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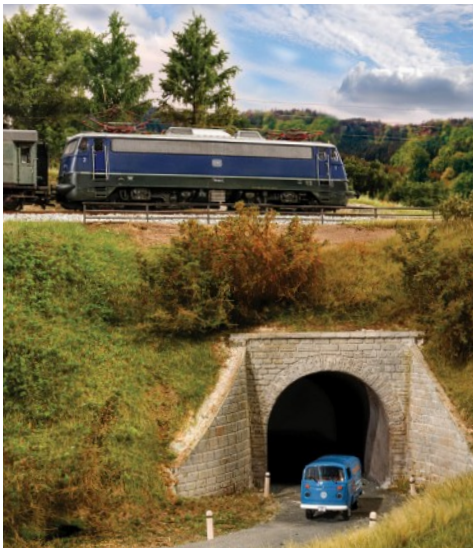
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NOVEMBER 2026
Volume 93, Number 11



28 The Chesapeake & Ohio Ryder Gap Subdivision
Prototype scenes and operation drove the design of the model railroad
by Joe Green

34 Colorado & Southern Clear Creek District
Doug Tagsold returns to Colorado-style mountain scenery on this 1:72 scale layout
by Doug Tagsold



42 German Railway reality in summer 1975
The Modellbundesbahn gave visitors a look at Germany's steam-to-diesel transition era
by Karl Fischer

48 Union Pacific's Overland Route
The massive HO scale layout is set between Ogden, Utah, and Green River, Wyo.
by Brooks A. Bentz

59 Model Railroad Planning: Layout planning with forks
Think about your model railroad in conceptual terms with common eating utensils
by Tony Koester

In every issue

6 On Trains.com
The latest features on our website

8 From the Editor
More *Great Model Railroads*



10 News & Reviews
2026 National Train Show recap



18 Ask MR
Options for clear flat finishes



24 Step by Step
How to make natural forest floor material

61 Behind the Scenes
How it began

62 Trackside Photos

73 Index of Advertisers and Cartoon

74 Trains of Thought
Modeling a not-so-bright future



On the cover: Train 52 heads for Denver on Doug Tagsold's 1:72 scale Colorado & Southern model railroad.
Craig Wilson photo

Go online and subscribe to receive *Model Railroader* issues packed with how-to tips and techniques for beginners to advanced modelers, news and product reviews, and inspiring layouts. www.trains.com/mrr/subnow

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More Great Model Railroads

This year we're adding a special online-only Great Model Railroads story — David Popp's Olympia & Sand Creek On30 layout. This special presentation includes a video and digital image presentation we just can't do in a paper magazine.

For subscribers who aren't Trains.com members, there will be more on the Sand Creek portion of David's layout starting in the January 2027 issue of *Model Railroader*. But if you want the full multimedia experience, head to Trains.com now!

Take a tour of the Train Show

Editor Eric White and Trains.com staff writer Lucas Iverson attended the 2026 National Model Railroad Association National Convention and National Train Show in Chattanooga, Tenn. If you're wondering what you missed, or want to see if you're in the background of some of our shots, check out both parts of our NMRA convention highlights video on Trains.com!





Convention highlights

Trains.com staff writer Lucas Iverson shares highlights from the Scenic City Express — the 2026 National Model Railroad Association National Convention. There were lots of trains to ride on, models to see, and layouts to visit. ScaleTrains.com also made a splash hosting events in its backyard, including tours of its facilities and excursions on the Tennessee Valley Railway Museum. Plus, we got to check out the Eagle Point RR. See it on Trains.com!



First-time tips for operating sessions

You often read about operating sessions in layout features in the pages of *Model Railroader* magazine. But do you ever wonder what happens at those events? Were you hesitant to attend an operating session because you didn't know what to expect?

Trains.com staff writer Lucas Iverson talked to some hobbyists with experience at model railroad "ops" and came up with a handy list of do's and don'ts, along with some ideas about how to get involved in operations and navigate your first session. If this is an aspect of the hobby you're thinking about exploring, check out the story at Trains.com.



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By Eric White

More *Great Model Railroads*

Every issue of *Model Railroader* has great model railroads in it, but this one has the best of the best.

As Tony Koester and I wrote about in the September issue, management here decided to combine the former standalone annual issues *Model Railroad Planning* and *Great Model Railroads* into the monthly magazine, MRP on a monthly basis, and GMR in this special themed issue.

So what makes a Great Model Railroad special? It's lots of things, really, that add up to that feeling that you just know when you see it. Excellent scenery, an interesting track plan, beautiful models, and maybe even an interesting operating scheme.

Over the years, *Great Model Railroads* has featured layouts from various eras, in all of the major scales. This month, we're featuring a narrow gauge layout in a unique scale the builder invented to fit his particular desires, as well as three HO scale model railroads, one set in Germany.

We don't often feature prototypes outside North America, but this one was easy to make an exception for. This layout, the Modellbundesbahn, shares a characteristic with the narrow gauge Colorado & Southern featured on the cover — both are no longer around — although the German model railroad may get a reprieve.

Doug Tagsold's Colorado & Southern has been featured in various magazines in the past, but for its swan song, I wanted to get it into this Great Model Railroads special. He's the one with the unique scale, as you'll see in the article. It turns out Model Die Casting, then Athearn, were making 1:72 scale locomotives and didn't even know it! Doug has a new project coming, which you'll learn more about soon.

The Modellbundesbahn caught my eye when I saw it was a transition era layout set in 1975, which is when West Germany was finally wrapping up steam power in the few regions where it still made sense.

The model railroad was a museum attraction designed to show how Deutsche Bundesbahn operated at the time, and featured lots of automation, including automated transfers of steam-hauled trains to diesel or electric power. There's some chance it could return to operation. We'll let you know when we get any updates.

John Gray's Union Pacific Overland Route is a layout of superlatives. It models vast Western scenery by being vast itself, 57 x 87 feet in a purpose-build structure it shares with John's car collection. The layout showcases John's significant collection of brass UP steam and other large locomotives, and was built by Custom Model Railroads in Baltimore.



Joe Green repurposed an RV garage to house his C&O Ryder Subdivision layout. Like many Great Model Railroads, it first appeared in *Model Railroad Planning*. Having had the honor to operate there myself, I'd encourage anyone headed to Tacoma for next year's NMRA convention to check it out.

In the meantime, we'll be on the lookout for more *Great Model Railroads*!



Model Railroader

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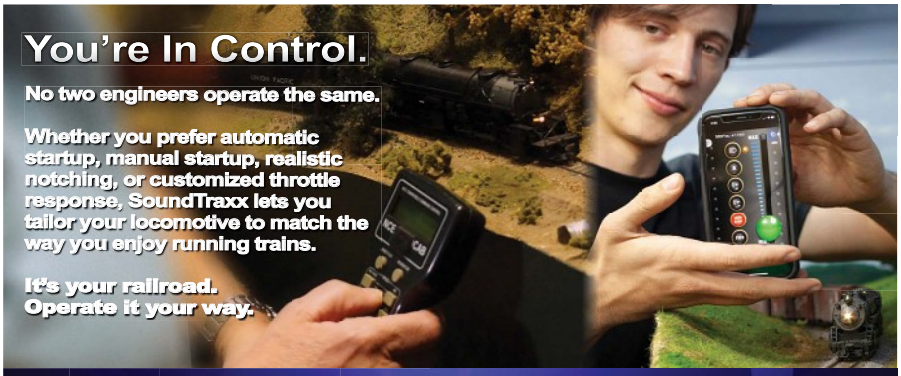
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HO scale



General Electric Dash 8-40C diesel locomotive. ScaleTrains announced this newly-tooled Rivet Counter line model at the 2026 National Train Show. Road names on the HO scale Dash 8-40C include CSX, Canadian National, Chicago & North Western, Ferromex, Norfolk Southern, Rock Island Rail, and Union Pacific. The six-axle road locomotive has era-specific details, factory-painted wheel faces, light-emitting-diode lighting, and metal semi-scale Type E couplers. The model has a minimum radius of 18" and a recommended radius of 22". Direct-current model with 21-pin DCC connector are priced at $219.99. Versions with a dual-mode ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder, single "passive radiator" style speaker, and ESU-designed PowerPack with two supercapacitors list for $329.99. ScaleTrains, 844-987-2467, scaletrains.com

2026 National Train Show recap

The 2026 National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) National Convention and National Train Show took place during the last week of July in Chattanooga, Tenn. This was the first time the events were held in the Scenic City, home of *Model Railroader* publisher Firecrown Media and hobby manufacturer ScaleTrains.

I attended the week-long convention with Trains.com Staff Writer Lucas Iverson. There was plenty of model and prototype railroad activities to keep us both busy.

Lucas and I started by taking advantage of some of the layouts that were open for tours. We were able to get to the Chattanooga Module Modelers open house and Roy Masterson's Southern Ry. Cherokee Division before our time window closed. Roy's HO layout was also a highlight of Friday night, when Lucas and I got the chance to operate with Roy and modelers from around the country.

The Chattanooga Module Modelers are a welcoming group who have modules in N, HO, and O scales they take to events in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. Part of their mission is to introduce model railroading to people just getting interested, including family groups. The club has an N scale layout that they use to teach techniques on, which led to one of the modular model railroads getting a quick scenic make-over before the convention started.

ScaleTrains pulled out all of the stops on Thursday, hosting a special excursion train on the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum behind freshly repainted Southern Ry. 2-8-2 Mikado No. 4501. The 13-car train held about 400 passengers, and ScaleTrains President Shane Wilson walked the train to greet everyone.

A highlight for me was the Friday morning open house at the Eagle Point 7½" gauge railroad that we featured in the June 2026 issue of MR.

The show coverage doesn't end here. Check out my two-part video of NMRA National Convention and National Train Show highlights, read Lucas' article "2026 NMRA Convention: Five takeaways from the second go-around," and see our full National Train Show report on Trains.com.

The 2027 NMRA National Convention will be held in Tacoma, Wash., and planning is already well underway. Visit 2027.nmra.org for the latest updates. — *Eric White, Editor*

HO scale locomotives



- **Siemens ALC-42E Charger diesel locomotive.** Amtrak Cascades and Amtrak (phase 7). One road number per scheme. New and existing tooling; dual-mode TCS WOWSound decoder; Keep-Alive capacitor; factory-applied air horns, antennas, brake hoses, grab irons, handrails, and m.u. hoses; detailed cab interior; and body-mounted E-Z Mate Mark II couplers. Price and release date to be announced. Bachmann Trains, 215-533-1600, bachmanntrains.com

HO scale rolling stock



- **Armour Refrigerator Line 40-foot steel refrigerator car.** Armour Refrigerator Line (1 through 1000 series, 1001 through 2000 series, and 1953+ repaint) and Chicago Great Western (two road numbers). Nine road numbers (three single cars and two three-packs) per scheme unless noted. Factory-applied running boards, brake appliances, and hatches; freestanding steps, ladders, grab

irons, and brine tank control valves; and detailed underframe with separate brake gear. Minimum radius, 18". Single car, $44.99; three-pack, $114.99. Athearn Trains, 800-338-4639, athearn.com



- **DLMX auxiliary water tender.** 3D-printed sample shown. American Freedom Train (4219); Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe ("Let's Roll"); BNSF Ry. (employee special); Canadian Pacific; Chessie Safety Express (614-A); Chessie Steam Special (2101-A); Norfolk & Western (220166); Southern Pacific (*Daylight* scheme); and Steam Railroading Institute (MSTX 5112). Also available painted black but unlettered. Factory-applied grab irons, handrails, and underbody details; finger touch control headlight; and Kadee-compatible couplers. Minimum operating radius, 18". $89.99. Broadway Limited Imports, 386-673-8900, broadway-limited.com
- **Pullman-Standard 50-foot PS-1 boxcar.** Soo Line (white and black with red doors). Sliding 9-foot Youngstown doors, modern Ajax brake wheel, and scale metal couplers. $45.99. Kadee Quality Products Co., 541-826-3883, kadee.com



- **North American Car Corp. 1979+ jacketed 33,000-gallon dual diameter flammable gas tank car.** PLM Railcar Management Services (1987+ black restencil, four road numbers), Aeropres Corp. (1991+ AREX black lease repaint, one number), and North American Car (1981 NATX black lease, four numbers). Painted black but unlettered ready-to-run model also available. See-through rooftop walkways and end platforms, 100-ton Barber S-2 trucks with rotating bearing caps, CNC-machined 36" metal wheelsets, and Kadee scale shelf couplers. $69.95. Tangent Scale Models, 828-412-3886, tangentscalemodels.com

HO scale passenger equipment

- **Siemens Airo passenger cars.** Amtrak Cascades (business, cafe car, coach, and cab car). One to three road numbers each. Detailed, illuminated interiors; car-specific exterior configurations; and factory-applied details, including metal grab irons and E-Z Mate Mark II couplers. Cab car has dual-mode TCS WOWSound Digital Command Control-operated light and sound features. Optional NEM close couplers and drawbar couplers included. Pricing information to be announced. Bachmann Trains, 215-533-1600, bachmanntrains.com



- **Heavyweight passenger cars.** Single-window coach: Southern Ry. (Steam program version, with CNO&TP reporting marks in two road numbers and without CNO&TP marks in four numbers) and Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum (Colonial Red, one number). Observation: Southern Ry. (Steam program version, one number). ABS plastic body, constant-voltage interior lighting, and detailed underbody with prototype piping and auxiliary equipment. $92.99. Fox Valley Models line. ScaleTrains, 844-987-2467, scaletrains.com

HO scale structures

- **Sugar Pine Roadside Motor Lodge.** Laser-cut wood kit with Tichy Train Group details and self-adhesive shingles by Rail-Scale-Models. Based on prototype in Darlington, Md. $26. Conowingo Models, conowingomodels.com



AEM-7 electric locomotive. Atlas offers this Master Line model in new Amtrak paint schemes (phase 3, phase 4, and phase 5 [without Travelmark]) and road numbers (phase 5 with Travelmark). The HO scale AEM-7 electric motive shown, provided to *Model Railroader* free of charge by Atlas Model Railroad Co., has a die-cast metal chassis, a detailed cab interior with two crew figures, wire grab irons, and freestanding roof details. Direct-current models with a factory-installed speaker are priced at $239.95; versions with an ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder sell for $359.95. Atlas Model Railroad Co., 908-687-0880, shop.atlasrr.com



- **Mobile home two-pack.** Injection-molded plastic kits with simulated corrugated aluminum siding, individually molded windows and doors, clear window glazing, and window treatments. Pink-and-white mobile home measures 6 15/16" x 2 15/16" x 1⅝". Mint mobile home measures 6½" x 1 8/16" x 2 13/16". $44.98. Cornerstone series. Wm. K. Walthers Inc., 414-527-0770, walthers.com

N scale locomotives



- **Electro-Motive Division GP39-2 diesel locomotive.** New paint schemes: Wisconsin & Southern (35th anniversary), CSX (Yn3), BNSF Ry. (Heritage IV), Boston & Maine (Guilford scheme), Delaware & Hudson (blue and yellow), Portland & Western (Genesee & Wyoming scheme), and Union Pacific (Armour Yellow and Harbor Mist Gray). One to two road numbers per paint scheme. Scale Speed motor, light-emitting-diode lighting, and blackened metal wheels. Direct-current model with factory-installed speaker and E24 DCC plug, $144.95; with ESU LokSound V5

sound decoder, $259.95. Add $10 to models with ditch lights. Master Line. Atlas Model Railroad Co., 908-687-0880, shop.atlasrr.com



- **Alco 2-6-0 steam locomotive.** Delaware, Lackawanna & Western; Pennsylvania RR; Southern Ry.; and Union Pacific. One road number per paint scheme. Factory-applied metal grab irons and handrails, warm white light-emitting diode headlight, cab interior with detailed backhead, metal running gear, blackened metal wheels with RP-25 contours, and E-Z Mate Mark II couplers. Direct-current model with NEXT18 socket. Price to be announced. Bachmann Trains, 215-533-1600, bachmanntrains.com



- **New York Central Jet RDC M-497.** Jet engine illuminates when moving forward. Kato knuckle coupler on rear of car. Upgradable with interior lighting. Compatible with a special Sound Card for the Kato Soundbox (sold separately). Direct current, $130; with interior lights, $145; with Digital Command Control, $230; with DCC and interior lights, $245; with sound, $330; and with sound and interior lights, $345. Kato USA Inc., 847-781-9500, katousa.com

N scale passenger equipment



- **Union Pacific business car No. 119.** 3D-printed sample shown. Union Pacific *Kenefick* (Big Boy Tour drumhead, George Bush Funeral Train drumhead, Missouri bicentennial drumhead, *Spirit of Union Pacific* drumhead, and UP shield on rear). Also available painted primer gray with black trucks. Detailed, illuminated interior; separately applied grab irons, handrails, ladders, antennas, and more; and controllable light-emitting-diode lighting (ditch lights, markers, taillights, and drumhead [were applicable]). Minimum operating radius, 9.75". $79.99. Broadway Limited Imports, 386-673-8900, broadway-limited.com

Large scale locomotives

- **1:29-proportion Electro-Motive Division E8 diesel locomotive.** Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; Baltimore & Ohio; Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; Pennsylvania RR; and Union Pacific. Non-proprietary plug-and-play electronic circuit board that accommodates DC, NMRA/NEM Digital Command Control, and RC track/battery operation. Factory-installed speaker with wire pigtail for installation of aftermarket sound. Two three-axle ball-bearing power trucks; one large motor per truck; light-emitting-diode lighting with Rule 17 dimming; illuminated number boxes; detailed, illuminated cab interior; operating AAR knuckle couplers; and power cables on each end for battery operation or RC control from trailing car. Price to be announced. Big Haulers line. Bachmann Trains, 215-533-1600, bachmanntrains.com

Large scale rolling stock



- **250 Years of America flatcar.** Includes hook-and-loop couplers; red, white, and blue stakes; small replica of the Liberty Bell, which can be carried as a load; and metal wheelsets. 1:22.5 proportion. $280. Märklin Inc., 573-635-1093, lgb.com

N scale



Uncoupling tools. These uncoupling tools are the latest offerings from GoodDealsDCC. The N scale uncouplers, given to *Model Railroader* free of charge by GoodDealsDCC, are 3D printed and include two magnets and a lanyard. Standard uncouplers (UNC-4) are priced at $12.95 each. Illuminated versions with a modeler-installed CR2032 battery (UNC-5) retail for $29.95. GoodDealsDCC, 224-703-0111, gooddealsdcc.com

Z scale locomotives



- **Alco FA1 and FB1 diesel locomotives.** Rapid prototype samples shown. Road names and additional details to be announced. American Z Line, 614-764-1703, americanzline.com



- **General Electric U25B diesel locomotive.** Rapid prototype sample shown. Road names and additional details to be announced. American Z Line, 614-764-1703, americanzline.com

Electronics/controls

- **Just Plug Sound System starter kit.** Includes one sound hub with backplate, one 6" power jumper cable, four optional stick-on rubber feet, two optional backplate screws, eight optional small screws, eight labels, four mini speakers, four preloaded sound cards, four pieces of double-sided foam tape, one power supply, one sound card reader, and instructions. Price and release date to be announced. Woodland Scenics, 573-346-5555, woodlandscenics.com

Rapido Trains HO scale ATSF-rebuilt CF7



An Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Cleburne, Texas-rebuilt CF7 diesel locomotive has joined the Rapido Trains HO scale product lineup. The four-axle unit is far from a cookie-cutter model. The CF7 is offered with five different cab variations; two different hood variations; and assorted etched-metal, formed wire, and plastic detail parts.

Between 1970 and 1978, Santa Fe's Cleburne shops rebuilt aging Electro-Motive Division F3, F7, and F9 diesel locomotives, converting them from cab units to hood units for use as road switchers on secondary and branch lines. The 233 rebuilt locomotives, numbered 2649 through 2417 (yes, in descending order), were given the designation CF7 for Converted F7.

Our review sample, supplied to *Model Railroader* free of charge by Rapido Trains, is decorated as Santa Fe 2428. The full-size locomotive was built in November 1953 as F7A 274C. It was rebuilt as CF7 2428 in December 1977.

The unit was retired in September 1984 and sold to Texas Industries Cement the following month. In 2014 the CF7 was donated to the Museum of the American Railroad in Frisco, Texas.

The Rapido Trains model decorated as Santa Fe 2428 has an angled cab. The front of the cab on the engineer's side has a standard rectangular window and a small oval window below it. On the prototype, the latter window gave the engineer a better view of crew members riding in the front step well.

On top of the cab, the 2428 has a Sinclair antenna mounted on top of a ground plane, an air conditioner, and a pair of single-chime air horns. Other cab details included etched-metal windshield wipers and mirrors.

Inside, the cab has a pair of seats, a control stand, and a detailed back wall. The cab interior and control stand gauges are illuminated. Because of the fine wires used for these items, Rapido doesn't recommend trying to add crew figures to the model.

The long hood on the 2428 has four exhaust stacks; four 36" cap top radiator fans, licensed by Cannon & Co.; and lift rings. The intake grills on the sides of the hood, along with the corner steps, are etched-metal parts.

Trains.com members can see the Rapido CF7 in action with this QR code.

The sample we received is painted in Santa Fe's yellow-bonnet scheme. The color separation lines are crisp, and the yellow is opaque. There were a few small paint voids in the louvers and door seams on the long hood behind the cab. The stencils on the sills are all legible under magnification.

Prototype drawings appeared in *CF7 Locomotives: From Cleburne to Everywhere* by Cary F. Poole (The Railroad Press, 1997). The Rapido model matches published dimensions.

I used an NCE Power Cab to do the initial testing. The Rapido model crawled at less than 1 scale mph at speed step 1. The four-axle diesel achieved a top speed of 67 scale mph at step 28.

Next, I used the CF7 to switch industries on the Winston-Salem Southbound. The model had no issues with the commercial and handlaid track and turnouts. It navigated the No. 4 turnout and 30-degree crossing with ease.

It has been several years since a CF7 has been available in HO scale. Kudos to Rapido Trains for bringing a newly tooled version to market. I'm hoping the next run will feature models decorated for the Red River Valley & Western. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: Direct-current model, $249.95; with ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder and MoPower capacitor, $359.95

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

Era: 1970 to present (varies based on paint scheme)

Road names: Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (angled and round cab); Amtrak (angled and round cab); Los Angeles Junction; Maryland & Pennsylvania; and Washington Central. Angled cab only unless noted. Also available painted but unlettered in Santa Fe patchout (angled and round cab), yellow and black (angled cab), and orange and yellow (angled cab).

Features
- Body-mounted metal couplers, at correct height
- Metal wheel stubs mounted on plastic drive axle gears, correctly gauged
- Minimum radius, 18"
- Weight: 11.2 ounces

Broadway Limited HO scale EMD GP35



A new run of Electro-Motive Division GP35 diesel locomotives has been released by Broadway Limited Imports. The HO scale model features an ABS body; die-cast metal chassis; and many separate, factory-applied detail parts.

Electro-Motive Division produced the GP35 from October 1963 until January 1966. During the production run more than 1,300 units were built for railroads in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The four-axle road switcher, rated at 2,500 horsepower, had a 16 cylinder 567D3A engine.

The review sample *Model Railroader* received free of charge from Broadway Limited Imports is decorated as Soo Line 1776. The full-size unit was built in May 1965 as Soo Line 727, part of the railroad's 722 through 731 series. In May 1975 the 727 was renumbered 1776 and painted in a patriotic paint scheme for the American Revolution Bicentennial. It was restored to regular Soo Line paint and its original number in July 1977.

The 727 was retired in March 1986 and sold to Chrome Crankshaft in Silvis, Ill., where it was scrapped. To learn more about the Soo Line's GP35 fleet, check out the Spring 2017 issue of *The Soo*, published by the Soo Line Historical and Technical Society.

The BLI EMD GP35 features a multi-piece body consisting of the long and short hood, cab, and sill unit. The blower housing, inertial filter screens, and air tanks are a few of the freestanding parts on the four-axle unit.

In addition, the Soo Line model has several prototype-specific details, including a snow plow on the front pilot, a strobe light on top of the cab, and an all-weather window on the engineer's side of the cab.

Rooftop details on the long hood include metal lift rings; a flat inertial filter hatch (it was raised on the 1776); and a turbo hatch. The radiator section has a pair of 48" cap top fans and a 36" cap top fan. The lead 48" fan is covered by a winterization hatch with a see-through, etched-metal screen.

Our sample is decorated in Soo Line's bicentennial scheme. Graphic placement matches the many prototype photos in books and online.

There were some detail and paint discrepancies. The air horn should be a Leslie SU-3L-R. The front headlight on the full-size unit had a rectangular profile; the one on the model is round. The rerailers above the front truck on both sides, the sill-mounted chain above the rear truck on the engineer's side, and the Automatic Car Identification panels were omitted. The end handrails should be solid (no gangway chains) as the unit didn't have drop steps.

Prototype drawings of the EMD GP35 were published in *Model Railroader Cyclopedia: Vol. 2, Diesel Locomotives* (Kalmbach Publishing Co., out of print). The BLI model matches or closely follows all published dimensions.

I did initial product testing at the workbench with an NCE Power Cab. At step 1, the four-axle unit moved at 2.5 scale mph. The model achieved a top speed of 77 smph at step 28. The full-size GP35 had a speed range between 71 and 83 mph depending on the gear ratio.

Then I took the BLI model over to our Winston-Salem Southbound Tar Branch for further testing. The model performed without issue on the compact layout.

With 2026 being our nation's semi-quincentennial, it's only appropriate that Broadway Limited offered its HO EMD GP35 in Soo Line's bicentennial paint scheme. Whether you model the Soo or like patriotic diesels, the engine will add a splash of color to your locomotive fleet.
— *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: Stealth Series (non-sound) with factory-installed 8-ohm speaker, $279.99; dual-mode Paragon4 sound decoder, $379.99

Manufacturer
Broadway Limited Imports
9 East Tower Circle
Ormond Beach, FL 32174
broadway-limited.com

Era: October 1963 to present (varies based on paint scheme)

Road names: Soo Line; BNSF Ry.; Conrail; Denver & Rio Grande Western; Gulf, Mobile & Ohio; Savannah & Atlanta (high short hood); Union Pacific; and Christmas. One to two road numbers per scheme.

Features
- Body-mounted metal couplers, at correct height
- Metal wheel stubs mounted on plastic drive axle gears, in gauge
- Minimum radius, 18"
- Weight: 14.4 ounces

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Atlas N scale PS4427 covered hopper



Atlas Model Railroad Co. is offering its Pullman-Standard 4,427-cubic-foot capacity three-bay covered hopper in a variety of new paint schemes. The N scale model, part of the manufacturer's Master Line, is based on former Wm. K. Walthers Inc. tooling acquired by Atlas in June 2018.

Pullman-Standard introduced the low-side PS4427 covered hopper in December 1963. Spotting features include sides that partially cover the bays and a 4-3-4 exterior post pattern. The carbuilder produced cars to this design through November 1966.

Our review sample, given to *Model Railroader* free of charge by Atlas Model Railroad Co., is decorated as BNSF Ry. No. 412006, part of the railroad's 411888 through 412574 series. The full-size cars were built for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe in May 1965 and numbered 303100 through 304099, part of the GA-137 class.

Following the 1995 merger between Burlington Northern and Santa Fe, the aging and smaller 4427 cars were bumped from the roster by the newly created railroad's rapidly growing fleet of 5161 and 5188 covered hoppers. A handful of BNSF Ry. PS4427s were still listed it the *Official Railway Equipment Register* into the early 2010s.

The Atlas model has a one-piece plastic body with a separate underbody. On top, the covered hopper has molded hatch covers. They aren't an exact match for those found on the full-size BNSF 412006, but they're reasonable stand-ins. There are two ejector pin marks on the covers. The manufacturing blemishes could be smoothed out and the areas touched up with Mineral Red paint.

The slope sheets are separate, factory-applied parts. Following the prototype's lead, the slope sheets have specifications for the trucks, wheels, and springs.

An upgraded, factory-installed brake wheel can be found on the B end of the car. The remainder of the details on the covered hopper are molded, including the ladder stiles; corner, end, and hand brake posts; brake wheel platform; grab irons; ladder rungs; and stirrup steps.

The underbody is a separate plastic molding. A pair of thin steel weights, both with two holes in them, fit over molded posts. The weights are further secured from the top with two screws. The covered hopper now has outlet gates, a detail the model lacked when produced under the Walthers banner. The shaker brackets are molded.

The brake system is fairly basic. The air reservoir is molded as part of the B end slope sheet. The brake cylinder, control valve, and piping are not depicted.

The pin-mounted, roller-bearing trucks are fitted with brown plastic wheelsets. The two-piece plastic couplers are truck mounted. There are no provisions for body mounting the couplers.

The sample we received was painted in BNSF's Mineral Red freight car scheme. The arrangement of the graphics follows a prototype photo of the 412006 published in *BNSF Railway Freight Cars Volume Two* by Robert C. Del Grosso (Great Northern Pacific Publications, 2008). The reporting marks and road number on the sides are a touch lower than the those on the full-size car, and a few small stencils were omitted.

Prototype drawings of the PS4427 covered hopper appeared in the 1966 *Car and Locomotive Cyclopedia of American Practice* (Simmons-Boardman Publishing Corp.) The Atlas model closely follows published dimensions.

I put the covered hopper in a freight train on our Milwaukee, Racine & Troy State Line Route layout to see how it performed in an operating layout environment. The car had no issues running on the main, navigating the crossover at Williams Bay, and being moved through the yard at Rockford.

More than 10,000 Pullman-Standard 4427 covered hoppers were built to the low-side design. The cars could be found on Class I railroads of the era and in lease service. I'm happy to see Atlas is continuing to revive the former Walthers N scale tooling and is making some upgrades along the way. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: $33.95
Manufacturer
Atlas Model Railroad Co.
378 Florence Ave.
Hillside, NJ 07205
shop.atlasrr.com
Era: 1963 to present (varies based on paint scheme)
Road names: BNSF Ry., Cargill, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Farmrail, Garvey, Louis Dreyfus, and Pillsbury. Three to four road numbers per paint scheme.
Features
- 36" plastic wheelsets, correctly gauged
- Truck-mounted couplers, at correct height
- Weight: 0.9 ounce, .2 ounce too light per National Model Railroad Association Recommended Practice 20.1

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By Cody Grivno

Options for clear flat finishes

Q Is there an alternative to Testor's Dullcote? It is very hard to find in New Zealand.

Tony Simkin



Contributing Editor Pelle Søeborg sealed the weathering on this HO scale BNSF Ry. diesel with Vallejo matte varnish. We take a look at some of the clear flat finishes on the market in this Ask MR question.

Pelle Søeborg photo

A I'm sorry to hear you're having a difficult time finding Dullcote, Tony. As I wrote in the July 2026 Ask MR column, the hobby paint marketplace has seen quite a bit of change in the past decade. Some familiar paint lines have been discontinued, new brands have emerged, and some shuttered labels have rebooted under new ownership.

Testor's Dullcote has been a staple in the hobby for decades. The transparent lacquer, still available today, is sold in 1¾-ounce bottles (1160) and 3-ounce spray cans (1260).

To help answer your question, I reached out to my friend and longtime colleague Tim Kidwell, Editor of our sister magazine *FineScale Modeler*, for his thoughts. He replied, "Ah, the eternal question. A replacement for Dullcote to get the flatest of the flat. My recommendation is Scale Modellers Supply Premium Flat Clear lacquer (scalemodeller.com.au/). It dries dead flat. This is about as close to the sheen Dullcote produces as I've seen."

Tim noted that the Scale Modellers Supply Premium Flat Clear is a lacquer and it is hot. He said a former co-worker spilled some on the workbench and it melted the plastic plane kit he was working on. "It's a great paint, but be careful with it," Tim said.

Contributing Editor Pelle Søeborg has shared many painting and weathering stories in MR over the years. In Pelle's August 2020 article "Weather a coil steel car" he wrote, "I sealed the weathering with a coat of Acrylicos Vallejo polyurethane matte varnish, followed by a layer of Vallejo matte varnish. I used the polyurethane matte varnish for its durability, but it dries with a slight sheen. To remedy that, I applied ordinary Vallejo matte varnish, which dries dead flat."

In addition to the products mentioned above, some other brands that offer clear flat finishes include Badger, Mission Models, Mr. Hobby, Rail Center, Scalecoat, Tamiya, and Tru-Color Paint. I'd encourage you to visit well-stocked hobby shops to learn more about these and other paint brands. I've found myself pleasantly surprised on more than one occasion to find a new line of paint or a brand new to the United States when visiting hobby stores in our area.

Regardless of the brand you select, when switching to a new clear flat finish (or any new paint for that matter), experiment with it before committing it to a project you've spent hours working on. I learned this lesson the hard way on an HO scale covered hopper I modeled for the June 2021 Step by Step column.

After weathering the car and adding decals, I sprayed it with a single coat of Tamiya Clear Gloss (TS-13) to seal the decals and give the car a uniform finish for subsequent steps. As noted earlier lacquer is hot — which I should have remembered since my dad and grandfather were auto body repairmen. After applying a single coat to the model, I watched in dismay as some of the decals started to distort. Applying two or three light layers of the clear prior to spraying the final wet coat would have been a better approach.

I would be remiss if I didn't add a note about workshop safety since we're on the topic of painting. When applying any hobby paints, work in a well-ventilated area and follow all manufacturer-recommended safety precautions. In addition, wear appropriate personal protective equipment, such as goggles, gloves, and a double-cartridge respirator rated for the paint you're using.

Send questions on model, prototype, and toy trains to AskTrains@Trains.com.

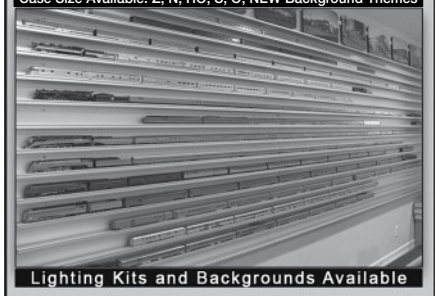
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Gorre & Daphetid 4-10-0 No. 34 is displayed at the *Model Railroader* offices at the wish of the model's last owner, the late Cliff Robinson. The steam locomotive appeared in many MR articles and Linn Westcott's popular book *Model Railroading with John Allen*. Cody Grivno photo

Q I'm interested in John Allen's Gorre & Daphetid and want a lot of info, such as a locomotive roster and surviving locomotives. A lot of forum posts from 10 years ago are available, but all of the photo links are broken and many never truly answer the question. I want to make one place where you can get hard facts and information on the G-D Line. On to my first question: Besides 4-10-0 No. 34, what other locomotives survived the fire?

Trainman2005, via the MR Forums

A You're correct. Gorre & Daphetid engine No. 34 is preserved at the *Model Railroader* offices in Brookfield, Wis. A label with the model states, "John Allen kitbashed Gorre & Daphetid 4-10-0 No. 34 around 1950. The epitome of the G-D Line motive power, it appears in many photographs in *Model Railroader* magazine and in the Kalmbach book *Model Railroading with John Allen* by Linn Westcott. It is displayed here at the wish of its last owner, the late Cliff Robinson of Dallas, Texas."

To learn more about what G-D Line items survived the fire after John's passing, I reached out to former National Model Railroad Association President Charlie Getz. He replied, "Well, the answer is complex. Almost all 'survived' as blackened lumps. Bob DuPont of the Pacific Coast Region secured them from the property, probably by way of two neighbor kids who apparently salvaged boxes of stuff after the fire, possibly slightly larcenously.

"Bob Brown, Editor of *Narrow Gauge & Short Line Gazette*, and I retrieved all of those items from them a few years back for the National Model Railroad Association, saving some and auctioning off the scraps to NMRA members. A passenger car was saved for "The Magic of Scale Model Railroading" exhibit at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. Three engines, the best of the sorry lot, were sent to Japan where Kenichi Matsumoto restored them."

You can learn more about this in Charlie's article "Miracle in Monterey: The restoration of G-D Line No. 10" on pages 30 through 35 of the February 2020 issue of *Model Railroader*.

"Kenichi received No. 9 as thanks from the NMRA, legal owners of all G-D Line items, including the copyright to the name," Charlie continued. "Engines No. 10 and 8, as reconstructed, are on display in Sacramento at the exhibit. I have a cigar box with the burnt remains of the HOn3 stuff. I'm not aware of any other items."





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Q I purchased two Athearn (Roundhouse line) ready-to-run locomotives in HO scale. In direct current, the beacon on top worked. When I installed a Digital Command Control decoder, I lost the beacon operation. With a Digitrax system, is there a way to get the beacon back? My other locomotives have it usually as function 5. How do I program the beacon? I admit I'm poor with DCC programming theory and have never programmed anything other than a locomotive address.

Brian Hager

A Thanks for writing, Brian. I reached out to Contributing Editor and former DCC Corner columnist Larry Puckett for help with your lighting question. Here is his reply:

Modern model locomotives may have some lighting features that are dependent on components and wiring built into the factory-installed circuit board. When a Digital Command Control (DCC) decoder is installed this circuitry may be bypassed so that the decoder can be used to control those functions.

From your question it sounds as though function 5 (F5) is typically used to activate the beacon in your other Athearn Ready-to-Roll diesel locomotives. If this is true and it also applies to the locomotive in which you wish to install a decoder, then you will need a decoder with an F5 capability.

You also may need to program that output for the beacon lighting effect. Athearn Product Support may be able to tell you what decoder it installed in these DCC-equipped locomotives or possibly sell you one that's been programmed for the desired lighting effect(s).

Because many decoders don't provide an F5 output, you may need to remap and reprogram that function in the decoder you purchase. I suggest you buy from a dealer such as Streamlined Backshop (sbs4dcc.com) who can do this for you as it is not a trivial procedure if you are not familiar with it. Remapping and reprogramming a decoder is best done using DecoderPro or a similar computer program.

In the future, keep in mind that it's often cheaper and easier in the long run to purchase a model locomotive with the decoder already installed. This is especially true where advanced lighting features and/or sound are involved as they may require complex programming and additional wiring. MR



Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay EMD GP38-2 No. 508, an HO scale Genesis-series diesel provided to *Model Railroader* free of charge by Athearn, features a working rooftop beacon. Contributing Editor Larry Puckett recommends buying locomotives with factory-installed decoders, especially if advanced sound and light features are involved. Cody Grivno photo




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How to make natural forest floor material



Train No. 1, the westbound "Cedar River Rambler," makes its return trip to Stephenson, Mich., on Dave Rickaby's On30 Stephenson, Cedar River & Eastern. Learn how he modeled the forest floor for this wooded scene using natural materials.

For several years, I've been in the process of building the On30 Stephenson, Cedar River & Eastern Ry. The fictional railroad is set in Menominee County, Michigan in the 1900s. Logging was still prevalent in the Upper Peninsula during this time, but it was giving way to farming. I wanted to depict both on my model railroad, skewing heavier toward the forested logging areas.

I realized early in the process that my 14 x 61-foot layout would require a lot of trees. However, I knew that I could make trees using natural weeds such as marestail (horseweed) and flock them with Woodland Scenics coarse turf in fall colors like orange, red, rust, and yellow. The reason I chose fall — besides the beautiful peak colors that I'd imagined — was because sugar beets were harvested here in October.

Sugar beet farming was big business in Menominee County during the early part of the 20th century and my 15 mile fictional short line helped transport them to the factory for processing. Though most of my plan was coming together nicely, I was left with one conundrum. Forest floors are not devoid of clutter. How could I model a relatively good looking forest floor without a lot of expense?

When I'm not working on my layout I enjoy watching railcams and model railroading videos on YouTube. One day I was perusing videos by Joey Ricard. He owns Trackside Scenery (trackside sceneryshop.com), offering photo backdrops, building flats, and helix components, among other hobby supplies.

In addition, Joey has several do-it-yourself scenery videos on his YouTube channel. I found one titled "Budget ground cover — forest floor" that caught my attention. You can access the video at https://youtu.be/uYnVRO3uUeo. After watching the 7-minute video (which I highly recommend) I knew my forest floor problem was solved.

I'm a big believer in using natural materials for model railroading, so this project fit the bill nicely. Fortunately, I'm able to readily find mullein in northeastern Wisconsin, as you can see on the next page. Pairing it with ground up dried leaves proved a winning combination for adding a realistic forest floor to my layout.

I'd like to thank Joey Ricard for his ideas and inspiration. I encourage you to not only try this process, but build upon it. Inject some of your own ideas and see what happens.

Dave Rickaby is a longtime contributor to the pages of Model Railroader *magazine and its special issues. He lives in Marinette, Wis., in the northeast part of the Badger State.*

STEP 1 TIME TO HARVEST



To model the forest floor material, Joey harvested a plant commonly referred to as mullein. The plant grows to approximately 4 to 5 feet tall, with a seed area toward the top of the stalk. Mullein is typically found in well-lit areas along roadways, railroad right-of-ways, overgrown meadows and pastures, and vacant lots, among other locations 1. It can be found in most parts of the United States and in Canada [Do not harvest it on private property without permission. — *Ed.*]

In fall, the seed area on the stalk turns brown. This is generally the time to harvest the plant, although I've found you can still do it in early spring. When harvesting mullein, snap off the brown seed tops and leave the rest of the stalk in the ground 2. The part you want to keep is shown in 3.

When I returned home, I broke the harvested seed areas into 3" to 6" pieces. As you can see in 4, this process can get a bit messy, so work over a towel or area that's easy to clean up.







STEP 2 FROM SEEDS TO SCENERY







Next, I placed the seed areas in a blender and ground them up. Don't use your good blender for this. Instead, pick up a cheap one at a thrift store or garage sale. While watching Joey's video, I noticed that he lifted and shook the blender while grinding the pieces to prevent it from jamming. During the blending process, the seeds turn into a pulp and the stalk material will shred. The pulp depicts soil, while the shreds represent broken branches and bark on the forest floor.

I took Joey's process one step further. I collected dried leaves from my yard in fall and ground them in a blender, separate from the mullein seeds. After I had enough of both materials, I mixed them together in a 5-gallon bucket. I don't have a set ratio of each material — I just eyeball it. An example of the mixture is shown in 1.

Before applying the forest floor material to the layout, I painted the wooded areas brown. With the paint still wet, I applied Woodland Scenics light green coarse turf. Then I added the same company's light green and yellow 12mm static grass to the perimeter of the wooded areas and along the edges of the track.

Then, using Joey's video as a guide, I sprayed the area I wanted to cover with 3M Super 77 spray adhesive [Do this in a well-ventilated area and wear all recommended personal protective gear. Also be sure to cover the tracks and other items you don't want coated in adhesive. — *Ed.*]

After I'd applied the spray adhesive to a 3 to 4 foot section, I took a handful of the forest floor material and covered the area. Once I had a location sufficiently coated, I soaked the forest floor material with extra super hold hairspray 2.

The terrain on my model railroad is relatively hilly. I discovered that when sprinkling the forest floor cover onto the hillsides, the material would drift down toward areas covered with static grass. This was not what I originally intended, but I was happy with the results as it added some clutter to otherwise pristine grassy areas.

Another moment of serendipity happened when I was planting the trees. Before applying the Woodland Scenics coarse turf in fall colors, I coated the armatures with 3M Super 77 spray adhesive. Though the adhesive is quite strong, some of the turf fell off, representing recently fallen leaves below the trees. The colors added to the 3D effect of the forest floor cover 3.

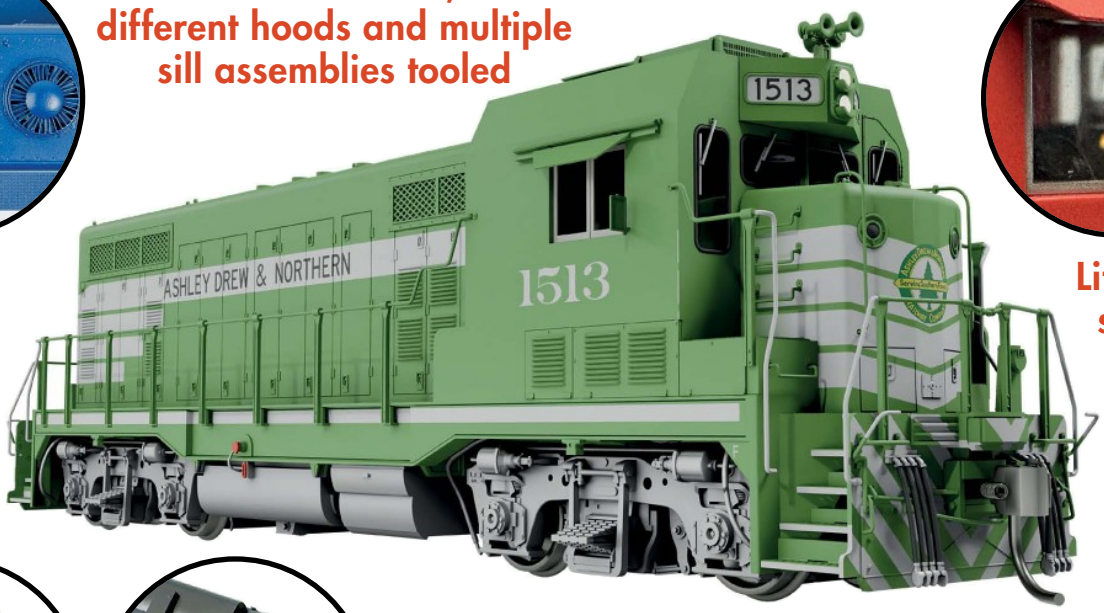
If you're looking to give the wooded scenes on your model railroad an added touch of realism, consider using natural materials. The combination of ground up mullein plant seeds and leaves have added realism to my layout. MR

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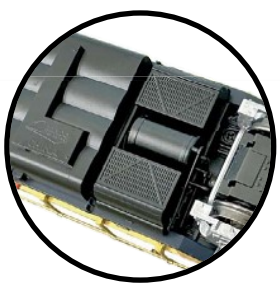




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Chesapeake & Ohio Ryder Gap Subdivision

Prototype scenes and operation drove the design of the model railroad

By Joe Green • Photos by the author





2 General Electric and Electro-Motive Division diesels lead train 147W past the Back Creek Paper warehouse. Eastbound cars are in the setout track to the right of the train. The paper mill is a mix of kitbashed and scratchbuilt structures.

1 Chesapeake & Ohio U23B No. 2303 leads train 146E past Beth County Building Supplies in the Beltline area of Mountain Grove on Joe Green's HO scale Ryder Gap Subdivision layout. C&O GP7 No. 5817 is switching the coal track.



3 Train 147W has left its cars in the Smithers siding and runs light to the May Yard engine terminal. The structures in the background were built board by board and are modeled after farm buildings in the author's hometown of Sequim, Wash.

There were two ways to walk to my high school, the safe way and the shortcut. Naturally we took the shortcut, which crossed the east end of the Chesapeake & Ohio railroad yard in Covington, Va. I experienced railroading up close and was hooked.

Proto-freelanced C&O

This is my fourth model railroad, and both my skills and interests have developed with each project. For this layout, I had two main objectives. I wanted to model specific C&O scenes, including Cass and Thurmond, W.Va., and the paper mill in Covington. I also wanted to host operating sessions with an emphasis on yard and industrial switching.

The C&O Ryder Gap Sub is a proto-freelanced layout set in the spring of 1974. Although the railroad and many of the scenes are prototype-based, the overall subdivision design is freelanced so I can accomplish my objectives within my space. The name is derived from the mountain pass the railroad would have crossed from Virginia to West Virginia.

From garage to train room

My model railroad is housed in a former 30 x 31-foot, two-bay RV garage, which required some renovation before the layout construction could begin.

I designed the model railroad in parallel with the room preparation (see *Model Railroad Planning 2021* for more details on the design process). I have persistent wrist tendinitis that limits my ability to use power tools, but fortunately a neighbor who enjoyed woodworking volunteered to help build my initial benchwork.

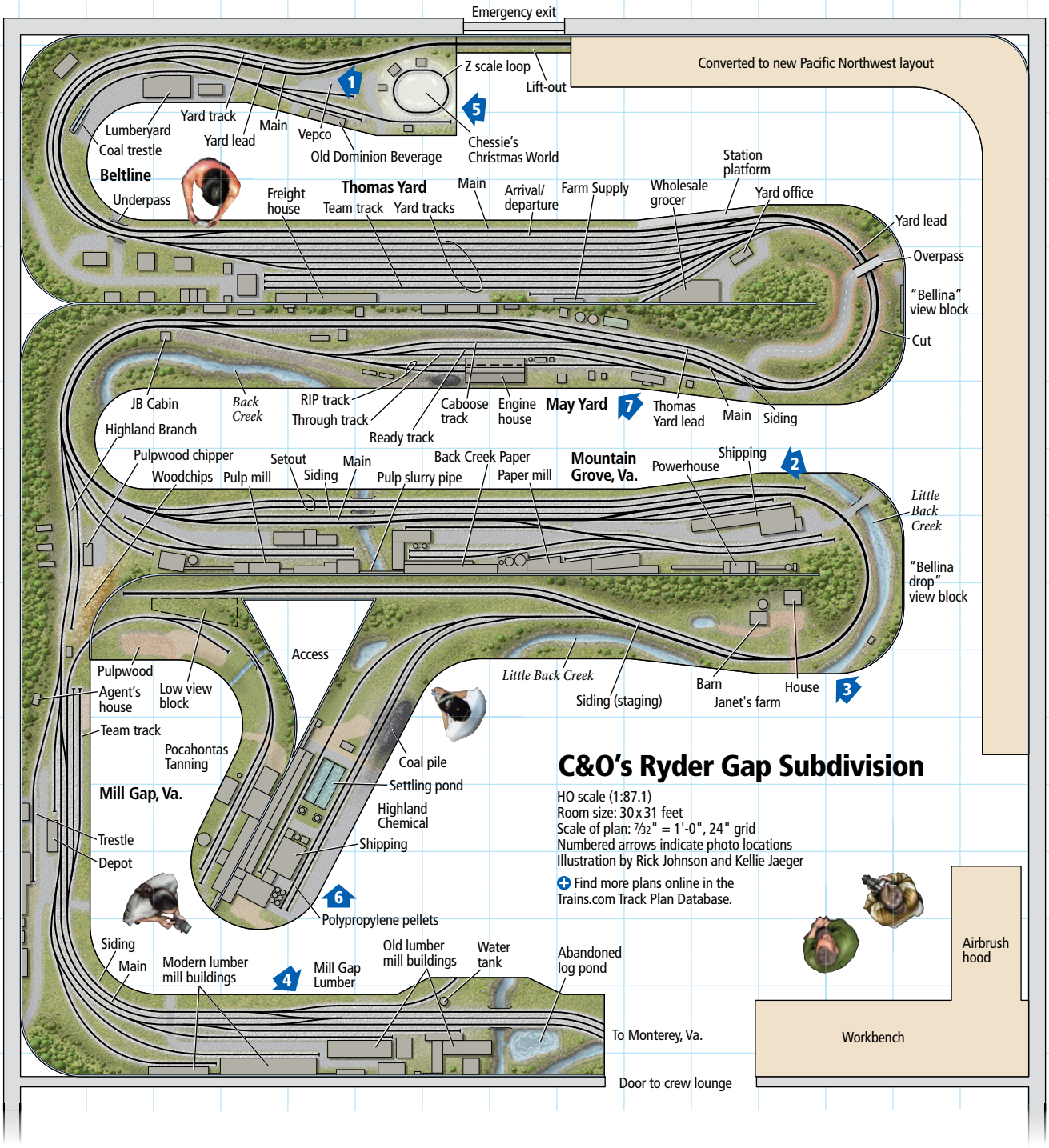


4 Chesapeake & Ohio GP7 No. 5817 eases past the abandoned sawmill and boiler room at Mill Gap Lumber. The structures are scratchbuilt. The C&O traditionally ran their locals with two cabooses, one directly behind the engine.

The layout is much larger than anything I've built before. I was concerned I wouldn't be able to maintain it, and was also unsure how many operators I would find on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state. I decided to build the layout in phases so it wouldn't get too big too fast.

A paper mill and a yard

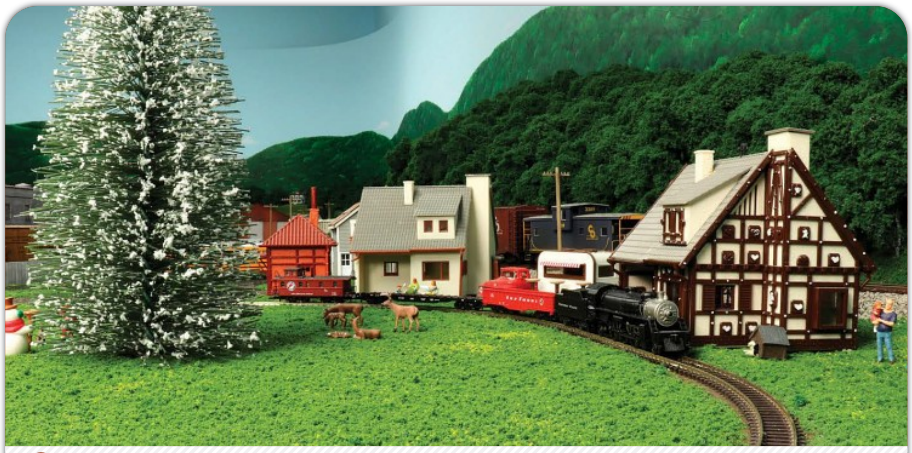
The first phase was Back Creek Paper and May Yard, on opposite sides of a central aisle. I alternated working on the two scenes, completing May Yard first. Both are set in the town of Mountain Grove, Va., a relatively flat valley at the base of the ascent to the Ryder Gap.



Back Creek Paper is inspired by the Westvaco pulp and paper mill in Covington. To create a challenging and prototypical industrial switching opportunity, I dedicated a 26-foot peninsula to the mill. Within this space, I was able to include 13 of the prototype's 25 industrial sidings. The mill is switched twice during an operating session, and each crew takes approximately two hours to complete their work. The mill was the inspiration for the October 2023 *Model*

The layout at a glance

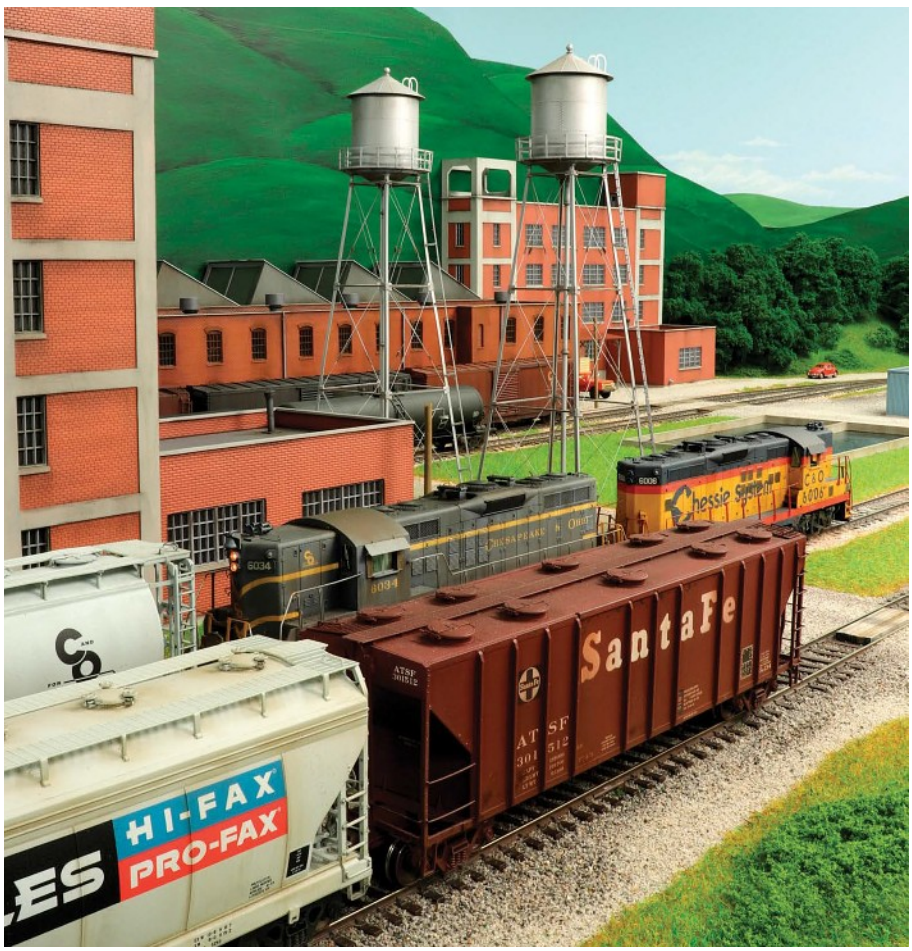
Name: C&O Ryder Gap Sub
Scale: HO (1:87.1)
Size: 26 x 31 feet
Prototype: Chesapeake & Ohio
Locale: Virginia mountains
Era: spring 1974
Style: around the walls with two peninsulas
Mainline run: 130 feet
Minimum radius: 30"
Minimum turnout: No. 6
Maximum grade: none
Benchwork: primarily L-girder
Height: 53"
Roadbed: Woodland Scenics Track-Bed
Track: Peco code 83 flextrack
Scenery: varied techniques
Backdrop: hand-painted on 1/8" hardboard
Control: NCE wireless DCC



5 Chessie's Christmas World is at the end of the Beltline. The Z scale layout was created by the author's wife, Janet Green.

Chessie's Christmas World

While I was constructing Mill Gap, my wife was building Chessie's Christmas World in memory of our chocolate lab (yes, the original Chessie was a cat but we prefer dogs instead). It features an oval of Z scale track, Vollmer kits, Preiser families and animals, and, of course, a Christmas tree. An unused Shay engine is another draw for the tourist attraction. Janet later added Duke's dog park in memory of our black lab mix. — *Joe Green*



6 The Farm Job spots covered hoppers of polypropylene at the Highland Chemical plant. The factory is inspired by the Hercules mill in Covington, Va. It was originally a rayon manufacturer.

Railroader article "A paper mill in a spare room."

May Yard is a close re-creation of the Thurmond engine facility. I dedicated a full 26-foot peninsula to it as well, not to create significant switching, but to allow the prototype scene to be built with little compression. I was able to include not only the major signature structures, but also many of the smaller buildings and scenic details.

I scratchbuilt 16 of the 24 structures, including Thurmond's three iconic brick buildings and the enginehouse. My skills improved, and I greatly enjoyed developing the prototype scene.

Having little experience in backdrop painting, I experimented until I found an approach I could repeat and that created acceptable results. I wanted visitors to feel like they were walking into the mountains when they entered the central aisle, so I intentionally painted the mountains higher than my eye level.

Initial operations

Layout construction started in 2008, and by 2014 I was ready to start formal operating sessions. To do so, I built a double-ended eight track freight yard on the second side of the May Yard peninsula. Thomas Yard is inspired by the freight yard in Covington. It has long yard leads on both ends, which allows two crews to work simultaneously. There are three small customers and a team track to the rear. The yard remains unscenicked, but it has performed well for more than a dozen years.

Initial operating sessions had two crews, one switching the paper mill and one working in the yard. With operating sessions successfully underway, I was finally accomplishing both of my goals, developing prototype scenes and operating a switching layout.

Adding on

I was ready to expand the railroad, to start phase 2. My next priority was to model Cass, with its evocative station area and lumber mill. But the Cass mill had closed well before 1974, so I imagined that the site had been purchased by another local lumber mill, Inter-State Hardwoods, and modernized.

I located my HO scale version of Cass in Mill Gap, Va., approximately 20 miles north of Mountain Grove. It's built on a 12 x 17-foot peninsula, ample space for another scene with little compression. The plan closely follows the prototype.

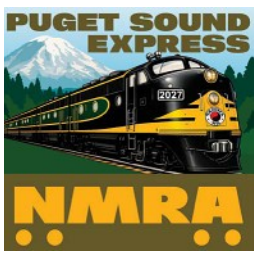


7 The Mill Gap Turn eases into the siding at May Yard. The scene is inspired by the commercial district and C&O engine facility in Thurmond, W.Va. Chesapeake & Ohio GP9 No. 6006 wears the blue, vermillion, and yellow Chessie System paint scheme.

Like May Yard, most of the structures are scratchbuilt, and a few are my initial scratchbuilt structures from a previous layout. I used static grass for the first time and am very pleased with the results.

What to build next? I'd created the scenes that were most important to me, Cass, Thurmond, and the Covington paper mill. My original phase 3 designs included a variety of other C&O towns, but I decided instead the layout's operating sessions would be best improved if I expanded Mountain Grove and Mill Gap.

Covington had a second large factory, the Hercules Chemical mill that manufactured polypropylene-based products. My version would be Highland Chemical, in the mythical location of Smithers just a mile west of Back Creek Paper. The plant is on a short peninsula that attaches to a main peninsula at a 120-degree angle, allowing the scene to flow off the main peninsula more naturally and the four tracks entering the mill to curve more prototypically. The track plan is quite close to the prototype.



Highland Chemical consists primarily of kits and kitbashed structures. The plant is straightforward to switch with its four trailing point tracks, but it keeps the crew busy for up to an hour.

In between Highland Chemical and Back Creek Paper is a rural scene with Janet's farm. It's intended to reinforce that the industries on the layout are in mountainous rural areas or small towns. I built the barn board by board for my wife based on a barn in our hometown.

On the opposite side of the peninsula from Highland Chemical is Pocahontas Tanning. The original tannery was in Bartow, W.Va., approximately 20 miles north of Cass. I could find few photos of the mill even though it was a sizable operation and an active C&O customer in 1974. When I reached out to a stranger who had written an article about his visit to the plant, I was rewarded with an annotated aerial photo and a paragraph description for how each building fits into the tanning process. While I'm building it, I'll remember the kindness of the stranger who went out of his way to help me create a more faithful representation of the tannery.

Phase 4 is an area of Covington that the C&O used to call the Beltline, an industrial lead that accessed many smaller customers in town. Chessie's Christmas World (opposite page) is at the end of the Beltline. There are three small customers, and all four structures are scratchbuilt. I used the area to continue refining scenery techniques.

20 years

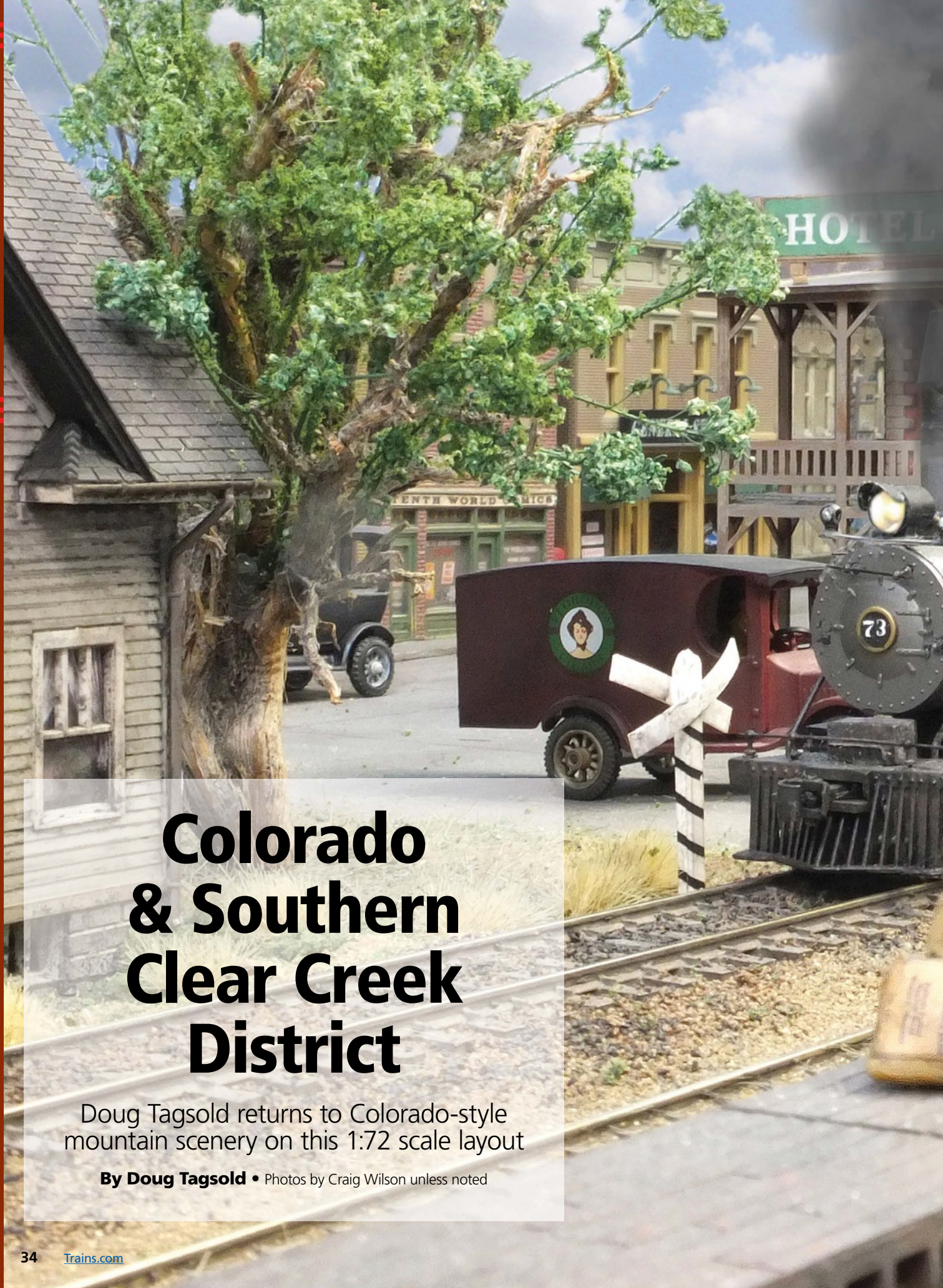
There is certainly more development to come. Designing and building the C&O Ryder Gap Subdivision has been a 20 year journey. I am indebted to my wife, Janet; our children, Joshua and Beth; and the numerous model railroaders who have helped me along the way.

The August 2027 NMRA National Convention will be in Tacoma, Wash. My layout and many others will be available for operating sessions during the convention. You can find more information online at 2027.nmra.org. MR



Meet Joe Green

Joe Green is a retired software manager who lives in Sequim, Wash., with his wife, Janet. Diversions from the train room include solving logic puzzles, watching Duke basketball and San Francisco Giants baseball, and walking in the woods and along the shores of the Olympic Peninsula.



Colorado & Southern Clear Creek District

Doug Tagsold returns to Colorado-style mountain scenery on this 1:72 scale layout

By Doug Tagsold • Photos by Craig Wilson unless noted

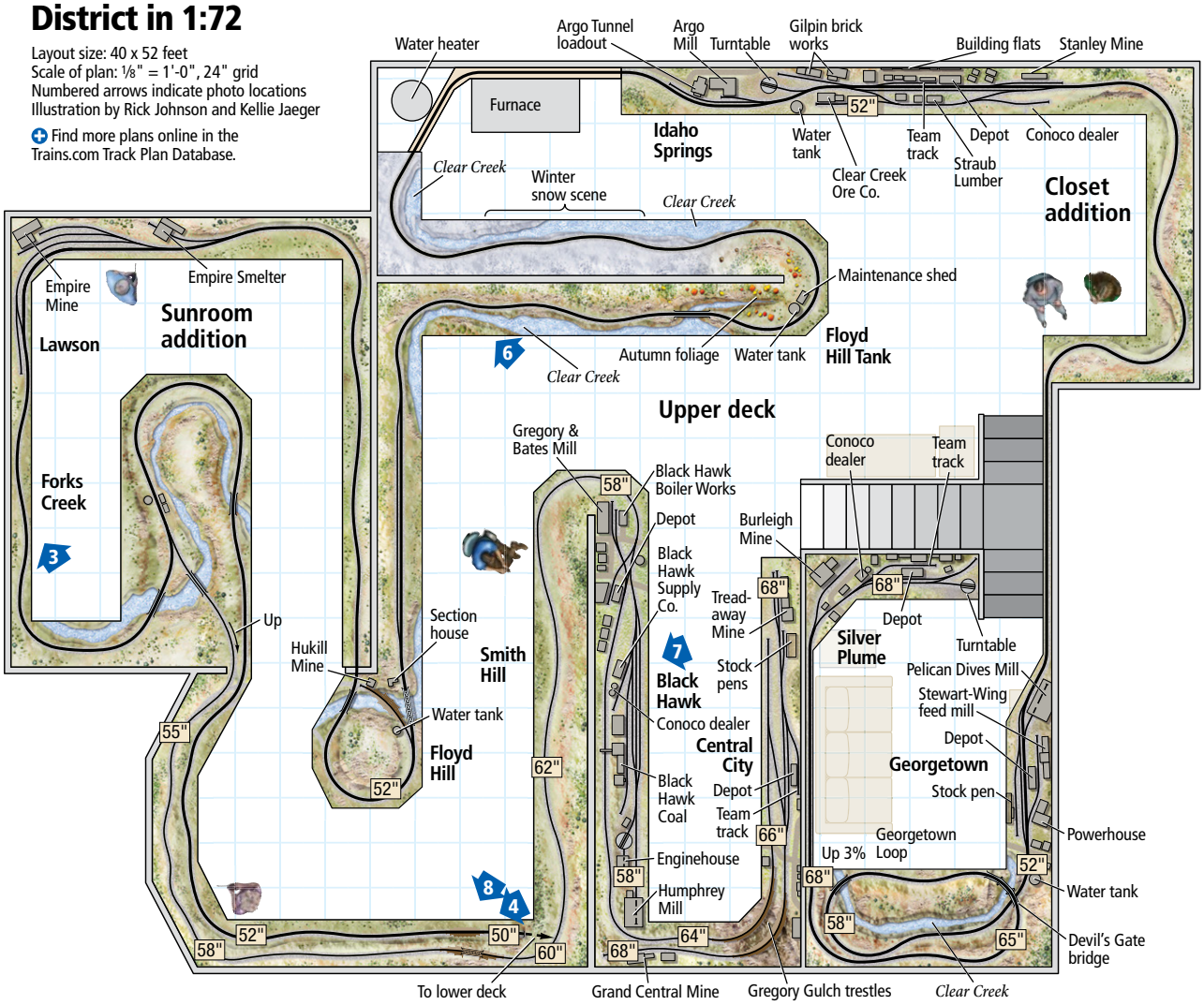


1 Colorado & Southern 2-8-0 No. 73 leads train No. 101 through Golden, Colo., on its daily run to Idaho Springs and Silver Plume. The scene takes place on Doug Tagsold's 1:72 scale C&S Clear Creek District.

C&S Clear Creek District in 1:72

Layout size: 40 x 52 feet
Scale of plan: ⅛" = 1'-0", 24" grid
Numbered arrows indicate photo locations
Illustration by Rick Johnson and Kellie Jaeger

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



The layout at a glance

Name: Colorado & Southern Clear Creek District
Scale: 1:72 on HO gauge track
Size: 40 x 52-feet
Prototype: C&S Clear Creek District
Locale: Denver to Rocky Mountains
Era: 1920s
Style: double-deck linear walkaround
Mainline run: 750 feet plus branch line
Minimum radius: 24"
Minimum turnout: No. 6
Maximum grade: 3%
Benchwork: open grid
Height: 30" to 70"
Roadbed: cork on insulation board
Track: code 70 and 83 flextrack with re-spaced ties
Scenery: plaster gauze strips over screen
Backdrop: drywall and aluminum sheet
Control: CVP Products EasyDCC

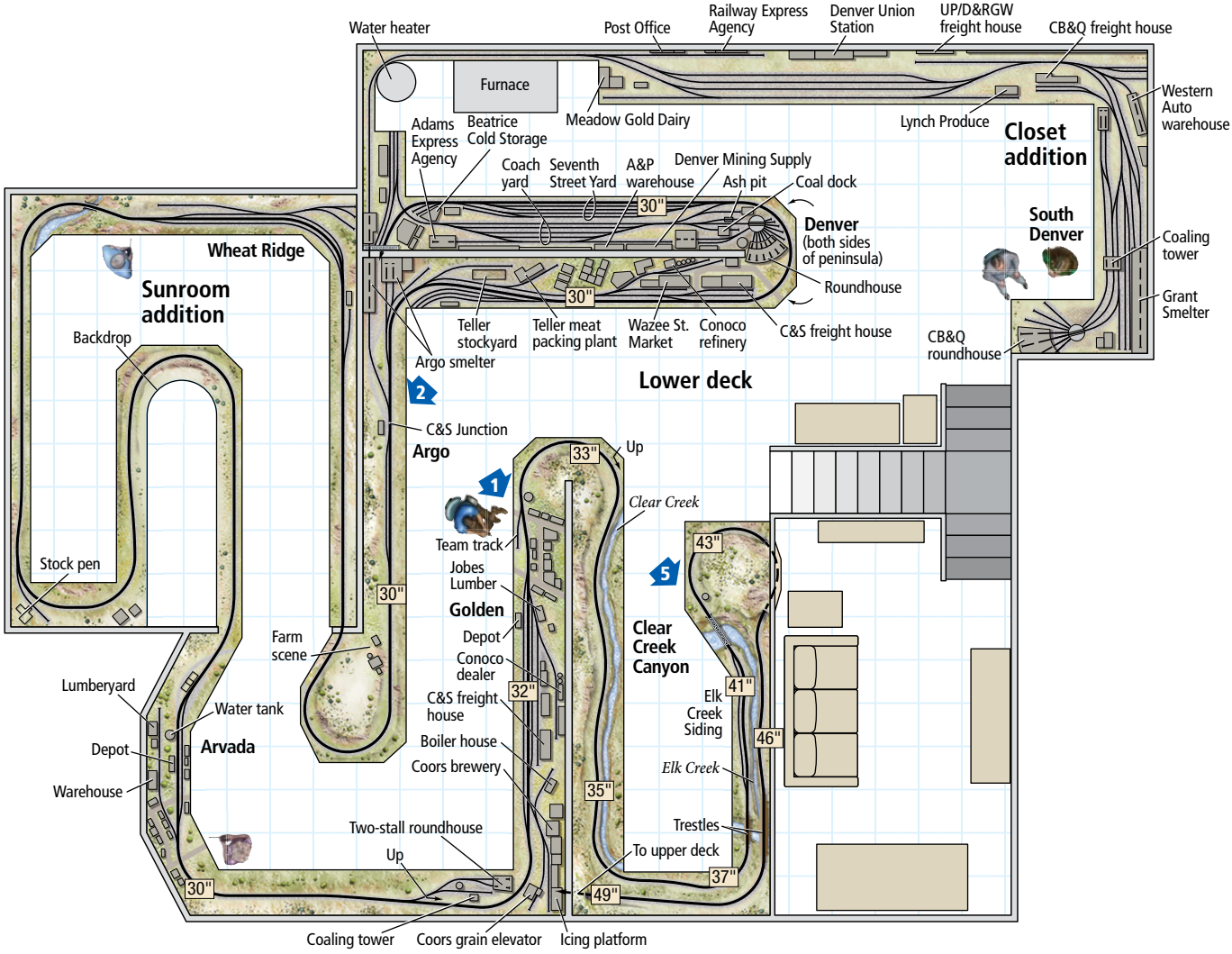
The design for the 1:72 scale Colorado & Southern Clear Creek District was inspired by favorite features from my three previous layouts. My HO scale Denver, Front Range & Western, published in the August 1999 issue of *Model Railroader* magazine, showed me that a double-deck layout provided the benefit of a longer mainline run. The model railroad also proved that being seated in rolling office-style chairs while operating on the lower level of a double-deck layout not only provided a better viewing angle, but was also highly desired by operators for comfort.

My On3 Durango & Silverton, covered in *Great Model Railroads 2007*, featured timetable-and-train-order operation. The layout proved the merits of a low-stress, laid-back operating scheme that branch line and narrow gauge railroads offer.

The HO scale Terminal of Toledo (GMR 2015) was basically a large industrial switching model railroad. Most members of my local operating crew really enjoy the operating challenge of switching cars, whether it be classifying them in a yard or doing set outs and pickups at local industries.

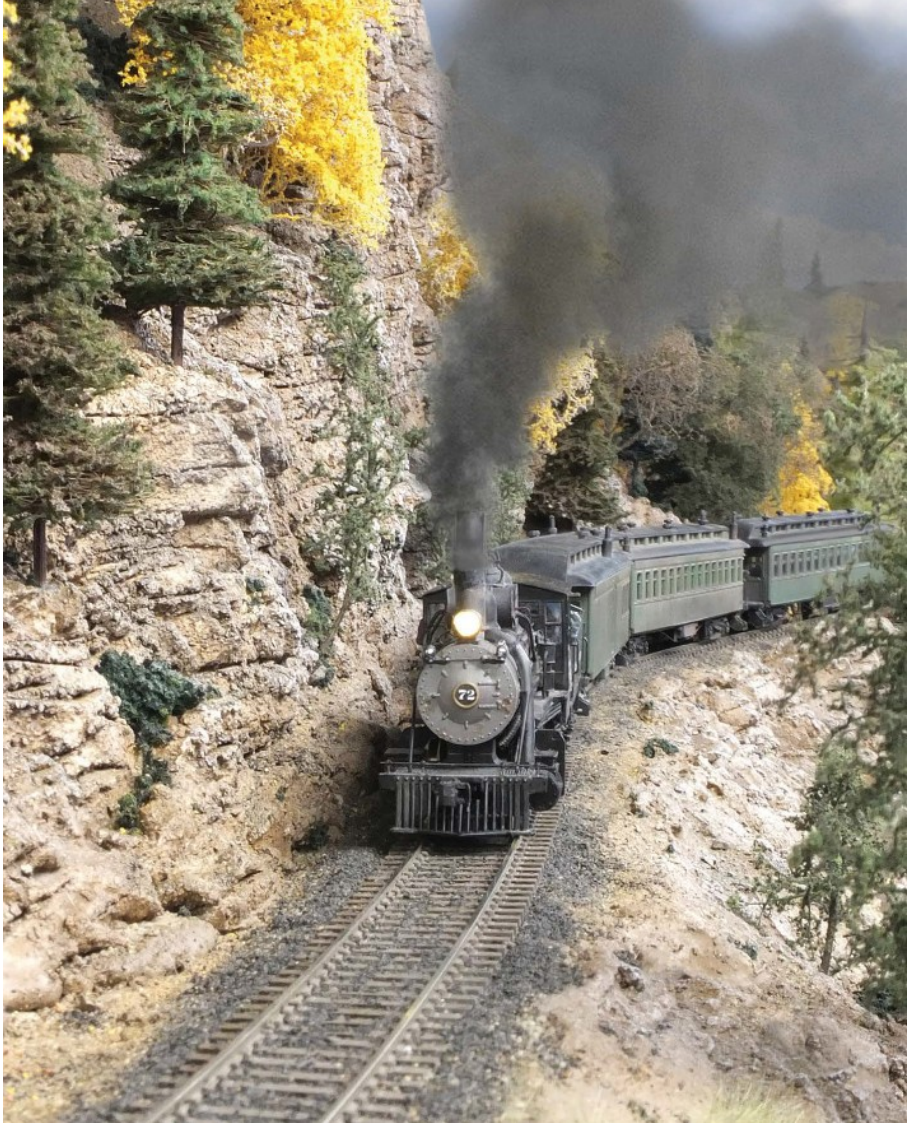
Even with a mainline several hundred feet long, a train running nonstop will only take a few minutes to travel the entire layout. However, a train switching in a town or industrial complex can take much more time, 30 to 60 minutes or longer. The Toledo layout taught me that if you like switching cars, a switching-style model railroad can give you hours of enjoyment, regardless of how big it is.

One final lesson I learned from the Toledo layout was that I thoroughly enjoy seeing and building Colorado-style mountain scenery. The two model railroads prior to Terminal of Toledo were





2 Train No. 104 passes by the train order station at C&S Junction, just a few miles west of Denver. Though Doug's layout is 1:72 scale, he uses HO scale locomotives and rolling stock and HO code 70 and 83 track with re-spaced ties.



3 The passengers aboard Denver-bound train No. 52, seen here just east of Forks Creek, are treated to mountain scenery and aspen trees that have started turning yellow. Creating mountain scenery is one aspect of the hobby that Doug thoroughly enjoys.



4 Caboose No. 1003 carries the markers on an empty ore extra, returning gondolas to the mines near Idaho Springs and Silver Plume. The caboose is a kitbashed Bachmann old-time bobber caboose repainted for the C&S.

set in Colorado. I promised myself never to build another layout without first considering a Rocky Mountain theme.

Layout design

I took all of those lessons to heart when designing my current layout. The model railroad would feature two decks so I could have a long mainline run. The lower level would be operated while seated in rolling office-style chairs. The model railroad would have numerous towns and urban industrial areas that required lots of switching.

The movement of trains would be laid back. There wouldn't be a larger number of trains being run, and train movements would be dictated by timetable and train orders. Of course, a good portion of the model railroad would include western mountain scenery.

Next, I began searching for a prototype railroad that would help me achieve those goals. I wanted to be able to host up to eight operators, each running their own train. That requirement ruled out a good number of the D&RGW narrow gauge lines in Colorado, as most of them saw only one or two trains per day.

Then I came upon an early 1900s timetable of the Colorado & Southern's narrow gauge line up Clear Creek. This 50-mile line from Denver to Idaho Springs and Silver Plume, with a branch line to Black Hawk and Central City, hosted several first-class passenger trains in each direction every day, with second-class freights each day as well. By adding a few extra gold or silver ore trains, I could have the number of trains I desired to run. Having scheduled trains and extras would make for interesting timetable-and-train-order operations.

This wasn't the first time I'd encountered the C&S Clear Creek District. I remember reading articles in the *Narrow Gauge & Short Line Gazette* by Harry Brunk where he described how he modeled the line in HOn3. The C&S narrow gauge locomotives had Ridgway "bear trap" spark arrestors on top of their stacks, a feature that distinguished the locomotives from those operated by the Denver & Rio Grande Western and other narrow gauge railroads.

Prototype history

The full-size C&S Clear Creek line was originally built in the 1870s as the Colorado Central RR, the first narrow gauge railroad constructed in Colorado. Following bankruptcy in the 1890s, the



What is 1:72 scale?

The display above illustrates the size difference between HOn3, 1:72 scale, and Sn3. Doug uses S scale figures, vehicles, and structures in the foreground and HO scale models in the background to create the illusion of depth and distance. Doug Tagsold photo

After weighing the various pros and cons of building in both On3 and HOn3, Sn3 seemed to be the perfect size. But when I calculated the number of locomotives and freight cars I would need for the layout, the cost quickly became unattainable. While searching the internet I found an HO scale "old time" 2-8-0 made by Model Die Casting (Roundhouse), now available from Athearn.

The steam engine looked similar to a narrow gauge C-19 locomotive. After a little measuring, I found the HO standard gauge engine was close in dimensions to a narrow gauge C-19 locomotive if modeled in 1:72 scale, roughly half way between HOn3 and Sn3 in size.

Further investigation revealed that the Athearn/Roundhouse 36-foot wood boxcar measures 30-feet long in 1:72 scale, the exact length of most narrow gauge boxcars. The Bachmann bobber caboose and Athearn/Roundhouse Overland passenger cars would also work for 1:72 scale. Shortening the Walthers Proto 1000 50-ton drop-bottom gondola by one section would also yield a 30-foot car. By using HO scale equipment and modeling in 1:72 scale, I could purchase all of the locomotives and rolling stock I needed at about a tenth of the price of Sn3.

Though modeling in 1:72 scale looked promising, I knew that it would require one big compromise. The locomotives and rolling stock were designed to run on HO scale standard gauge track. In 1:72 scale, the distance between the rails is 3'-10", not the typical 3'-0" of Colorado narrow gauge railroads.

I decided I could live with the gauge compromise. Fortunately, I kept all of my code 70 and code 83 HO track and turnouts from the Toledo layout, which saved an enormous amount of time and money. I would be correct to call the track "narrow gauge" in 1:72 scale, but I would be careful to not ever call it 3-foot gauge. — *Doug Tagsold*

Colorado Central, as well as the Denver, South Park & Pacific, were consolidated into the Colorado & Southern in 1898.

These narrow gauge lines, as well as the C&S standard gauge lines in Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, came under the control of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy in 1908, but continued to operate as the Colorado & Southern until December 1981 when it was folded into the Burlington Northern. The narrow gauge C&S Clear Creek District was abandoned in 1941.

Turning plans into reality

I started work on the C&S Clear Creek District in 2015. Construction went quickly. Much of the benchwork from the Toledo layout was rebuilt in



5 Engine No. 72 eases up to the water tank at Elk Creek with passenger train No. 51 in tow. The thirsty engine will take on water here, about mid way through its daily climb up Clear Creek Canyon.



6 Train No. 51, on its way to its next stop in Idaho Springs, hugs the banks of Clear Creek on its journey west. After modeling Toledo, Ohio, on his previous layout, Doug was excited to return to the Rocky Mountain setting on his 1:72 scale C&S model railroad.



7 Consolidation No. 70 pumps up air to its train is it prepares to run from Black Hawk to Denver as train No. 104. Doug takes prototype images at the various locations he models and uses photo-editing software to stitch the images together to make backdrops.

place, only needing to be modified slightly to add an upper deck.

When I constructed the layout, I made it fully operational before starting any scenery. Why? Because I wanted to ensure the model railroad achieved all of my operational requirements. Running trains solo and hosting operating sessions helped me learn what worked and what didn't. Modifications were easier to make without scenery in the way.

I'm a big fan of operator comfort, so I maintained the spacious 4- to 6-foot-wide aisles that the Toledo layout had. I also avoided building the layout with towns directly above and below each other so operators wouldn't be competing for the same aisle space.

My large basement also allowed me to spread things out. I have 50 to 75 feet of main line between most towns and sidings. After putting a sunroom addition on our house, covered in *Model Railroad Planning 2025*, the basement grew to its current 1,600 square feet. The addition let me increase the mainline run from Denver to Silver Plume to 750 feet.

Structures and scenery

All of the scratchbuilt structures are constructed to 1:72 scale. I used S scale (1:64) figures in the cabs of locomotives to help reinforce the diminutive look of narrow gauge locomotives.

When constructing a scene, I divide it into thirds. In the foreground between the aisle and track I sometimes use S scale figures, vehicles, and structures. Then I place 1:72 scale figures and vehicles in the middle third near the tracks. I primarily use HO scale models in the rear third of the scene. Employing items in various modeling scales gives a forced perspective view of the scene, creating the illusion of more depth and distance.

I like to use photo backdrops for some of my scenes. These, too, can help scenes feel much deeper. I took most of the mountain scenery photos at the actual locations being modeled. Needing more backdrop photos is my go-to excuse to plan another trip to Colorado.

Creating mountain scenery is an aspect of the hobby that I enjoy the most. I've used various methods, such as carving foam and casting plaster in molds. However, my favorite is still the old-fashioned way of forming up screen wire, covering it with plaster gauze cloth, then applying plaster and hand-carving the rock work. You can learn more about my techniques for making mountains and adding rocks in the February 2021 issue of *Model Railroader*.

Running trains

All of the locomotives have either Train Control Systems or SoundTraxx Tsunami2 sound decoders with CurrentKeepers installed. Control is with CVP Products EasyDCC wireless throttles, a system I've been using since 1999. With such a long main line, it takes a train running from Denver to Silver Plume, plus working at Idaho Springs and Georgetown along the way, two actual hours, or six hours on the 3:1 fast clock, to make the run.

Since all trains are operated as turns, in this case from Denver to Silver Plume and back, one operator spends the entire four-hour operating session running just one train. Our operating sessions can accommodate four to nine operators. There are three scheduled trains and one yard job that run every session, requiring four operators. A dispatcher isn't necessary with a four-member crew; all trains run by their timetable schedules.

As the number of available operators increases, extra trains are added. With a full crew of nine people, we have a dispatcher, two scheduled freight trains, one scheduled passenger train, a Denver yard



8 Colorado & Southern Consolidation No. 70 leads train No. 103 through the spindly high bridge near Smith Hill on the Black Hawk Branch. The locomotives on Doug's layout are Model Die Casting (now Athearn) 2-8-0s that have been modified to match C&S prototypes.

switcher, plus four freight or ore trains running as extras.

The challenge for extra trains is making their way across the railroad against the flow of scheduled trains. The dispatcher only needs to set up meets between extras; it's up to the crews of extras to decide when they can move and where to meet superior scheduled trains.

Sometimes mistakes are made, and two trains may come face to face on the single-track main line. When that happens, the fast clock is stopped, all operation ceases, and a mini trial is held to see which crew was at fault. Once the guilty party is identified, a little laughter is shared and a tombstone is placed on the layout marking the location where the crew member "died". This is all taken as good humor. It was actually one of the crew members that came up with the tombstone idea.

I'm blessed to have a terrific operating crew. Together we all have gone through the process of learning timetable-and-train-order operation. We enjoy the time together and the thought process and challenges of operating the way full-size railroads did for nearly a century.

Achieving goals

Though I'm told I'm a prolific layout builder, I prefer to think of myself as a layout operator first. The primary goal of all of my model railroads has been to host operating sessions. For me, nothing is better than having a group of friends come over to run trains. I see operating sessions as historical re-enactment, and I hope operators leave feeling they've experienced what life was really like while working the Colorado & Southern Clear Creek District in the 1920s. MR



Meet Doug Tagsold

Doug Tagsold is one of the hobby's most prolific, innovative, and skilled modelers and a regular contributor to *Model Railroader* magazine. He has built basement-size railroads in HO, On3, and now the unique 1:72 proportion using HO scale standard gauge track, locomotive mechanisms, and some rolling stock to represent 3-foot narrow gauge equipment.

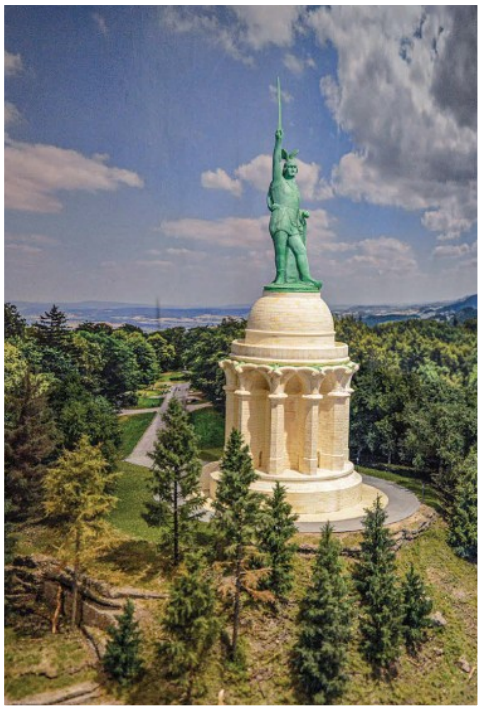
German Railway reality in summer 1975

The Modellbundesbahn gave visitors a look at Germany's steam-to-diesel transition era

By Karl Fischer • Photos as noted



1 The E 3658 semi-fast train (Eilzug) for Duisburg has arrived at Bad Driburg station on the HO scale Modellbundesbahn in Brakel, Germany. The Class V200 diesel locomotive comes from ESU, and the passenger cars are Roco. The station in the background, like all other visible buildings, is scratchbuilt. The trees are also handmade.
Markus Tiedtke photo



2 The Hermann Memorial is southwest of Detmold in North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany. The landmark monument commemorates the Cherusci war chief Arminius (in German, Hermann) and his victory over Rome at the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD. The Modellbundesbahn team visited the prototype 12 times, carried out detailed measurements of the monument, and acquired original plans. The 3D-printed model required approximately 150 hours of production time.
Modellbundesbahn photo



The Modellbundesbahn pursued an uncompromising goal: to replicate the Deutsche Bundesbahn in 1:87.1 scale as accurately as possible. Buildings were constructed according to original blueprints and precise measurements. The vehicles, trains, and operational procedures strictly followed their historical prototypes. Landscapes were either re-created section by section wherever feasible or, when that wasn't possible, faithfully reproduced in both character and charm. No matter how challenging the implementation was, a way was always found to honor reality. The museum in Brakel, Germany, closed at the end of May 2026.

The central prototype was the Deutsche Bundesbahn in 1975. Only by carefully studying and understanding its operations at the time can one convincingly re-create it in miniature.

The layout was built using an open-frame construction method. The base structure is made from 15 mm-thick multiplex plywood, with the supporting frames (spans) in 9 mm thickness. The entire structure was designed on a computer using CAD software and then milled with a 5-meter wide CNC router at a local carpentry workshop. This approach allowed for exceptionally high precision and perfect fit of all components, ensuring a stable and accurate foundation for the layout.

Visitors to the Modellbundesbahn embarked on a journey through time: Operations start on Aug. 16, 1975, and run through Aug. 31. During this period, the layout completed 14 full day-and-night cycles before the time loop restarted on the next exhibition day.

The layout itself was designed as a flattened "G" with an added dash — and consisted of five legs in total. Across these, a varied railway landscape unfolded, merging historical accuracy with operational diversity.

Bad Driburg

The Bad Driburg station served not only local passenger, luggage, and express freight traffic, but also played a central role in wagonload (carload) operations. Two long freight tracks, tracks 4 and 5, were available. In addition, the station featured a head ramp, an extended loading ramp, a freight handling facility, several industrial spurs, and a loading road. An unprotected level crossing without a crossbuck ran over the timber ramp track (track 8). The road was used exclusively for internal traffic within the freight yard.



3 On its way to Altenbeken, the oil-fired Roco Class 01.10 locomotive makes a stop at Bad Driburg station with its special train. The figures shown are mostly from Preiser, while the road vehicles depicted are made by Brekina. Norbert Sickmann photo



4 The signalman in the Dwf signal box (Driburg West dispatcher's office) has plenty to do in August 1975. The small Köf diesel locomotive, from Trix, provides shunting operations. Norbert Sickmann photo

Before crossing the open loading road over track 8, every shunting crew was required to stop. A shunting supervisor or a designated shunting employee secured the crossing in clear view to warn or hold back any potential users of the loading road — safety first!

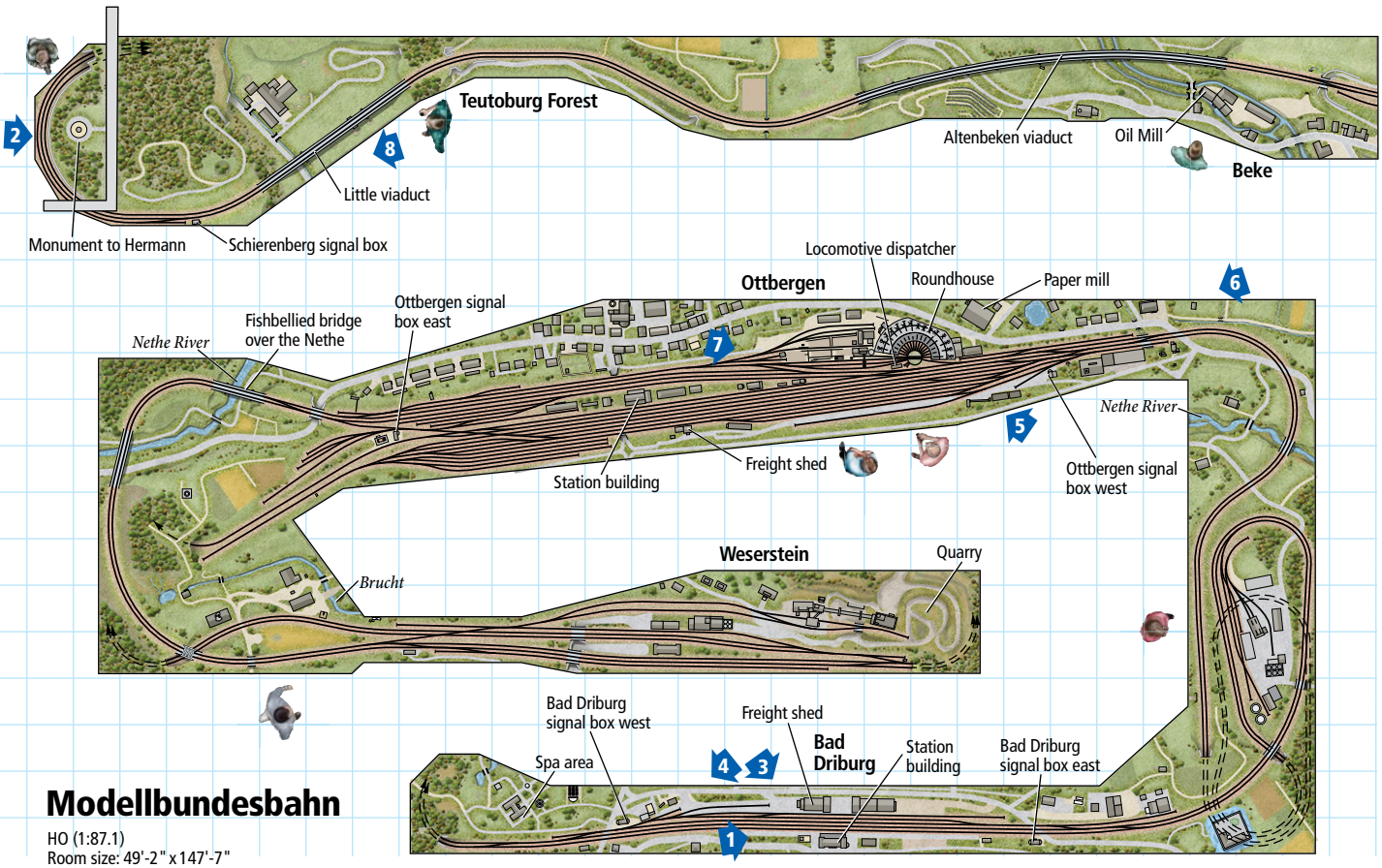
The station building, made of hewn sandstone that gleamed in the sun, was a late-classical structure of striking symmetry. On the opposite or east side was the freight handling facility, with one street-facing and one rail-facing loading ramp beneath a simple gable roof. Industrial spurs included the glass and porcelain dealer Dirichs and the fish and delicatessen merchant Menge & Niederau, which, together with the fuel suppliers Pauly and Emmerich, were located at the eastern end of the station.

The freight facility primarily dispatched covered goods wagons. Typical for Bad Driburg in the 1970s was the presence of several loaded wagons secured with handbrakes at the house ramp.

The prototype of the freight facility was built in 1863 as a sandstone structure and went into operation in 1864. For the model, Solnhofen Limestone slabs were used, which closely resemble the yellowish-white sandstone. Milling the material was technically demanding and required more than 20 worn milling heads and chisels — a nerve-wracking but rewarding task. For the station building, polyurethane-milled material was used for precise implementation, which, as usual, was colored to match the prototype structure.

Ottbergen

Ottbergen is a classic island station with tracks on both the north and south sides. On the full-size railway, Ottbergen operated as a mid-point exchange station. Trains traveling east or west would often change crews and locomotives halfway between their start and end points. By



Modellbundesbahn

HO (1:87.1)
Room size: 49'-2" x 147'-7"
Scale of plan: ⅛" = 1'-0", 24" grid
Numbered arrows indicate photo locations, Illustration by Kellie Jaeger

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

summer 1975, most east-west freight trains were already electrified and no longer required a locomotive change at Ottbergen, but steam engines remained in use for certain services. The model station simulated the full procedure: uncoupling; moving the old locomotive to the service tracks for coal, sand, and water; and bringing the fresh locomotive from a standby track to attach to the train. All steps, including brake tests and signal adherence, were faithfully replicated.

The technical backbone of this system was the TCCS (Train Communication Control System) from T4T (now ZIMO). The system integrates locomotive decoders, car decoders, and couplings in a single bus, allowing individual cars and locomotives to be uncoupled anywhere in a train without the need for uncoupling tracks. This enabled realistic operations such as splitting and forming freight trains, adding helper engines, and running shunting moves like the prototype.

To achieve this on the layout, 12 locomotives were modified with T4T decoders and specialized couplings, and four train sets were specifically equipped to handle the locomotive change maneuvers. Careful calibration guaranteed each uncoupling occurred at the correct height and position, ensuring reliable operation. The combination of signals, PC-based routing, and TCCS-controlled uncouplings allowed Modellbundesbahn to offer a fully operational, historically authentic demonstration of mid-1970s Deutsche Bundesbahn practices.

The locomotive depot formed the heart of the site. The original 20.5-meter turntable was only partially suitable for the 22.62-meter-long Class 44 locomotives: when turning, the buffer beams extended beyond the turntable, and the locomotive had to be positioned precisely in the center according to its wheelbase. The same principle applied in the model: only 3 mm of clearance remained for maneuvering on the turntable.

An infrared control system within the Selectrix protocol, a digital protocol developed for Trix and Minitrix, solved this problem. François Huguenin designed the corresponding drive unit along with the necessary contact sliders, which were integrated into the control system by the Model Railway Technic Team Munich (MTTM).

The townscape of Ottbergen is characterized by numerous half-timbered houses, likely reflecting the abundance of oak trees in the surrounding forests.

The layout at a glance

Name: Modellbundesbahn
Scale: HO (1:87.1)
Size: 15 x 45 meters (49'-2½" x 147'-6⅝")
Prototype: German Federal Ry.
Locale: northwestern central Germany
Era: August 1975
Style: walk-in museum display
Mainline run: 70 meters (230 feet)
Minimum radius: 650 mm (25.5")
Minimum turnout: No. 5
Maximum grade: 1.8%
Benchwork: open grid
Height: 85 to 110 cm (33½" to 43")
Roadbed: self-made
Track: flextrack
Scenery: computer-carved Styrodur sheets
Backdrop: photos from prototype locations
Control: Train Controller Gold 10 automated train control

Weserstein

While Bad Driburg and Ottbergen consistently followed historical prototypes, the Weserstein section deliberately took a different approach. Here, various regional motifs from the Weser Uplands



5 The turntable was built by the small-series manufacturer Wiederholdt Modellbau based on plans by Bernard Huguenin. The original measures 20.5 meters — an unusual size — leaving Class 44 locomotives in the model scene with only 3 mm of clearance for maneuvering. In the full-size locomotive depot, precise handling was required as well. The track is from Tillig. Markus Tiedtke photo



6 Ottbergen is a small settlement in the Weser Uplands. In 1975, it had a population of around 2,300, with more than 500 people employed by the Deutsche Bundesbahn. Other major employers were the paper mill and agriculture. Markus Tiedtke photo

were combined into a new, fictional overall scene that still appeared seamless.

The track plan of Weserstein station incorporated elements of the Wehrden Junction station. The station building was based on the 1945-destroyed station of Brakel, while the granary referenced a now-demolished original from Eissen station on the Scherfede–Holzminden line.

The Weser Uplands are not only a landscape of fairy tales but also a region steeped in legend. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected stories here that flowed into their famous fairy tales — many, like Little Red Riding Hood or Snow White, are internationally known, while others, such as the Bremen Town Musicians, are familiar to almost everyone in Germany.

Teutoburg Forest

The newest section of the layout showcased the most beautiful segments of the Paderborn–Altenbeken main line and greeted visitors at the entrance with a small fantasy section. There, probably the most prominent East Westphalian, Hermann the Cheruscan, sat enthroned above the "Hermann Arch," welcoming guests. The model Hermannsdenkmal measured 61.5 cm from the base to the tip of the sword; the model's weight was an impressive 2,507 grams, or more than 5½ pounds.

Interestingly, there's also a tribute to Hermann in the United States: the Hermann Heights Monument in New Ulm, Minn., honors the same Cheruscan



Laser-cutting and 3D printing for structures

Structure building methods have evolved during Modellbundesbahn's construction. In the early years, we milled buildings from Polystyrol and used Auhagen roof tiles. Since 2015, we relied exclusively on laser-cutting and 3D printing. For laser-cut models, we use architectural cardboard and pressed wood sheets (1–3 mm thick), and resin 3D printing.

A notable example are the historic post office buildings in Altenbeken at *Adenauerstraße* 53 and 55. In 1986, both became registered heritage buildings. We had access to original plans and numerous photographs from the 1970s, capturing details such as roof structures and chimneys that differed from the modern appearance. In 2019, Bernard Huguenin and I extensively photographed the buildings, providing additional reference for the designers.

From these drawings, DXF files were created for laser-cutting. Green lines indicate engraving, red lines indicate cutting. Complex roof structures and ornate details required additional 3D models, also prepared by Bernard. While the two buildings may appear similar at first glance, the differences in roof gables and decorative elements are faithfully reproduced in the models. Doors, dormers, and chimneys were 3D-printed by Norbert Sickmann, creating a level of detail that was unimaginable during the early years of the Modellbundesbahn.

This combination of laser-cutting, 3D printing, and meticulous research allowed us to replicate not only the appearance but also the historical accuracy of every significant structure on the layout. — *Karl Fischer*



7 A Class 44 locomotive stands at the coaling crane on track 73 of the Ottbergen locomotive depot. Meanwhile, its sister No. 044 193-1 is leaving the depot via track 71, heading toward new duties. All of the servicing facilities shown are scratchbuilt models or were manufactured according to plans and templates created by team Modellbundesbahn. Norbert Sickmann photo

chieftain and illustrates the international fame of the figure.

The highlight of this section is the Altenbeken Viaduct. On July 8, 1851, the Prussian Minister of Commerce laid the foundation for this significant individual railway structure between Paderborn and Warburg, financed by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV with a budget of 573,000 thalers [a thaler was equivalent to a skilled laborer's week's wages. — *Ed.*] Its opening on July 21, 1853, caused a stir throughout Altenbeken. The festival grounds were filled with anticipation as people waited in suspense to hear what the king would say about the new bridge. Paraphrasing his words: "I thought I would find a golden bridge, because so terribly many thalers have been spent!" This memorable statement later inspired the golden bridge in Altenbeken's town crest.

The viaduct remains one of the oldest testimonies of German railway history. In the model, it was also a structure of superlatives: valued at €35,000, it was the most expensive individual piece of the Modellbundesbahn and simultaneously the longest bridge in Germany built in 1:87.1 scale according to original plans.

A team effort

The Modellbundesbahn was very much a team effort, and many specialists contributed their expertise to bring this layout to life. Karl Fischer, the founder, oversaw historical research, planning, building structures, landscape design, woodwork, weathering of rolling stock, and is also a published author. Norbert Sickmann handled electrics, programming, 3D printing, building construction, maintenance, and carpentry. Bernard Huguenin was responsible for historical research, chief planning, technical construction, building fabrication, and is a co-author of layout publications. Michael Butkay served as chief modeler, overseeing track construction, landscape, and road building. Jos Geurts specialized in tree, bush, and shrub modeling, while Sven Löffler focused on micro-scale modeling and the car system.

The collaboration of such a diverse and highly skilled team is what made the Modellbundesbahn unique: every element, from large-scale viaducts to microscopic details, benefited from specialized attention and collective experience.

And the public's recognition of the quality of the layout has resulted in an outpouring of support that may yet give Modellbundesbahn more time. Stay tuned! MR

Karl Fischer lives in Germany and has been a model railroader for 48 years. His very first layout was when he was just 5 years old, and ever since, his fascination with trains and detailed modeling has only grown stronger.



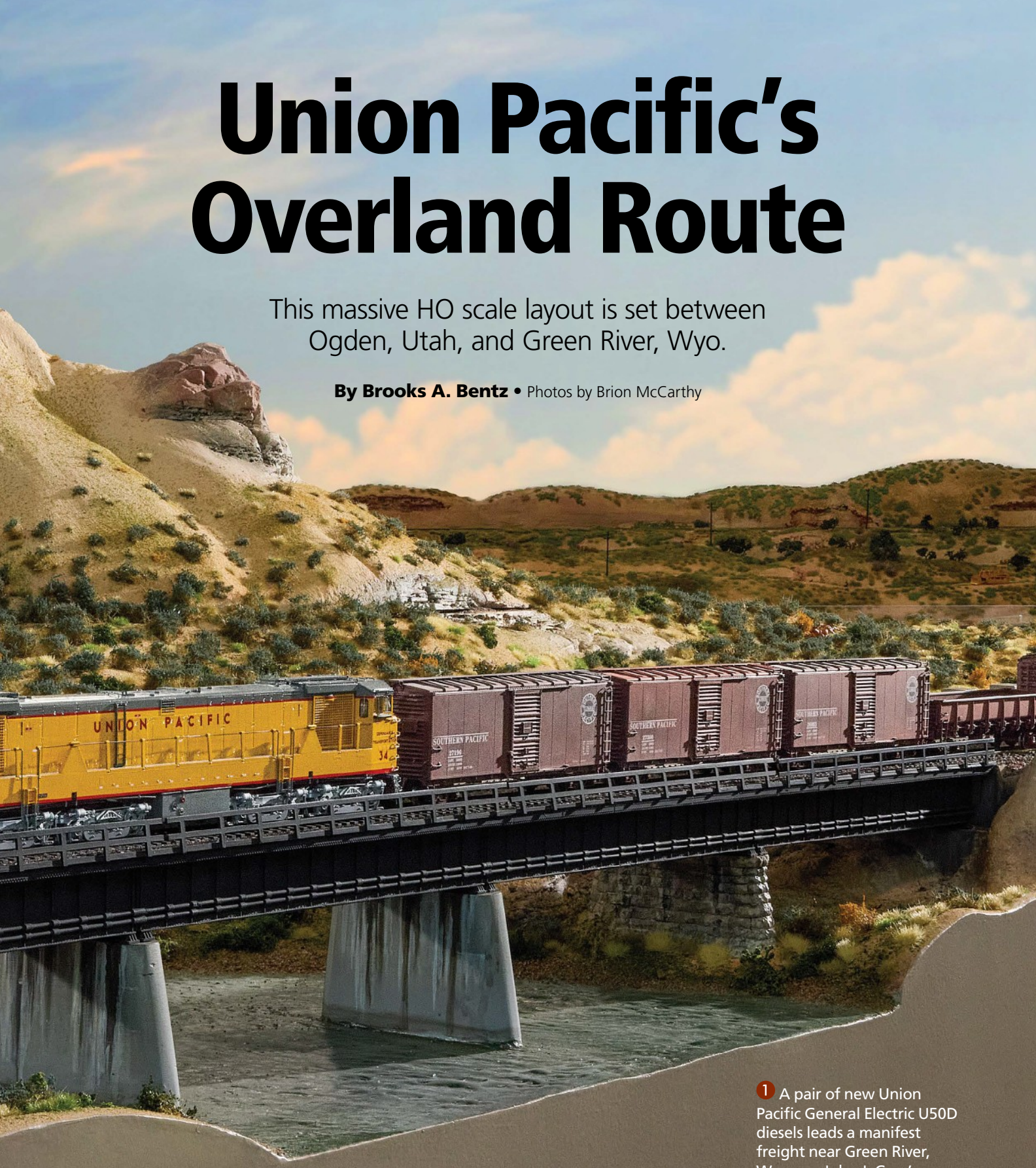
8 A Class 150 electric locomotive (Roco) hauling an empty coal train meets a V200 diesel locomotive (ESU) with an express passenger train on the little viaduct between Teutoberg Forest and the Schierenberg signal box. The bridge was based on a 19th-century drawing and the team's on-site measurements. Markus Tiedtke photo


UNION PACIFIC
53
UP 53
UNION PACIFIC
DEPENDABLE TRANSPORTATION
53
34

Union Pacific's Overland Route

This massive HO scale layout is set between Ogden, Utah, and Green River, Wyo.

By Brooks A. Bentz • Photos by Brion McCarthy



1 A pair of new Union Pacific General Electric U50D diesels leads a manifest freight near Green River, Wyo., on John J. Gray's 57 x 86-foot HO scale Overland Route layout. Castle Rock is visible in the background.



2 This overall view of the layout shows the clean, well-lit space the model railroad is housed in. Ogden, Utah, is in the foreground; Echo Canyon is in the middle; and Green River, Wyo., is in the background.

The prototype, locale, and era for a model railroad can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as books, other layouts, and travel. John J. Gray's lifelong interest in the Union Pacific stems from his childhood years in Boise, Idaho. He grew up near the depot and later traveled around to watch UP operations in the surrounding area. His 57 x 86-foot HO scale model railroad depicts UP's Overland Route between Ogden, Utah, and Green River, Wyo., in the 1950s.

John is a veteran professional railroader. He started with Western Pacific in the 1970s, where he rose to become Senior Vice President — Intermodal and President of Western Pacific Transport Co., the railroad's motor carrier subsidiary. After Union Pacific acquired the WP, John departed and became an entrepreneur in rail services, starting intermodal terminal contractor Rail Management Services in 1983. He retired from the company at the end of 2025.

Though John has been interested in model trains for decades — he purchased his first brass locomotive, a Tenshodo Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Hudson, at Vista Hobby Shop in Boise when he was 15 — a busy railroad career didn't leave John much time to pursue the hobby. In 1982 he began collecting locomotives and freight cars, largely UP prototypes [See "A passion for brass" on page 57. — *Ed.*]

The layout at a glance

Name: Union Pacific Overland Route
Scale: HO (1:87.1)
Size: 57'-1" x 86'-9"
Prototype: Union Pacific
Locale: Ogden, Utah, to Green River, Wyo.
Era: 1950s
Style: linear walk-in
Mainline run: 450 feet double-track main
Minimum radius: 60"
Minimum turnout: No. 8
Maximum grade: 1%
Benchwork: open grid
Height: 41" to riverbed, 45" to track
Roadbed: cork
Track: Peco code 83
Scenery: extruded-foam insulation board
Backdrop: painted tempered hardboard
Control: Direct current cab control

Near the end of the 1980s, when John was living in Marin County, Calif., he began work on his first layout based on UP's operations in Cheyenne and the countryside around Wyoming. The model railroad featured wide-open western scenery and broad, sweeping curves.

The layout's focal point was Cheyenne, where John re-created the expansive UP physical plant, including the depot, mail and express facility, turntable and full-circle roundhouse, shop facilities, and freight yard. In addition he modeled Sherman Hill, complete with Hermosa Tunnel.

Due to John's absorbing schedule he retained a full-time modeler, Phil Gazzano, to work on the model railroad through to completion. The layout was featured in volume 36 of Allen Keller's *Great Model Railroads* video series, released in 2004. The model railroad was dismantled and stored temporarily until John moved to a new home in Florida.

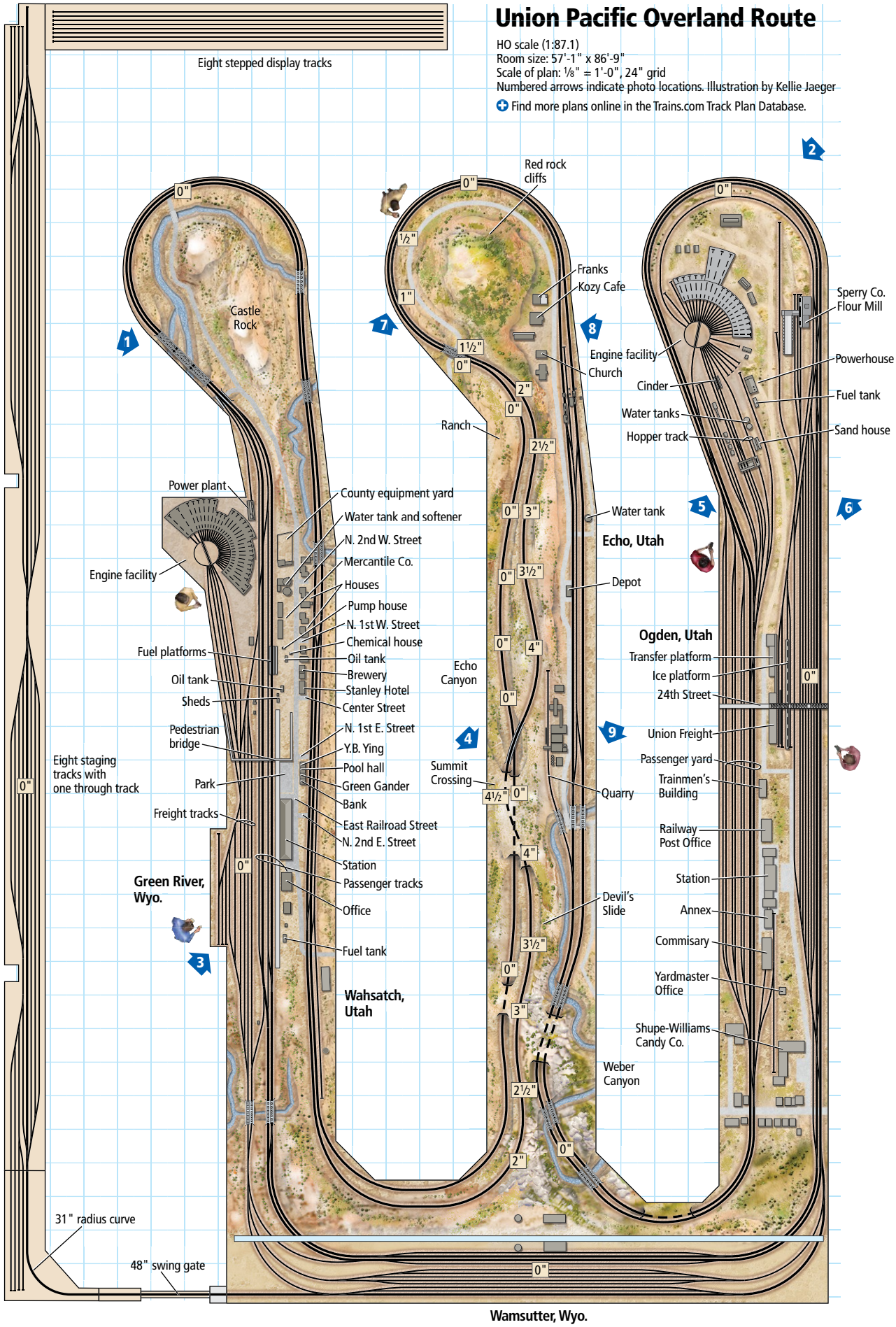
A fresh start in Florida

After relocating to Florida, John erected a 15,000-square-foot building to house a new version of the UP in HO scale along with his car collection. The modern steel-and-masonry structure with epoxy-coated floors has three bays that measure 50 x 100 feet each. The model railroad occupies one bay; John's antique and current cars are housed in the other two.

Union Pacific Overland Route

HO scale (1:87.1)
Room size: 57'-1" x 86'-9"
Scale of plan: ⅛" = 1'-0", 24" grid
Numbered arrows indicate photo locations. Illustration by Kellie Jaeger

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





3 An A-B-B set of Electro-Motive Division E3 diesels ease the westbound *City of Los Angeles* up to the platform at Green River, Wyo. The station accurately features the modified control nest on top above the columns.

The model railroad was constructed to John's specifications by Jeff Springer and his staff at Custom Model Railroads in Baltimore. Jeff has been building layouts professionally for more than 30 years. Custom Model Railroads' staff and subcontractors work out of a 3,000-square foot shop.

In October 2018 John and Jeff took a field trip from Ogden to Green River to visit key sites and collect local scenery materials for use on the model railroad. Work began on the model railroad in 2019. It was built like all CMR layouts with cabinets underneath. The cabinets are similar to those used in kitchens but have open sides and backs and tops. This creates a clean look and plenty of space for storage.

The layout was built using grid construction. All wood is cabinet grade plywood ripped to size. No dimensional lumber was used as it's prone to twisting and warping. The track deck or surface the track sits on is Medium Density Overlay plywood.

Since the model railroad had to be transported to its final destination, it was built in sections in Baltimore then reassembled in Florida. The layout was installed in September 2023.

A closer look

The linear walk-in layout is situated in the middle of the room. A framed wall backdrop, covered with tempered hardboard and painted on both sides, was used to hide one of the staging yards and the garage doors. After the backdrop was installed, it was determined it needed to be taller. With great agility, and a little bit of risk, it was extended in place by about 6 feet, then finished and painted.

John wanted the lighting to replicate daylight as much as possible. In an effort to maximize illumination to simulate desert light, John and Jeff installed around 30 5000-lumen lighting fixtures, which are augmented by natural light that streams through the UV-coated windows at certain times of day. As John said, "You can never get enough light, and I still don't have enough!"

Peco code 83 track and the company's No. 8 turnouts were used throughout the model railroad. Tortoise by Circuitron switch machines were installed to power the turnouts. The turnouts are controlled with Berrett Hill Touch Toggles.

Western scenery

Long passenger and freight trains roll through the arid scenery, marked by canyons, bluffs, and buttes, and through small desert towns.

Extruded-foam insulation board was used for the scenery base. After it was installed with foam-safe adhesive and shaped, the foam was coated with joint compound. All of the rocks were carved by hand, covered with gesso, and painted with acrylics.

Assorted ground foam and static grass was used for the scenery, all from Scenic Express, "A great source for what we do" Jeff said. "We also used lots and lots of sage made by Martin Welberg in the Netherlands."

Natural materials harvested during site visits along the right-of-way in Wyoming and Utah were used to reinforce the layout's setting. Shrubs and trees were installed afterward.

Large river scenes were re-created with plaster. After it had cured, the



4 John's model railroad is set in the 1950s when steam and diesel locomotives operated side by side. Here, a diesel-powered *City of Los Angeles* bound for Chicago passes over a freight led by 4-6-6-4 Challenger No. 3833.

plaster was painted and overcoated with clear gloss. Clear epoxy products were used for small streams and runoffs.

The rocks at Echo Canyon were a challenge because the colors can look different depending on the weather and time of day. It took a lot of go-arounds to get the appearance dialed in. "I am particularly proud of the work on the cliffs and buttes in Green River, modeled by David Schlesinger, one of the CMR crew," Jeff said.

A structure showcase

In addition to the wonderful western scenery, structures are another highlight of John's layout. Most were custom built by Jeff and the CMR team using prototype drawings, photos, and field measurements as guides. Jeff also spent considerable time at the University of Utah going through its historic archive collection to find resources.

Almost all of the structures were built using laser-cut and engraved acrylic, along with some 3D-printed objects. The buildings, painted with acrylic hobby paints, feature detailed, illuminated interiors. "I like lightly weathered structures; John likes them a little heavier. I had to learn to make everything 'dirty,'" Jeff said.

The bridges are a combination of brass imports from Overland Models and scratchbuilt by CMR using laser-cut acrylic and styrene. There's also a model of the unique overpass at Green River that still exists today and is a great location to photograph trains.

Ogden and Green River, the bookends of the railroad, have accurate structures and facilities, including impressive passenger stations, yards, and large engine service facilities. Ogden even features the former station, which still remains, adjacent to the newer one. The yards were augmented with two staging areas, as well as a multi-track display that holds full passenger train consists from bygone eras.

The turntables at Green River and Ogden are CMR products (now discontinued) with New York Railway Supply indexing systems. The roundhouses were scratchbuilt, detailed, and painted to match the prototypes as they appeared in the 1950s.

Another noteworthy location is Echo, Utah. The diner, motel, and gas station are exact replicas of the full-size buildings in the tiny town. The scene was populated with era-appropriate vehicles, figures, and details.

Control and signals

The model railroad features direct current (DC) cab control with walkaround throttles. There are also eight yard control panels.

The wireless system was designed by Kevin Hunter at Berrett Hill and Chuck Davis at Railroad Control Systems. "Pretty cool stuff that most people don't really appreciate how involved it was to develop," Jeff said.

The signal system is unique. Union Pacific had its own design for trackside signals, so they all had to be custom made. They're approach-lit and function in an ABS manner. The signals were produced by Richard Piccuilla at Custom Signal Systems, along with a few from Tomar Industries. The signals are controlled using Railroad Control Systems hardware and software. The

5 Veranda turbines are gathered by the fuel tracks at the Ogden, Utah, locomotive facility. The roundhouse, scratchbuilt from laser-cut and engraved acrylic, can be seen in the background.



6 Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 Big Boy No. 4023 and 4-6-6-4 Challenger No. 3985 take on coal at the Ogden, Utah, coal chute. Those snappy-looking Alco RSD4 diesels to the left of the chute belong to the Utah Ry.

self-contained system doesn't require a computer. Simply turn the layout on it starts up on its own.

Current-sensing detectors tell the system if a block is occupied or vacant. Turnout position is detected using turnout position detectors. There are Input/Output boards that receive information from the detectors and have outputs for the signals. These are all connected to a main board that has the operating software on it. The software is set up for approach lighting. Each signal is programmed to operate based on the various inputs and track scenarios happening beyond it.

Running trains

The model railroad is set during in the transition era when both steam and diesel locomotives were still in operation. John's layout can readily accommodate prototype-length freight and passenger trains. During one of my visits, we operated a 90-plus-car freight train and it ran flawlessly.

One of John's goals for the model railroad was having good sight lines, giving



7 Union Pacific M-10002 *City of Los Angeles* rolls eastbound at Red Cliffs near Echo, Wyo. The brass trainset, based on a prototype built by Pullman-Standard in 1936, was produced by The Coach Yard.

A passion for brass

John J. Gray has spent decades accumulating one of the premier collections of brass locomotives and rolling stock. All of the 1,500 locomotives and 3,500 cars have been custom decorated or are factory painted and lettered.

Much of John's collection is made up of UP prototypes — steam and diesel locomotives, passenger equipment, and freight and company service cars. In addition, he's collected a large complement of classic trains, including two versions of New York Central's *20th Century Limited*, the jointly operated *California Zephyr*, Southern Pacific Larks and Daylights, and most well-known Pennsylvania RR trains, among many others. All locomotives are non-sound, direct-current models by choice.

John worked closely with the late Bob Darwin to source UP prototypes that weren't on the market. The two worked with Challenger Imports, The Coach Yard, Overland Models, and Key Imports. Bob would obtain the plans and create detailed drawings, which were sent to the importer and manufacturer, who would produce a pilot model. John and Bob would examine the sample, request corrections, and move it to production. This was seldom a fast process, taking up to 10 years in some cases.

Some of the UP models John and Bob were responsible for include the M-10000-1 through M-10000-4 early streamliners, a 2-10-2 (Key), 2-8-2 and FEF-series 4-8-4s from 1930 to 1938 (Overland), early Challengers, and 4-12-2 steam locomotives (Key). They also collaborated with Challenger on a variety of Electro-Motive Division E units, paying particular attention to the nose configurations.

In the case of the M-10000s, there was a rumor that the prototype plans were in a storage trailer at the Illinois Railway Museum. The rumor proved true, setting off a decade-long odyssey to produce the unique trainsets. — *Brooks A. Bentz*



8 The Echo, Utah, scene may be small, but it's big on detail. The Kozy Cafe and Motel and Franks Echo Service are accurate models of the full-size buildings, complete with detailed and illuminated interiors.

the viewer the sense of the railroad running through wide-open spaces without conflicting views. He feels one of his key strengths is knowing and understanding the history of the area he's modeling and what the locations would have looked like in the era he's depicting. "You're always compromising on space, no matter how large your railroad," John said. "Railroads go from somewhere to somewhere through nowhere" and he wanted to re-create a good amount of the nowhere to engender that feeling and sense of space.

From an operating perspective, John doesn't do much local switching. Instead, he prefers to run trains. "Like I saw them when I was a kid," John added.

Plenty of options

John's extensive collection of locomotives and freight cars give him the flexibility to change eras. "I can run any train from the 1930s to 1970, with steam or diesel power and the proper consist for the era, replicating fond memories from the past," John said.

The Ogden, Utah, and Green River, Wyo., scenes were designed with John's operational goals in mind. The station tracks at both locations can accommodate full-length, 20-plus-car passenger trains. The freight yards are capacious enough to handle 200 to 300 period-appropriate freight cars.

Ultimately, John says he's grateful that he could make a living out of his passion for trains, without ever tiring of or wrecking model railroading and not having the hobby affect his business judgment. MR



9 The *Overland Limited* in UP's two-tone gray paint scheme passes over one of the twin bridges at Weber Canyon. The class FEF-3 Northern is a brass model from Key Imports.

Brooks Bentz is a veteran of more than 56 years in railroading and transportation consulting. He's currently building the HO proto-freelance Stonington Ry. & Navigation Co., patterned after the first railroad in Connecticut. He also writes regularly for supply chain, railway, and model railroad publications.

Meet John J. Gray

John J. Gray grew up in Boise, Idaho. After graduating from Notre Dame and earning an MBA at Stanford, he joined the Western Pacific RR. He rose through the ranks to become Senior Vice President — Intermodal and President of Western Pacific Transport Co., the railroad's motor carrier subsidiary. After Union Pacific acquired WP in 1983, John left the railroad and founded Rail Management Services, which today operates more than 60 rail intermodal and auto terminals for Class I carriers. He retired at the end of 2025. John and his wife, Katia, maintain homes in Naples, Fla.; Boise; and San Francisco.

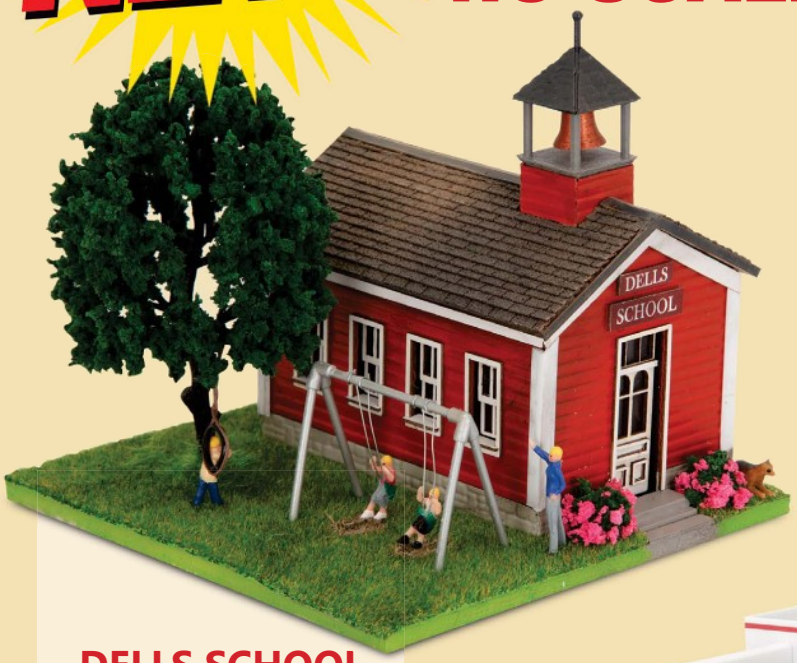




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Layout planning with forks

Think about your model railroad in conceptual terms with common eating utensils

By Tony Koester • Photos by the author

Planning your next model railroad in conceptual terms is literally as easy as borrowing two forks from the kitchen and overlapping the handles. The tines represent the staging yards at both ends of the railroad. The handles represent what our British friends call the "twisty bits" — the main line that runs between them. My HO scale Third Subdivision depiction of the Nickel Plate Road's St. Louis Division was designed in exactly this way: One set of tines represent the staged Toledo and Sandusky Divisions on the east end, the other set the St. Louis Division's Fourth Subdivision on the west end.



The basic concept for the typical track plan can be envisioned by overlapping the handles of a pair of forks. The handles represent the main line and the tines the staging yards.

If you're modeling a stub-ended branch or short line, you'll need only one fork. Or maybe you'll need three: one for the branch, and two for a short stretch of main line it connects to if you want that line to be active. You can conceptually bend the forks so the tines touch end-to-end to make the main line a continuous run.

The latter also applies to those who simply want a continuous run for the main railroad, never mind a branch or connecting short line. Put the connected tines (staging yards) behind a backdrop to create the illusion of trains coming from or going to somewhere far away. It could also be a fiddle yard where a second crew, usually called a "mole," switches the hidden yard to keep a variety of trains flowing over the scenicked portion of the railroad.

And here you thought track planning was difficult! MR


Both ends of Consulting Editor Tony Koester's 24'-6" x 60'-6" HO scale Nickel Plate Road layout are represented by the tines of two forks. At lower right, on the bottom deck, are the staging yards for the Sandusky and Toledo Divisions. At upper left is staging for the Fourth Sub of the St. Louis Division.

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By Pelle K. Søeborg

How it all began

I have often been asked why I've chosen to model railroads in the United States, far from where I live in Denmark. There is no deeper philosophy behind it. It is primarily due to coincidence.

It all began back in 1990 when I visited a bookstore in Copenhagen. I don't remember what I went there for, but as I was waiting in line to pay for whatever I got, I spotted a basket full of *Model Railroader* magazines they sold for practically nothing. I don't know how they had ended up there because you didn't normally see American model train magazines in Denmark then. I picked one of them up and was impressed with the realism of the featured layout on the cover and I ended up buying them all.

I was not a model railroader at the time. Like most men in Europe my age I had a Märklin train set as a kid, but I never had a layout, just a circle of track I put on the floor when I wanted to play with my trains. When I became a teenager I lost interest in my trains and sold them.

I read my *Model Railroader* magazines cover to cover several times and decided to give the model railroad hobby a try. You see, I was in between hobbies at the time.

I used to have Harley-Davidson motorcycles, but my partner and I had recently bought our first home. I had to sell my bikes to get money for the down payment, so I was looking for a new hobby. Compared to motorcycles model railroading seemed very affordable to me.

I wanted to model American trains even though American railroads didn't really mean anything to me at the time. Somehow the modeled scenes in the magazines appealed to me.



Almost all the pictures Contributing Editor Pelle Søeborg had of his first attempt at model railroading were destroyed by water damage in his basement. This grainy image of a Southern Pacific EMD SD45 is one of the few survivors. It was probably taken in 1991. Pelle Søeborg photo

The first obstacle was to get models of U.S. prototypes. I visited every model train store in the Copenhagen area but they didn't have any American models. It was all European. Then I started calling train stores advertising in *Model Railroader.*

Many of them didn't ship outside the U.S., but finally I found a store in New York City that was willing to ship overseas. They wanted payment in advance, so I went to my bank, had a check made in U.S. dollars, and mailed it to them. Remember, this was before the internet, so it was a bit complicated to buy stuff in the U.S. when you lived in Denmark.

I waited and waited and began wondering if I'd ever receive anything, but after a couple of months a package arrived. Enthusiastic, I started building a kind of diorama that eventually was supposed to be a part of a layout.

I'd never been to the U.S., so my modeling was mostly based on layouts featured in *Model Railroader.* I filled in the blanks with things I had seen here in Europe. No need to say that the result was terrible. It looked nothing like the layouts I had seen featured in *Model Railroader.*

Life is barely long enough to be good at one thing and even though my model railroad interest started relatively late in life, I took up the challenge to become a better modeler. I realized the first step in becoming a better modeler was to visit the U.S. and see with my own eyes how things looked. I don't think it's possible to model anything you haven't seen with your own eyes. Not in a convincing way.

My first trips to the United States were all to the southwestern parts of the country. Because of the hot and dry climate, the scenery there is very different from what I was used to living in Denmark. Most of the area is desert, but there are also other types of unique scenery, such as the grass covered hills of the Tehachapis in California with the famous loop.

That area appealed to me and was the inspiration for my first model railroad, which I started right after my return. Seeing with my own eyes how things really looked helped a lot, and my Tehachapi layout was definitely better than my first attempt.

After the Tehachapi layout, which I had in a basement, we moved to another house with no basement. The spare bedroom I had available for my trains was not big enough for a layout, so I built a diorama instead. I soon realized a diorama couldn't fulfill my modeling needs. I missed watching trains run through larger scenery, so during the summer of 2003 I built a 9 x 21-foot insulated shed in the garden as a train room.

A trip to the heartland, to be more specific Iowa and Nebraska, gave me inspiration for my final layout. I would face the same obstacle of transforming wide open spaces to a model railroad, which suited me well, but it offered new challenges. That layout is now in Tennessee at the ScaleTrains headquarters.

Had I not visited that bookstore back in the early '90s, I probably would never have known about *Model Railroader* and maybe never started in the model railroad hobby. I would have missed out on countless experiences and friendships as well.

One thing I can say for sure is, looking in the rear view mirror, it was damn lucky I did go to that bookstore that day. MR



The earth shakes as a Baltimore & Ohio "Big 6" 2-10-2 steams past company-owned miners' housing on a sultry day high in the Appalachians on Michael Tricker's HO scale Port Trenton model railroad. The locomotive is a brass import and the housing is constructed from laser cut parts. Michael Tricker photo


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Rio Grande



An engineer climbs down from Staten Island Rapid Transit Alco S2 No. 9031 after spotting Diesel Sand Car No.1 in the Arlington enginehouse. Marc Pitanza of Red Bank, N.J., built the HO scene on a 2 x 4-foot micro-layout. The locomotive is from Atlas. The engine-house was modified to better represent the prototype structure built by the B&O in Arlington Yard, Staten Island. Marc took the photo.



It is early October 1950, and the westbound *Empire Builder* is passing through Wayzata, Minn., early in its journey to the West Coast. The scene was photographed by Rich Remiarz on Doug Complin's Great Northern Ry. Twin Cities Terminal HO scale layout. This portion of the model railroad was designed based on photos and Great Northern maps of Wayzata. Doug scratchbuilt the Wayzata depot. The industries and other buildings were scratchbuilt, kitbashed, or modified to match prototype photos. Minnetonka Boat Works would have new boats delivered by rail to the unloading ramp in the parking lot.



Somerset County Traction System motor No. 32 is on switching duty at Warrenville, N.J., which is a bit of a challenge involving a switchback set on a 6% grade. The motor is placed on the downhill side of the train to prevent runaways should a coupling fail. Tom Piccirillo MMR scratchbuilt the O scale motor following Baldwin-Westinghouse plans for a Class D electric locomotive. The cab and buffers were constructed of urethane castings, using workbench-made patterns and rubber molds. The roof is brass sheet, as is the deck, with a frame fabricated using brass channel. Twin homemade power trucks make it a strong puller. A sundry of commercial detail parts, homemade decals, and light weathering from an airbrush finished the job. Tom Piccirillo photo



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Forney No. 8 crosses South Road in Strong as Buster the barber steps out on his porch in the background to catch a glimpse of the action. The scene takes place on Lou & Cheryl Sassi's On30 Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes RR. The engine is from Bachmann, painted and detailed for the SR&RL, and the barber shop is a Bar Mills kit built by Lou. Both trees, a winter maple on the left and a winter oak on the right, along with the rest of the foliage in the scene, are the work of company arborist Cheryl Sassi. Lou Sassi photo

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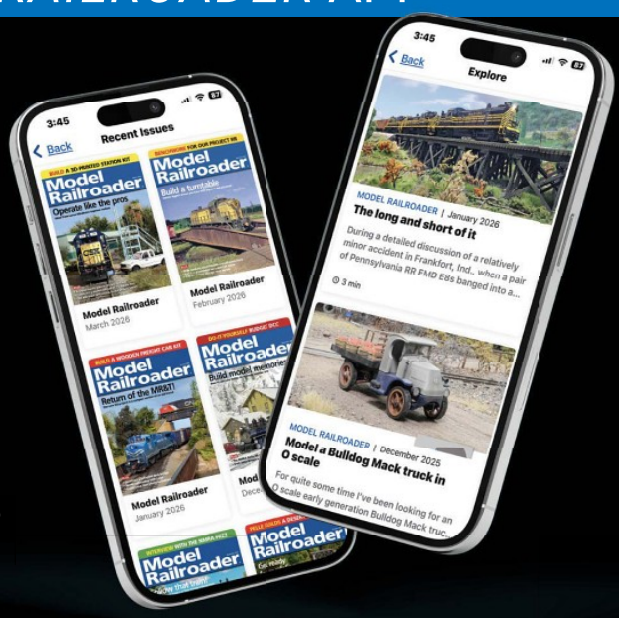
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Schedule of Events

AZ, GLENDALE: ARHS Model Train Swap Meet. Glendale Christian Church, 9661 North 59th Ave., Glendale, AZ 85302. Saturday, November 14, 2026, 9:00am-1:00pm. Everything Trains – Food – Fun. Admission $5.00. Tables $25.00 - to sign up, send check or money order to: ARHS, PO Box 5816, Glendale, AZ 85312-5816. Contact: Craig Faris, 623-340-3529

CA, SACRAMENTO: International Railfair. November 14-15, 2026. Cal Expo, Building C, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95815. Saturday 10am-5pm and Sunday 10am-4pm. Admission: At Gate- Saturday $15, Sunday $12; Online- Saturday $12, Sunday $10 (plus fees). 12 and under free. Operating Layouts, Vendors, Kids Activities, on-site food and more! For updates, visit: internationalrailfair.com or contact Tom Campbell: tom.c.irf@gmail.com

CO, LOVELAND: Rocky Mountain Train Show, November 28-29, 2026. The Ranch Events Complex, 5280 Arena Circle, Loveland, CO 80538. Saturday, 9am-5pm, Sunday 9am-3pm. 200+ sales tables, 50+ vendors, operating layouts, model trains of all scales. Admission $10.00, 12 and under free. Free parking. 303-364-0274 www.RockyMountainTrainShow.com Information@RockyMountainTrainShow.com

FL, BROOKSVILLE: Regal Railways presents Toy Trains & Hobby Show. Hernando Fairgrounds, 6436 Broad St., Brooksville, FL 34601. Saturday, November 21, 2026. 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: $6.00 adults, children under 12 free. Vendors and model train layout. Lunch available. Contact: Joe at 727-244-1341 or visit: www.regalrailways.com for more information.

FL, LARGO: Regal Railways presents Toy Trains & Hobby Show. St. Jerome Catholic Church, 10895 Hamlin Blvd., Largo, FL 33774. Saturday, November 7, 2026. 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: $6.00 adults, children under 12 free. Vendors and model train layout. Lunch available. Contact: Joe at 727-244-1341 or visit: www.regalrailways.com for more information.

FL, OCALA: Lions Bi-Annual Train Show. First Christian Church, 1908 E. Fort King St., Ocala, FL 34471. Saturday, November 7, 2026, 9:00am-2:00pm. Model trains, accessories, detail parts and toys. Admission $5.00, children 12 and under free w/paid adult. Bring two canned goods and receive $1.00 off admission. Food/snacks available. Information: Bob 352-694-6381 or cell 352-547-0938

FL, OCALA: "Trains for Christmas" Free train show November 14 & 15, 2026. Saturday 10am-4pm, Sunday 11am-4pm. Experience multiple layouts and participate in great raffles. We are a collection site for Toys for Tots. No vendors. Marion Oaks Community Center, 294 Marion Oaks Lane, Ocala, FL 34473. Information, contact Bill Quast at 352-209-5422 or email wmquast@gmail.com

IA, IOWA CITY: 6th Annual Iowa City Train Show. Sunday, October 18, 2026. 10am-3pm. 4261 Oakcrest Rd. SE, Iowa City, IA 52246. Buildings B & C. Admission: $5, children 12 and under free w/adult. All different scales! Displays and layouts to see! Sponsored by the Hawkeye Model Railroad Club! Iowacitytrainshow@gmail.com or visit: www.hawkeyemodelrrclub.com

IL, EAST MOLINE: Quad City Society of Model Engineers Open House and Swap Meet. Saturday, November 7, 2026. 9am-2pm. 740 16th Avenue, East Moline, IL 61244. (The Old East Moline Public Library.) Admission: $5 (cash only), children 12 and under are free. John's Trains & Hobbies will be there selling.

IL, ST. CHARLES: 35th Annual Chicago Railroadiana and Model Train Show. Kane County Fairgrounds, (Front Building), 525 South Randall Rd., St. Charles, IL 60174. Sunday, October 18, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: $6.00 (includes tax). Children under 12 FREE. Tables starting at $65.00. For information: 847-358-1185, RussFierce@aol.com or www.RRShows.com

IN, LA PORTE: La Porte County Train Show and Swap Meet. La Porte County Fairgrounds Community Building, 2581 In-2, La Porte, IN 46350. Sunday, November 22, 2026, 9:30am-2:00pm (Chicago time). Adults $5.00, youths 6-12 $1.00, 5 and under free. Contact: Dave Novak at trains86@myyahoo.com or 219-778-3195.

MA, MARLBOROUGH: Hub Division NER/NMRA. Royal Plaza Trade Center, 181 Boston Post Road West (Rte. 20 West), Marlborough, MA. Saturday December 5, 2026; 10am-4pm, and Sunday December 6, 2026; 10am-4pm. Admission: $15.00; Children under 12 and Scouts in Uniform FREE. Admission is good both days. Information: Ray, 781-910-9581; e-mail: TE.info@hubdiv.org; website: www.hubdiv.org

ME, BREWER: Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club 50th Anniversary Show. Jeff's Catering in Brewer, 15 Littlefield Way, Brewer, ME 04412. Saturday, November 21, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission $5.00 for adults, under 12 free. Dealers, silent auction, and operating layouts. Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club, PO Box 745, Blue Hill, ME 04614, 207-479-2920, dahak@roadrunner.com

MI, BELLEVILLE: Rails on Wheels & Division 6-NMRA's North Central Region, presents the Southeast Michigan Model Railroad Show and Sale. November 22, 2026, 10am-3pm. Early Bird 9am. New Location: Wayne County Community College's Ted Scott Campus; 9555 Haggerty Rd., Zip: 48111. Admission: $6, Early Bird $10. Operating Layouts, LEGO layout, Vendors, Clinics. Contact: John Young, 517-449-9063, cdjhyoung@yahoo.com

MI, EAST LANSING: Lansing Model Railroad Club Show and Sale. Farm Bureau Michigan State University Pavilion. Sunday, November 8, 2026, 10:00am-4:00pm. Admission $8.00, 12 and under free. Michigan's largest train show: layouts, demonstrations and 500+ tables. Free parking. Flyer, table forms and map http://www.lmrc.org or call John Hartmann 517-290-8948

MN, ST. CLOUD: GRANITE CITY TRAIN SHOW AND SALE. River's Edge Convention Center, 10 4th Ave S, St. Cloud, MN 56301. Saturday, November 14, 2026. 9:00am-3:00pm. $6.00, Kids 10 and under FREE. Buy/sell model/toy trains, books, videos, railroad collectibles. Operating model and toy train displays. Win a LIONEL train set! 612-558-6484; GraniteCityTrainShow@gmail.com or visit www.GraniteCityTrainShow.com

MO, JOPLIN: Joplin History & Mineral Museum Model Train Show and Swap Meet. Saturday, November 21, 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

NC, RALEIGH: Neuse River Valley Model RR Club 42nd ANNUAL FALL TRAIN SHOW; DATES: November 7-8, Sat 9-5; Sun 10-4. Graham Building at NC State Fairgrounds. 500+ vendor tables, 16 operating layouts. Display your models at our Craftsman's Showcase. Admission: $10 covers both days, children 12 and under free with adult. Visit www.nrvclub.net

NH, DOVER: The Great Northern New England Train Show. Dover Lodge of Elks #184, 282 Durham Road, Dover, NH 03820. Saturday, October 31, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: $5 per person, children under 12 free. Exhibitor tables $35, includes entrance fee. All scales, operating layout, railroadiana items, and food on premises. Contact Ed Martin, efmenter@aol.com or 603-362-4300

NJ, BRICK: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Brick Train Show. Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, November 1, 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, DAYTON: 50th Original Dayton Train Show. The New Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 645 Infirmary Road, Dayton, OH 45417. November 7 & 8, 2026. Saturday 11am-5pm and Sunday 11am-4pm. Admission: $10.00 per adult, children 12 and under free with paid adult. PO Box 341233, Beavercreek, OH 45434, 937-424-6413. Email: NMRA.Div.3@gmail.com or visit: www.DaytonTrainShow.com for updates.

OH, MASSILLON: CJ Trains 41st Winter Train and Toy Show. Massillon Knights of Columbus Hall, 988 Cherry Road NW, 44647. Sunday, December 13, 2026, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: $5.00, 12 and under FREE. $25/dealer table, 152 - 8' dealer tables. Jon Ulbright, PO Box 446, Wooster, OH 44691, 330-262-7488, cathijon@sssnet.com www.cjtrains.com

OK, OKLAHOMA CITY: The OKC Train Show, November 14-15, 2026. Saturday, 9:00am-5:00pm, and Sunday, 10:00am-4:00pm. Bennett Center at the State Fairgrounds in Oklahoma City. It's Oklahoma's largest train show and sale with over 120,000 square feet and more than 600 tables of vendors, manufacturers, layouts, clinics and more. Visit www.okctrainshow.com for more information!

PA, ALLENTOWN: ATMA First Frost Train Meet. Allentown Fairgrounds Agri-Plex, 1925 W. Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18104. November 14 & 15, 2026. Saturday 9am-4pm, Sunday 9am-3pm. Advance tickets $15, admitted at 8am. At the door, admitted 9am: $10 adults, 12 and under FREE with adult ticket purchase. For more info, visit: www.allentowntrainmeet.com or call 610-442-2859

TX, HOUSTON: Houston Area Model Train Show, November 14-15, 2026. Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 10am-4pm. Adults $8, 17 and under free. All scales, operating layouts, club/museum displays, table sales and more. Pearland Knights of Columbus Hall, 2320 Hatfield Rd., Pearland TX 77581. More information at http://houstonttrak.org or email info@houstonttrak.org. Sponsored by Houston Area T-TRAK Association, Inc.

VA, ROANOKE: Roanoke Railway Expo, November 7-8, 2026. Saturday, 10am-5pm and Sunday, 11am-4pm. Virginia Museum of Transportation, 303 Norfolk Ave SW, Roanoke, VA 24016. First Model Railway Show in over 30 years! Vendor Marketplace: books, models, railroad memorabilia and Norfolk & Western Historical Society Open House! For more information, call 540-342-5670.

WA, LONGVIEW: November 21, 2026. LK&R Model Railroad Club presents our 2026 Holiday Model Train and Toy Swap Meet. Cowlitz County Event Center, 1900 7th Ave. 10am-4pm. Admission $5.00. See https://www.cowlitzeventcenter.com/contact-event-professionals/ and scroll down for directions. Information for vendors and guests, visit: http://lkrtrains.yolasite.com or contact Howard Flick. 360-751-7276, email: flickh@yahoo.com

WA, SPOKANE: River City Modelers Fall Train Show. Spokane Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana. Sunday, October 11th, 9:30am-3:30pm. Admission: $8 for adults, 12 & under free. 200+ tables of Railroad-related items for sale, operating layouts, Free-MO, Operation Lifesaver & more. Free Parking. For table rental or general info, contact: Shirley Sample, 509-991-2317 or email: shirley@busnws.com

WI, EAU CLAIRE: West Wisconsin Railroad Club Annual Train Show. YMCA Sports Center, 3456 Craig Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701. October 10-11, 2026. Saturday 10:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: $8 adults ($7 w/non-perishable food item), $3 students ages 6-16, children 5 and under free w/paid adult. Operating Layouts, Vendors, Displays, and Concessions. For additional information email: TrainShow@WestWisconsinRailroad.Club

WI, ONALASKA: The 35th Annual Great Tri-State Rail Sale. Onalaska Omni Center, 255 Riders Club Road. Saturday, October 24, 2026. 9:00am-3:00pm. Admission $8.00, under 12 free with adult. 300 vendor tables. All Scales; Model, Toy & Antique Trains & Memorabilia. Information: 4000 Foundation, PO Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, 608-498-9522. www.4000foundation.org

All listed events were confirmed as active at the time of press. Please contact event sponsor for current status of the event.

Classifieds

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CLOSING DATES
January 2027 closes October 20
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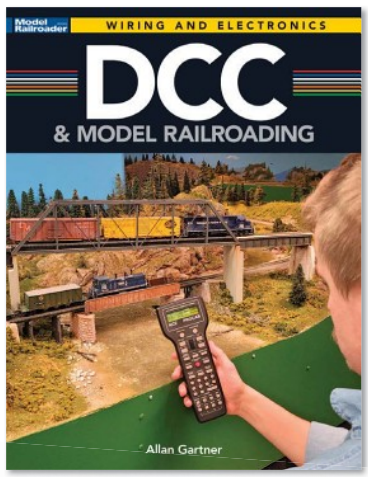
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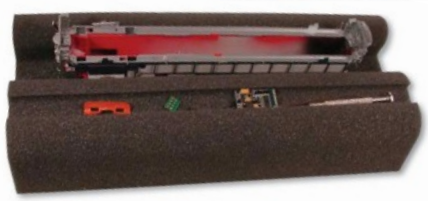
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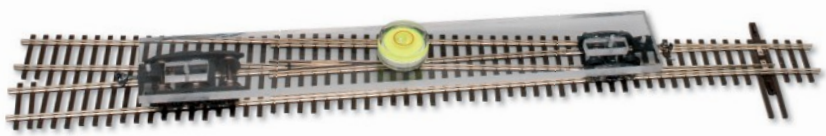












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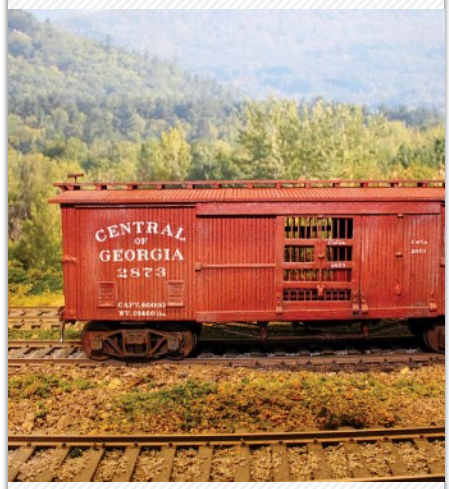
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Menards 58
Mianne Benchworks 60
Model Train Market 15
Modelers Marketplace 69
Model Rectifier 7
PECO Products 20
Penguin 3D Workshop 60
Pre-Size Model Specialties 60
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ScaleTrains 2, 67
Showcase Express 19
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Model Railroader MAGAZINE



Next Issue

Scratchbuild a ventilated boxcar

This model was built using drawings from the April 1962 issue of MR.

A different kind of scratchbuilding

There's more than one way to scratchbuild a steam locomotive. A great introduction to designing and building your own locomotive might be found in a box of LEGO.

Modeling Western railroads

Layout visits this month focus on the Santa Fe, but in the Midwest, and the Southern Pacific.

Plus more:

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- Model Railroad Planning: Don't forget to look at the why
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By Tony Koester

Modeling a not-so-bright future



CP Rail RS18u No. 1801 leads a southbound local with a pair of cars destined for St. Johnsbury, Vt., in this photo posed on Neil Schofield's HO railroad. A decade prior, multiple-unit consists with run-through Boston & Maine power and 100-car trains were common, but with the abandonment of the B&M interchange at Wells River, Vt., the CP Lyndonville Subdivision became a dead-end branch line handled by a three-times-per-week local. Neil Schofield photo

Neil Schofield's superb HO scale model railroad accurately depicts CP Rail's Newport and Lyndonville Subdivisions in Vermont in 1980 (see *Model Railroad Planning 2022*). He chose that year because it was a busy time on the railroad when multiple-unit consists with run-through Boston & Maine (B&M) power and 100-car trains were commonplace and power was first- and second-generation Montreal Locomotive Works (Alco) hood units.

But only a decade later, following the abandonment of the B&M interchange at Wells River, Vt., the CP Lyndonville Subdivision was essentially a dead-end branch line with a handful of customers handled by a three-times-per-week local. The accompanying photo was posed to show the CP Rail line as it would appear after being degraded to a much quieter branch line.

Neil has a 28 x 32-foot basement to work with. If he had less space, this would have been another way to model CP Rail as it wandered through the verdant Vermont countryside shown above.

There are myriad examples of once-busy main lines that are now low-traffic branch lines, regional railroads, or even short lines. Many now wear the unified paint scheme of a common owner such as R.J. Corman and Genesee & Wyoming. (See my books *Modeling Shortline Railroads* [Firecrown Media 2025] and *Guide to Modeling Branch Lines* [Firecrown Media, 2026]). Some have traffic levels that rebounded considerably since the days when they were owned by a Class I railroad. But others operate short, more model-size trains like the one in Neil's photo.

It requires a different mindset to enjoy building and operating a smaller, simpler model railroad. For some, it's their ideal, but for others, perhaps those who had to downsize and are now living in a condo, apartment, or home with a much smaller footprint sans basement, it may take some adjustment.

I found that my skills as a train crewman had atrophied over the years as I traveled to out-of-state operating sessions less frequently. My "job" on my home railroad is that of general superintendent. That was by design, as during an operating session, I want to step back and watch an autumn day in 1954 on my favorite railroad come back to life, something I hadn't seen since I was a young lad living in west-central Indiana.

But I missed actually doing the work of a professional railroader. So in my enclosed porch over the garage, I am building an O scale tribute to the Wabash's 11th District in northwestern Illinois as it appeared in the early 1950s. Until 1955, five lightweight Moguls did the honors due to a spindly and lengthy bridge across the Illinois River. Fortunately, Kemtron offered kits for these handsome little 2-6-0s, and I was able to obtain a pair of built-up ones.

Now, like Neil's what-if truncated train, I can run short consists between the pair of towns I have room for on my porch. I will do all the switching as opposed to waving a baton at the orchestra, as I metaphorically do on my HO scale NKP. In short, I'm labor, not management.

So if you, like CP Rail's Lyndonville Sub, face a not-as-bright future for whatever reason, perhaps it's time to review your mindset about how you approach our broad-shouldered hobby. Find a different approach that fits comfortably within your current boundaries and then exploit every aspect of it.

My tendency has always been to favor big-time mainline railroading. Seeing and hearing a Nickel Plate Road Berkshire at speed with a symbol freight in tow appealed to me much more than watching the local freight switch cars around Smallburg, U.S.A. But I couldn't help but notice how so many other modelers seemed to gravitate to jobs that offered lots of switching, notably yard and local-freight assignments. Maybe I should rethink my views on this and prepare for a future time when I might need to downsize.



THERE ARE MYRIAD EXAMPLES OF ONCE-BUSY MAIN LINES THAT ARE NOW LOW-TRAFFIC BRANCH LINES, REGIONAL RAILROADS, OR EVEN SHORT LINES. – TONY

Fortunately, by repurposing my porch, I can have my cake and eat it too. What are your plans to ensure a bright future? MR



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