a local railroad, the famous coal-hauling Clinchfield. But I had four sons to raise and was playing music in bands for extra money while running a Pop Warner football and cheerleading organization. There was no time or money for trains except an occasional magazine.

About a decade ago I was watching RFD TV, and a program called "Steam



② West Wayne, near Ft. Wayne, Ind., is the joint east- and westbound staging yard and engine facilities for the railroad, which is operated point-to-point but can run continuously to entertain family members and guests. The Wabash crosses the Nickel Plate Road in New Haven, Ind., on the east side of Ft. Wayne. John Colombo rebuilt the drives on Tom's steam fleet and added DCC sound decoders.



The layout at a glance

Name: Nickel Plate Road Ft. Wayne Division
Scale: N (1:160)
Room size: 24'-0" x 32'-0"
Prototype: Nickel Plate Road
Locale: northwestern Ohio
Era: 1934–48
Style: walk-in
Mainline run: 200 feet
Minimum radius: 20"
Minimum turnout: No. 10
Maximum grade: none
Benchwork: 2 x 8-foot tables
Height: 52"
Roadbed: cork
Track: Atlas code 55 flextrack
Scenery: mostly static grass and Woodland Scenics trees
Backdrop: hand-painted 1/4" lauan plywood
Control: Digitrax DCC with walkaround throttles

3 On the east side of Ft. Wayne is New Haven, Ind. The train on the Wabash is the daily freight to Toledo. The left main is the NKP from Chicago to Cleveland. The Wabash line is not active during op sessions. Tom recently discovered that NE Tower was operated by the NKP, not Wabash, so he replaced the gray utility shed with an NKP green one and moved the other beside the Wabash station.



4 The line then passes through the town of Payne, Ohio, which has three grain elevators plus a wood depot, alfalfa plant, co-op, stores, a post office, church, and homes. Most are Woodland Scenics buildings or structures custom-built by Tom's friend Steve Coffman.

and Diesel on the Nickel Plate" came on. Mainline steam in the late '50s — wow! I fell in love with it. I got on the computer and found the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society (nkphts.org) and joined. I started buying the track books and much other material to use for research. Then I found John Barriger photos of the towns I would later model

that were set in the '30s. I finally settled on the Ft. Wayne Division from Bellevue, Ohio, to Ft. Wayne, Ind.

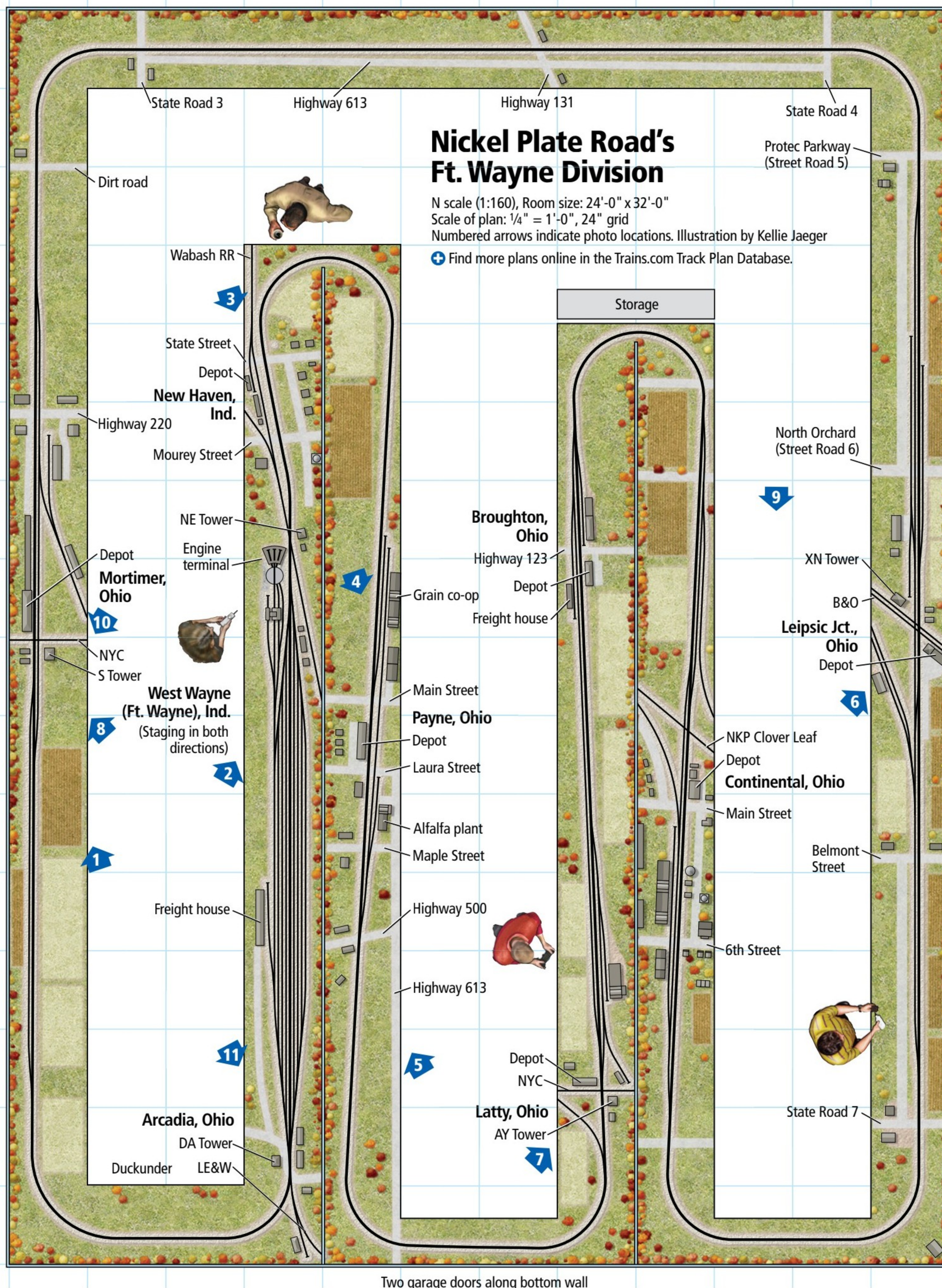
When Bachmann came out with the N scale NKP 700-series Berkshires, I started buying them, because I had learned in N you buy when they're available. They sat in the boxes until about 6 years ago when I had a life-threatening

medical emergency and then an 8-hour surgery. After that, I decided if I was ever going to have a model railroad, I had better get started.

I hired my neighbor to construct a 2 x 8-foot section of benchwork with two shelves and started on the NKP layout. I decided one section wasn't long enough and ordered two more. Then I moved the sections out to our 24 x 30-foot garage. I made a deal with my wife that if she was OK with me using the entire building, I would put heat, air conditioning, and lighting in the garage and use the bottom shelves to store her stuff so mice couldn't get to it. I bought plastic containers to replace the cardboard storage boxes. Heating and cooling are handled by two mini-split heat pumps.

Then I ordered all the benchwork sections to build the layout. We bolted them together, and I was ready to go. I built the first attempt using extruded-foam insulation board, but the spikes didn't keep the track in place. So I pulled it all up, gave away the foam board, started laying flextrack on cork roadbed, and sunk the spikes into the plywood, which has worked out well. The track is Atlas code 55 flex with No. 10 turnouts. Switches are lined manually by the station or tower operators or a local's crew using Blue Point controllers.

I used the NKP track books and laid the towns out basically the way the railroad had them as Layout Design Elements (visually and operationally



recognizable models of actual locations). I put the sidings in the towns because that's where most were, and I wanted the long runs between towns with a single-track high-speed main line that everyone loves about the Nickel Plate Road.

I use Digital DCC with six walkaround throttles.

Structures and scenery

I haven't modeled any cities served by the NKP but rather just the engine facilities in Ft. Wayne and a series of small towns east of there and the rural areas that give the Midwest a special character of its own. This meant I had to include

hundreds, if not thousands, of deciduous trees, which gave me a chance to show off the colorful fall foliage along the right-of-way. A major objective was to separate towns by substantial distances so that I could enjoy watching trains race down the high iron, just as I had seen on that TV show some time ago.



The locations I modeled are the engine terminal (and staging yard) at West Wayne, Ind., near Ft. Wayne; the Wabash RR crossing at New Haven, Ind.; Payne, Ohio; the New York Central crossing at Latty, Ohio; Broughton, Ohio; Continental, Ohio, where the NKP's Clover Leaf District crossed the Chicago–Buffalo main line; the Baltimore & Ohio crossing at Leipsic Junction, Ohio; and finally Mortimer, Ohio, and the crossing with the New York Central. Trains then head toward DA Tower in Arcadia, which is actually West Wayne Yard again.

But modeling granger country also meant I had to find ways to model the various cash crops that contributed considerable revenue to the farms and towns and hence to the NKP that served grain elevators and livestock pens in those communities.

To do that, I coated the plywood base with acrylic green paint. I then used Woodland Scenics glue and 4mm green or wheat-colored static grass to simulate wheat fields and pastures. I also used Busch plowed-field mats butted end-to-end to represent recently plowed fields. The fields with corn have Bluford Shops plastic cornstalks.

My trees are from Woodland Scenics, complemented with fall-colored ground foam underneath to represent leaves that have dropped. One of the drawbacks of building the railroad on top of what amount to a series of tables is that they don't readily accommodate depressions for waterways. However, I can electronically simulate a thunderstorm's thunder and lightning effects.

The backdrop is 1/4" lauan plywood hand-painted by a local art teacher. She kept asking whether I wanted her to paint a bad storm or even an approaching tornado, but I declined in favor of a beautiful autumn day with puffy cumulus clouds. To highlight the scenery, I've installed overhead light-emitting diode lighting fixtures in a drop ceiling.

The buildings are a mix of custom-built structures by my friend Steve Coffman, some kitbashed structures, some commercial built-ups, and some kits. The wood structures were scratch-built to match photos we saw in vintage NKP photos. Several have sound or a form of animation — a Woodland Scenics church has a choir that sings at the flip of a switch, and my water columns and coal dock make appropriate sounds thanks to ITT Products sound modules. The Woodland Scenics TV repair shop has some animation, too. I choose buildings that have a generic appearance and look appropriate for the 1934–1948 timeframe.

Realistic operations

I had a fully working block signal system when I discovered that the arrangement of the lights was incorrect; red should be on top, green on the bottom,

6 Leipsic Junction, Ohio, marks the location of the junction of Baltimore & Ohio's Cincinnati–Detroit line with the NKP main line. The depot, XN Tower, and some small trackside buildings were custom-built by Steve Coffman and are prototypically correct.

5 Between New Haven and Latty is Steve's grass airfield for the crop duster, where we took off this morning. Tom built the telegraph and utility poles using parts from Showcase Miniatures.



and the top and bottom signal heads should be widely separated as though they were leaving room for a future third signal head. I had Richard Piccuilla, owner of Custom Signal Systems, make new signals as they add a lot of color and “action” to the railroad and I wanted to have them correct. He’s building 24 new signals; I sent the old ones back so he can rewire them.

My railroad is set between 1934 and 1948. At that time, the NKP had ABS signals (no CTC). There are operators at five towers and two stations, and they are in contact via radios with each other. Each one is responsible for manually lining the switches by hand levers and set the signals appropriately. They will display a green until the train passes and then set it back to red. They also control the operating grade-crossing flashers.

The operators then call the next tower or station and report that, for example, eastbound No. 54 just passed at 8:45 a.m., sort of a manual-block system. I want the operators to be engaged as



7 The New York Central crosses the NKP at AY Tower in Latty, Ohio. Cars were interchanged on the track behind the interlocking tower and another track out of sight in the foreground. Since the connecting tracks were in opposite quadrants, they didn't form a wye.





9 Tom's oldest son, Tom Jr., is the tower operator at Continental, Ohio. Tom has an operator at every station or tower to manually set the route and interlocking signals. The black knobs on the fascia control signals, the wood knobs track switches via Blue Point machines. The radios allow communication between station agents/towermen.

much as the train crews. I have two sons who have master's degrees in information technology, so I can get as fancy as I want. But my goal was to operate like the 1930s and '40s. I believe it was a grand time for railroading then.

The railroad will keep about 14 crew members busy during an operating session: the five tower operators and two station agent/operators plus a dispatcher, a roundhouse foreman, a yard crew, and four to six engineers. I obtained an original 1949 NKP employee's timetable, and we use those schedules as a general sequencing reference; I don't have a fast clock yet. We run around 12 trains between 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. (about 3 actual hours). We can operate at night, since all buildings

are illuminated with Woodland Scenics Just Plug lighting systems.

Motive power and rolling stock

All of my locomotives are Bachmann models except a Mikado, which is a Broadway Limited model; one from Kato; and one from Walther's (Proto 2000). They have been fine-tuned by fellow NKP modeler John Colombo with DCC sound decoders, stay-alive capacitors, and better speakers. I need NKP

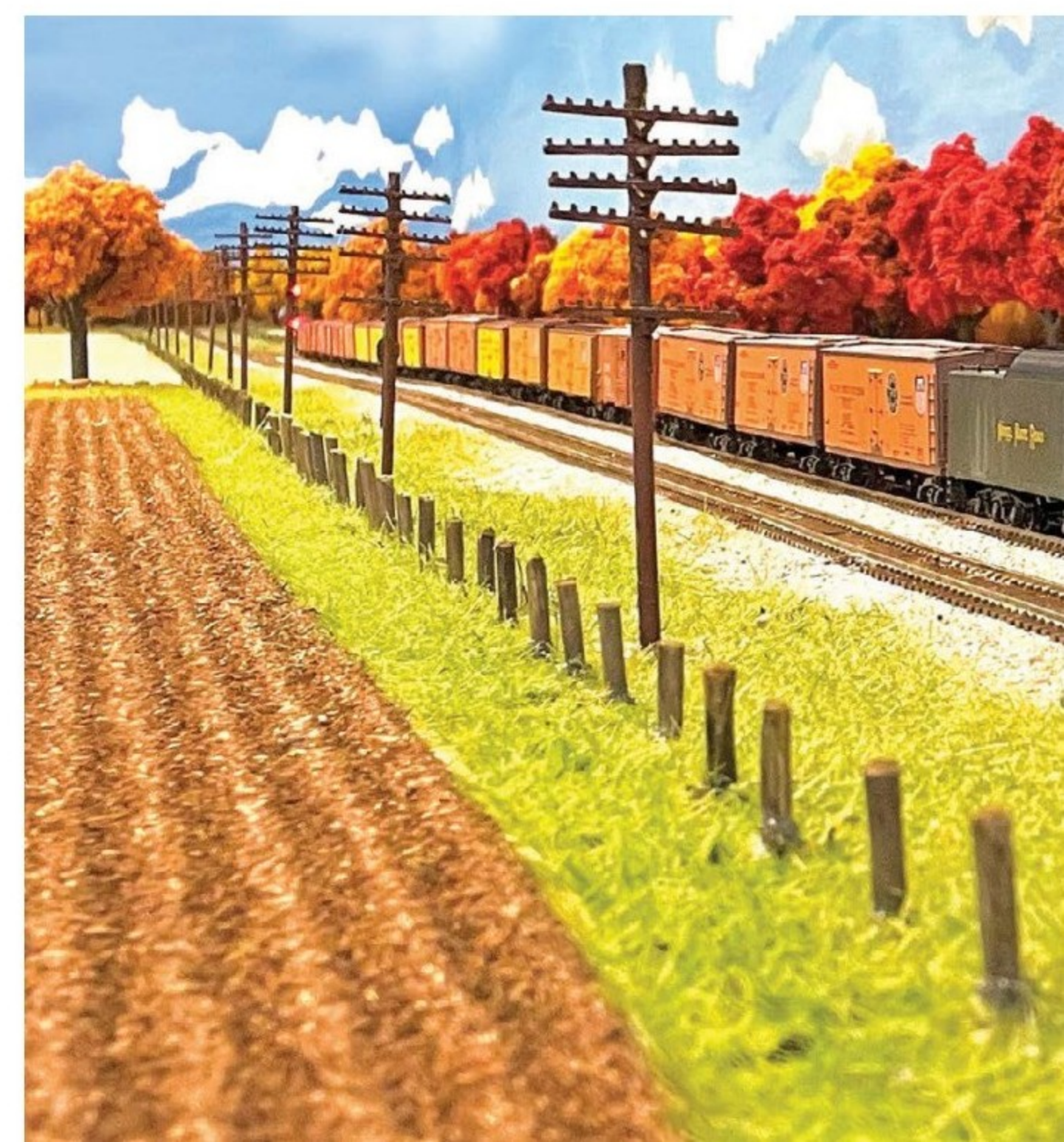
10 We're now just east of Mortimer coming from DA Tower. In the era Tom models, NKP Berkshires had not acquired the familiar "flying" number boards or Mars lights.

8 Mortimer, Ohio, marks another crossing with the NYC. It's governed by S Tower. Trains now head toward DA tower in Arcadia, which is actually the west end of West Wayne yard. We're back on the ground again for the rest of our day of photography along NKP's Ft. Wayne Division.

Hudsons, but none are available in 1:160, so oversize New York Central Hudsons will have to do for now.

I bought a friend's collection and gave the anachronistic diesels to a 7-year-old visitor who loved trains and did a good job running my trains with DCC. That kid will be a master modeler one day. As I replace my structures with better models, I send him the originals for his layout. Just paying it forward.

I try to buy or detail equipment typical of that seen in photos taken on the NKP in the 1930s, but I don't do any kit-bashing. I do weather most of my rolling stock with PanPastel products.





11 DA Tower in Arcadia, Ohio, is the last station before eastbounds enter West Wayne Yard, ending their runs. Note the widely spaced signal heads, an NKP characteristic. Richard Piccuilla of Custom Signal Systems in Utah built all of Tom's signals to NKP specifications.

A continuing journey

The railroad may look finished, but it's an ongoing journey of improvement. For example, John Colombo, who was the NKP Society's National Director when I wrote this, has a beautiful N scale railroad that also depicts a portion of the NKP's Buffalo–Chicago main line. I admired his ballast, so I redid mine using the same Arizona Rock & Mineral



N scale No. 1381 CSX/SP/Wabash Gray ballast he uses.

By the time this is in print, I'll finally have had the opportunity to visit all the locations I'm modeling as I make my way from my North Carolina home to the annual NKP Society convention in northern Indiana. But thanks to the NKPHTS, there's enough material available that I already know what it looked like.

Building the N scale Nickel Plate Road Ft. Wayne Division has been quite a journey and a wonderful learning experience. Many talented people were needed to complete this project. I'm just glad that the model railroad has reached an advanced state of completion. I am at the stage now that I will change something only if a new photo shows something I missed. Many are enjoying my efforts, and hopefully I can enjoy the layout for many more years!

I want to extend a special thanks to my good friend Rob Hale, who digitally added beautiful sky backdrops to some of my photos. You may enjoy seeing my railroad in action; use your browser to look for "N Scale Nickel Plate" on YouTube. [MR](#)



Meet Tom Smith

Tom Smith was born and raised in Winston-Salem, N.C. He began playing music at an early age, becoming an accomplished pedal steel and bass guitar player. Over the years, he has toured and recorded extensively and is a founding member of the Booger Swamp Rhythm Section, a country gospel band heard worldwide. He is currently head of mechanical and plumbing sales with GP Supply in Greensboro, N.C. The same meticulous attention to detail that he has applied to music, sales, and helping his community is reflected in his layout. Tom and wife, Elaine, have four sons, one daughter, 12 grandkids, and one great-granddaughter.



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- Erie/1930s
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Making a realistic line of trees for your layout is easy to do using SuperTrees from Scenic Express, as well as various colors of ground foam from Woodland Scenics and a few household craft supplies. Cody Grivno photo

EAST TROY INDUSTRIAL PARK

REALISTIC TREES

Part 8: Using Scenic Express SuperTrees to add realism to our HO scale layout

By David Popp // photos by the MR staff

When building a model railroad, at some point you're going to need trees. Our East Troy Industrial Park RR is set in southeastern Wisconsin, and there are trees everywhere you look, even in industrial areas. Although we'd already "installed" a lot of trees using paper backdrops, we needed something that looked just as

detailed for the foreground. For that we turned to Scenic Express SuperTree kits.

If you've never worked with these before, you essentially get a box of dried plant material and a set of instructions. By following the directions and working diligently, over the course of several evenings, you end up with easy-to-make model trees that have some of the best branch structure you will find anywhere.



SuperTree kits include a box of dried plant material, a set of instructions, and a sample of Scenic Express leaf flocking.

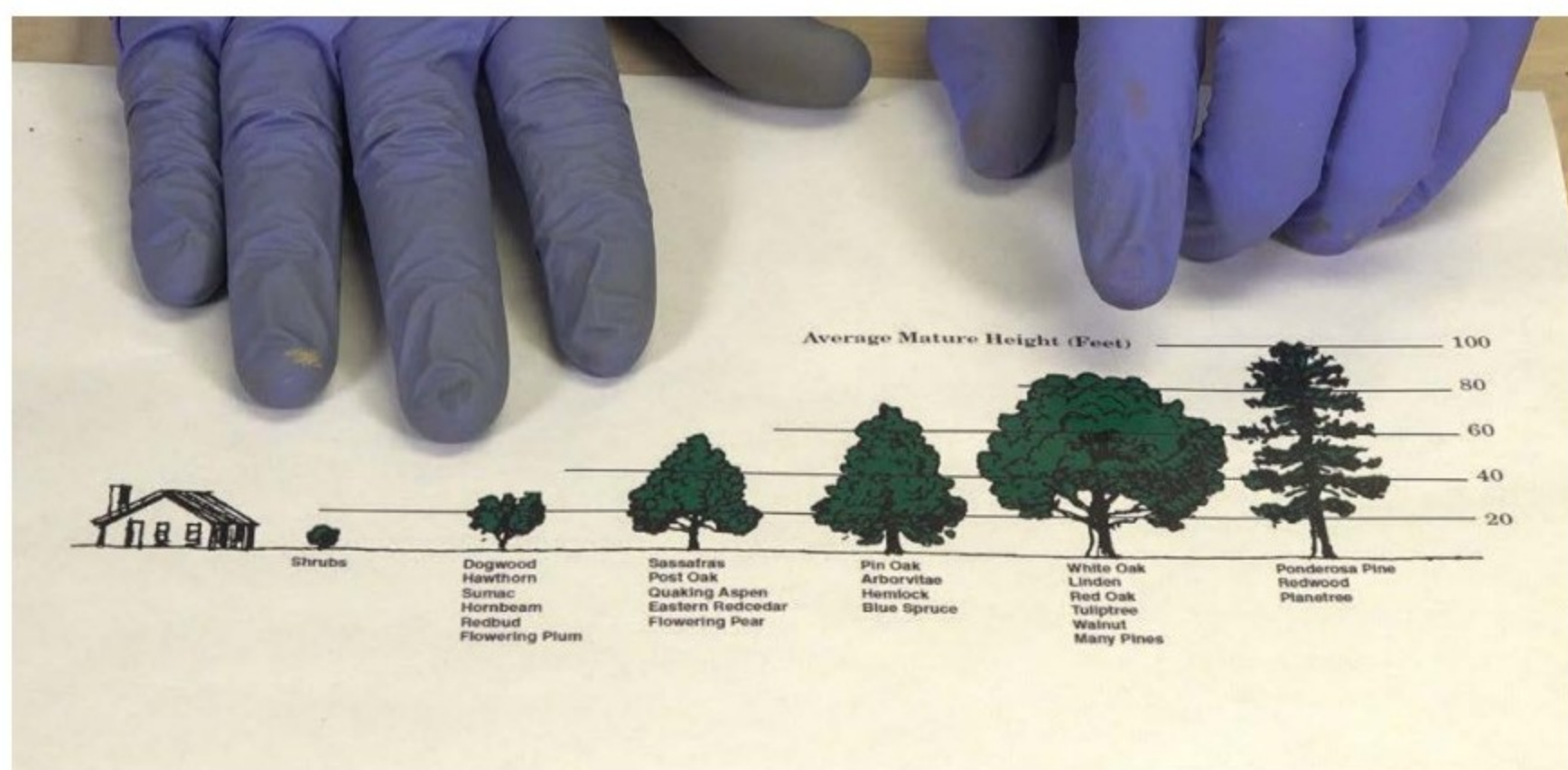
STEP 1 Armature prep

SuperTrees are made using natural plants for armatures and require some preparation. Most have the remains of narrow leaves inside the branch structure that should be carefully removed. Also, be aware that there are tiny seeds on the trees — hundreds of them! While the seeds won't hurt the finished appearance, they do get everywhere. I covered my workbench in plastic to keep the seeds contained.

Trees come in all manner of shapes and sizes, and for realism, you should be aware of how tall the armatures are in your scale. I found an arborists' chart on the internet to get an idea of average tree sizes. Since southeastern Wisconsin has a lot of deciduous trees, such as oaks, elms, and maples, I used their average heights when selecting armatures. I cut the ones that were too tall to the correct scale sizes.



The trees use natural plants for armatures, but they need to have the thin leaves removed to appear realistic in HO scale.



David found this arborists' chart on the internet so he had an idea of the proper scale heights he should make the trees.



You can measure the trees and cut them to the proper height using a scale ruler and a pair of flush-cut pliers.

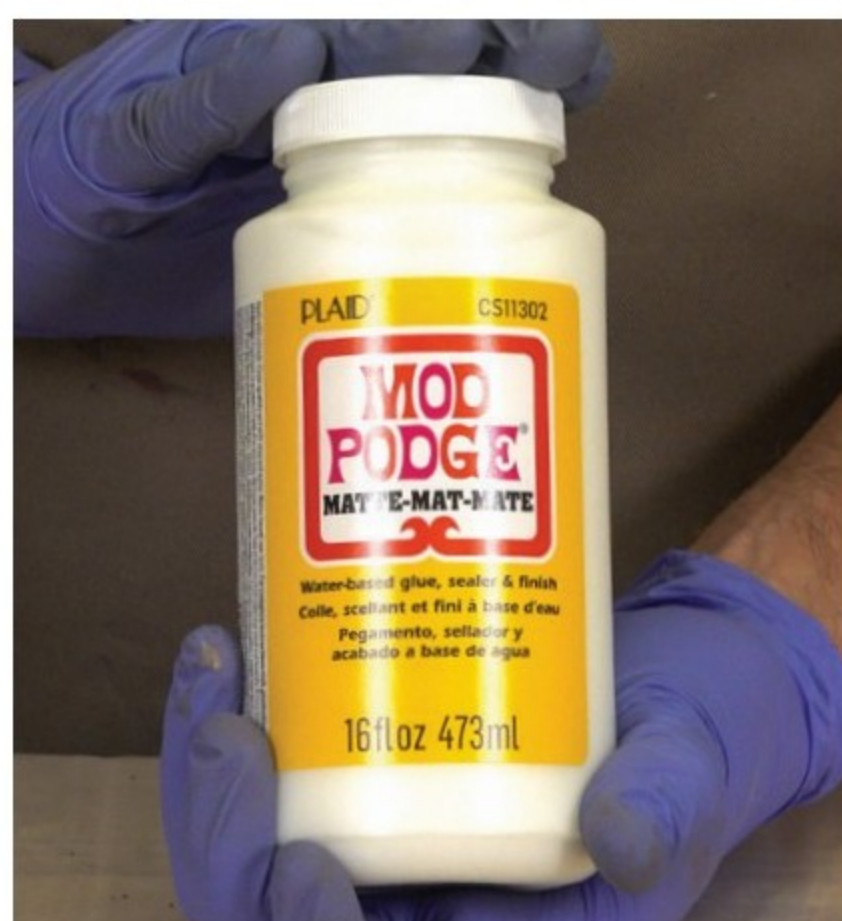
STEP 2 Treating armatures

Before you can use them, you need to treat the armatures. Being natural plant material, they will dry out and become brittle unless you do something to help preserve the fibers. After all, no one wants a layout full of crumbling trees. Scenic Express suggests soaking them in diluted matte medium. I used a full bottle

of Plaid CS11302 Mod Podge matte medium, diluting it 50% in water. I mixed the material in a deep plastic storage container with an air-tight lid so I could save the matte medium for making more trees later.

To treat a tree, dunk it completely in the matte medium, let it drain out of the branches, then clip it upside down to a line with a clothespin to dry. If the trunk is bent, you can straighten it a bit by attaching another clothespin to the tip and allow gravity to do its thing.

As a side note, Gerry Leone shared a technique with me for straightening trunks of SuperTrees using a soldering iron. Before soaking the bent tree in matte medium, Gerry touches the trunk on the outside of the bend briefly with a hot



Plaid CS11302 is a readily available matte medium.



Before using the armatures, they need to be soaked in diluted matte medium. Be sure to get as much of the material out of the branches as possible, and cover work surfaces with plastic.



David made simple drying lines with rope and sawhorses. He clipped the wet trees to the line, using an additional clothespin on the tip to straighten bent trees.

STEP 2 Treating armatures (Cont'd)

soldering iron. The heat allows you to straighten the trunk without breaking it.

As shown in the photos, I used three lines of rope strung between two saw-horses in the shop as a drying line. Note that this is a messy project, so in addition to again covering my workbench with plastic, I also covered the floor. Give the trees at least 24 hours to dry.

The next day, I inspected the treated armatures. Some had bald patches, while others had noticeably broken tops. I fixed both problems by using smaller treated armatures, gluing them to the trunk of a damaged tree to fill in the missing pieces. Once painted and covered in leaves, the repaired trees are nearly impossible to spot on the model railroad.



To repair broken armatures, David applied more branches to the trunk using Aleene's clear tacky glue. Hot glue works as well. You can do this to make trees with multiple trunks too.

STEP 3 Painting armatures

When I was a child, all of my crayon-drawn trees had brown trunks. Over time, however, I eventually discovered that real trees don't look that way, and their trunks and bark are more often a variegated mix of grays.

To paint the armatures for our SuperTrees, I took a small collection of Rust-Oleum spray cans outside

and matched the colors up with the real things, in this case a locust tree and a Scotch pine growing in front of our office building. I found three Rust-Oleum colors that seemed to work well: 2X Flat Gray primer, Light Flat Gray automobile primer, and 2X satin London Gray. The locust and Scotch pine trunks were different shades of gray, so I decided

to make some of each for the Mukwonago scene.

I painted the trees in the spray booth at our workshop, applying the paint mostly to the trunks and inner branches. These are the parts of the trees that will still be visible when on the layout. The ends of the branches will be covered with leaf flocking anyway, so there is no need to coat the

armature entirely. I painted trees that had a pine shape with the 2X Flat Gray primer. The deciduous trees received coats of either the automobile primer or the London Gray colors.

I let the spray paint dry to the touch (15 minutes), then clipped the armatures back on the drying lines, giving the paint 24 hours to fully cure before continuing.



One way to choose paint for the armatures is to match the colors to real trees, such as this locust tree trunk.



When painting the armature, focus on the trunk and inner-most branches, as they will be visible when finished.



This shows the difference between the London gray (left), automotive primer, and an unpainted armature (right).

STEP 4 Adding leaves

There are a lot of products you can use to add leaves to the SuperTrees. As I wanted to stay in the same color family as the other scenery materials we'd already used on the layout, I selected three colors of Woodland Scenics coarse turf, including light green (T1363), medium green (T1364), and conifer (T1366) to use on the trees.

I poured a thin layer of the diluted matte medium into a pan (see photo at below), then rolled just the outer branches of an armature into the liquid to keep the trunk clean. Next, I spun the tree by its trunk over a garbage can to remove the excess material, and then carefully rolled the armature into one of the colors of the

coarse ground foam, which I'd spread out on the bottom of a disposable paint tray. Rolling the armature in the foam only gets you part of the way. I also picked up small handfuls of the leaf material and sprinkled it over the wet matte medium on the branches. I then gently shook off the excess ground foam.

I used the light and medium greens for the deciduous trees and the darker conifer color for the pine trees. I let everything dry clipped to the lines. This technique allows you to put leaves only on the outer branches and keep the inner branches and trunk clear, giving the trees a realistic open feeling.



David poured a shallow layer of matte medium in a small pan, then rolled the armature in the liquid to coat the branches.



David used disposable paint trays, one for each color of ground foam, to contain the coarse turf while applying it to the matte medium-coated branches.



To remove the excess liquid, twirl the armature by the trunk in a large garbage can. Make sure the tree is low enough, or you will get coated with matte medium as well!



After applying the leaves to the trees, David carefully shook off the excess foam over the paint tray, then clipped the trees to the drying lines for a final time.

STEP 5 Planting trees

After the trees have dried thoroughly, you'll probably find that they still shed foam leaves. While the matte medium does a good job attaching the leaves to the branches, excess ground foam often just hangs on to the inner layer as well. You can affix the loose material with a quick shot of hair spray, which should dry in

just a few minutes.

Unless it stands in a landscaped yard, trees rarely grow with open ground under them, except in deep forests. For the tree line along the road on the East Troy layout, I started the planting process by first installing undergrowth. This represents the mix of bushes, tall grasses, and small trees

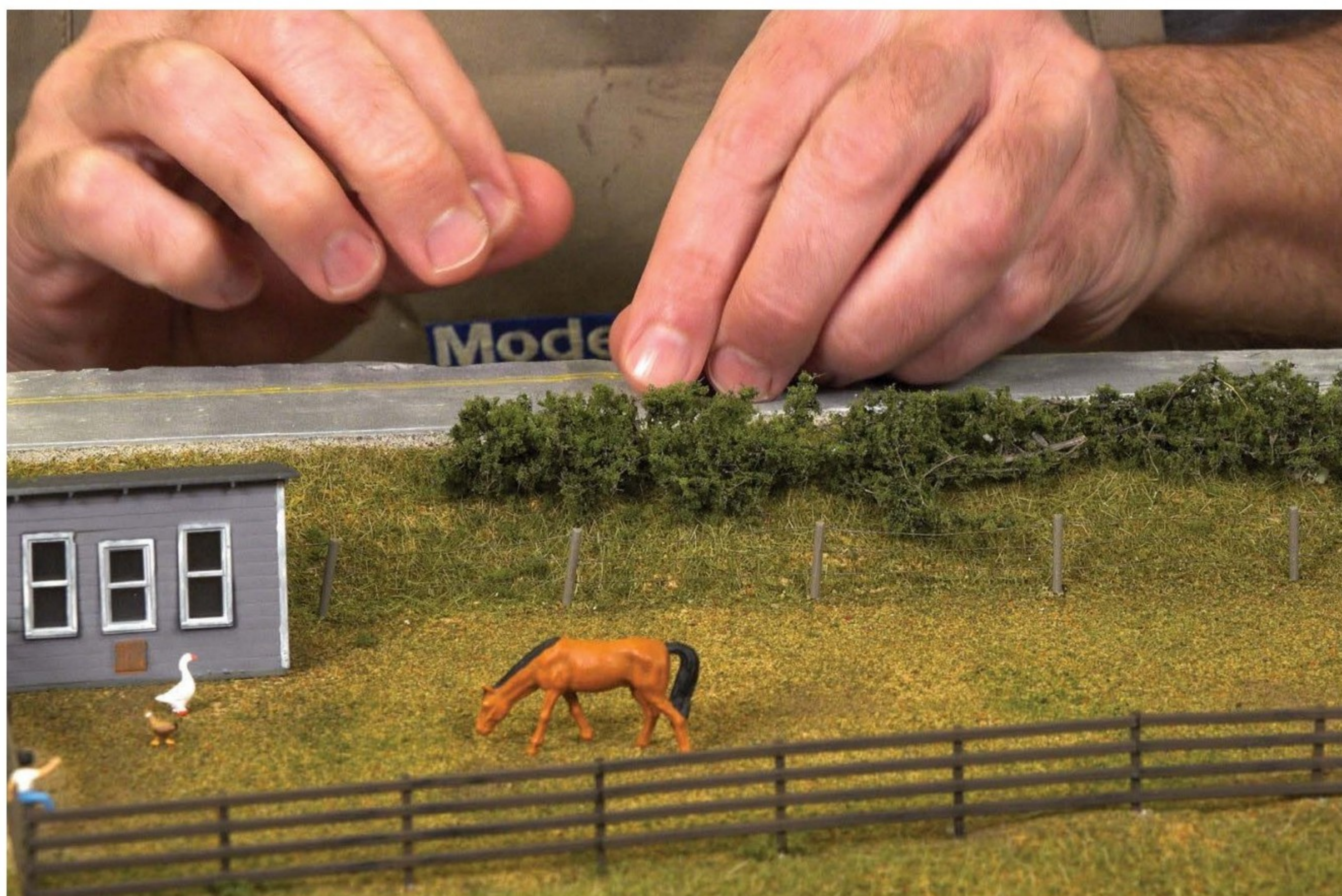
you often find along fence lines and ditches. You can use castoff SuperTree material for this, but I chose to use Woodland Scenics Fine-Leaf Foliage, which is also made with painted plant material coated with coarse ground foam. I glued strips of the foliage along the embankment for the road using white glue.

Next, I planted the trees directly in the undergrowth, as well as several in open locations on the layout. Because much of the scenery is made with a foam base, I could easily make simple holes for the trunks with an awl. After choosing a spot for a tree, I inserted the awl to make the hole in the ground. I then applied white glue to the trunk and placed it in the hole.

Although the process may seem time consuming, you can make a lot of trees for your layout quickly and inexpensively using the materials and techniques shown here.

To model the undergrowth found along road and fenceline, David used another Woodland Scenics product, medium green Fine-Leaf Foliage, which makes great bushes.

If you're working with foam scenery, you can use an awl and white glue to plant the trees. Use a drill to make holes in plaster and wood surfaces.





Revising a MODEL RAILROAD

Changing from two decks to one made this HO scale layout more enjoyable to run

By Brian Searles

Photos by Doug Tagsold



1 Today's Belt Local (NY 23), powered by a pair of Norfolk Southern Electro-Motive Division GP38-2 diesels, picks up cars from Detroit Iron & Metal. The scene takes place on Brian Searles' HO scale Conrail Shared Assets Operations layout set in Detroit.

Space is something most model railroaders want to have more of. When my HO scale Conrail Share Assets Operations layout was featured in *Great Model Railroads 2016*, it was a double-deck layout. Since the article was published I made some major revisions to the layout.

Probably the biggest change is that the model railroad is now on a single deck. I also bumped the era forward a decade. However, I still model Conrail Shared Assets Operations in the Detroit area, so I didn't have to revise my locomotive and rolling stock fleet.

Though I made changes to my 26 x 42-foot model railroad, one thing

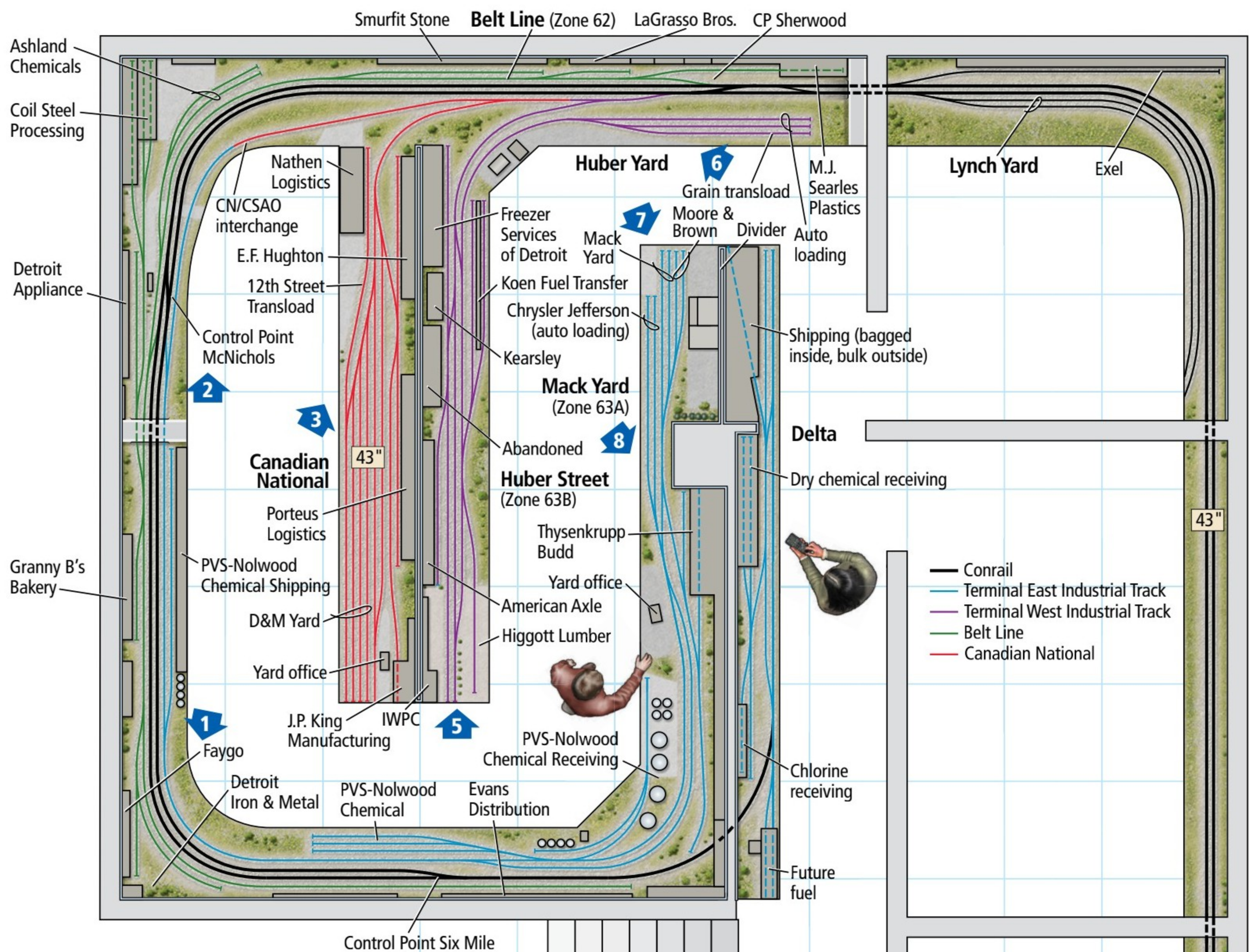
remains the same — operations. I have a dedicated crew that meets each month to run trains, bringing my HO scale version of the Motor City to life.

Time to reflect

Over the years I've had the good fortune of operating on many layouts. I've also read many articles on model railroad operations. This helped me discover that two of my favorite aspects of the hobby are yard operations and industrial switching. My main sources of inspiration were reading about and operating on the layouts of Chuck Hitchcock, Jim Senese, and Doug Tagsold.

The 2011 version of my Conrail Shared Assets Operations (CSAO) was set in 2005. The layout featured many of the full-size industries on the branch. I also included some former rail-served customers and added a few freelanced businesses to help me achieve my operating goals. In order to maximize the size of the railroad I included a helix and a second deck at the south end of the modeled railroad from Control Point Beaubien to staging at West Detroit.

I hosted nearly 100 operating sessions on the layout between 2011 and early 2020, when restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic suspended our monthly gatherings. We had enjoyed the



The layout at a glance

Name: Conrail Shared Assets Operations in Detroit

Scale: HO (1:87.1)

Size: 26 x 42 feet

Prototype: Conrail Shared Assets Operations

Locale: Detroit

Era: circa 2015

Style: walkaround

Mainline run: 100 feet

Minimum radius: 28" (main), 24" (industry)

Minimum turnout: No. 6 (main), No. 5 (industry)

Maximum grade: 2 percent

Benchwork: box frame

Height: 42"

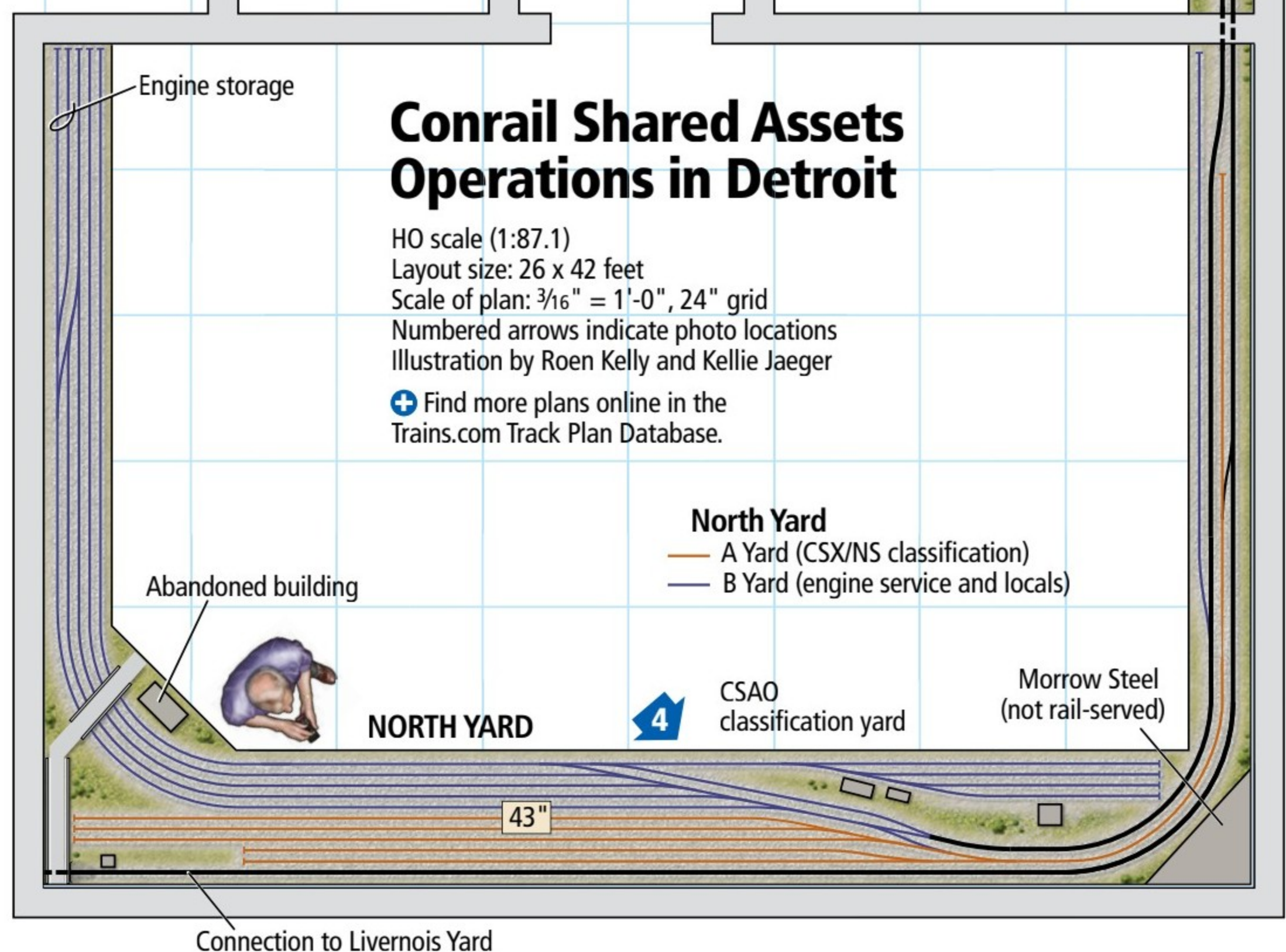
Roadbed: cork on 3/4" plywood or 2"-thick extruded foam insulation board

Track: Atlas code 83

Scenery: play sand base with Woodland Scenics ground foam and Heki grass products

Backdrop: photographs

Control: NCE Digital Command Control with wireless throttles



Conrail Shared Assets Operations in Detroit

HO scale (1:87.1)

Layout size: 26 x 42 feet

Scale of plan: 3/16" = 1'-0", 24" grid

Numbered arrows indicate photo locations

Illustration by Roen Kelly and Kellie Jaeger

Find more plans online in the

Trains.com Track Plan Database.

North Yard

A Yard (CSX/NS classification)

B Yard (engine service and locals)

CSAO classification yard

Morrow Steel (not rail-served)

Connection to Livernois Yard



② Detroit Appliance, Coil Steel Processing, and Ashland Chemicals are seen in this view of Control Point McNichols. Closest to the fascia is the Canadian National/Conrail Shared Assets Operations interchange track, followed by the north- and southbound main lines and the Belt Line.

layout as it was. However, the shut down gave me time to reflect on an aspect of the model railroad that had been bothering me for some time.

The upper level was 60" high and crews had to use plastic step stools to operate on it. This was fine when the layout was built. But as the years passed and we aged, stepping up and down and standing on step stools became increasingly tiring and uncomfortable. Also, the risk of someone making a misstep, falling, and potentially getting seriously injured was increasing. There had to be a better way.

Addition by subtraction

After months of planning, I realized the best solution was to remove the upper deck and helix. What would fill the space? A central peninsula measuring 14-feet long by 42" wide with a divider running down the middle. The result was two switching zones, each 21" wide. I also extended the layout on both sides of the hallway wall where the helix was to create two more switching zones.

My friend David Higgott helped with the benchwork changes as soon as the pandemic restrictions were lifted. I laid the track. Then, with more help from David and another friend, Peter Porteus, we wired the new sections and prepared the layout for operations.

The revised model railroad is a proto-freelanced representation of CSAO's double-track North Yard Branch. The layout is set approximately 3 miles north of North Yard to an unmodeled continuation on the Sterling Secondary. Four industrial zones branch off from the main: The Belt Line, Terminal West Industrial Track, Terminal East Industrial Track, and Delta Industrial Track. There's also a connection with Canadian National.

When we removed the upper deck, it resulted in the loss of the six-track West Detroit staging yard. To make up for this, I use North Yard as an active staging yard. Between operating sessions CSX and Norfolk Southern exchange cars with CSAO in the yard. Canadian National's D&M Yard works the same way, but the exchange of cars only occurs between every other session. Our sessions alternate between Day 1 and Day 2.

I also lost two-thirds of my mainline run and the through trains that ran between staging and North Yard when I revised the layout. However, I wound up with more industries and more interesting switching zones than before. Better yet, these new locations could be worked without the need for step stools. I wish that I'd made this revision years earlier.

To tie the new areas into the existing model railroad, I turned to many of the same structure building and scenery

techniques that I used before. For larger industries I used Gatorboard covered with plastic siding material and commercial detail castings. Other structures are kitbashed commercial plastic kits, primarily from Wm. K. Walther's Inc. The backdrop buildings are from the former KingMill Enterprises Radical Flats product range.

As before, the ground cover is play sand, which you can find at most big-box home improvement stores. The scenery base was then covered with Woodland Scenics ground foam and Heki grass mats and foliage.

Most of the trees are made from sagebrush branches and Heki foliage. They are supplemented with plastic armatures from Woodland Scenics covered with Heki foliage.

Locomotives and rolling stock

Conrail Shared Assets Operations mostly uses pairs of four-axle road switchers, primarily Electro-Motive Division (EMD) GP38-2 diesel locomotives, on its locals. Yard power consists of two six-axle units, a CSX EMD SD60 and a Norfolk Southern EMD SD40-2.

The interchange train from Livernois Yard is powered by an EMD SD70ACe and a General Electric ES44AC. Canadian National uses two GP9R locomotives on its trains, and an EMD



4 Conrail's assets were split between CSX and Conrail on June 1, 1999. Here, CSX SD60 No. 8790 works the A Yard. In the foreground, Norfolk Southern SD40-2 No. 3218 rests on the caboose track between assignments.

MP15DC serves the Delta Industrial Track. The sound-equipped locomotives are from Athearn, Atlas Model Railroad Co., Broadway Limited Imports, and Wm. K. Walther's Inc.

Though there are enough bi- and tri-level enclosed auto racks and 86-foot boxcars to serve the auto-related industries and give the model railroad a

Detroit feel, that equipment is far outnumbered by other freight car types. I've modeled a variety of industries, and almost one-third of the 350-plus cars on the layout are tank cars. The majority are from Wm K. Walther's Inc., with others produced by Athearn, Atlas Model Railroad Co., and InterMountain Railway Co.

Operations overview

I enjoy many aspects of model railroading, but operating sessions are at the top of the list. I host monthly operating sessions that last around four hours. Jobs for the six-member crew include yardmaster, assistant yardmaster, and four local crews. The jobs are listed on a train sheet and are called sequentially. Road crews use wireless throttles from NCE. Operators assigned to yard jobs use tethered throttles.

As before, most of the main line is double track and operated under Rule 151: right-hand running at restricted speed that will permit stopping within half the range of sight, not exceeding 25 mph. Non-mainline track is operated under Rule 105: restricted speed that will permit stopping within half the range of sight, not exceeding 15 mph.

Three approach signals are on Main Track 2 (southbound) for North Yard. The first two are controlled by occupancy detectors, and the third is controlled by the yardmaster.

Car forwarding is also handled as before, with waybills that fit into plastic sleeves. I design the waybills in Microsoft Excel, including only the information found on a switch list, then print them. I



③ The Canadian National Local, led today by GP9RM diesels 4013 and 4012, is returning from North Yard with transfer cars from Conrail Shared Assets Operations. This section of the model railroad replaced the area where the helix was located.

also color code the waybills, which I've found helps the railroad run better. The traffic plan is based on a two-day cycle.

Train instructions are printed to fit in the same plastic sleeves as the waybills. They're accompanied by a list of industries served by that local. The yard has instructions for each train listing which cars are required.

Using prototype Zone Track Spot maps as a guide, I assigned identification numbers to all of the Conrail Shared Assets Operations tracks. Each setout location has the name of the consignee and track number. At industries that call for location-specific setouts, a spot number is also included. Since this can be a lot of information for crew members to remember, I've placed zone maps at various locations around the layout.

A closer look

Here's a breakdown of the different locations on the my model railroad.



⑤ Huber Street is another of the new sections of Brian's layout. Two CSX road switchers are seen picking up cars from Koen Fuel Transfer. In the foreground is Inland Waters Pollution Control (left) and Higgott Lumber.

North Yard consists of two five-track sub yards with individual switching leads connected by one track. The A Yard holds the interchange cars for Norfolk Southern and CSX and is run by the assistant yardmaster. In theory, Norfolk Southern and CSX interchange cars daily between sessions.

The B Yard holds the interchange cars for Canadian National and Livernois Yard and the receiving/departure tracks for the locals. It's run by the yardmaster.

Belt Line (Zone 62) connects to the main line at Control Point Sherwood and Control Point McNichols. It extends 35 feet around the outside of the room and serves 11 customers. It's switched by morning and afternoon locals (NY 13

and NY 23) that originate at a crew shack on the Belt Line. Trains take pickups to North Yard and return with setouts.

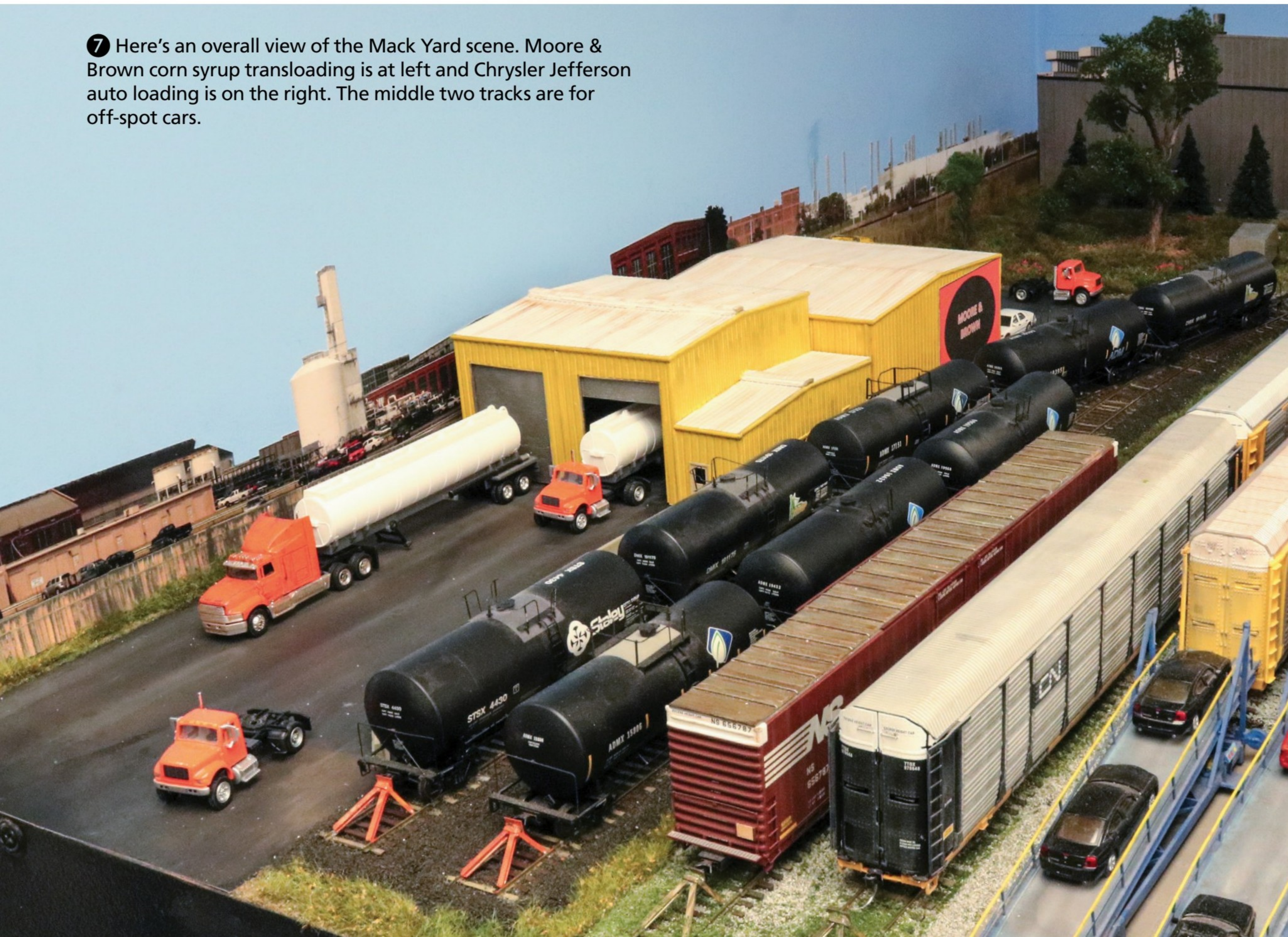
Mack Yard (Zone 63A) is located at the end of the Terminal East Industrial Track. It branches off the main line at Control Point McNichols. It has a small yard and serves three customers. It's switched by a morning local (NY 12) that originates at the office in Mack Yard. The train takes pickups to North Yard and returns with setouts.

PVS-Nolwood (Zone 63C) is also located on the Terminal East Industrial Track. It has 16 spots and an off-spot yard. It's switched by an afternoon local (NY 17) that originates in North Yard.



⑥ At left, the Huber Local (NY 14) is departing Huber Street for North Yard with its pickups. At right, CN Transfer (NY 15) heads north toward the Canadian National/Conrail Shared Assets Operations interchange track.

⑦ Here's an overall view of the Mack Yard scene. Moore & Brown corn syrup transloading is at left and Chrysler Jefferson auto loading is on the right. The middle two tracks are for off-spot cars.



Huber Street (Zone 63B) is located on the Terminal West Industrial Track and connects to the main line at Control Point Sherwood. It serves eight customers and is switched by the morning and afternoon locals (NY 14 and NY 24) that originate at a crew shack in Huber Yard. The trains take pickups to North Yard and return with setouts.

Transfers. Four transfers are part of the operating scheme. The Livernois Transfer (LY 14) runs from Livernois Yard (staging) to North Yard early on Day 1 and returns to Livernois Yard late on Day 2.

The CN Transfer (NY 15) delivers CN local cars to the CN interchange track and returns with outbound cars.

The Auto Rack Transfer (NY 26) delivers auto racks to Lynch Yard for prepping and returns with prepped cars.

The Delta Transfer (NY 16) exchanges from/to Delta at Lynch Yard.

Canadian National connects to Conrail Shared Assets Operations via the

Terminal West Industrial Track. It operates out of D&M Yard, which has a 30-car capacity and serves five industries.

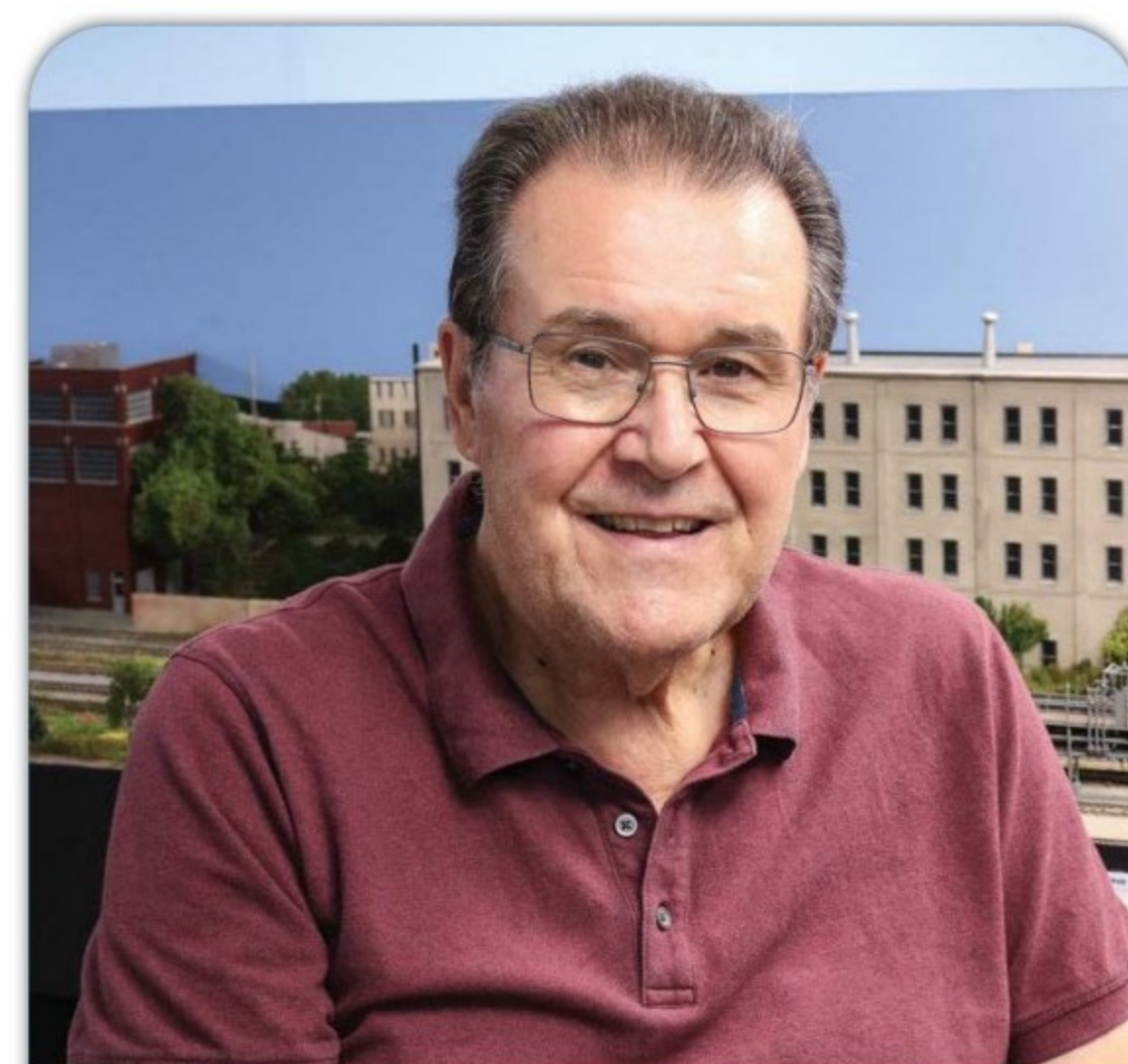
In theory Canadian National runs a transfer to exchange cars after the Day 2 session. The CN Local switches the local industries, works the interchange track for CN local cars to/from CSAO, and runs a transfer that takes CSAO local cars from CN to North Yard and returns with outbound cars for CN.

Delta trackage branches off of the main north of Control Point Six Mile. It serves two customers and is switched by two locals. The Morning Local (DS 1) makes the pickups and delivers them to Lynch Yard for interchange with CSAO and returns light. The Afternoon Local (DS 2) runs light to Lynch Yard and returns with the setouts.

Working together

I've been fortunate to develop friendships with several great people over the years who I have met through model railroading. Their qualified help made building and revising my HO scale Conrail Shared Assets Operations model railroad possible, as I have limited construction and electrical skills.

I would also like to acknowledge the members of my operating crew — David Higgott, Peter Porteus, Graham Baker, John Brown, Bill Huddleston and Ron



Meet Brian Searles

Brian Searles and his wife, Betty, live in Alliston, Ontario, Canada. They have two sons and four grandchildren. Brian is a retired chartered accountant. Besides model railroading, his other interests include walking, camping, gardening, and computer and board gaming.

Kearsley. They have stuck with me through this layout revision and continue to help me with various projects on the model railroad.

Their regular attendance and participation in operating sessions is greatly appreciated. For four hours each month my HO scale slice of the Motor City is a hub of rail activity. Thank you. **MR**



8 The Mack Local (NY 12) rumbles past the yard office as it returns from North Yard with empty auto racks for Chrysler Jefferson. The EMD GP39-2 diesels are both former Reading Co. units.



Ma & Pa train on a trestle

The Maryland & Pennsylvania RR has been described as a 12"-scale model railroad owing to its compact length, sharp curves dating back to its narrow gauge origins, small motive power, and the resulting short trains that frequented the main line. The motive power roster

comprised a handsome fleet of products from the nearby Baldwin Locomotive Works in Eddystone, Pa.

Although rural in nature, with almost every structure, rail and otherwise, crowded up close to the rails, it offered the opportunity for urban modeling as well at its end

points in York, Pa., and Baltimore, Md. In short — pun intended — the 77-mile-long Ma & Pa was an ideal candidate for modeling, and Stan White took advantage of that to fit a fitting representation of the railroad on an equally compact porch; see *Model Railroad Planning*

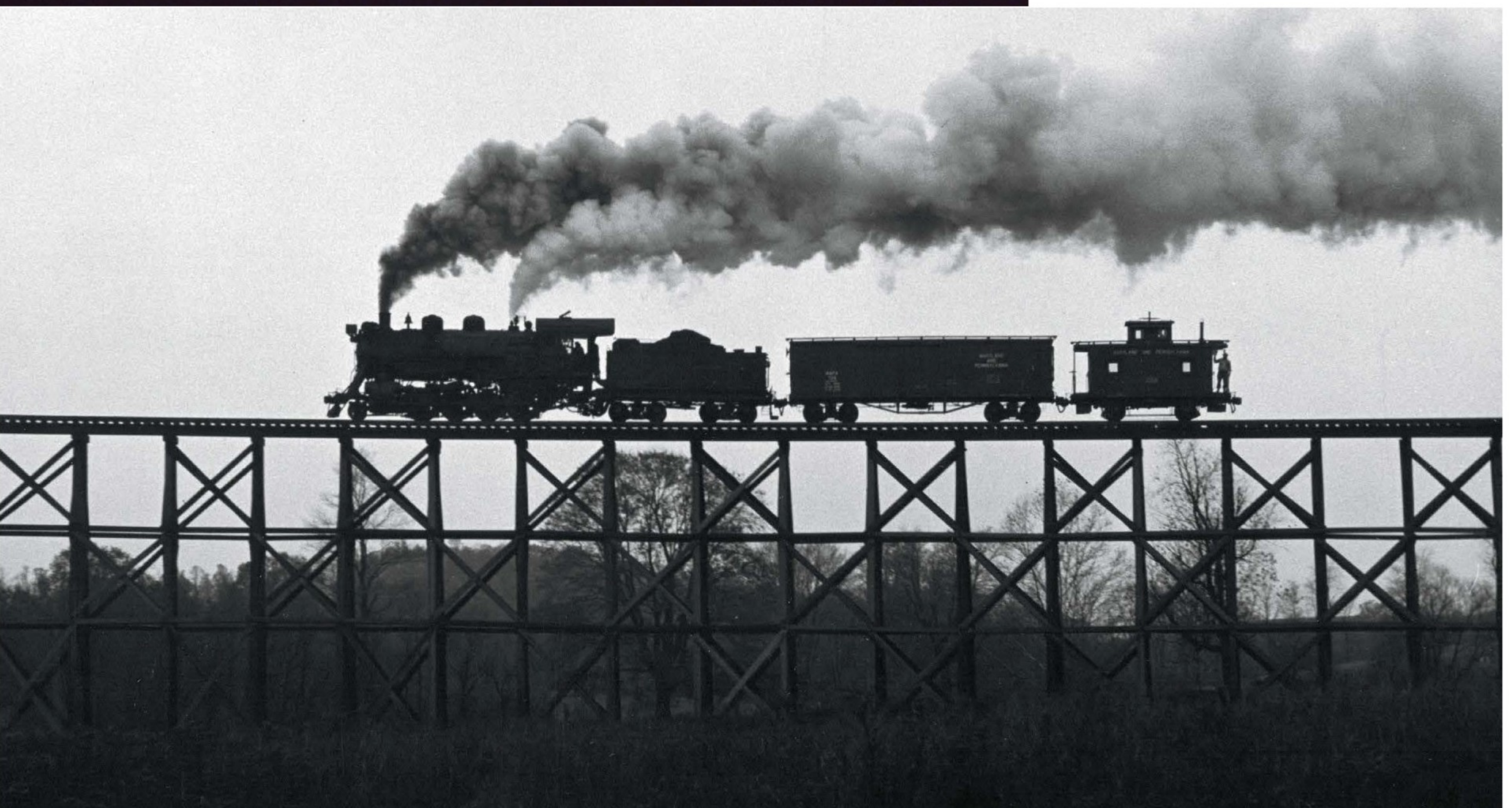
1997. His HO tribute to the railroad included this famous scene of a wood trestle near Sharon, Pa., made famous by a James Gallagher photo in the mid-1950s as a train headed southbound to “pick up a couple of additional cars at Belair,” James reported. **MR**

Send us your scenes

Have you modeled a scene based on a prototype photo? Send both the prototype and model photos, along with a brief description of the scene and the modeling techniques shown, to: Prototype to Model, *Model Railroader* magazine, 18650 W. Corporate Dr., Suite 103, Brookfield, WI 53045; or email to Consulting Editor Tony Koester at consulting.editor@firecrown.com.

One of the most famous Maryland & Pennsylvania photos shows 2-8-0 No. 43, a truss-rod boxcar, and a four-wheel bobber crossing Gross's Trestle at Sharon, Md., on Nov. 10, 1955. Stan White's shortened HO model of Gross's trestle is nonetheless sufficient to convey the essence of the scene.

Prototype photo: James P. Gallagher;
model photo: Tony Koester



● Trackside Photos

It's a bit past dusk in northwestern Oregon around 1912, and Climax No. 1 pulls a string of log cars over Humbug Creek on Steve Zapytowski's HO and HOn3 layout, the Tillamook & Astoria Railroad Co. Humbug Creek was dammed by the Big Creek Timber Co. to form a log pond for its Camp 18. In the upper left, visible in the fading light, is Camp 18's derrick. Locomotive No. 1 is a 53-year-old brass United PFM Climax, and it's the oldest locomotive owned by the Tillamook & Astoria. Bruce Hukill photo







A Baldwin switcher (Stewart Hobbies Baldwin DS-4-4-1000) is marshalling cars in North Philadelphia's Margie Yard prior to their journey up the Chestnut Hill Branch on Ron Hoess' HO scale Pennsylvania RR layout. Meanwhile an MP54 commuter train (Funaro & Camerlengo) has just left the branch and is hurrying to downtown Philadelphia. Catenary was constructed using Andy Rubbo's methods and depict the unique bridges that were installed when electrification of this portion of the main line took place between 1915 and 1918. Bob McCormac photo



Westbound train LNAWE (Local from Nampa, Idaho, to Weiser, Idaho) is being led by Union Pacific No. 1983, an Electro-Motive Division SD70Ace heritage unit painted in the Western Pacific scheme on Phil Smith's HO scale UP Huntington Sub layout. Dave Rickaby photo

Send us your photos

Trackside Photos is a showcase for the work of *Model Railroader* readers. Send your photos (digital images 5 megapixels or larger) on a flash drive to: *Model Railroader*, Trackside Photos, 18650 W. Corporate Dr., Suite 103, Brookfield, WI 53045; or email them to us at editor@modelrailroader.com.



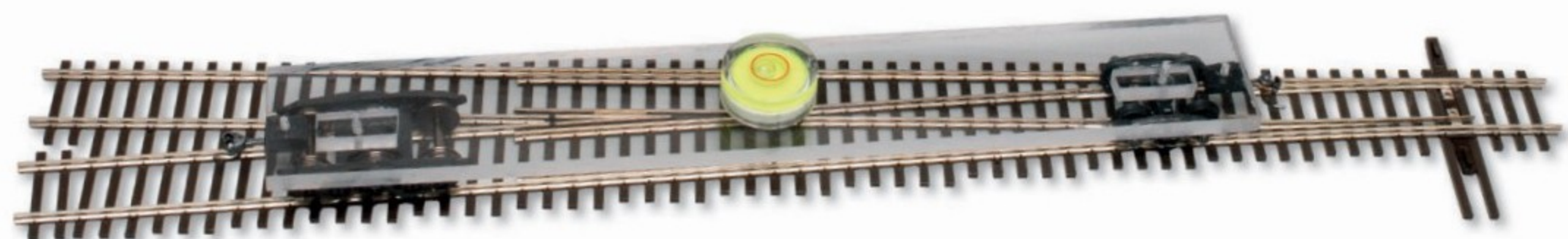
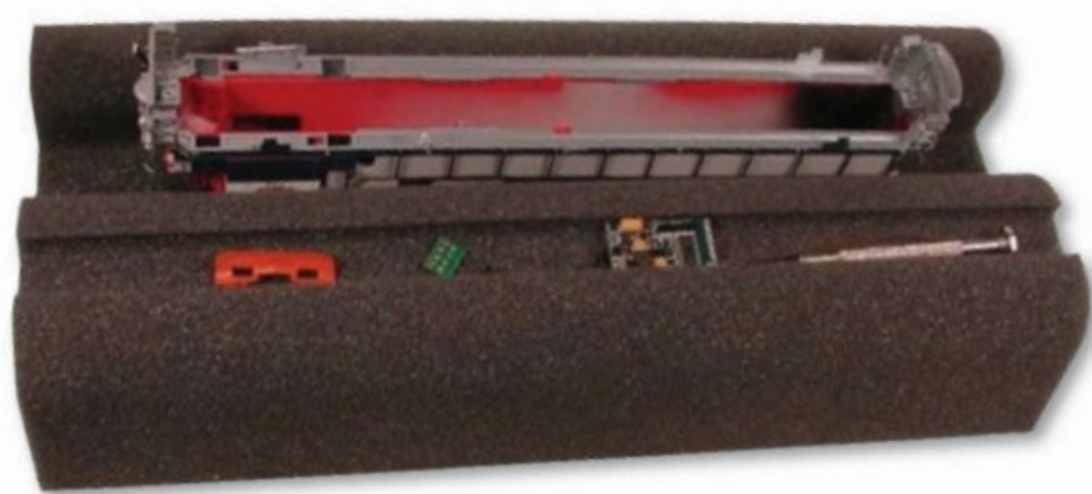
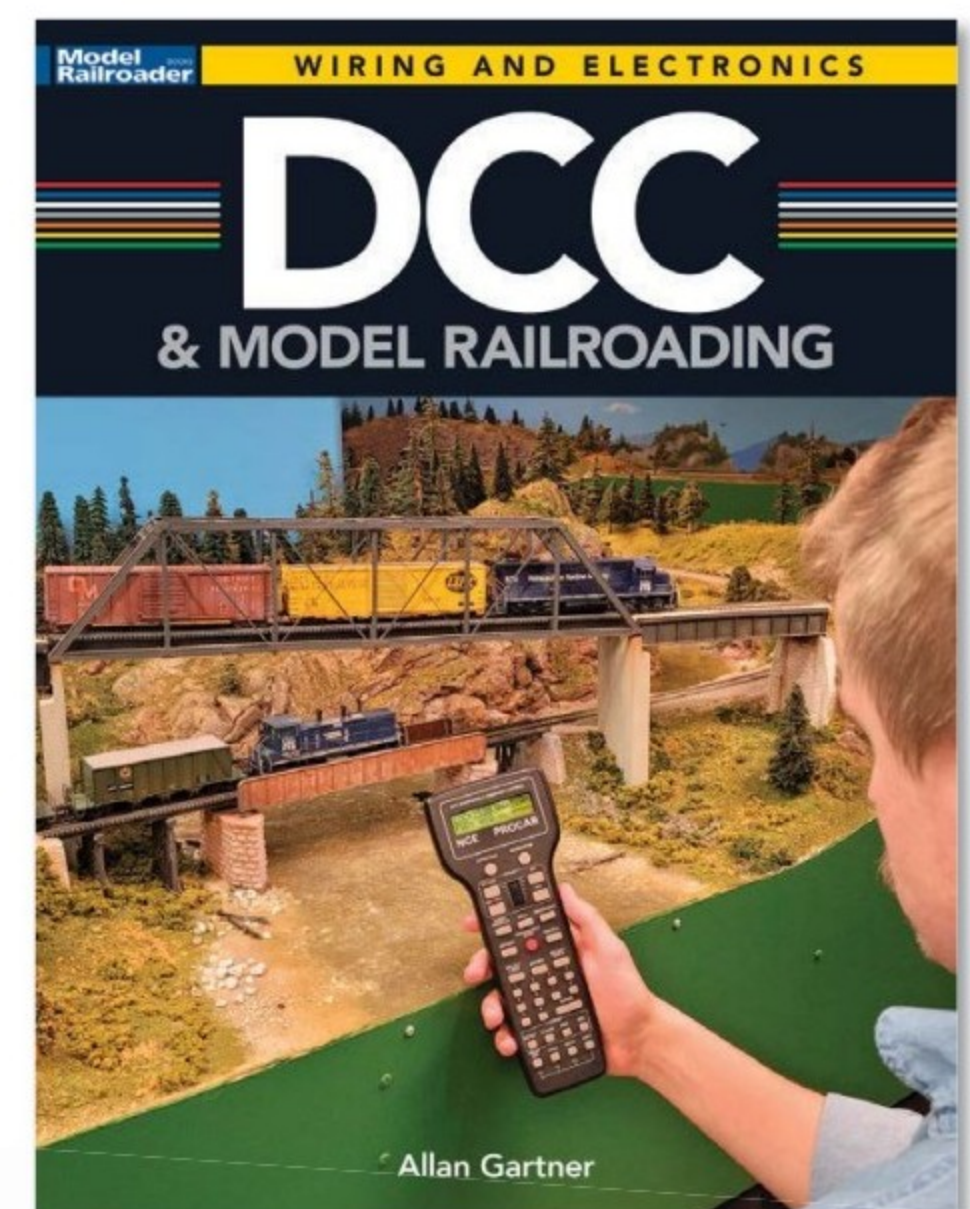
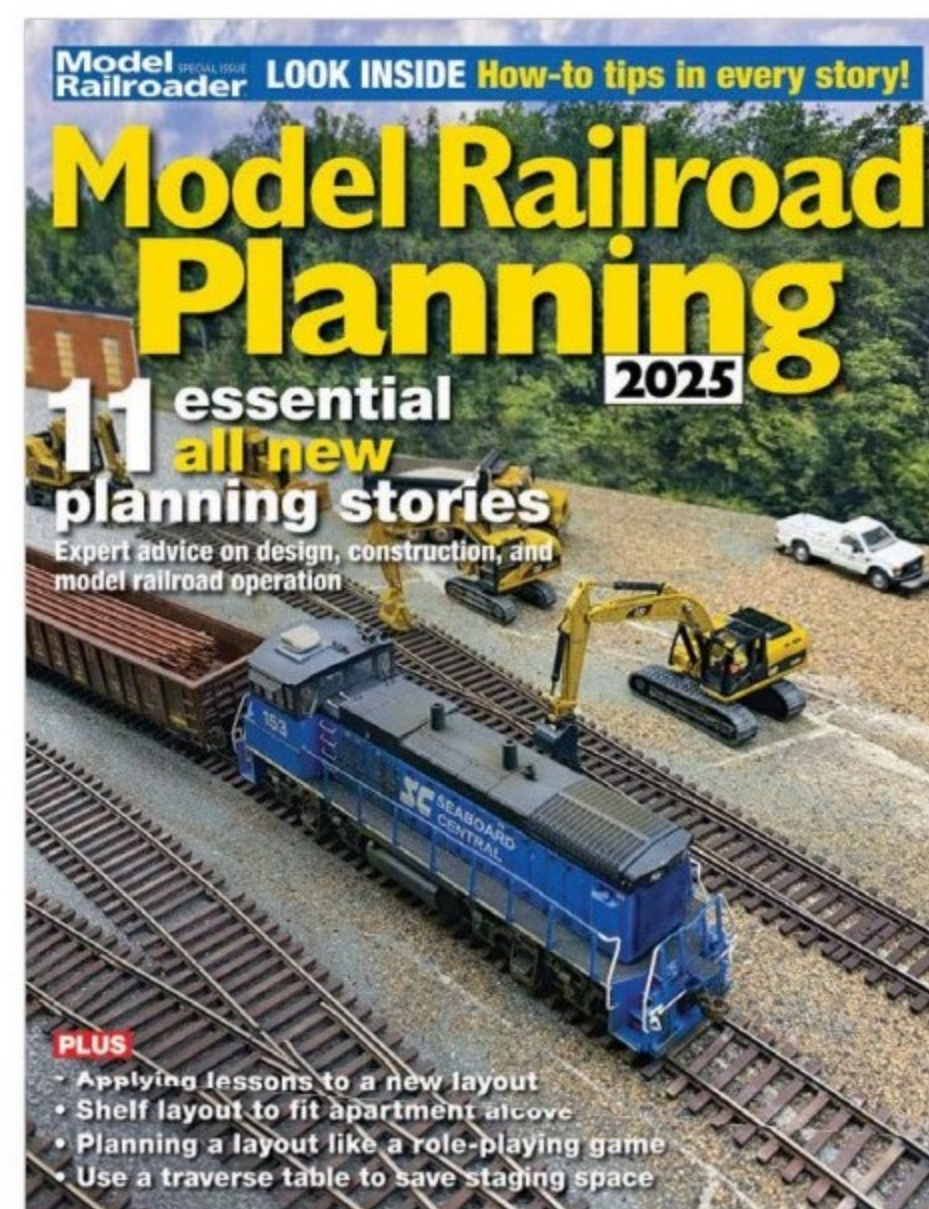
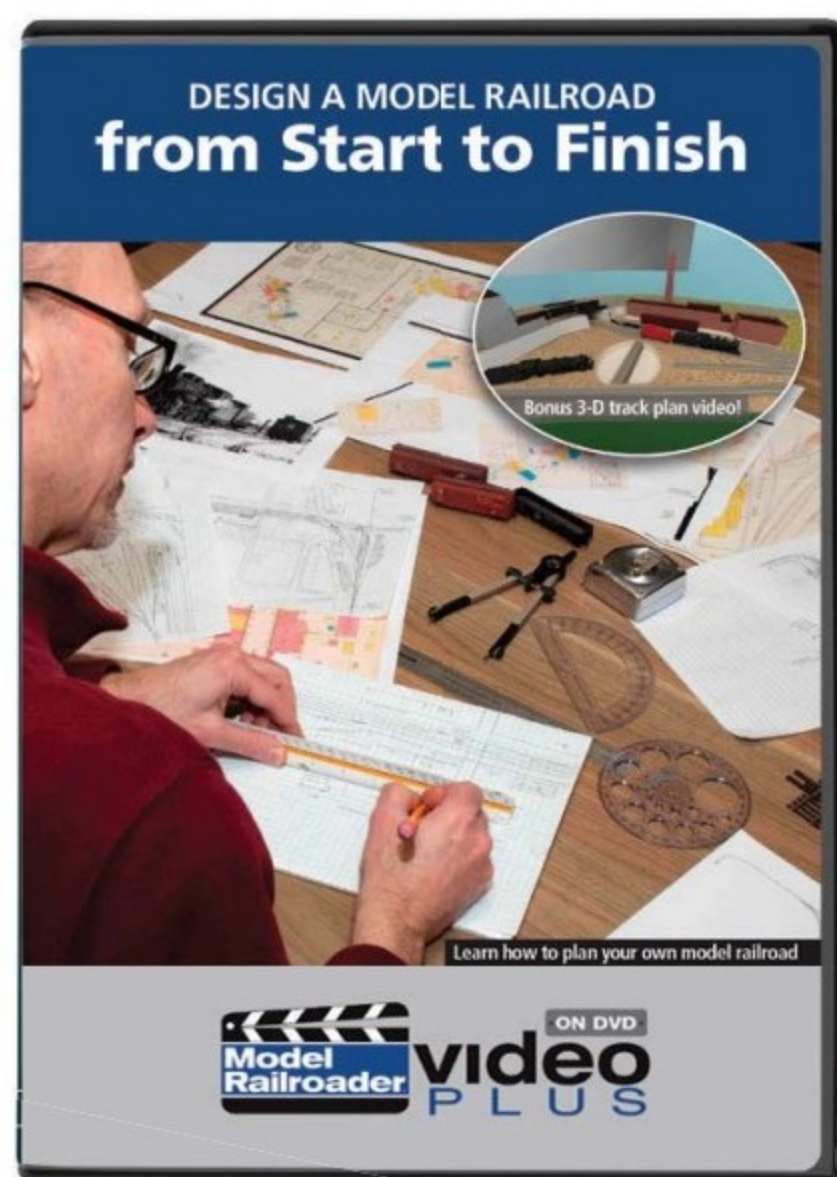
Lumber is being loaded onto the tramp steamer at Westport on Robert McLaughlin's N scale diorama. It was built on a 2 x 4 foot foam core board, and depicts a freelanced Oregon Coast port. Robert McLaughlin photo

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AZ, TEMPE: ARHS Model Train Swap Meet. Tempe Nazarene Church, 3929 S. Rural Rd., Tempe, AZ. Saturday, July 11, 2026, 9:00am-12:00pm. Everything Trains — Food — Fun. Admission \$5.00. Vendor info: To sign up, send a check to: ARHS, PO Box 5816, Glendale, AZ 85302. 6' tables \$20.00 each. Contact: Craig Faris, 623-340-3529

CA, SACRAMENTO: SAVE THE DATES! International Railfair. November 14-15, 2026. Cal Expo, Building C, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95815. Saturday 10am-5pm and Sunday 10am-4pm. Operating Layouts, Vendors, Kids Activities, on-site food and more! For updates, visit: internationalrailfair.com or contact Tom Campbell at tom.c.irf@gmail.com

IA, ELKADER: 14th Annual Elkader Model Train Show-Swap Meet. Sunday, August 16, 2026, 10:00am-3:30pm. NEW LOCATION: Moyna Building, 206 Johnson St., Elkader, IA 52043. Adults \$5, children 6-12 \$2, under 5 FREE. Free parking, lunch stand available. Information: Larry Lerch, 563-880-2066 or 563-880-4241

ID, CALDWELL: Southwest Idaho Train Show. O'Conner Fieldhouse, 2207 Blaine St., Caldwell, ID. September 19-20, 2026. Saturday, 10AM-5PM; Sunday, 10AM-5PM. Admission \$5.00, \$6.00 w/card. Under 12 free w/adult. Clinics, operating layouts, exhibits, rides, vendors, all scales. Concessions available & free parking. Sponsored by Caldwell Model Railroad Club & Historical Society. Contact Dave 208-936-5730 or visit www.cmrchs.org

MA, TAUNTON: OLD COLONY MODEL RAILROAD CLUB ANNUAL MODEL RAILROAD SHOW. Sunday, September 20, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Taunton Inn & Conference Center, 700 Myles Standish Blvd., Taunton, MA 02780. Route 495, Exit 25. Admission: \$5.00, under 12 (accompanied by an adult) FREE. All gauge show, operating layout and test track. For more information contact: rckcross749@gmail.com

MN, BLOOMINGTON: The 46th National Narrow Gauge Convention. September 2-5, 2026. Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, 7800 Normandale Blvd., Zip: 55439. Admission: \$159 (covers all days). More than 75 vendors of all scales, 85 outstanding clinics, 40 home and club layouts on tour, contest room with models and photos. Free parking at hotel. Information: www.2026nngc.com

MO, JOPLIN: Joplin History & Mineral Museum Model Train Show and Swap Meet. Saturday, July 18, 2026, 9am-3pm. In Schifferdecker Park, 504 South Schifferdecker Ave., Joplin, MO 64801. Admission: \$5 adult, 12 and under admitted free with paid adult. Swap Tables \$20 each. Contact: Gary Potter at 405-541-0162, or email JoplinMRR@gmail.com

NJ, BRICK: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Brick Train Show. Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, August 16, 2026, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$7.00; under 12 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoasttrainparts.com and click on The Brick Show.

OH, VAN WERT: 23rd Annual Van Wert Railroad Heritage Weekend Model Railroad Show & Swap. Van Wert County Historical Society, Van Wert County Fairgrounds, 1055 S. Washington St., Zip: 45891. NEW DATES: July 17-18, 2026. Friday 4pm-8pm & Saturday 10am-3pm. Adults \$7. Children under 12/Scouts in Uniform: FREE. Info: Chuck White, railcarman@frontier.com, 260-760-1666, <https://www.vwrrhw.com>

PA, LOPEZ: Lopez Train Meet. Hosted by St. Vladimir's Orthodox Church. Saturday, September 19, 2026, 9am-2pm. St. Vladimir's Orthodox Church Hall, 127 Main St., Zip: 18628. Admission: Adults \$5. Children under 12 free w/adult. All scales & gauges welcome. Vendor tables, test track, railroadiana, memorabilia, model trains and more! Free parking. Food available. Contact: Gregory White, trainmaster726@gmail.com

TX, AUSTIN: Austin Train Show. Over 25,000 sq.ft. of railroading fun for the whole family! Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX. August 29-30, 2026. Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 10am-4pm. Admission: \$9 online, \$10 at the door (includes both days), 12 and under FREE w/adult. Kids train ride, vendors, model/Lego railroads, tour, clinics. Visit: austintrainshow.org

WI, ONALASKA: Rail Fair, Omni Center, 255 Riders Club Road. Saturday, July 18, 2026, 10am-4pm. Admission \$8.00, under 12 free with adult. Railroad Show-Flea Market-Swap Meet. BUY/SELL/TRADE. Model, Toy & Antique Trains & Memorabilia, Railroad Exhibits & Displays. Information: 4000 Foundation, PO Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, 608-498-9522. www.4000foundation.org

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'It will never get done!'

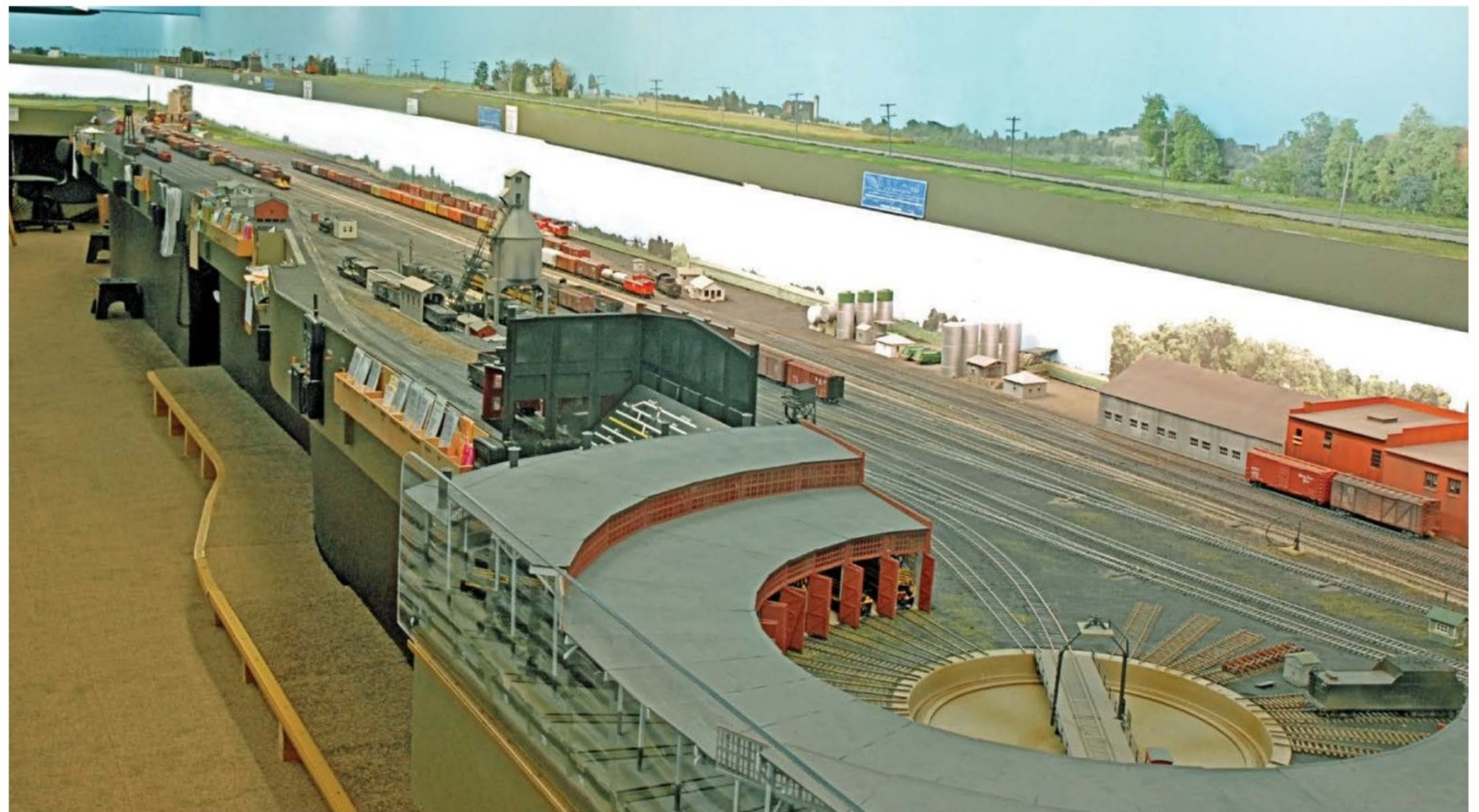
Building a model railroad is a big task. It can be an almost overwhelming task, even for those of us who supposedly know what we're doing and are fully aware of the work that lies ahead.

Since model railroading, and hence building a model railroad, is a hobby endeavor, most of the "work" confronting us should be viewed in a positive context. Modeling is, after all, fun. Mostly. Usually.

Okay, so some tasks aren't exactly fun. Challenging, rewarding, fulfilling, character-building, perhaps, but not necessarily what I'd file under "Fun." And even some of the more interesting tasks start to drift over toward the onerous side when they have to be done time and time again.

I wrote about one such task: ballasting the railroad. To cope with this necessary but repetitive task, I tried to ballast maybe 6 to 10 feet of track each time I was doing any scenery work on the railroad. That's an easy task to accomplish out in the boon-docks between towns on a single-track railroad, but it got to be a tad more tedious when I was working my way through a small town.

My regular operating crew is usually quite pleased to hear what I've accomplished on the railroad since the last operating session, but they are almost horrified to learn that I had ballasted any track within 30 feet of a turnout. I am, after all, one of the world's foremost authorities on getting stray ballast granules and glue into the switch points.



Some projects such as ballasting a large yard or building a multi-stall roundhouse can seem so onerous that they become barriers to progress on the railroad as a whole. Tony Koester photo

When I proudly announced that I had — finally! — ballasted the rest of Frankfort Yard some time ago, I thought the usual eastbound yardmaster was going to pass out. Sure enough, when he began the put-and-take car-sorting chores, he discovered that none of the switches threw quite as smoothly or fully as they had previously. He spent the first hour of the session removing grit and dried glue from harm's way and the rest of the "day" staring lightning bolts in my direction.

I saw the situation somewhat differently than he did. For starters, very few of the switch points moved at all once the glue had dried, so any movement was an improvement. Yes, I did try to keep the thinned white glue I use for ballast cement away from said switch points, but I'm notoriously unlucky in that

regard despite having been made aware of at least eight-dozen ways to do exactly that.

Here's the deal from my perspective: Frankfort Yard actually comprises two yards, an eastbound and a westbound side. Both are considerably compressed in length, of course, and also reduced in width. My westbound yard has 8 tracks, whereas the prototype had 11, and I reduced the eastbound yard's track count from 14 to 8.

But that's still a lot of tracks and turnouts to ballast — so many, in fact, that I studiously avoided that chore for more than a decade, just as I had avoided building the 22-(should have been 27-) stall roundhouse at Frankfort.

This was actually more of a barrier to further progress on the railroad than it seemed. Subconsciously, I was without a doubt thinking that "I'll never get this done!" If even one aspect of a project seems overwhelming and hence unlikely to be finished any time soon, if ever, it casts shadows over everything else on the to-do list. Why bother

to tackle this simple task that no one will even notice when that big eyesore is glaring back at me?

The big roundhouse added to the misery. I had good photos of the still-standing (barely) prototype and some dimensions, but the task seemed gargantuan. If that had been the only major project on my list, no sweat, but I had scale miles of barren plywood and towns devoid of lineside structures to cope with. I could not afford to spend weeks, perhaps months, on one structure, no matter how impressive the finished edifice would have been.

I solved the roundhouse problem by buying a Walther's modern roundhouse kit and a bunch of three-stall extensions. It resembles the prototype and saved me a ton of time fabricating roof trusses, inspection pits, and brick walls. And I solved the yard-ballasting dilemma by just doing it as fast as I possibly could over three days. Those done, I can comfortably cope with more modest projects. **MR**



SUBCONSCIOUSLY, I WAS WITHOUT A DOUBT THINKING THAT "I'LL NEVER GET THIS DONE!"
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