SCENERY FOR OUR PROJECT LAYOUT

Model Railroader®

April 2026



Build a Conrail roster

Dave Abeles shares top models for his 1990s Onondaga Cutoff

PLUS

- **Add economical passenger car lighting**
- **Visit a bayside model railroad museum display**
- **See master builder Jack Burgess' El Portal station**

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HO SCALE



U30CG

- Accurate nose and roof contours
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- Roadnumber-specific stepwells
- Passenger and freight configurations
- Full traction motor casing details with rotating bearing caps (where appropriate)
- Etched-metal steps
- Rubber sanding lines
- Heavy die-cast frame with many extra details
- Weathered versions available (Yellow warbonnet with red and silver paint fading through!)



Red and Silver Warbonnet • Book End Scheme • Weathered Warbonnet (Yellow Cigar Band) • Warbonnet (Blue Cigar Band)

All locomotives have full lighting effects: three-color class lights, track, step and walkway lights and much more!



U34CH

Please note that NJ TRANSIT licensing is pending approval.

- Correct long hood without dynamic brakes
- Correct nose "marker light"
- Adirondack trucks
- Pilot-mounted HEP receptacles and brackets
- Undermount coupler cut bars
- Leslie SU3L horn
- Cab roof flag brackets
- Conrail Bicentennial features correct rebuilt headlight

Conrail Bicentennial • NJDOT • NJ TRANSIT

U33C features radiator "fairings" on select models — never before done on a plastic model!

- Multiple nose, long hood and cab variations (nose lights, Gyralites, high nose and more!)
- With or without dynamic brakes (where appropriate)
- Correct details for all U33C and U36C phase variations
- Correct battery box door arrangements
- Full traction motor casing details
- Road-specific fuel tanks
- Highly detailed interior with lit control stand
- Heavy die-cast frame with many separate details

Burlington Northern • Delaware & Hudson • Erie Lackawanna Illinois Central • Northern Pacific • Penn Central • Southern • Southern Pacific* • ATSF • Clinchfield • NdeM*



U33C AND U36C

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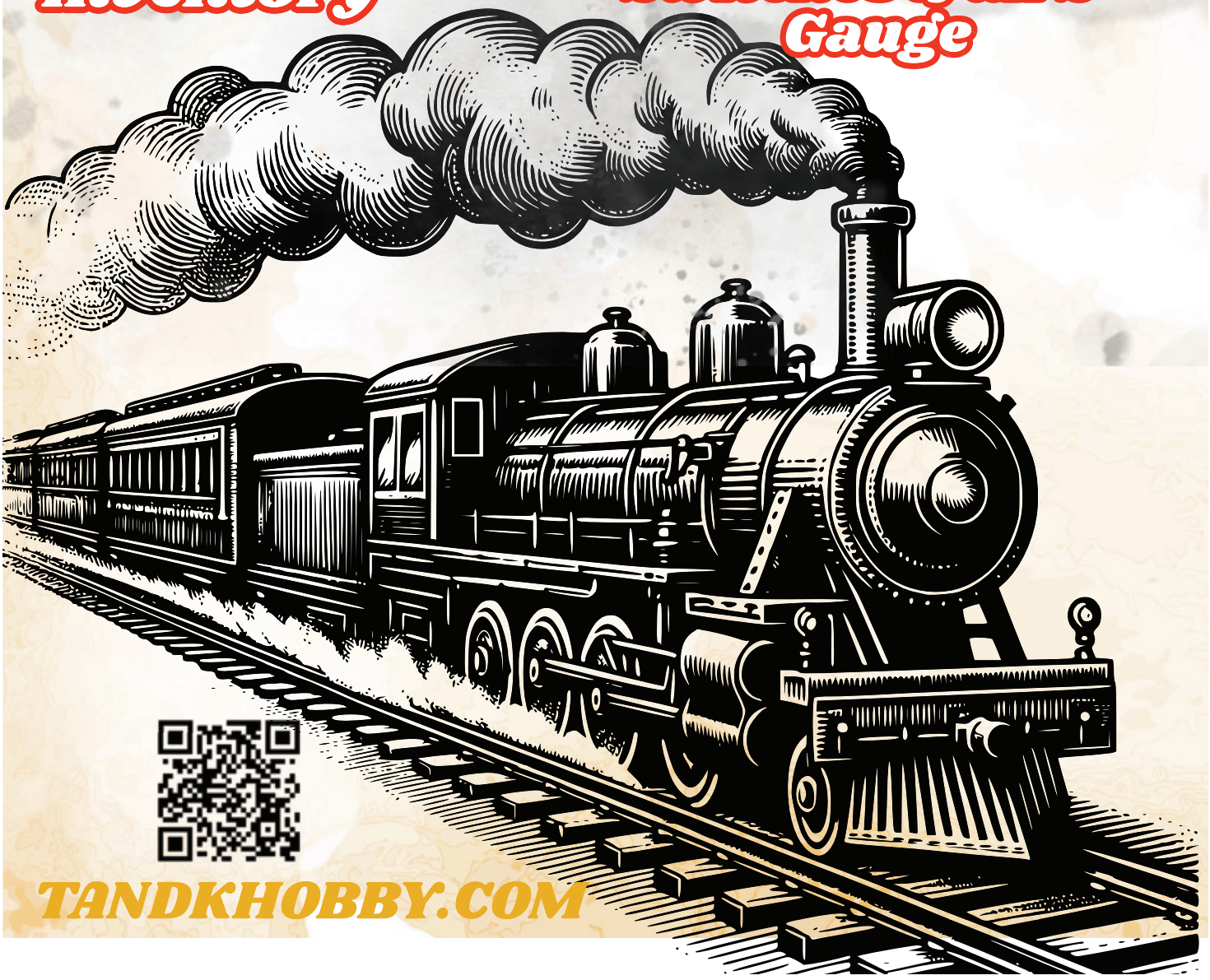
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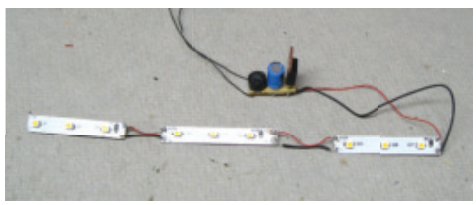




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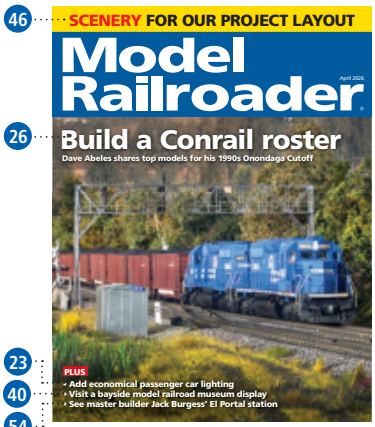
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On the cover: ScaleTrains Conrail SD40-2s lead a unit coal train on Dave Abeles' HO scale Onondaga Cutoff.
Dave Abeles photo

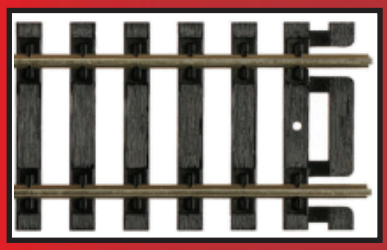


Next issue

In May, learn techniques for 3D printers and laser cutters, check out a layout on this summer's NMRA convention tour, detail a Baldwin diesel switcher, and more!

Model Railroader (ISSN 0026-7341, USPS 529-810) is published monthly by Firecrown Media Inc., 405 Cherry Street, Chattanooga, TN 37402. Periodicals postage paid at Chattanooga, TN and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Model Railroader*, PO Box 850, Lincolnshire, IL 60069.

MAKE ATLAS TRACK THE HEART OF YOUR LAYOUT



HO CODE 100 SNAP-TRACK®

Atlas is world renowned for its inaugural Code 100 track. This superior, finely engineered track has long been considered an industry standard and the first choice of modelers who demand the ultimate in quality and dependability. Its nickel silver rail, which provides exceptional electrical conductivity, plus simple installation and affordability makes it a good choice for all skill levels. Pro tip - Use the New Atlas HO Cork Roadbed for an even better running experience!

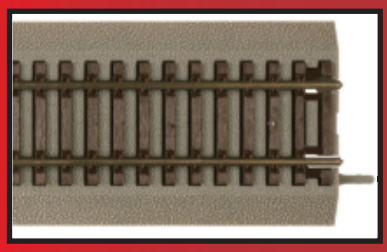
Available: straight pieces, Super-Flex® track, curves, crossings, turnouts, layout packages, assortments and bridges



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Atlas' Code 83 track is well renowned amongst discriminating modelers. Featuring prototypically-fine brown ties and solid nickel silver rail, it not only looks realistic but is incredibly reliable, making it the number one choice of discriminating modelers. Pro tip - Use the New Atlas HO Cork Roadbed for an even better running experience!

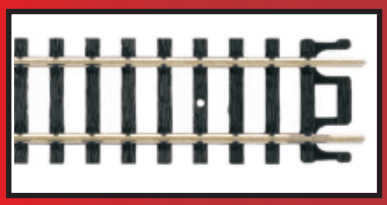
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HO TRUE-TRACK®

Atlas' HO True-Track® features Code 83 track and true-to-life gray graveled roadbed. Affordable and extremely easy to assemble, True-Track® is versatile, but not toy-like. This ready-to-run track system is unparalleled in appearance and performance making it the best choice for beginners. BUT Atlas knows that every beginner becomes more experienced, so just pop-out the Code 83 track from the roadbed and you can start your permanent layout without having to purchase a thing!

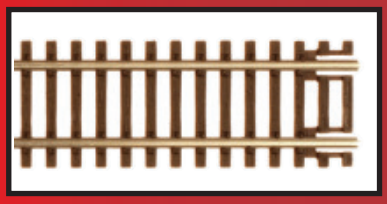
Available: straight pieces, curves, crossings, turnouts, layout packages, and assortments



N CODE 80 SNAP-TRACK®

Atlas' popular Code 80 track has been used on thousands of model railroads over the last 30 years. It's affordable, easy to use, and built to last with astounding performance. Pro tip - Use the New Atlas N Cork Roadbed for an even better running experience!

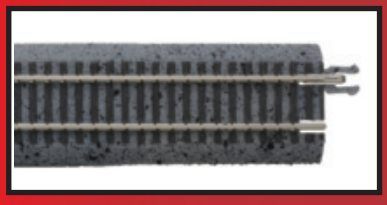
Available: straight pieces, Super-Flex® track, curves, crossings, turnouts, layout packages, assortments, and bridges



N CODE 55 SNAP-TRACK®

Using sophisticated technology, Atlas has engineered the ultimate in precision track with its Code 55 line. With it's superior designed simulated wood ties and nickel silver rail, it's the number one choice of discriminating modelers who want realism and performance. Pro tip - Use the New Atlas N Cork Roadbed for an even better running experience!

Available: straight pieces, Super-Flex® track, curves, crossings, turnouts, layout packages, assortments, and bridges



N TRUE-TRACK®

Atlas' N scale True-Track® features Code 65 rail, which is smaller than similar ready-to-run track on the market, with protoypical dark brown ties and simulated grey ballast roadbed with mottled color highlights. A perfect choice for beginners who want advanced realism and performance.

Available: straight pieces, curves, crossings, turnouts, and layout packages

Whether you are a seasoned modeler or just beginning your model railroad empire, rest assured that Atlas has the perfect track for you!

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Visit the HO scale Chicago, Peoria & Western

John Brennan's Chicago, Peoria & Western models the area between Chicago and Galesburg, Ill. When Lou Sassi went to Florida to see the layout, John had recently passed away, but his friends spared no effort getting things ready for Lou and his wife, Cheryl, to photograph and video the CP&W.

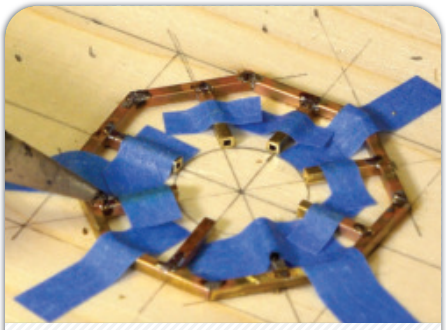
John started building the layout in the Chicago suburbs, then moved to Florida for retirement, where he constructed a purpose-built home for the model railroad with everything any hobbyist could want in a layout space. Once John was in Florida, he assembled a crew of local modelers to help him reconstruct the model railroad. Check out Lou's video on Trains.com of what John and his friends accomplished in this special layout visit.



Checking in on Athearn Trains

Lucas Iverson and Cody Grivno recently sat down with Athearn's Jim Wiggin to learn more about the hobby manufacturer. Jim shared details about Athearn's history and the development of products, such as the first plastic rolling stock and locomotive kits, including the iconic "blue box" line.

But this wasn't just a rehash of the past. Jim also talked about the move to more detailed models, what modelers can expect from Athearn in the future, as well as how social media has helped customers let the company know what models they'd like. Check out the interview on Trains.com!



Easy soldering jigs

Model Railroader Editor Eric White shares a tip and a few techniques to make soldering parts easier.

We're still working on the Ardagh Glass plant on our East Troy Industrial Park project layout, and Eric shares how he started building equipment platforms to go onto the brass kiln stacks he'd already made. Check out this simple method for soldering multiple parts.



Add a river and bridge to the Bona Vista RR

Gerry Leone is on the fifth version of his Bona Vista HO scale model railroad. Like previous examples, it's built on two decks, and that poses a few challenges for scenery on the upper deck.

Because there's a lower deck, upper deck scenery can't dig too deep. But Gerry didn't want a flat surface either, so multiple waterways add visual interest to his scenery. Follow along on Trains.com Video as Gerry updates the scene!



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By Eric White

We're here to help you build a layout

Do you have a layout? *Model Railroader* is a magazine about building model railroads. I've built or worked on several model railroads — see the project layouts starting with the Red Oak N scale layout in 2015 — but my "big" layout is still a Someday Central as Consulting Editor Tony Koester would say.

I do have a small shelf layout in my living room that I designed when I first moved to Wisconsin with my family. It was an apartment layout designed to be a part of everyday life.

But the basement model railroad space is waiting for a few more environmental enhancements before I deem the area ready for a layout. Most of the walls had been finished with drywall by the previous owners of the house. I took out a big storage room and an odd closet, then I opened up the space under the stairs and rearranged the entry to the HVAC room. There's one last small section of wall that needs finishing before I can tackle the ceiling.

In the meantime I've been collecting rolling stock and locomotives (I'm excited about Rapido's E44s), and I have one structure ready for the layout. I have a basic track plan that I think will make the most efficient use of the space, but it just shows the main line routes. I'm more of a design/build kind of guy than one who plans everything to the finest detail.

My son keeps asking when I'll start on the layout, but the best I can offer at the moment is "soon."

In addition to MR project layouts, I'm also helping a local modeler rebuild his basement-filling Chicago & North Western layout. I keep teasing him that I'm trying stuff on his model railroad so I'll know the right way to do it when I build my own. He's assembled a great crew of guys to help with the project,



A space 16" wide by 8 feet long is plenty to build a model railroad. Neatness helps in the living room. Eric White photo



and it gives me a chance to fill in gaps of my knowledge, as well as practical experience in building a large layout.

Whether you have a basement or just a shelf in your living room, you can probably find a place to build something, be it a small switching layout, a module, a diorama, or something larger. Keep reading to find out how to create a layout of your own.

Model Railroader

Model railroading is fun!

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We welcome contributions from readers, including articles, photographs, and drawings. For more information on submitting material, email Editor Eric White at eric.white@firecrown.com. Model Railroader assumes no responsibility for the safe return of unsolicited material. We assume unsolicited material is intended for publication by Firecrown Media unless otherwise noted. We assume letters, questions, news releases, and club news items are contributed gratis.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATE: single copy: $8.99 (U.S.). Print + digital subscription rate: U.S. 1 year $54.95. Digital subscription rate: U.S. 1 year $44.95. Canadian and International subscriptions available for the digital edition only: 1 year for $44.95, payable in U.S. funds, drawn on a U.S. bank.

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ARRIVING FALL 2026

Legends inspire us. Tales of giants - machines built to conquer distance, time, and terrain - ignite our imagination and challenge us to push beyond the ordinary. That spirit is what drove Union Pacific's pursuit of "big power," and it's what inspired our **Museum Quality™ HO Scale GE U50C**.

Born from a bold 1962 motive power study, the U50C represented Union Pacific's vision of the future: fewer locomotives, more horsepower, and unprecedented efficiency. General Electric answered with a double-diesel titan – two prime movers on a single frame, riding on span-bolster trucks reclaimed from the mighty Big Blow turbines. Delivered between 1969 and 1971, the 5,000–horsepower U50Cs were unlike anything that had come before, roaming system-wide in their early years and standing as rolling symbols of UP's "bigger is better" philosophy.

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HO scale



Electro-Motive Division SD35 diesel locomotive. New paint schemes on this six-axle road unit from Atlas include Cargill, CSX, Great Lakes Central, and Montana Rail Link. New road numbers are offered on models lettered for Baltimore & Ohio, Norfolk & Western (high short hood), Southern Pacific, and Southern Ry. (high short hood). The HO scale EMD SD35 features a detailed cab interior with crew figures, golden-white light-emitting-diode lighting, and body-mounted Accumate couplers. Direct-current models with a factory-installed speaker sell for $189.95. Models with an ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder retail for $294.95. Atlas Model Railroad Co., 908-687-0880, shop.atlasrr.com

HO scale locomotives



- **Electro-Motive Division E7A and E7B diesel locomotives.** New York Central; Baltimore & Ohio; Boston & Maine; Chicago & North Western; Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; Maine Central; Pennsylvania RR; Seaboard Air Line; Southern Ry.; Southern Pacific; Spokane, Portland & Seattle; and Union Pacific. Road-specific plastic and etched-metal detail parts and die-cast metal chassis. Direct-current models — single unit, $249.95; two-unit set, $469.95. With Digital Command Control and sound — single unit, $369.95; two-unit set, $689.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com



- **General Electric P42 diesel locomotive.** Amtrak (Phase 5 [early], phase 3, phase 4, phase 6 [50th anniversary scheme in one road number], and phase 7) and VIA Rail Canada. Four numbers per scheme (two each in direct current and DCC) unless noted. WalthersProto drive and light-emitting-diode lighting. Direct-current models, $179.98; with ESU Sound & DCC, $239.98. Walthers Mainline. Wm. K. Walthers Inc., 414-527-0770, walthers.com

HO scale freight cars



- **Pullman-Standard 4750 three-bay covered hopper.** Pullman Transport Leasing Co. (Farmers Co-op Elevator Association, Roland and Nevada, Iowa,; The Andersons; and Kellogg Grain Co., Denver, Colo.); Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (GA-180, as-delivered scheme); Interstate Commodities (ex-Kellogg Grain Co.); Midwest Railcar Leasing (ex-Farmers Co-op Elevator Association); Soo Line (ex-Farmers Co-op Elevator Association and ex-Kellogg Grain Co.); and Union Pacific (class CH-100-28, delivery gray and with conspicuity stripes). Road-specific details and wire grab irons and uncoupling levers. $67.95. Tangent Scale Models, 828-412-3886, tangentscalemodels.com

HO scale passenger equipment



- **Budd, HEP1, and HEP2 lightweight coaches.** Model from previous run shown. Budd — Canadian Pacific (1955 to late 1960s), CP Rail (1968 to early 1980s), and VIA Rail (1978 to mid 1990s). HEP1 — VIA Rail (1998 to present and 2020 to present). HEP2 — VIA Rail (1996 to present, coach and club; 2020 to present, business and economy; and ex-Southern Pacific coach, 1996 to 2010s and 2020 to present). Two to five road numbers per paint scheme; also available painted stainless steel but unlettered. Track-powered interior lighting compatible with DC and DCC, factory-installed metal grab irons and end gates, and metal couplers. $124.95. Superior Stainless line. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com

Club offerings



Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club 50th anniversary boxcar. Atlas HO scale 50-foot boxcar decorated for the Katahdin Valley RR. Metal wheels, underbody details, and Accumate couplers. Anniversary cars available in two road numbers (1976 and 2026); non-anniversary cars offered in four numbers. $37 plus $13 shipping. Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club, P.O. Box 745, Blue Hill, ME 04614; easternmainemodelrailroadclub.org

N scale locomotives



• **Budd RDC-2 and RDC-3.** RDC-2: Canadian Pacific; Alaska RR; Baltimore & Ohio; Boston & Maine; BC Rail; Canadian National; CN Rail; CP Rail; Long Island Rail Road; New York Central; New York, New Haven & Hartford; Northern Pacific; VIA Rail; and Western Pacific. RDC-3: Alaska RR, B&M, British Columbia Ry., BC Rail, CN, CN Rail, CP, CP Rail, Great Northern, Missouri-Kansas-Texas, NYC, NYNH&H, NP, Rock Island, and VIA Rail. Also available painted stainless steel but unlettered. Phase I and II body styles. Single-motor, all-wheel drive; all-wheel electrical pickup; directional headlights and red marker lights; fabricated or cast trucks as appropriate; flicker-free interior lighting; tinted window glazing; and MoPower capacitor. Suggested minimum radius, 12.5". Direct-current models, $159.95; with DCC and sound, $269.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com

O scale details and accessories



• **Moving truck conversion kit.** Designed by Thomas Yorke. Unpainted resin kit includes front, side, rear, and floor panels; doghouse (over cab) front and floor panels; roof; mudflaps; and instructions. Donor truck not included (various mid-1950s trucks available for purchase separately, $22.95 each). Approximate dimensions of moving truck conversion kit are 5¾" x 2" x 2⅜". Black-and-white instructions included with kit; color instructions available on manufacturer's website. $46.95. Frenchman River Model Works, 701-256-2129, frenchmanriver.com

N scale



FMC 50-foot offset double-door boxcar. This Athearn model is decorated for East St. Louis Junction Railroad Co.; Texas, Oklahoma & Eastern; Camino, Placerville & Lake Tahoe; Galveston Wharves; Lamoille Valley (Primed for Grime — Galveston Wharves, Union Railroad of Oregon, and Yreka Western patchouts); and Union Railroad of Oregon in one to three road numbers per paint scheme. The N scale model has an injection-molded plastic body, die-cast metal underbody, and body-mounted McHenry couplers. Standard FMC 50-foot offset double-door boxcars are priced at $29.99. Primed for Grime models sell for $34.99. Athearn Trains, 800-338-4639, athearn.com

S scale freight cars



• **GSC 53'-6" flatcar with 35-foot trailer.** Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe flatcar and trailer; Baltimore & Ohio flatcar with RISS trailer; CP Rail flatcar and trailer; Great Northern flatcar with Associated Transport trailer; Milwaukee Road flatcar and trailer; and Trailer Train flatcar with Preston trailer. Three numbers per scheme. Flatcar has detailed plastic deck, positionable bridge plates, and trailer on flatcar hitch. $69.99. S-Helper Service line. ScaleTrains, 844-987-2467, scaletrains.com

Z scale locomotives



• **Electro-Motive Division F7A diesel locomotive.** Spokane, Portland & Seattle. Two road numbers. Prototype-specific details, 7mm motor with dual flywheels, and AutoLatch couplers. Contact manufacturer for pricing information. American Z Line, 614-764-1703, americanzline.com

In Memoriam

John Olson, 1947-2025

John Olson, a popular *Model Railroader* magazine author and photographer from the 1970s through the 1990s, died on Dec. 28, 2025. He was 78 years old.

His first MR article, "A day at Mule Shoes Meadows," appeared in the May 1976 issue. John is perhaps best known for his nine-part project railroad series on the HO scale Jerome & Southwestern, published between February 1982 and February 1983. The magazine series was later turned into the Kalmbach Publishing Co. book *Building an HO Model Railroad with Personality.*

John's HO and HOn3 Mescal Lines and HOn3 Cielo Lumber Co. were featured many times in MR. John also did design consultation with manufacturers, including Campbell, Chooch, and Plastruct.

Professionally, John was a designer for WED Enterprises, the Disney organization responsible for designing and developing theme park projects. He designed and supervised projects at Disneyland, Disney World, and many Disney parks overseas.

ScaleTrains HO EMD SD7



An Electro-Motive Division SD7 is one of the latest additions to the ScaleTrains Rivet Counter line. The HO scale model, based on a prototype from the early 1950s, features injection-molded plastic and die-cast metal construction; factory-applied, prototype-specific details; and metal semi-scale Type E couplers painted a rusty color.

Electro-Motive Division produced the SD7 from February 1952 until November 1953. During that time, 188 units were produced, all for railroads in the United States. The six-axle diesel, rated at 1,500 hp, was equipped with a 16-cylinder, 567B diesel engine.

The sample we received is decorated as Great Northern 572, part of the railroad's 550 through 572 series. The SD7 was built by EMD in April 1953 under order number 5182 and delivered in the *Empire Builder* scheme. It later wore GN's simplified Omaha Orange and Pullman Green and Big Sky Blue paint schemes. The schemes were introduced in 1962 and 1967, respectively.

Following the March 1970 merger that created Burlington Northern, the locomotive became BN 6022. The SD7 was retired by the railroad in July 1983.

As part of the Rivet Counter line, it shouldn't be a surprise that the SD7 is a detail-rich model. The pilots feature see-through, etched-metal footboards; formed wire footboard handrails; and plastic m.u. and train line hoses.

The handrails and stanchions are plastic, with the vertical railings painted white. Plastic ladders and factory-installed and painted wire grab irons can be found on the end of the short and long hoods.

A cast brass Leslie S-3-L air horn is attached to the top of the cab. I couldn't find a prototype image of the 572 in its as-delivered scheme. Photos of the unit in the simplified and Big Sky Blue schemes show a pair of single-chime air horns on the winterization hatch.

Long hood details include tapered exhaust stacks, a bracket-mounted bell between the stacks, a winterization hatch with a see-through screen, photo-etched metal lift rings, and piping near the radiator fans. An exhaust stack for the standby heater is located over the radiator intake screens.

Our review model is decorated in the *Empire Builder* scheme. The paint is smooth and evenly applied, and graphic placement follows prototype images. The stripes separating the orange and green and the road name have more of a Dulux Gold appearance, but should be yellow. The EMD builder's plates and equipment trust plates (the latter with legible lettering!) are correctly placed. The Scale Trains model matches drawings published in an EMD SD7 operating manual from March 1952.

I took the model over to our test track, which features an NCE Power Cab. At step 1, the six-axle unit ran at less than 1 scale mph. The model achieved a top speed of 65 smph at step 28. The maximum speed on the prototype ranged from 65 to 89 mph depending on the gear ratio.

For real-world testing, I used the SD7 to switch cars on our Winston-Salem Southbound layout. The GN unit had no problem navigating the mix of handlaid and commercial track and turnouts (the latter as sharp as a No. 4). It made it over the 30-degree crossing trouble free.

In addition to the SD7, ScaleTrains also offers an EMD SD9 decorated for Conrail and Norfolk Southern. Whether powering a freight, switching a yard, or working cars at an industry, the six-axle diesel would be a good fit for any HO layout set between the 1950s and today.
— *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Trains.com members can see the ScaleTrains HO EMD SD7 in action with this QR code.

Facts & features

Price: Direct-current model with 21-pin connector, $214.99; with ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder, $324.99

Manufacturer
ScaleTrains
4901 Old Tasso Road NE
Cleveland, TN 37312
scaletrains.com

Era: April 1953 to early 1960s (as decorated)

Road names: Great Northern; Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; Southern Pacific; and Union Pacific. Six road numbers per scheme.

Features
- Body-mounted die-cast metal semi-scale Type E couplers, at correct height
- Metal wheel stubs on plastic drive axle gears, in gauge
- Minimum radius, 18"; recommended radius, 22"
- Weight: 1 pound, 1.7 ounces

Atlas N scale EMD GP38-2



An Electro-Motive Division GP38-2 has been added to the Master Line from Atlas Model Railroad Co. The N scale model, based on a Phase II prototype, uses former Walthers (and before that Life-Like) tooling that Atlas acquired back in 2018.

Electro-Motive Division produced the GP38-2 from January 1972 until July 1986. More than 2,200 units were built during the production run. The 2,000-hp road switcher was fitted with a 16 cylinder, 645E3 diesel engine; an AR10 alternator; and D77B traction motors.

Our review sample is decorated as Rock Island No. 4310, from the railroad's 4300 through 4314 series delivered in August and September 1976. The railroad had two other groups of GP38-2 locomotives, 4315 through 4355 (delivered between September and November 1976) and 4368 through 4379 (delivered in November 1978).

When the Rock Island shut down on March 31, 1980, units 4300 through 4325 were sent back to Equilease. The engines later became part of the Missouri Pacific fleet, numbered 2238 through 2263.

The Atlas GP38-2 features a multipiece plastic body consisting of the cab, long and short hood, and sill unit. There are four holes by the lead radiator fan for a winterization hatch (not included with the Rock Island model). The water-level sight glass window is printed on the engineer's side of the long hood

The Geep has a mix of molded and separate, factory-applied details. The class lights, eyebolts, grab irons, m.u. hoses, and uncoupling levers are among the molded parts. Freestanding details include the air horn, bell, electrical cabinet air filter box, radiator fans, and snow plow. The handrails are molded in flexible engineering plastic.

The GP38-2 has a split, die-cast metal frame that encloses the motor and flywheels. Wires run between the wheel wipers and metal tabs attached to the frame with screws. The ESU LokSound V5 decoder is mounted on top of the frame. The speaker, also in DC models, is located in the fuel tank.

The sample we received is neatly painted in Rock Island's blue-and-white scheme, dubbed by railfans as "Bankruptcy Blue." The placement of the graphics follows prototype photos.

There some detail discrepancies between the model and prototype. The Atlas model has an angled paper air filter box; the prototype's was square. The front anticlimber on the model follows the lines of a style used on early 1980s production GP38-2s. The prototype unit had a Nathan P5 air horn, not a three-chime horn.

The model's dimensions match prototype drawings published in the *Model Railroader Cyclopedia: Vol. 2, Diesel Locomotives* (Kalmbach Publishing Co., out of print). I tested the hood unit at the workbench with an NCE Power Cab. At step 1, the model moved at 1 scale mph. The locomotive achieved a top speed of 78 scale mph. The full-size road switchers had a maximum speed between 71 and 83 mph depending on the gear ratio.

To see how the Atlas model performed in an operating layout environment, I took the unit over to our Milwaukee, Racine & Troy State Line Route. The GP38-2 pulled nine hoppers to the quarry and effortlessly led a 13-car freight train on the main. The locomotive had no issues navigating the model railroad's generous 18" radius curves and No. 6 turnouts.

The Atlas N scale Phase II GP38-2 joins the Phase I model that was added to the manufacturer's Master Line back in 2006. This one-two punch of four-axle road switchers is a great asset for those modeling the early 1970s to the present day in 1:160 proportion. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: Direct-current model with factory-installed speaker, $134.95; with ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder, $234.95. Subtract $10 for undecorated models.

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

Era: January 1972 to present (varies based on paint scheme)

Road names: Rock Island; Alaska RR; Canadian Pacific; Chicago, South Shore & South Bend; Conrail; GATX Locomotive Group; Norfolk Southern; and Southern Pacific. Two to three road numbers per paint scheme; also available undecorated.

Features
- Body-mounted Accumate couplers at correct height
- Metal wheel stubs on plastic drive axle gears, properly gauged
- Weight: 2.4 ounces

Rapido Trains HO Greenbrier coil gondola



Looking to add a model of one of the newest freight cars on the rails to your HO layout? Then you'll want to check out the Greenbrier 5-trough transverse coil gondola from Rapido Trains. The model, based on a prototype introduced in 2021, features plastic and die-cast metal construction, 36" metal wheelsets, and metal semi-scale couplers.

The Greenbrier Companies offers its transverse coil gondola in 5- and 10-trough versions. A video on the freight car builder's YouTube channel notes the various benefits of the car's design. The lined bunks prevent the coils from shifting, eliminating the need for dunnage to block or secure the load. The one-piece hood features a sloped roof, allowing it to shed rain and snow.

The gondola can carry coils in various sizes. The outer troughs can hold coils between 40" and 90" in diameter. The middle trough is designed for 40"- to 84"-diameter coils. The remaining troughs hold 40"- to 72"-diameter coils.

The sample we received is decorated as Providence & Worcester 407123, part of the 407000 through 407199 series built by Greenbrier in July and August 2022. The cars, which have WRWK reporting marks, are in service today and can be found throughout the North American rail network.

The Rapido model has a die-cast metal underframe, which accounts for much of the car's 4.7 ounces of weight. The bunk liners are painted dark gray. There are ejector-pin marks on the flat surfaces of each trough.

The sides and ends of the coil gondola are plastic. Molded details on the sides include billing card holders and Automatic Equipment Identification tags, the latter painted silver.

The car ends have platforms that are neatly appointed with see-through, etched-metal walkways; formed wire grab irons and handrails; and plastic uncoupling levers. The B end of the car features a freestanding brake wheel and hand brake with chain and handbrake rod fulcrum detail.

Underneath, the model has screw-mounted 100-ton trucks with raised foundry data, separate brake beam detail, and the car's reporting mark and road number printed on the sideframes. A plastic plate with two pins fits into holes on the bolster. I used a flat-blade screwdriver to remove the plates to reach the mounting screws.

The center sill, body bolsters, and draft-gear boxes are cast as a single plastic piece. The brake system is well executed, with a freestanding air reservoir, brake cylinder, and control valve, along with the associated levers, pipes, and rods. The parts are a mix of plastic and formed wire. Screw-mounted draft-gear box covers hold the metal semi-scale couplers in place. The couplers use centering springs similar to the Kadee No. 5.

The coil hood is plastic with weld seam and rivet detail. The hood stacking brackets and lifting bail are factory-applied parts.

Our review sample is painted blue with opaque white and yellow lettering. Graphic placement follows prototype images that I found online. A yellow stencil located on the sill above the angle cock on both ends was omitted.

The April 2023 *Official Railway Equipment Register* and sales literature on The Greenbrier Companies website contained dimensional information for the modern-era freight car. The model closely follows published data.

I put the coil gondola in a train and did some switching on our Winston-Salem Southbound layout. The car performed without issue, easily navigating a No. 4 turnout and 30-degree crossing.

The boxy profile of the Greenbrier 5-trough transverse coil gondolas makes them stand out next to other coil cars. I know we'll be adding a few of them to our Milwaukee, Racine & Troy East Troy Industrial Park layout. Will you be getting some coils gons for your layout? — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: Single car, $59.95; six-pack, $359.70

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

Era: 2021 to present

Road names: Providence & Worcester (WRWK reporting marks); Arkansas-Oklahoma RR; Chicago Heights Terminal Transfer; Chicago, South Shore & South Bend; Norfolk Southern; Railroad of Lies (single cars only); and Union Pacific.

Features
- 36" metal wheelsets, correctly gauged
- Recommended minimum radius, 18"
- Semi-scale metal couplers, at correct height
- Weight with hood, 4.7 ounces (.9 ounce too heavy per National Model Railroad Recommended Practice 20.1)

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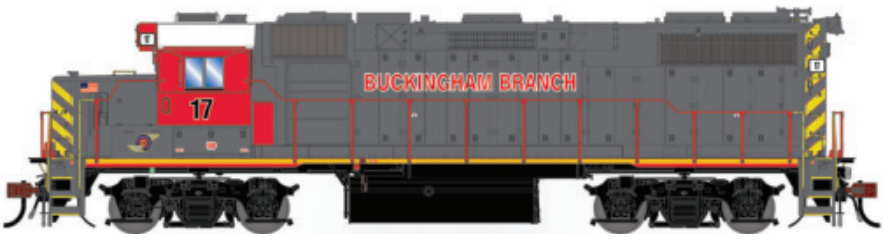
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By Cody Grivno



Athearn is adding Buckingham Branch Electro-Motive Division GP38-2 diesels 17 and 15 to its Genesis series. The models, due out in October 2026, will feature prototype-specific details. Illustration courtesy Athearn Art Team

Modeling the Buckingham Branch in HO

Q Where can I find HO scale Buckingham Branch locomotives (preferably GP38-2s) and rolling stock? If there are none available, what decals and paint should I use to custom decorate a GP38-2?

Caleb Miller

A The Buckingham Branch (BB) is shortline railroad headquartered in Dillwyn, Va., that operates 280 miles of track. The family-owned operation interchanges traffic with CSX, Norfolk Southern, and the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley RR at various locations throughout Virginia.

The railroad is divided into four divisions: Buckingham (Dillwyn to Bremo, Va.), Richmond & Alleghany (Richmond to Clifton Forge, Va.; leased from CSX), Virginia Southern (Burkeville to Clarksville, Va.; leased from Norfolk Southern), and Norfolk (Norfolk to Virginia Beach, Va; leased from NS and Canonie Atlantic). For more information on the Buckingham Branch, including the railroad's history and a system map, go online and visit buckinghambranch.com.

As someone who is interested in shortline railroads (Minnesota Northern RR, Northern Plains RR, and Dakota Southern Ry.), I know modeling them can be tricky as few, if any, products are available. However, it looks like you're in luck with the Buckingham Branch. Commercial models for the BB have been (or will be) produced in HO scale. In March 2025, Athearn announced that it's offering a pair of Electro-Motive Division GP38-2 diesel locomotives decorated for the BB. The four-axle road switchers, numbered 15 and 17, are part of the Genesis series. You'll have to wait a few more months for those, Caleb. They're due out in October 2026.

In 2010, Athearn released its Ready-to-Roll Pullman-Standard PS-2 2,600-cubic-foot capacity two-bay covered hopper decorated for the Buckingham Branch in three road numbers (item Nos. 97303, 97304, and 97305). The models are sold out at the manufacturer but might be available at model railroad swap meets and online auction websites.

In addition to Athearn, InterMountain Railway Co. produced a GP16 lettered for the short line in four numbers (2, 3, 8, and 9). A note on the manufacturer's website suggests contacting dealers to check on availability.

If you want to decorate your own models, NetzlofDesign and Model Works and Highball Graphics offer decal sets. NetzlofDesign set ND-1362, available from cmrproducts.com, covers second-generation Geeps in the 2010 and newer paint scheme.

Highball Graphics (highballgraphics.com) has three sets for the Buckingham Branch RR. Set L-277 covers the railroad's EMD GP38-2, GP40, and GP40-3 diesel locomotives in the early and late paint schemes. Set L-278 covers early Geeps in both schemes. Set F-332 is for BB cabooses.

I couldn't find specific paint information for BB GP38-2 diesels. Highball Graphics set L-277 recommends medium gray (carbody), red (cab and sills), and black (fuel tank, pilot faces, and trucks).



For many years Polly Scale Caboose Red was a popular choice for the red on Nickel Plate Road 1000-series caboose models. Today, Tamiya TS-8 Italian Red is a good option. Cody Grivno photo

Q I want to know if anyone has a good red that matches closely with the one used on Nickel Plate Road 1000-series wood cabooses. I'm buying a 3D-printed kit and don't think the colors I have found match that well. I'm curious if anyone could help me out?

Jack_Kemp_IV, via MR Forums

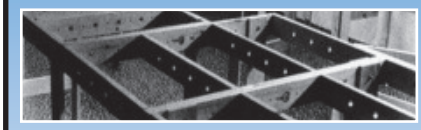
A Well, it just so happens that our Consulting Editor, Tony Koester, is also the co-founder of the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society. He put me in touch with Ray Breyer, who wrote, "Nickel Plate Road caboose red is a little subjective due to lighting, film, fading, age, and grime. For new paint I prefer what the Fort Wayne Railroad Historical Society in New Haven, Ind., used when it restored caboose No. 141, which is a deep bright red.

"I've got one of the 3D-printed NKP cabooses on my bench right now and need to think about the paint. The last time I painted NKP cabooses I used my stash of Polly Scale Caboose Red. [The Testor Corp. discontinued Polly Scale and Floquil model railroad paints in 2013. — *Ed.*] These days, I'd use Tamiya TS-8 Italian Red spray paint.

"I also have to consider the 'white' stripe, which was actually painted a light gray. Tamiya Surface Primer L Gray (87042) is too dark. I'll probably fall back on a 50/50 mix of Polly Scale Milwaukee Road Light Gray (414158) and Reefer White (414113), which doesn't do anyone any good these days. I'd look at Vallejo light grays that seem to have a little light blue in them, and a lot of white."

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Tony added that he sprays NKP caboose models with the gray color, masks off the stripe, sprays the red, then brush-paints the roofs black. He noted that the end platforms and steps are freight car brown.

Q While thinking through the operating scheme for my World War II-era (1944) model railroad, I wondered where troop trains sat in timetable priority. Obviously they were extras, but were they bumped up in priority to first class due to the war effort?

Callum Day



Jerry Dziedzic explains where troop trains fit into operating schedules during World War II. Models from Walthers (HO scale, above), Micro-Trains (N), and Atlas (O) can be used to re-create the trains. Bill Zuback photo

A I reached out to our former On Operation columnist Jerry Dziedzic for help with this question. He replied:

The most interesting questions are ones whose answers are surprising. My immediate reaction was to agree with Callum: they were extras. But a few minutes of research dispelled this notion.

Adam Burns gives interesting statistics in his American-Rails.com article "A History of Troop Trains during World War II." Its data details "regular" and "special" trains and indicates that as many regulars moved as specials. Early in 1942, there were more specials. By August, regulars took the lead. This continued for two years until August 1944 when specials became more numerous.

A trusted source says the railroads' operating departments decided how to run them, either using timetable schedules or creating extras. Then, yes: troop trains could be bumped up to regular, scheduled trains. It's reasonable to say that wartime priority and rulebook superiority made them first class trains. Passenger rail was frequent enough at that time that timetables had numerous first class schedules to use. It could take only one train order for a Santa Fe dispatcher to arrange a troop movement over single track from Las Vegas, N.M. to Raton, N.M. "Display signals and run

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as Second 19." Two troop trains could run as Second and Third 19.

Running extras was more complicated, especially for priority movements. Extras were at the bottom of the pecking order so an urgent movement would need an order such as "Engine 3751 run extra Las Vegas to Raton with right over all westward trains." Further, all the westward trains affected needed copies of the orders, demanding careful record-keeping.

Q I want to simulate the type of roof that uses rubber, tar, and then stone. I was thinking of painting the roof with a glossy black and then putting cinder ballast on it to simulate the rocks. Has anyone done this type of roof? If so, how did you do it?

Rick, via MR Forums

A I've modeled this style of roof a few times, Rick. First, I paint the roof flat black and install it. Next, I run a bead of full-strength white glue along the joint where the roof meets the walls to seal any gaps (This prevents the isopropyl alcohol and scenery glue from running inside the building. More on that in a bit). Then I brush black paint part way up the inside of the walls to simulate sealant. The paint doesn't have to be applied neatly. I recommend using an old brush with bristles that aren't in the best shape to replicate this detail.

After the paint has dried, I brush full-strength white glue on the roof. With the glue still wet, I sprinkle in fine ballast (typically N scale for HO scale buildings) to simulate the stone. Work in manageable areas so the glue doesn't dry before you can apply the ballast.

Once the roof is coated in ballast, I wet it with isopropyl alcohol using a pipette. This helps break the surface tension of the ballast. Place the pipette along the edge of the roof and let the alcohol gently flow into granules. Don't hold the pipette too high over the roof as the drops of alcohol may leave craters in the ballast. I let the alcohol soak in for a few minutes before applying scenic cement with a pipette.



Senior Editor Cody Grivno added a tar-and-gravel roof to the warehouse portion of Ben-Hur Freezer Co. on the HO scale Milwaukee Road Beer Line project layout. Bill Zuback photo

After the scenery glue has dried, you can add weathering around chimneys, pipes, and other details. You may also choose to add other items to the roof, like a ladder, boards, or a tire or two. Use prototype photos as inspiration for selecting and placing the details. MR

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Three turnouts and a few industries can make an interesting layout. Russ Ottens photo

No space, no problem

George Sebastian-Coleman's $500 layout in an Ask MR column reminded me of a similar layout I started in 1978. I was a graduate student renting a single room in an 1860s house, so space was at a premium. I built an HO model railroad utilizing a 4 x 6-foot sheet of plywood. It was basically a simple oval with half its width hinged to fold out of the way when I wasn't running trains. I thoroughly enjoyed working on the 2 x 6-foot section over a three-year period.

Russ Ottens
Winston, Ga.

Old school is cool

I'm writing to comment on how much I enjoyed the article about using old techniques in today's modeling world in the November 2025 issue. Along with the materials and methods shared in the article, I'd like to give a shout out to zip texturing.

This old school way of creating turf using plaster of paris mixed with pigment allowed me to make detailed and highly realistic 19th century roads on my Flushing & Brooklyn layout. Above all else I found it very easy to work with and allowed me to cover a pretty large surface area in a very short timeframe. It was also very forgiving in the sense that if I wasn't happy with the appearance I could either add more texture to it, or wipe it away completely and restart with a clean slate (I suspect applying the zip texture on insulation foam like I did rather than plywood increased that level of flexibility).

While I was recently rewatching an old Allen Keller video on the Coal Belt model railroad, a layout I greatly admire, a quote from the modeler Bill Henderson stood out; "A lot of modern problems we face were often solved by the pioneers of the hobby." I think this definitely rings true even today as I read the most recent issue of the magazine. As always it's a joy to read and seek inspiration from, and I hope to contribute again in the future.

All the best,

Frank DeStefano
Little Neck, N.Y.

Panels are fun!

Kudos to Vic Worthington and his article "Easy Turnout Control Panels." I got caught-up in the high tech and automation capabilities of today's technology (block detection, programmed routes, etc.) and found doing simple ad-hoc operations was a bit of a task (entering x keystrokes to line a turnout in remote, or fumbling with my PC interface). I found a turnout panel has made operations more practical, efficient, and … fun! As Leonardo da Vinci said, "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." Thanks Vic!

David Mickelson
Stillwater, Minn.

Modeling skills to the rescue

Regarding Eric White's (September 2025) discussion of how us model rails develop a variety of skills from our model railroads, I ran into an IRL [in real life. — *Ed.*] situation recently where my modeling skills came into play.

At about 150,000 miles, the driver's side sun visor on my car broke. The plastic visor blade cracked along its mold seam. Online advice was vague, along the lines of "glue it." But inside the visor there's a cam that rotates around the visor arm allowing you to position the visor to best block the sun's glare. I figured glue would stop this cam from working, and probably make the visor useless.

Working on HO scale rolling stock, I've learned that simply gluing a part back on is insufficient. You need to make a mechanical connection that will support the glue. In the case of the sun visor, I figured bolts positioned to either side of the internal cam would close the crack along the visor blade seam, yet still allow the cam to move from position to position.

And, this worked. A bit ugly (on a model, I'd paint the bolts to match the gray of the visor, but I decided against using up some of my dwindling supply of Floquil to do that). I can't say I wouldn't have figured this out if I hadn't been "playing with" model railroad rolling stock for more than 50 years. But I can say, in my own case, that IS how I figured this one out.

Maybe we need our own Magliozzi Brothers/Car Talk Guys to explore the connection between 1:87.1 and 1:1 vehicle repairs?

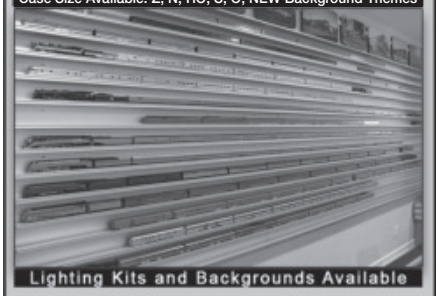
With thanks for your 92 years!

David W. Babson
via email

Comments, suggestions, and additional information on *Model Railroader* articles and departments are welcome in this column. Every comment will be read, but not all can be printed or answered. Make your statement in 300 words or less, and send it to **Railway Post Office, *Model Railroader* magazine, 18650 W. Corporate Dr., Ste. 103, Brookfield, WI 53045,** or email **editor@modelrailroader.com**. Please include your name, city, and state.

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By Bill Rooke



Bill Rooke illuminated the interior of his HO scale Amtrak Amfleet car, a model produced by Wm. K. Walthers Inc., with light-emitting diode strips used for decorative lighting. Photos by the author

Passenger car lighting on a budget

Always looking for a better way to illuminate my passenger cars, I became interested in the possible application of self-adhesive light-emitting diode (LED) strips being sold for decorative lighting. Rated at 12 volts DC and available in cool, neutral, and warm white, they're sold in continuous strips but can be divided into strips as short as three LEDs.

Each strip of three contains its own current-limiting resistor so it operates on 12V and has clearly defined soldering points. At 12V the LEDs are bright. I decided that 9V would be better for passenger car interiors. At 9V my meters show a current drain of slightly less than 4mA. Since the LEDs don't illuminate until around 7 to 8 volts, they're not well suited for direct-current layouts unless a constant-intensity light circuit is used.

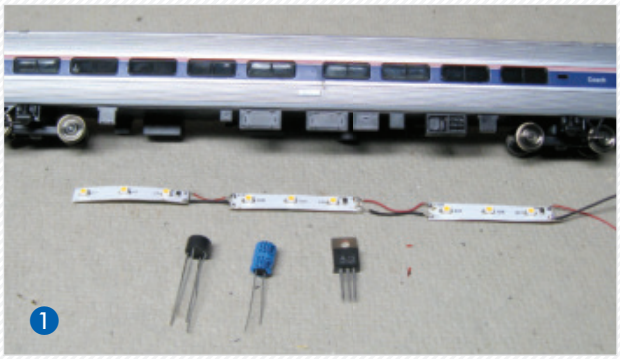
In addition to passenger cars, the LED strips can be used to illuminate cabooses and other cars that call for interior lighting. Follow along as I share my techniques.

Bill Rooke lives in northern New York and has been a model railroader for more than 60 years.

Materials list

7809 three terminal voltage regulator (T1)
Bridge rectifier — full wave 1.5 amps, 200V (R1)
Pre-punched IC spacing perfboard
Radial electrolytic capacitor (100 mfd @ 35V) (C1)
Warm white light-emitting diode strips

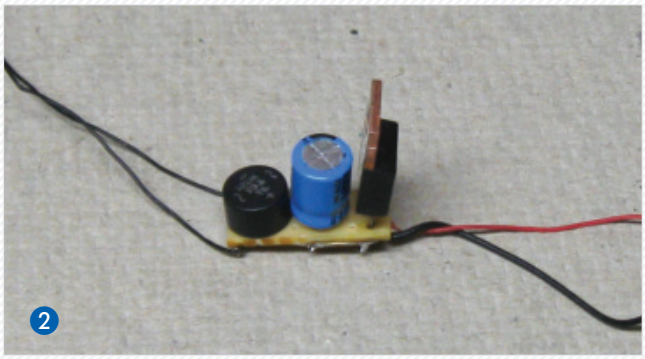
STEP 1 WHAT YOU NEED

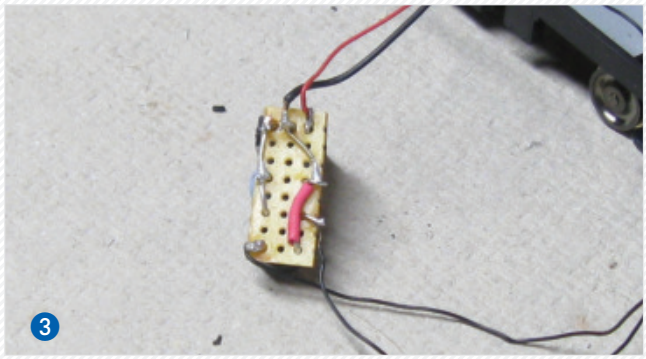


For the Walthers HO scale Amtrak Amfleet car shown in 1, I used three sets of three LEDs, spaced a bit wider than they come on the roll. The jumpers between the LEDs are decoder wires.

Below the LEDs, from left to right, are the parts for the power supply: A 1.5 amp rectifier rated at 50V, a 100 mfd capacitor rated at 35V, and a 7809 three-terminal voltage regulator. The 78-series regulators come in a variety of voltages identified by the last two digits. I purchased these components from All Electronics, which is no longer in business. Similar components can be found online from other electronics retailers.

STEP 1 WHAT YOU NEED (CONT'D)



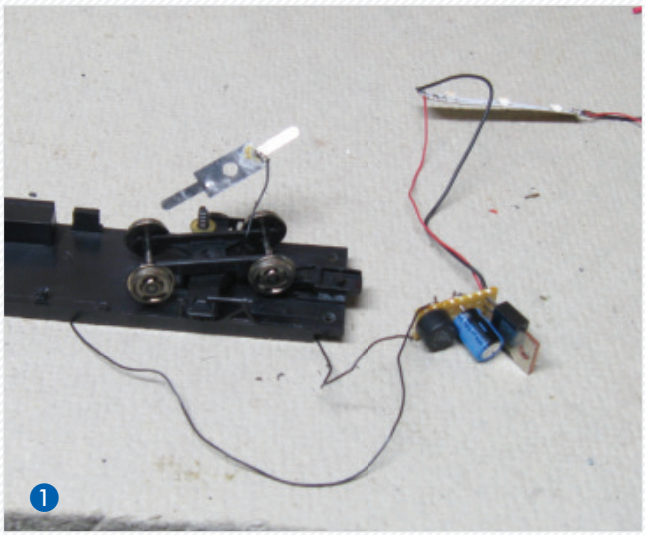


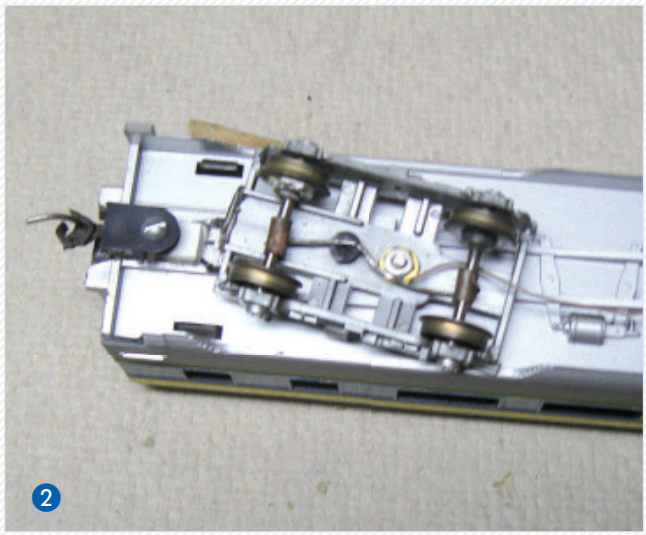
The power supply brings the voltage down to a desirable level of brightness and safety. Track voltage on my Digitrax DCC system is around 14V. The capacitor helps level out light flicker from intermittent contact.

I mounted the rectifier, capacitor, and voltage regulator on a piece of pre-punched perfboard 2. I did all the soldering on the back of the board, as seen in 3.

Orientation of the components is important for this project. The rectifier is clearly marked - +, -, and input. The black band on the top of the capacitor is negative. When the lettering of the 7809 is facing you with the heat sink tab at the top, the left pin (1) is + input, the middle (3) is - input and output, and the right pin (2) is regulated + output.

STEP 2 POWER PICKUP





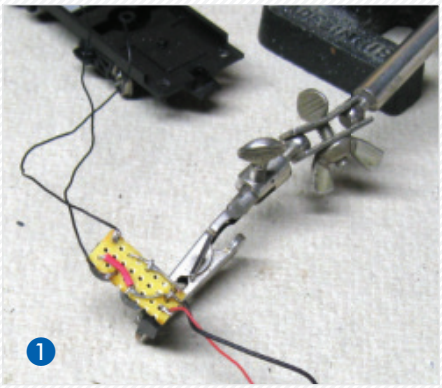
Most contemporary passenger car models have factory-installed power pickups, and the Walthers Amfleet car is no exception 1. I'm not sure what material the wipers are made of, but they resisted any attempt to make a connection with solder. As a workaround, I drilled a No. 56 hole and tapped it for a brass 0-80 bolt. Then I soldered the wire to the bolt.

Cars without pickups require some ingenuity. First, the wheelsets need to be half insulated. What does that mean? One metal wheel must be electrically attached to the axle while the other must be insulated from it.

Second, the wheelsets must be positioned in the truck so both insulated wheels are on the same side. This makes no difference to the plastic sideframe, but the electrical connection between the axles will create a short circuit if the car is placed on the track and the orientation isn't correct. The trucks should be positioned so that one gets power from the left-hand rail and the other gets power from the right-hand rail.

Photo 2 shows the pickups I added to a Con-Cor passenger car from the 1970s. Short pieces of 3/32" or 1/8" brass tubing were slit on one side, spread open, and slipped over the axle. Then I pinched the tubing shut and soldered the wire over the cut to keep it closed. Note that they are loosely skewed on the axle in such a way as to make good contact with a minimum of rolling resistance.

STEP 3 MAKING THE CONNECTIONS



1



2

I connected the small wires from each truck to the power supply and covered any bare wires with electrical tape. Then I connected the wires from the LEDs to the outputs of the power supply, observing the correct polarity. I found a "helping hand" tool useful to hold when making the solder connections 1.

If there is still too much light flicker, increase the capacitor to as large a size as space permits. However, keep at least a 35V rating.

Next, I removed the backing from the double-sided tape on top of the LEDs and carefully set the light strips in place. I placed the power supply, also attached with double-sided tape, out of sight at the end of the car 2.

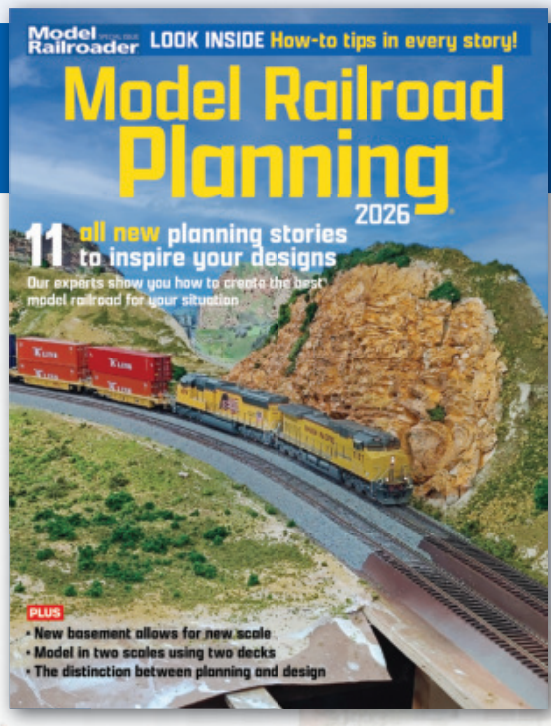
Installing interior lighting in passenger cars adds visual interest to the models. The price per car for this project was around $8, making it an economical way to illuminate passenger cars and cabooses if you're on a budget and are looking for a hands-on modeling project. MR

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Model Railroader's popular special issue, *Model Railroad Planning*, returns for 2026 with all-new planning stories!

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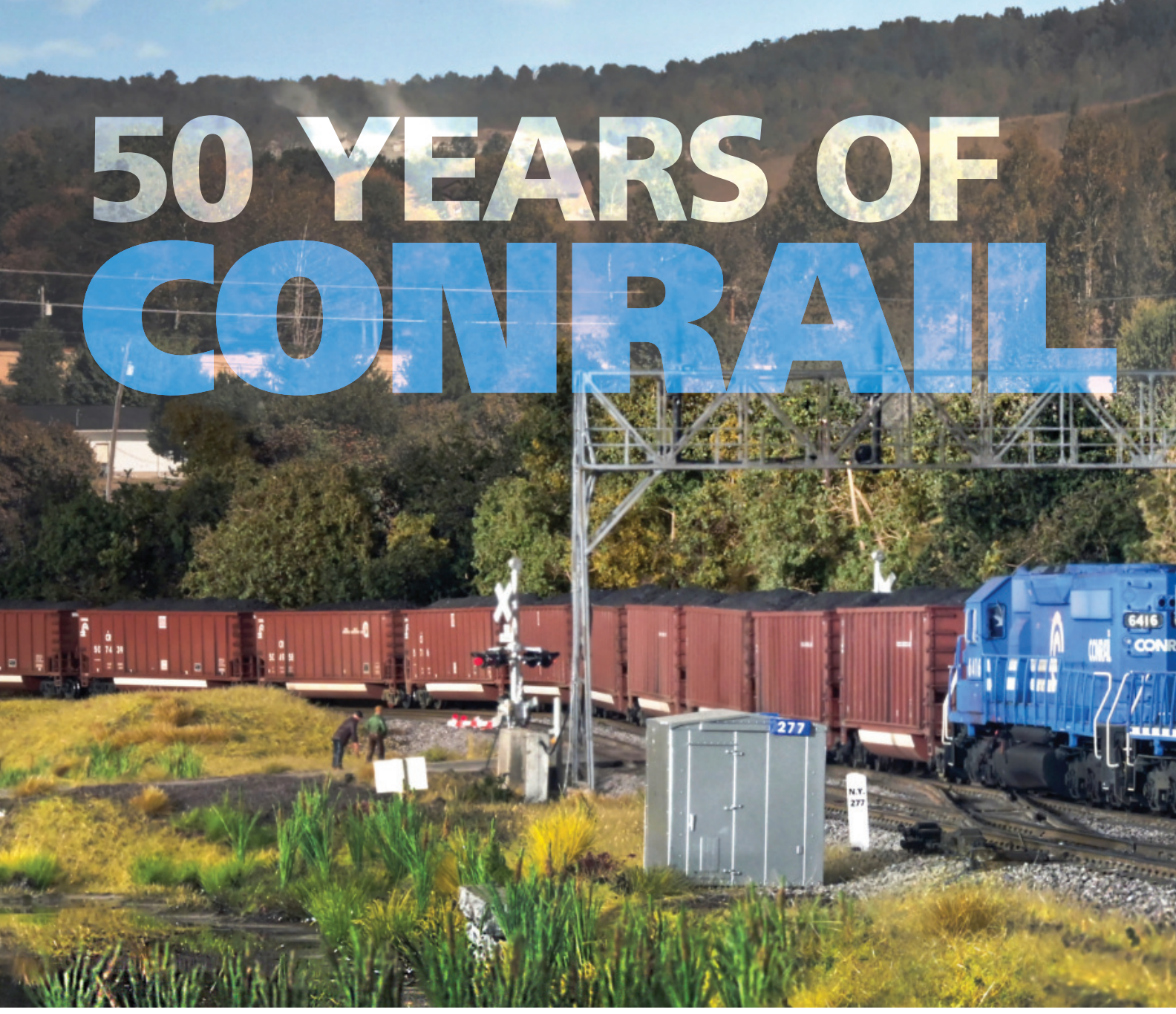


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50 YEARS OF CONRAIL



Essential models along the Onondaga Cutoff on a milestone anniversary

Years of planning and preparation come before construction of most railroads. On the prototype for the Onondaga Cutoff, a massive federal reorganization effort culminated on April 1, 1976, with the creation of Conrail. This was to become a date that changed American railroading. That day the Consolidated Rail Corp. was incorporated as a government-funded company in charge of the majority of railroading in the Northeastern United States, connecting to every western and southern Class I railroad and hundreds of other lines directly or indirectly.

Many modelers today that study history remember the changes that came as part of the reorganization. Throughout the 1960s, railroads were struggling nationwide as the economy changed. After a series of railroad bankruptcies in the Northeast during the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government was forced to step in with legislation and a plan to stabilize the railroad industry. The plan included consolidation of the bankrupt companies and their operations, combined with investment in improvements to most main routes.

Many observers and industry insiders doubted the plan could or would work. And yet after decades of decline and bad news, Conrail itself created new opportunities where none existed before.

Lines were sold off to the forerunners of today's regional railroads; some lines were flat out abandoned. The '70s and '80s were a period of massive pruning of track, facilities, equipment and, perhaps most painfully at the time, railroad jobs.

But that pruning made hitherto unavailable resources available for main lines and yards to be rebuilt to modern standards, to purchase new equipment and to develop a new, more service-oriented and aggressive approach to the transportation business. Legislation was enacted to help control costs, and





1 GE 'DASH-7' SERIES FROM RAPIDO

CONRAIL, LIKE ALL MAJOR CLASS I railroads in the 1990s, had a roster with a variety of locomotives serving different roles. Conrail was unique among Class Is in the number of different General Electric diesels that were present on the roster at the same time. Rapido has done stellar work in delivering all-new models of the B36-7 in 2019 and 2021, the C30-7 in 2024, and the C36-7 in 2025 with the unique-to-Conrail C30-7A soon to come. With factory lighting, strong motors and superdetailing, these common prototypes scream the CR Albany Division and are a mainstay on the Onondaga Cutoff.

LEFT: Conrail UBO-4A, behind a pair of ScaleTrains SD40-2s, rolls east into CP277 on the Onondaga Cutoff. Conrail was formed 50 years ago, on April 1, 1976. The locomotives along with the utilitarian signal bungalow are models that have helped Dave Abeles' HO scale Onondaga Cutoff create the atmosphere of Conrail in miniature.

By Dave Abeles • Photos by the author

remaining passenger train services were divested to Amtrak or to state agencies. Equipment was rebuilt and repainted and new rolling stock was ordered to improve reliability. Labor agreements were modified.

By the middle 1980s, all the hardship and sacrifice by labor and management finally began to pay off and Conrail was seeing significant financial progress. In 1987 the company was profitable and became independent through an initial public offering on the New York Stock Exchange — the largest ever to that date. The newly independent Conrail didn't stop there. By the middle 1990s Conrail was humming, adding track and yards for a growing traffic base.

This success was a double-edged sword for Conrail employees as it also made the company attractive for potential suitors. After a merger announcement with CSX Transportation, a bidding war arose between CSX and Norfolk Southern. In the end, CSX and NS divided most of Conrail's assets and people, keeping Conrail itself as a jointly owned subsidiary. Today, Conrail is a railroad company that crews trains and maintains infrastructure on behalf of its two owners.

As we reflect on the legacy of Conrail and on 50 years of Conrail operations in different arenas, there is no better time to be a Conrail modeler. Conrail equipment in the model railroad hobby is being delivered at a level of high quality and detail from more manufacturers than ever before. As *Model Railroader* editor Eric White and I were discussing the anniversary of the prototype for my HO scale Onondaga Cutoff layout, he asked about models that we use on the OC that define the layout as Conrail. In honor of Conrail's employees and thanks to all the great work from many manufacturers, here are some of the essential models in 2026 that help set the tone of Conrail at its heyday of the middle 1990s.

2 EMD SD40-2 FROM SCALETRAINS

THE BACKBONE of Conrail's mainline locomotive fleet from 1977 through the '80s and into the '90s was the EMD SD40-2. Many manufacturers have released SD40-2s decorated for Conrail in different scales from Z through G, but no manufacturer has done an HO scale SD40-2 better than ScaleTrains. Conrail opted for SD40-2 models with unique details such as Flexicoil trucks, extended-range dynamic brakes, RS-3L horns, cab signal boxes, and split battery box doors. Each of these features is captured beautifully on the ScaleTrains model. The company has made several releases in 2022 and 2024 with more to come.



3 EMD GP40-2 FROM ATHEARN GENESIS

NOW AND AGAIN a model comes out that is so well done and pleasing to the eye that we have to do a double take. The Athearn Genesis GP40-2 is a beautiful model of the nicely proportioned prototype. Conrail's GP40-2 fleet included a few former Reading locomotives, but the bulk of the fleet was ordered and purchased new by Conrail. These locomotives ruled the piggyback and intermodal service trains from 1976 right through the middle '90s and were joined by the B36-7 and B40-8 GEs in that service. The original run of the Athearn Genesis GP40-2 was in 2013 and a number of runs have followed — we are hoping for a new run soon!



4 GENERAL ELECTRICS'S B23-7 AND C40-8W FROM ATLAS MASTER LINE

IN THE FIRST FEW YEARS of the Onondaga Cutoff, it was clear that the locomotive fleet needed to look more like the Albany Division. Enter the Atlas Model Railroad Co. and its B23-7. The first runs were made in 2004 and 2005, followed by another run in 2007. B23-7s were the jack-of-all-trades on Conrail's Albany Division. They handled yard work, local and wayfreight assignments, work trains, and even mainline symbol freights. I needed a small fleet of them on the OC. With Master Line details and a smooth, powerful mechanism, the Atlas B23s were instantly a hit with operators and visually went a long way to making the modeled railroad look more like the prototype.

All of North American railroading was getting used to a new face in 1990, too: the full-width nose of the GE "Safety Cab." This new design was created for better crew safety and was introduced to Conrail on the GE Dash 8-40CW; W for Wide nose. Conrail's first order of 50 C40-8W locomotives, as they were named by the railroad, arrived starting in summer of 1990. The new power was quickly praised by crews and managers alike and other orders followed, eventually bringing the fleet to roster 273 C40-8Ws.

Like the SD40-2 in the '80s, the C40-8W became the backbone of the mainline Conrail fleet in the '90s. In HO scale it was Atlas once again that came through. The Master Line model of the C40-8W was first released in 2009 and then again in 2024 and is a good model of a common prototype. The 'W's' as they are known to crews, help set the Onondaga Cutoff clearly in the middle 1990s.



5 89'-0" AUTO RACK FROM WALTHERS



MODERN RAILROADING on a trunk line is the domain of big trains and humongous cars. Walthers first released its 89-foot enclosed auto rack cars as a kit in 1992 and my first purchase of one made me realize that my 18" radius curves on my bedroom layout at the time would not cut it for my long-term vision. That car, however, still runs on the Onondaga Cutoff 34 years later!

Under the Gold Line series, which featured improved tooling, better details, metal wheels and couplers, and high-quality paint jobs, Walthers re-released its auto rack in 2005 as a fully assembled, ready-to-run car. Other releases followed with dozens of road names in 2007, 2009, 2011, and more. Auto racks from all railroads in 1994 with their extra-height clearance requirements were only allowed to run on certain Conrail lines. Thanks to Walthers, seeing a variety of auto racks on the OC helps suggest to operators and visitors that they are on the Chicago Line.

6 HOLLIDAYSBURG-BUILT FREIGHT CARS FROM TANGENT SCALE MODELS

TANGENT SCALE MODELS BURST onto the scene of the HO scale car market in 2007 with high-quality, superdetailed cars painted to match specific prototypes in a certain era. In 2016, the company announced availability of beautiful new models of prototype gondola cars built by Pennsylvania RR in its Samuel Rea Shops in Hollidaysburg, Pa.

Conrail inherited tens of thousands of former PRR and Penn Central cars, and G43 gondolas with their interesting fluted-panel sides are classic Conrail rolling stock. Tangent's willingness to release stunning models of cars built at Hollidaysburg continued with the mid-1960s vintage ex-PRR X58 boxcar in 2018; the H51 covered hopper built for Penn Central between 1968 and 1969, and released in model form in 2023; and the G41A coil car built for PRR starting in 1965 and offered beginning in 2024.

The Onondaga Cutoff rosters each of these cars and they add to the fabric of the story the OC is trying to tell.



7 BACHMANN HI-RAIL TRACK MAINTENANCE TRUCK

TRAINS DO NOT RUN WITHOUT TRACK. It's a basic fact of railroading. And track requires special maintenance, as do bridges, signals, and other facilities. Conrail's legacy was one of improving its physical plant so that trains could run. In a first run in December 2012 and with several subsequent runs, Bachmann Trains released a DCC-equipped, motorized hi-rail truck decorated for Conrail.

Maintenance of way is an aspect of modeling railroading that is rarely modeled, especially as part of operations. This clever and unexpected release by Bachmann at the time opened up the possibility of one of Conrail's ubiquitous hi-rail trucks motoring along the main line of the Onondaga Cutoff, helping suggest a well-maintained track plant and a railroad serious about maintenance.



8 SIGNAL BUNGALOWS & CUSTOM EQUIPMENT

JUST AS EQUIPMENT makes up a train, structures make up the facilities that support operations on every railroad. One of the most distinctive parts of Conrail's lineside facilities were the signal bungalows at interlockings and the small, white-on-blue station signs that labeled them. While many large shops or customer buildings could also be listed here, sometimes it's the details that do the talking. In the case of Conrail main lines, 3D Central has a series of 3D-printed signal bungalows that fit the bill. Older models from Piko and BMLA (now owned by Atlas) are also good patches. The four-sided metal cabinets that match the General Railway Signal Corp. structures are a close match to many of the small structures that hold the relays at interlockings. You won't go far on the OC without seeing a bungalow in service!



9 G52X COAL GONDOLAS

FOR ITS WHOLE EXISTENCE as a Class I railroad, Conrail was nearly synonymous with coal trains, especially in Pennsylvania and Ohio. The Chicago Line got in the action, too, moving coal from mines in those states to markets in New England and the Hudson River Valley. When Conrail's fleet was wearing out, the Samuel Rea Shops in Hollidaysburg stepped in with a program to rebuild tired hopper cars into modern high-side gondolas for coal service. In 2021 ScaleTrains delivered a beautiful model of the G52X. Coal gondolas were also released by Athearn and Walthers. Long string of G52s are regularly seen on the OC.



10 E8As and Conrail 9 theatre car 'OCS' from Rapido Trains and Broadway Limited

ONE OF THE MOST ICONIC trains on any big railroad is the "office car special" — the executive business train. Often made up from rebuilds of classic passenger equipment, the OCS roams the system for inspections, events, and hosting important customers or politicians hoping to make a deal. Conrail rostered three E8A locomotives and a small fleet of custom cars for its executive train. Rapido Trains stepped up in October 2024 and delivered all three of Conrail's E8As in the classy Conrail Pullman Green paint with gold lettering and trim in HO scale. Adding to the fun, Rapido will be delivering Conrail 11, a 10-5 sleeping car, in 2026. Broadway Limited is also getting in on the action and developing Conrail 9, the theater car that often brought up the rear of the inspection train.



Check out the Spring issue of *Classic Trains*. Conrail 50th anniversary coverage includes a system map, photo gallery, locations of preserved equipment, history of its creation and successes, and more! Get it now at hobby shops and shop.trains.com.

CONRAIL FOR THE FUTURE

In all, Conrail remains a corporation and active railroad as the shared-assets operation of CSX and NS in northeastern New Jersey, the Philadelphia area, and Detroit. While no longer a Class I, some of the spirit remains and will be celebrated by Conrail on its 50th birthday on April 1, 2026. You can bet we will be doing the same on the Onondaga Cutoff!





Organize your WIRING

Contributing Editor Pelle Søeborg used PVC cable raceway channels to organize the wiring on his former HO scale Union Pacific Daneville Subdivision layout. The version he used had self-adhesive backing, making installation quick and easy.

Adhesive-backed PVC cable raceway channels keep things under the layout nice and tidy

By Pelle Søeborg
Photos by the author

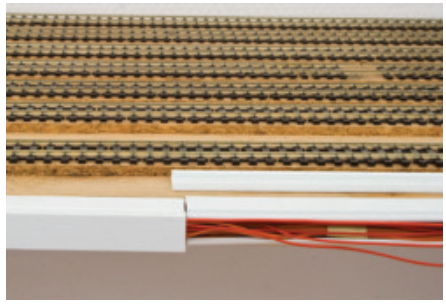
There are many aspects of model railroading that I enjoy. Scenery, weathering, and photography are just a few things that come to mind. However, one task I thoroughly detest is layout wiring. If you had looked under my former HO scale Daneville & Donner River, featured in the March 2005 and November 2006 issues of *Model Railroader* magazine, you would have been greeted by a spaghetti bowl of wires.

In addition to the mess of wires, the color coding wasn't consistent. I started out with specific colors for different items like feeders wires for switch motors, signals, track, etc. When I ran out of a color, I used what I had instead of driving to the hobby shop and purchasing the right color. This made troubleshooting electrical issues difficult. When I started work on my HO scale Union Pacific Daneville Subdivision layout, published in the March 2014 issue of MR, I swore that I would make the wiring impeccable.

While visiting a building supply store here in Denmark I spotted PVC cable raceway channels in various sizes. The version I found consisted of a U-shaped channel, a snap-on cover, and peel-and-stick mounting tape. This seemed like an ideal solution for organizing the wiring on my model railroad, so I purchased a bunch of it.

I mounted the cable raceway channels on the edge of the hidden staging yard beneath Daneville and below the main line 1. I drilled small holes in the channel at locations where I had to install feeder wires 2.

This time around I didn't take any shortcuts in color coding. Every item has its own wiring color. It cost me a couple of trips to the hobby shop to buy new supplies, but it was worth it. Now I don't have to be ashamed of anything if visitors take a look under my model railroader, which for some reason they always do. MR



1 Pelle attached the raceway channels to the edge of the hidden staging yard below Daneville. The snap-on covers can be easily removed should the wiring need to be accessed for maintenance.



2 All of the wiring for the staging yard was run through the channel. Pelle drilled small holes in the PVC at locations where feeder wires needed to be installed.

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THE CHICAGO, PEORIA & WESTERN

This 30 x 44-foot HO scale model railroad is set between Chicago and Galesburg, Ill., in the 1940s

By Lou Sassi
Photos by the author

The prototype railroads serving Chicago long fascinated John Brennan. His interest in model railroading started when he saw an American Flyer train set under the Christmas tree at his parents' house. John began actively pursuing the hobby as a teenager and was involved with it for decades. He built numerous layouts over the years, culminating with the HO scale Chicago, Peoria & Western.

The 30 x 44-foot model railroad was influenced by the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; Elgin, Joliet & Eastern; and Illinois Central on the flatlands of Illinois west of Chicago in September 1940. All three lines moved grain from the Midwest to Eastern customers who used it in food production. The railroads also transported sundry other merchandise west to St. Louis and other points.

Unfortunately, John passed away shortly before my wife, Cheryl, and I arrived to photograph his model railroad. His many friends joined together to help prepare the layout for this article.

From Chicago to Tampa

John, considered by many of his peers to be a master in layout design, developed the track plan for the Chicago, Peoria & Western (CP&W). He studied prototype rail movements south and west from

1 Union Pacific 4-8-2 No. 7009 leads a local through Altona, Ill., on John Brennan's HO scale Chicago, Peoria & Western. The layout was influenced by railroads that ran west of Chicago.



2 As a Chicago, Burlington & Quincy steam engine finishes taking on coal in the background, Chicago, Peoria & Western No. 728 is in charge of the local at Galva, Ill. The backdrops are hand-painted on tempered hardboard.



3 This overall view shows how the layout fit in the 35 x 45-foot building. East Mendota can be seen against the wall, Kewanee and Wyanet are in the middle of the frame, and Princeton is at right.



4 A variety of rail-served industries serve as the backdrop for a run-through train led by Union Pacific No. 7009 at Kewanee, Ill. All of the buildings are kits, several of them modified to increase their size or customize the footprint.

The layout at a glance

Name: Chicago, Peoria & Western
Scale: HO (1:87.1)
Size: 30 x 44 feet
Prototype: CB&Q, EJ&E, and IC
Locale: Chicago to Galesburg, Ill.
Era: 1940s
Style: walk-in
Mainline run: approximately 230 feet
Minimum radius: 30"
Minimum turnout: No. 8 (main), No. 6 (industries and yards)
Maximum grade: less than 1%
Benchwork: open grid
Height: 50"
Roadbed: Homabed
Track: handlaid code 70
Scenery: foam base covered with sawdust paste, real dirt, and flocking
Backdrop: hand-painted on tempered hardboard
Control: Digitrax simplex and duplex DCC

Chicago and researched the many towns along the line in those regions.

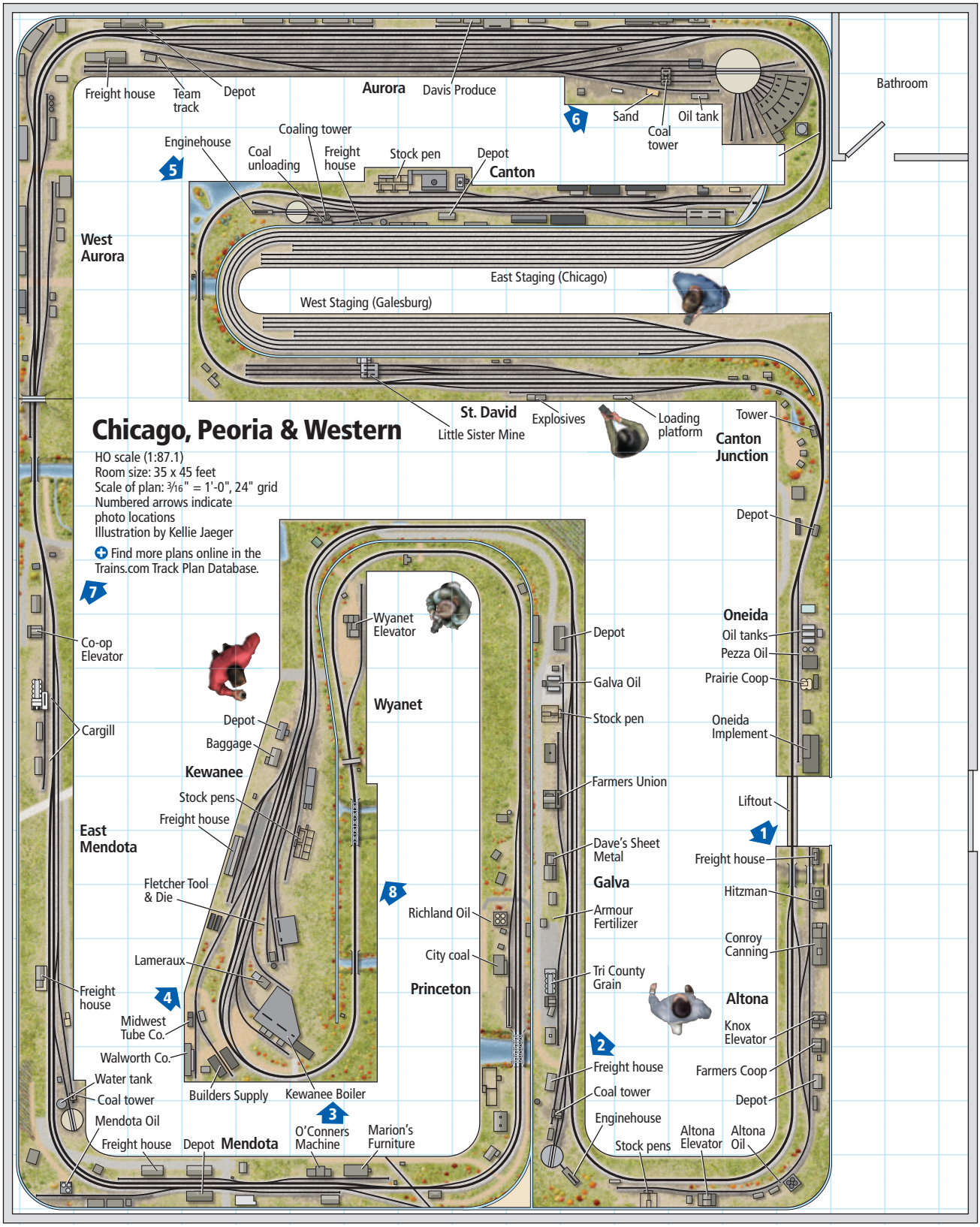
Preparation of the basement room for the railroad began in his Chicago home in 2000. Layout construction began shortly thereafter, with beta operations starting in 2005.

After retiring to Tampa, Fla., in 2007, John spent almost three years looking for property upon which to construct a free-standing 35 x 45-foot steel building to house the model railroad. Many modelers in the Tampa area helped John reassemble the CP&W. Among the members of the crew were Jon Addison, Duncan Baldock and his wife, Jim Hopes, Steve Kilbort, Dan Kimpton, Donovan Lewis, John Moran, Dennis Paquette, and John Whitinger.

Scenery, track, and structures

A tempered hardboard backdrop was installed prior to the construction of the open-grid benchwork. The backdrop includes many hand-painted trees, fields, and clouds painted by Jon Addison.

When the layout was in Chicago it didn't have scenery, so special attention was given to that after the model railroad was set up in Florida. Most of the ground cover is a mixture of wood flour (fine sawdust from a cabinet shop) mixed with diluted white glue. "It makes a very convincing base for the scenery and can be changed easily enough by just spraying it down again with water," said Jim Hopes, a member of John's operating crew.



The wood flour was supplemented with other scenery products. Static grass was used extensively, along with ground foam and natural materials like dirt, gravel, and coal. The trees on the layout were made using sagebrush and Scenic Express SuperTree armatures covered with Noch leaves.

Foam insulation board was used as the scenery base in locations where creeks and other low-lying features were needed. The water features were primarily made using clear caulk applied over painted, detailed creek beds.

Laying track is one area where John excelled. He handlaid the code 70 rail, spiked to Central Valley ties glued to ½" Homasote over a ¾" plywood track base. "Laying hundreds of feet of track by hand seems daunting to many people, but not to John," said Jim Hopes. "Building extensive yards with many industries to work down the line was truly a joy for him."



5 Chicago, Peoria & Western 2-8-0 No. 368, a Bachmann model, leads a freight destined for Canton, Ill., past the Brennan Recreation Area. Jon Addison scratchbuilt the structures, cardstock boats, and water scene.



Jon Addison made the frame for the multi-sign billboard in front of Gilmartin Auto Repairs using HO scale 2 x 8 stripwood.

Multi-sign billboards

Multi-sign billboards were popular in the 1940s and 1950s. I made some for John Brennan's layout using the following techniques.

First, I cut the frame pieces from HO scale 2 x 8 stripwood. Then I used a mixture of yellow glue and tacky glue to attach the horizontal frame pieces to the vertical posts. I used double-sided blue tape to hold the joints tight while the glue dried.

I found the signs for the billboards at train shows and online retailers like JL Innovative Design. To add some age to the signs, I weathered them using a small piece of sponge and acrylic paints. Silver, black, raw sienna, and burnt sienna were my go-to colors.

After removing most of the paint from the sponge, I dabbed each color along the edges of the signs. On occasion I used transparent orange oxide artist oil paint to add some subtle new rust along the edges.

If the backs of the signs were going to be visible I painted them. A clear gloss finish made the signs look more like metal. — *Jon Addison*



6 Aurora, Ill., is home to the largest engine servicing terminal on the CP&W. In addition to taking on coal and sand, steam engines can be serviced at the multi-stall roundhouse and turned on the turntable.

Most of the turnouts are Shinohara, the majority of which are controlled by Caboose Industries ground throws. Approximately a dozen turnouts in hard-to-reach areas are controlled with Tortoise by Circuitron switch machines.

The structures are kitbashed plastic or laser-cut wood kits, most of which have been painted and weathered. John's son, John P. Morgan, helped assemble many of the buildings. Since coal and grain dominate the CP&W's operating scheme, there are numerous buildings dedicated to serving those industries.

Running trains

The locomotives on the CP&W — mostly steam with some early diesel power — are appropriate for the 1940 era. All of the engines are equipped with Digitrax DCC and sound.

The rolling stock is also correct for the era, with many 40-foot boxcars in grain service. An airbrush was used to weather the locomotives and freight cars.

Live loads (coal and sand) are used during operating sessions. "That has led to many funny stories over the years, or ones that seem funny now after cleaning a number of big messes," said crew member Royal Bruce. "It's always wise to have a handheld vacuum available."

The model railroad is divided into six power districts. Though there are usually



7 Chicago, Burlington & Quincy 2-8-2 No. 5508 is in charge of a solid train of refrigerator cars. While the rest of the family finishes up a picnic lunch, dad has walked over to the bridge to get a closer look at the passing train.



8 On a different day, the CB&Q heavy Mikado brings a freight over a Pratt truss bridge near Wyanet, Ill. The Mikado is by Broadway Limited. The bridge is a Central Valley kit.

only 11 operators at one time, the layout can handle up to 20 DCC throttles.

John was also skilled in developing operating schemes for layouts. He designed a detailed operating system with car cards, waybills, and switch lists that govern the work and movement on the CP&W. John was also an accomplished dispatcher and attended operating sessions throughout the country.

All operations are controlled by a dispatcher who is responsible for determining which trains will be run and in what sequence. The car routing system consists of waybills inserted into pockets on the fascia that list the car type, destination, and load material.

A typical operating session features 19 trains, including locals, through freights, a coal drag, a grain train, a maintenance-of-way train, and passenger trains. Every effort is made to keep the higher priority trains on schedule. This can be a challenge on a single-track main with trains running east and west.

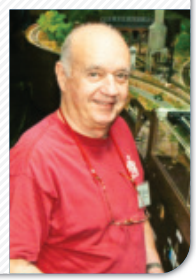
Achieving goals

When asked what John would have considered the best parts of the Chicago, Peoria & Western, Jim Hopes replied "He would likely say Aurora and the West Aurora Yards. They were designed to prototypical standards and contain numerous local industries to work."

John always wanted a large layout that could provide opportunities for many engineers. The fact that a group of people still meet each week to operate his railroad indicates his goal was accomplished. MR

Meet John Brennan

John Brennan lived in Tampa, Fla., with his two cats. He was a member of the Marine Corps, serving in Vietnam and later in the Marine Reserve. John was a high school shop teacher in Chicago and a commercial property manager in Florida. He passed away in Tampa on Sept. 17, 2023.





Building the TIBURON RAIL YARD MODEL





❶ **Above:** Passenger train No. 3 heads north through the yard on the Tiburon Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum's HO scale layout.

❷ **Left:** Passengers from across San Francisco Bay have boarded Train No. 3 at Tiburon to continue their journeys into Northern California. The model railroad accurately depicts the railroad yard and ferry docks of Tiburon, Calif., in 1909.

The layout is the centerpiece display of the Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum in Tiburon, Calif.

By Phil Cassou
Photos by Gary Lavarack

The Tiburon Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum opened in May 1999 with displays of historical photographs and artifacts from the town of Tiburon, Calif., and its rail yard. Managed by the non-profit Landmarks Society, the museum plans by architect Tom Schneider called for a large working model of the rail yard as the central exhibit on the first floor. To announce the upcoming model, an outline was placed on the floor with yellow tape and a sign "There will be a model here." This was met with a variety of comments from the public such as Oh sure!, When?, and How long will it take? For the next 20 years, the model was a work in progress.

Planning the model

Since 1909 was the height of both passenger and freight operations on the Northwestern Pacific RR in Tiburon, a team, including Tom Schneider and 12 model builders, began research for the layout with the Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NWP) Historical Society. The group studied rail yard plans from October 1909 and consulted Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, topographical charts, and an extensive collection of historic photographs from the Landmark Society archives.

We then determined the coverage of the model using a scale of 1:87.1 (HO scale) for the area just past Beach Road to the end of Shoreline Park. This covered about a half mile of the NWP property and gave a complete view of the yard and about half of Tiburon's Main Street. We also decided to include model trains and several ferry slips and docks to show both rail and ferry connections.

A solid foundation

In 2000, we started to build the support framework using angle iron bolted together in box sections to form the base. By double-bolting all joints, the structure was made very strong and rigid. In fact after finishing the base, we discovered that it had to be moved a few feet to provide clearance for visitors. To make this happen, we put one person at each end, 26 feet apart, and moved it like it was an airplane wing. A team that included Roger Felton, Frank Buscher, and Mike Dubisky then took up wrenches and got everything connected. We set the height of the model top to be in line with ADA guidelines.

To create the layout surface, including the subroadbed, we used ½" plywood over wood stringers in a configuration similar to the subfloor of a house. This provided a solid surface you could walk on. On top of the plywood, we added thin balsa roadbed to dampen the noise of running model trains. Making



❸ A freight comes off Schooner Pier past the machine shop. The landforms for the scene were carved from extruded-foam insulation board, then covered with local dirt. All of the structures were scratchbuilt based on plans in the museum's collection.

scenery to match the topographical maps entailed gluing layers of extruded-foam insulation board for hills and the shoreline. Shaping of the foam to the appropriate elevation was accomplished using a grapefruit knife with its curved end.

Once the surface was ready, the 1909 track plans were expanded to HO scale and laid on the wood. We placed the tracks exactly on the paper, slid the paper out and, using 2,300 spikes, secured the Atlas code 83 flextrack in place. We used commercially available track so the maintenance could be easily done in the future. For the long straight runs, such as the main line and the schooner pier, we used a laser to precisely align the tracks. The piers (passenger, schooner, and Gallows) all have handlaid rails spiked directly into the pier boards. Turnouts are mostly Atlas code 83 No. 8, some with modifications. On the Gallows Frame we used two No. 10 turnouts because of the tight fit on the apron.

A town slowly appears

To provide visitors a view of how the diorama would look, Pete Kane constructed more than 30 concept structures in white cardboard showing where each final building was to be placed and its approximate size. As each model builder brought his structures to the museum, the cardboard buildings were replaced by the actual scale representations, carefully researched from maps and photos for accuracy including architectural details and paint schemes.

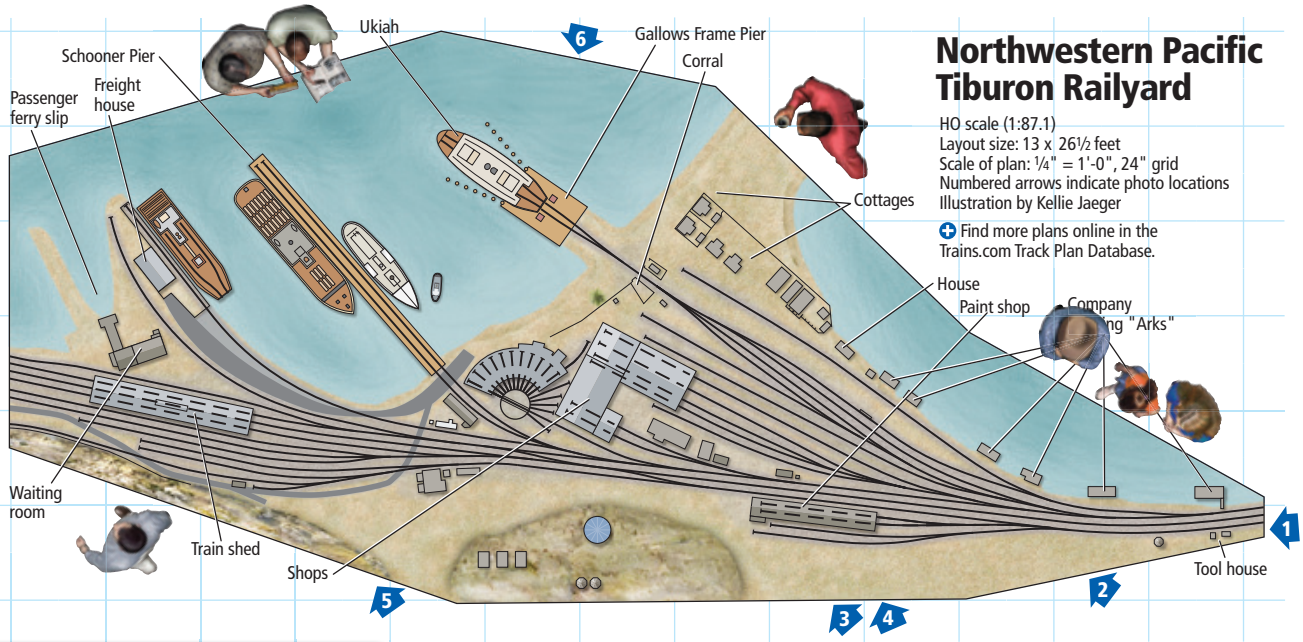
We had a book of standards about an inch thick to ensure the modeling looked consistent. Stuart Purvis constructed the Gallows Frame freight slip. Pete Kane built many of the structures, including the passenger and freight pier, the machine shop complex, and others. Phil Gale contributed a ferryboat, the *Ukiah*, and several passenger cars from LaBelle kits. Joe Kelly built the schooner pier that in real life was some 600 feet long. I constructed the passenger depot/walkway complex and several other structures. The group of model builders was assembled by our museum architect, Tom. All of them had experience in model railroads or maritime models.

All the ships and structures are built from stripwood, mainly spruce. The only structure built from plastic is the paint shop made by ZD Designs of San Francisco. The company also laser cut more than a hundred windows of various specification we used in many structures (the model builders often didn't do windows). Due to the humid salt air (we're on the San Francisco Bay shoreline), wood tends to swell and bend, so maintenance on their shape is constant. The roofs are shingled with commercially available material. The water tanks (three) are customized plastic kits.

Ships for the harbor

Two ferryboats were named for the south end town of the railroad (Tiburon) and the north end town (Ukiah). The car float, *Lagunitas*, was named for a town on the route to the Russian River. The ferryboat, *James M. Donahue*, was named for the brother of the railroad's founder, Peter Donahue. The ocean going boat, *Willapa*, came from the prototype built in Coos Bay, Ore. All the ferryboats have interior and electric lights. The ferries used commercial plans from the old Works Progress Administration via the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.

Our fleet of boats was constructed by three model makers: Stuart Purvis built the small ferry *Marin*, which used to shuttle between Sausalito, Belvedere, and Tiburon; the larger NWP ferries: the *James M. Donahue* and *Tiburon*; the ocean-going freighter *Willapa*; and a



The layout at a glance

Name: Northwestern Pacific RR Tiburon Rail Yard
Scale: HO (1:87.1)
Size: 13'-0" x 26'-6"
Prototype: Northwestern Pacific RR
Locale: Tiburon, Calif.
Era: October 1909
Style: island
Mainline run: none
Minimum radius: none
Minimum turnout: No. 8
Maximum grade: none
Benchwork: 1 x 6 and 1 x 8 wood joists on steel angle with plywood layout surface
Height: 40" to 58"
Roadbed: balsa over plywood
Track: code 83 flextrack
Scenery: extruded-foam insulation board covered in local dirt
Backdrop: none
Control: Digitrax Digital Command Control



4 Northwestern Pacific No. 153 shoves a cut of freight cars to the ferry *Ukiah* with Tiburon Town in the background.

steam tugboat. Phil Gale worked on the railcar and passenger ferry *Ukiah*, shown on the next page. John Ferguson contributed the car float *Lagunitas*.

Landforms and water features

Scenery was also an essential part of the model, using rocks from the bluff that created the landfill for the railyard and machine shops. To cover the hillsides, we took dirt from the garden around the depot building, heated it in an oven for half an hour to remove any microbes, and spread it over the surface. True to the actual site, there are very few trees on the hills. Using artistic license, we installed the Heritage Palm made by Dan and Armando Vargas (not placed until 1920) at the end of Main Street.

The lagoon water and bay water areas created special challenges. The lagoon is made of two-part epoxy ½" thick, which dries clear. The details of sand bars, seaweed, and other features were put in place before pouring the surface. The bay water took almost a year to perfect. Again, we painted the features you would see on the bay, mainly clouds and kelp patches, texturing the bay water to reflect the light wind and wave action seen in the afternoons.

Yes, the trains move!

Visitors never hesitate to ask "Do the trains move?" Yes, we have four trains that run, clank, and whistle. The most popular is the passenger train with its 1905 Pullman cars; the train loading freight cars on the ferryboat *Ukiah*, the gallows line; the freight pier line running on the schooner pier; and the work train hauling large rocks on the quarry line.

The engines are all Bachmann models with custom paint and lettering to match the roster of the NWP in 1909. Our fleet includes 2-8-0s, 2-6-0s, 4-6-0s, 0-6-0s, and one standard gauge, three-truck Shay. The passenger cars are LaBelle wood kits to represent the Madison cars, and commercially available plastic for the Harriman cars.

We use the Digitrax Digital Command Control system. Although we'd like to have automatic running, we still use handheld controllers. Often, with a little training, we have children run the trains to the delight of their parents.



5 The red train shed provided protection for passengers waiting to transfer from cross-bay ferries such as the *Tiburon* onto Northwestern Pacific passenger trains.

Phil Maslin ensured the model engines all matched the 1909 NWP roster with the appropriate oil bunker on the tender and correct engine number on the cab — each with Digital Command Control and sound. Phil still keeps the engines running and diagnoses and fixes any problems.

In early 2019, the final three houses on the hill on Mar West Street were placed and the diorama part of the model finally completed. Now there is a fully three-dimensional view of the Tiburon rail yard in 1909 for all our visitors to enjoy. The most common comment when people first see the rail yard model is "Wow!" MR

Phil Cassou started as a docent at the Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum in 1999. He is the current board president of the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, the developer of the Depot Museum. Gary Lavarack has been a docent at the Railroad & Ferry Depot Museum for several years. He's also a very accomplished 3D printer expert.



6 The car ferry *Ukiah* has arrived at Tiburon and will soon be unloading its cargo of freight cars destined for points north in California. Phil Gale constructed the passenger and railcar ferry.

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The finished grass, fence, trees, and even the road in this scene on the East Troy project railroad are all supported by a scenic base of foam board and plaster products. Cody Grivno photo

EAST TROY INDUSTRIAL PARK

ROADS AND BASIC TERRAIN

PART 4: Building a scenic base from foam and plaster products for our HO scale project railroad

By David Popp // Photos by the MR staff

Although having the track installed and wired to a control system allows you to run your model trains, even the best-looking models in the world can't disguise bare plywood. It's the addition of hills, rivers, vegetation, and human elements, such as roads and buildings, that turn what an outsider might call a "train table" into a representation of the world in miniature. Scenery is the one thing that most often allows visitors to connect personally to your model railroad, capturing the feeling of a place and time they may well recognize.

Building model railroad scenery is one of my favorite aspects of the hobby. It's a creative endeavor, much like painting or sculpting, whereby you as the artist attempts to re-create the world as you see it. It's also one of the most forgiving aspects of the hobby, allowing you to make adjustments or additions at will, even to the point of removing some or all of it and starting over with a blank canvas — in this case the benchwork.



We used a number of photos as our guide when building the scenery for our project railroad, including this Google Street view of St. Peters Road outside of East Troy, Wis.

Perhaps the best part of scenery work is there is no one correct way to do it. In fact, we used several methods of scenery construction on our East Troy Industrial Park HO scale project railroad. Follow along as we build the hills and roads that cover our project railroad.

FOAM AS A BASE

Our layout depicts the East Troy Railroad Museum's right of way between its namesake town and nearby Mukwonago, Wis. As such, it was easy for us to drive along the line and photograph some if its features. This part of Wisconsin is a combination of low hills and open flat places, so for much of our layout, we didn't need a lot of elevation, making foam board the perfect scenery base.

Along the back of the farm scene, I built a low ridge from 1" foam, including white beaded material from Woodland Scenics and extruded-foam insulation board, as found in house construction. One of the reference photos I used showed a road that crossed the tracks and angled behind them while climbing up a low ridge, so I included that here.

Part of the Woodland Scenics line of foam products includes flexible inclines at fixed grades. I installed one along the path of the road to raise it from where it crosses at track level to the top of the ridge that runs along the backdrop.

Woodland Scenics offers foam board in small sheets of various thicknesses, including ¼", which is hard to find in insulation board. I mixed several thicknesses of foam to fill in the ground for the farm and the lower fields that occupies the section between the tracks and the aisle.

Foam is easy to cut with a knife or a hot wire tool. There are several brands of hot wire foam cutters available — the one I used here is from Woodland Scenics.

The cutter places an electrical charge through a thin piece of steel wire that heats up and melts its way through the foam. It's ideal for making curved and angled cuts. You can get fairly straight cuts by resting the hot wire tool on a workbench surface to keep it steady while drawing the foam sheet through it. You can also use it to shape foam already attached to the layout.

When using this tool, it does release harmful fumes while cutting, so be sure to use adequate ventilation. We had a box fan running in the workshop to vent the fumes out of the building.

To glue the foam in place on the layout, I used DAP Alex Plus latex caulk. It provides good tack and a flexible bond, yet allows sufficient working time to reposition parts if needed. In several places we needed to weight the foam down until the caulk had cured.



The ridge is made from Woodland Scenics' 1"-thick foam sheets and two flexible incline sections.



The foam is easy to cut and shape with assorted hobby knives, as well as with a hot wire foam cutting tool, as shown here.



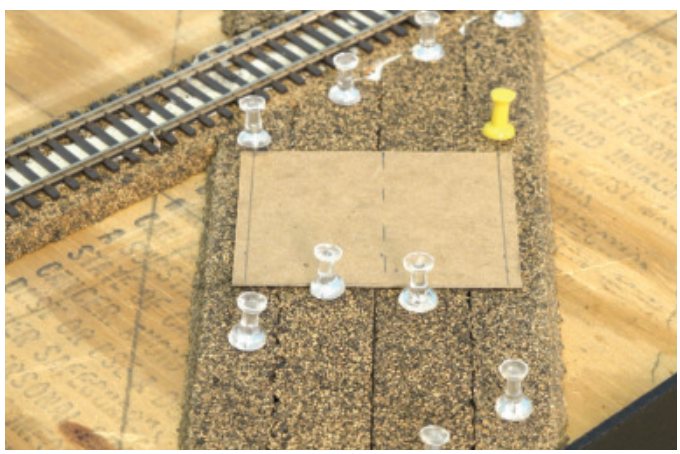
David glued the foam to the layout's plywood top using DAP acrylic latex caulk, letting the caulk cure overnight before continuing scenery construction.

ADDING A ROAD

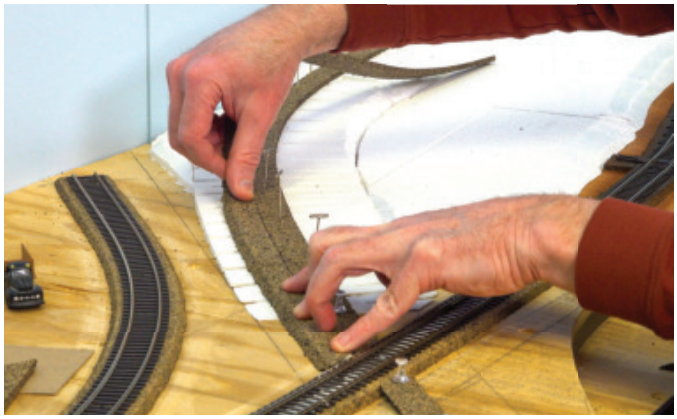
To build Army Lake Road, which crosses the tracks and then runs up to the ridge, I started by making a cardboard template 26 HO scale-feet wide. That's enough room for two 12-foot-wide lanes and a foot of shoulder on each side. The template became my guide when laying out the roadway.

The flexible foam incline I used for the road and part of the ridge has hollow gaps in it, which allows it to flex. However, those gaps need to be filled to form a solid surface. To cover over them, I used HO scale cork roadbed strips. I also used cork strips for rest of the road's base as well. Much like elevating track, the cork strips provide just enough profile to set the road above the surrounding scenery. And because the strips are flexible, they form flowing curves, giving the road a realistic appearance.

After marking the road's centerline, I laid the inner two strips first with the cork's beveled edges facing downward. This will help



David made a simple cardboard template that allowed space for two 12-foot lanes with an additional foot of shoulder space on each side.



To build a base for the road, David laid strips of HO cork over the top of the foam inclines and boards, gluing them in place with more DAP caulk.



Pushpins held the cork strips to the plywood and foam surfaces until the caulk set, particularly through the curve and the approaches to the tracks.

form a smooth, level surface across the entire road. I attached the cork to the foam using latex caulk, but switched to wood glue where the cork was laid directly on top of the plywood at the grade crossing.

Next, I laid the two outer strips with the bevel face up, forming a beginning point for the road's shoulder. I held the curved sections of cork in place with assorted pins until the caulk cured.

As shown in the photo, four strips provided enough space for our road template, while leaving approximately 2 additional scale feet of room on either side of it for the top edge of the ditch, which we later formed with Sculptamold in the next step.



Mix enough water into the Sculptamold until it is the consistency of tuna fish salad. Avoid adding too much water.



David applied the wet Sculptamold to the layout to fill in gaps in the scenery, smooth out sharp edges, and soften the steep slope of the cork roadway.



To smooth the surface of the Sculptamold, David dipped his fingertips in water and then ran them over the scenery, looking for lumps or rough spots.

SCULPTAMOLD

Although I'd shaped the foam using the hot wire cutter, it still had many flat surfaces, hard edges, and gaps between sections. To smooth it all out, Bryson Sleppy and I coated the surface with a papier-mâché product, called Sculptamold, made by American Art and Clay Co. (amaco.com). This is a water-activated modeling material made from paper fiber and plaster. After covering the track with tape and the fascia with wax paper, we mixed the Sculptamold to a pasty consistency (like tuna fish), and then we spread it over the foam. We also used it to form some low hills between the edge of the ridge and the station scene.

Being plaster based, Sculptamold sets up quickly. You only have about 10 minutes of working time, so be sure to mix small batches. As it begins to set up, you can dip your fingers in water and smooth out any lumpy sections you find. Note, we did not put Sculptamold over the cork roadway. I had a different product in mind for that part.

SMOOTH-IT

I gave the Sculptamold a couple of days to dry before continuing on the road project. I picked back up by installing a Blair Line angled wood grade crossing where the road crosses the tracks. This is a laser-cut wood kit that's easy to stain and install on the layout and features etched detail. I stained the parts using India Ink diluted in isopropyl alcohol. Once the stain had dried, I attached the parts to the tops of the ties on the track using a gel-type CA (cyanoacrylate adhesive). After the CA cured, I put painter's tape over the crossing to protect it from the plaster during the road finishing steps.

With the grade crossing in place, I turned my attention to the road's surface. Although cork strips provide a good base for the road, even if you paint them well, they still look like cork strips when you're finished. So, I needed to provide a pavement layer.

I've used both hardboard and styrene for roads before, but this time around I opted for Woodland Scenics' Smooth-It. I used the material on the T-TRAK layout (January 2025 *Model Railroader*), as well as on the Jones Island project (May 2023 MR) to good effect, so I decided to use it here. Smooth-It is a fine plaster that can be applied in thin layers and after sanding, produces a very smooth surface, just as its name implies.

Like Sculptamold, Smooth-It is also water-activated. To color it, I used some Woodland Scenics Earth Colors Slate Gray liquid acrylic pigment, adding it to the plaster while mixing it with water. Don't be too concerned by how dark the material looks when you apply it. As seen in the photos, the pigment in the Smooth-It dries much lighter than it looks when the material is wet. The pigment is there in case the road cracks at some point, as it will prevent the chips from looking like white plaster.

It's almost impossible to apply the plaster in the correct width without using forms. Instead, I simply coated the entire surface of the cork with the smooth it. After the plaster had a couple of hours to cure, I came back with my road template, a hobby knife, and a straight edge to true up the road's shoulders. After scoring the outline on both sides, I used a hobby knife with a No. 17 chisel blade to remove the excess material from the sides. This is far easier to do while the plaster is still green. However, you can make it work after it has hardened, it just takes a lot more effort.

Once the Smooth-It was fully dry, I coated it with more State Gray acrylic pigment diluted 50% with water. I applied it to the plaster surface with a wide foam paintbrush. Be careful to color the entire roadway at the same time and maintain a wet edge when reloading the brush to avoid streaking.

Later, Cody Grivno returned to the road to apply the stripes using paint pens, and I added the railroad crossing pavement markings using an old template we had from S&S Hobbies, now out of production. Cody also added a few places to look like the road had been patched, by masking rectangular areas and painting them with a darker gray acrylic paint.

I completed the road with a light application of dark gray PanPastel weathering pigments in the center of the traffic lanes to represent darkening of the pavement due to vehicle tires.

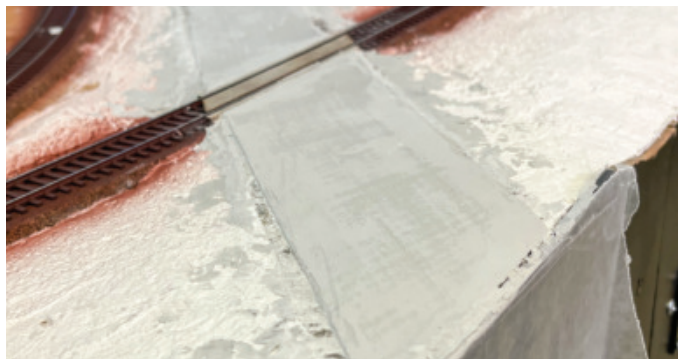
The Smooth-It product worked so well for the road, Cody and I used it again when we made the depot's platform and parking lot.



David used a laser-cut wood HO scale angled grade crossing kit from Blair Line, staining it with India ink and gluing it to the ties of the track with gel-type cyanoacrylate adhesive.



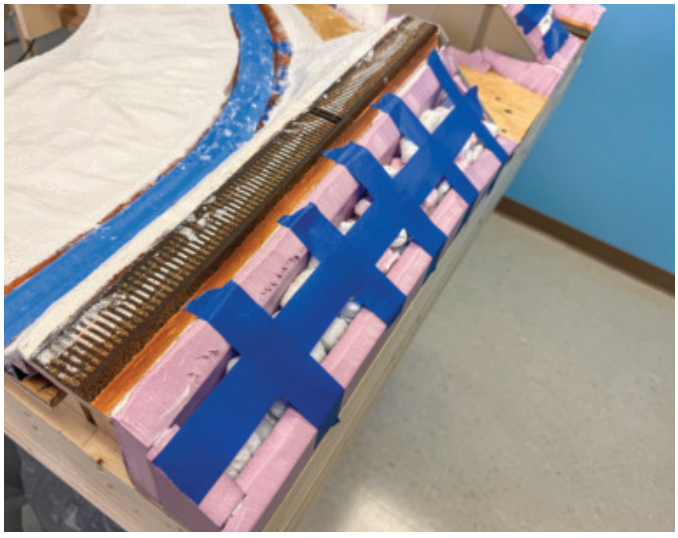
The road's surface is made with Woodland Scenic's Smooth-It plaster tinted with Earth Colors Slate Gray acrylic pigment.



Before the Smooth-It fully hardened, David trimmed the edges using a hobby knife, straight edge, and a second knife with a No. 17 chisel blade to chip away the unwanted plaster.



After the plaster was completely dry, David used a foam paintbrush to apply a diluted coat of Slate Gray pigment to the road's surface.



For large open areas, David surrounded them with 1" foam board, filled the centers with packing peanuts, then applied making tape over the top to hold the peanuts in place.



David used Woodland Scenics plaster cloth to cover the peanuts. After cutting the material into various sized sheets, he dipped them in water and applied them to the layout.

PLASTER AND PEANUTS

Although foam sheets work great for low-relief scenic features, such as the area around our farm, you need to stack up a lot of foam to fill spaces with significant depth or height. For those areas we switched to hardshell scenery.

This technique uses the inherent strength of plaster cloth, a plaster-impregnated gauze, that forms a self-supporting scenery base when applied in two or more layers over simple, lightweight formers, such as cardboard strips, masking tape, or even packing peanuts. The hardshell method is ideal for building embankments, tall hills, and even mountains — any scenic feature where a lot of elevation change is required.

The key to hardshell scenery is that the plaster cloth needs an anchor point on all edges. Attaching it to the plywood subroadbed along the track is a natural starting point, and you can attach it directly to the fascia or backdrop on the other end if you wish. However, in doing so, neither will be removable since it is supporting the plaster cloth.

To keep both of those things removable, I opted to build foam formers along the edges of the fascia and backdrop. After positioning strips of 1" foam along the front edges of the layout and marking the contours of the fascia on them, I cut the formers using the hot wire cutting tool. I then glued them into position with latex caulk. This way, the plaster cloth still follows the contours of the fascia, but is supported by the foam, allowing the fascia to be removed if needed.

To support the plaster cloth until it hardens, I filled the voids in the scenery between foam sections with packing peanuts. I applied strips of masking tape over the top of the peanuts to keep them from shifting. If you wish, you can remove the peanuts later by cutting a hole in the foam formers, and sucking them out with a shop vac, but it really isn't necessary. They don't add significant weight, and they won't absorb moisture like wadded newspaper will.



Learn more about building scenery for the East Troy Industrial Park at Trains.com Video. Members can watch now at www.Trains.com.

I used Woodland Scenics' plaster cloth sheets for the project, cutting some of them in halves and quarters to provide a variety of sizes, making application easier. You can cut the plaster cloth with heavy household scissors, but don't use your good pair — plaster cloth is rough on the blades.

To apply the sheets, fill a flat pan or tray with about an inch of water. You'll want to wear chemical-resistant gloves when working with the material. Take a sheet, quickly dip it in the water just long enough to get both sides wet, then apply it over the tape and peanuts on the layout. Start at the points farthest away from you, as it will prevent you from leaning in the wet plaster. Try to keep each sheet as flat and smooth as possible and avoid wrinkles in the surface as you work. Prepare a second sheet and lay it next to the first with about ½" of overlap along one edge.

Continue working, placing full sheets where possible, and filling in smaller gaps and unusual openings with the smaller pieces. It's OK to overlap significant pieces of plaster cloth as needed.

Once the first layer is complete and is still damp but firm enough to support the weight, apply the second layer. Try to overlap sheets in different places and stagger the seams. Also, be careful not to introduce large air pockets between the layers as these degrade the integrity of the hardshell surface.

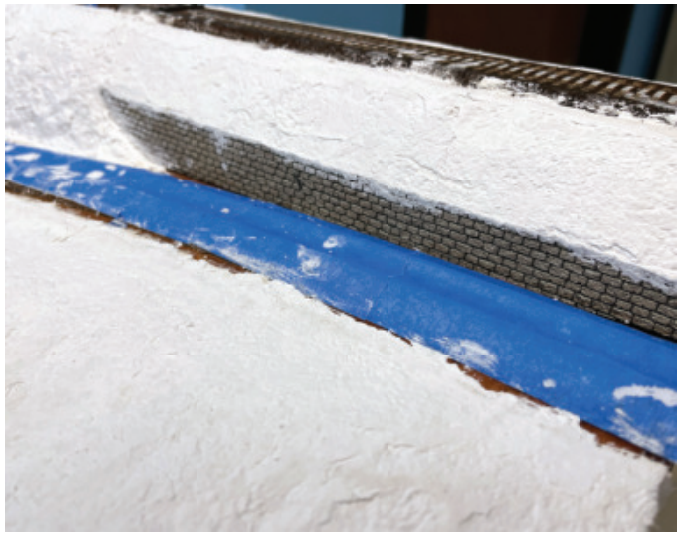
After the second layer is applied, wet your gloved fingers with water and smooth out the joints, air pockets, and wrinkles that you find. Then clean up your tools and let it all dry completely — usually 24-48 hours is good.

The plaster cloth forms a hard surface when fully dry. However, you'll notice that it also has a lot of tiny holes in it. While you can attempt to paint it and apply your scenery materials directly over the top, those holes have a pesky way of showing through the finished scenery.

Instead, much like the foam board scenery I've already shown, you will be better served by applying a thin layer of Sculptamold over the plaster cloth surface. This will not only fill the tiny holes, it will also add



When applying plaster cloth sheets, it's important that they have a solid top and bottom edge to attach to, and that you overlap the seams by a half inch or more.



Once the plaster cloth was dry, David filled in the tiny holes, as well as covered over seams and wrinkles, with more Sculptamold. The retaining wall is a foam product.

extra strength to the scenic base, and provide better hold for things like utility poles and trees.

This time around, mix the Sculptamold with a bit more water, making it more like oatmeal or thick yogurt than tuna fish. Also, avoid applying the wet Sculptamold directly to the dry plaster cloth. The dry plaster surface will leach the water out of the Sculptamold before it has a chance to complete its chemical reaction. Use a misting bottle and wet the plaster cloth first. You don't need to soak the gauze; just make the surface damp.

After misting an area, smooth the Sculptamold over the top. Gloved hands work the best for this, and be sure to keep rinsing off the plaster. Once it starts to set on the gloves, it can crumble into your work.

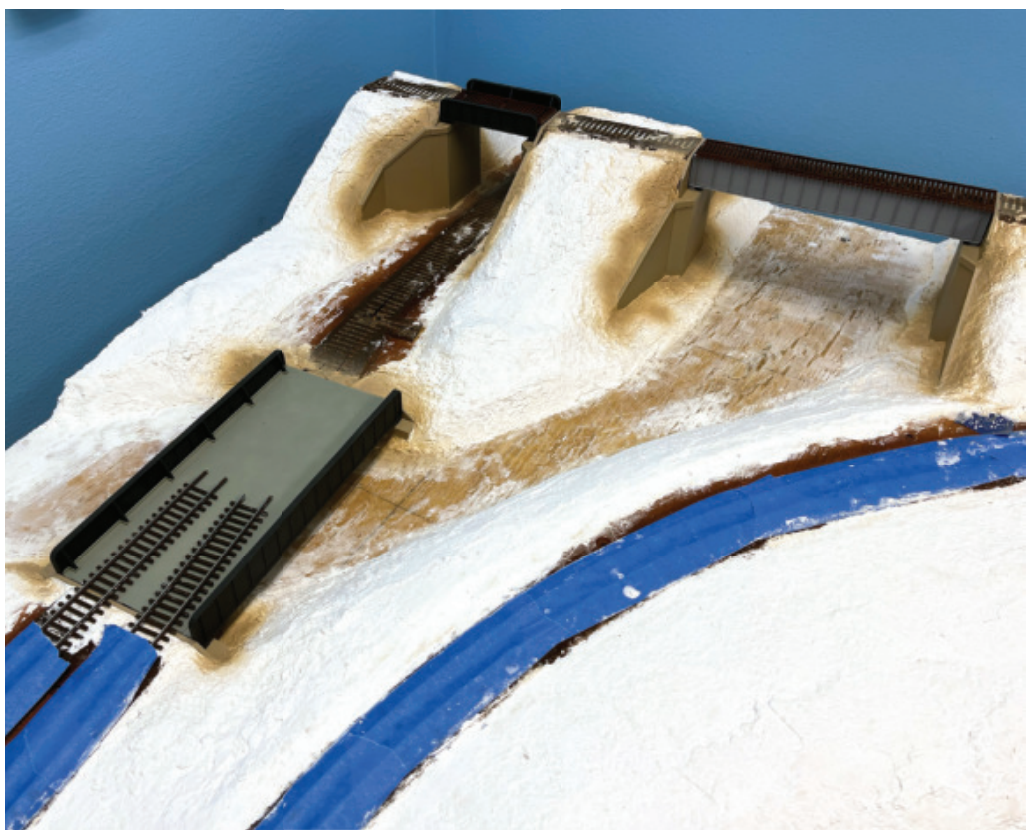
Like before, if you want to add scenic features, such as small hills, this is the time to do it. Also, if you want to add rock castings, glue them to the plaster cloth before applying the Sculptamold.

I added a foam retaining wall along one section of the Canadian National main line, installing it before the plaster cloth.

MAKING PROGRESS

Whether you use the foam board or hardshell techniques or a combination of the two as we did here, both are easy to do and provide good results. They also can be altered, simply by adding more material on top or by cutting pieces away as needed. Both are flexible scenery systems that have a proven track record and have been used by model railroaders for many years.

By now, our East Troy layout has some real topography to it, including roads, a railroad embankment, and a shallow riverbed. It also looks a lot like a layout in a snowstorm, as it's covered in a large amount of white plaster. But before we dig into the basic scenery layers, including dirt and grass, we need to apply the photo backdrop. We'll cover that project next issue! MR



In this view, the bridge abutments are in place and scenic base is ready for the finish scenery step, which we'll cover in a future issue.



Mike Tylick, a popular *Model Railroader* author for more than 40 years, shares his techniques for making O scale lumber bunks from basswood and stripwood. Though he initially needed the bunks to detail an industry on his On30 Marshfield & Old Colony RR, he also used them as freight car loads and lineside details. Photos by the author

Quick and easy LUMBER BUNKS

A fresh take on techniques published in MR more than 65 years ago

By Mike Tylick

During the COVID pandemic, a few friends and I escaped a little by carefully meeting bi-weekly for a pizza lunch and to talk about model railroading. At one of our lunch gatherings, we decided to do a joint build — all four of us would assemble the same kit and compare what we did.

A recent effort had us each build the Crown Crate kit from Bar Mills Scale Model Works. The lumber shed required bunks of lumber, more than what was included with the kit. Instead of turning to commercial offerings, I made my own using basswood and stripwood.

My inspiration for modeling the lumber bunks came from Aaron G. Fryer's three-part series "Lineside lumber yard" published in the May through July 1960 issues of *Model Railroader*. I've used Aaron's techniques, outlined in part two of the series, many times over the years. Unfortunately, to my knowledge, I have not seen his easy-to-follow techniques published since they first appeared in the magazine more than 65 years ago.

In addition to populating the lumber shed, I've used the bunks as freight car loads and lineside details on my On30 Marshfield & Old Colony. If you're looking for a fun workbench project, consider making some lumber bunks using the techniques outlined here.

Step 1 BUILDING THE BASSWOOD BASES

I started work on the lumber bunks by cutting 1/32" basswood strips into pieces 3 scale feet wide x 8 scale feet long. Those dimensions can be modified as needed. Likewise, the thickness of the basswood can be changed to represent different sizes of dimensional lumber.

In earlier eras unwrapped lumber was commonly carried in boxcars and hand stacked when stored in lumber sheds. To represent unevenly aligned ends, I cut a few nicks into the ends of the basswood strips. A razor saw, triangle file, or miniature table or band saw can all be used for this task.

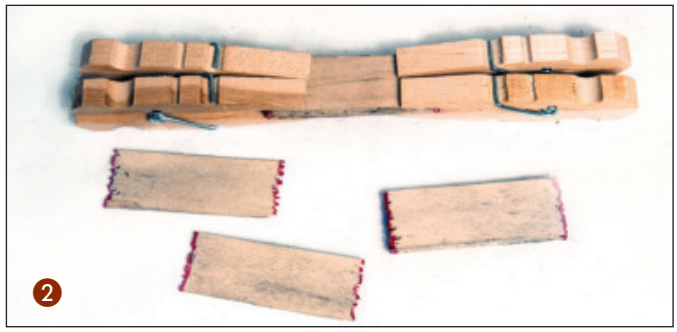
Though the lumber is new, the raw basswood looked too pale for me. A light India ink and alcohol wash darkened the material to my satisfaction.


1

Step 1 BUILDING THE BASSWOOD BASES (CONT'D)

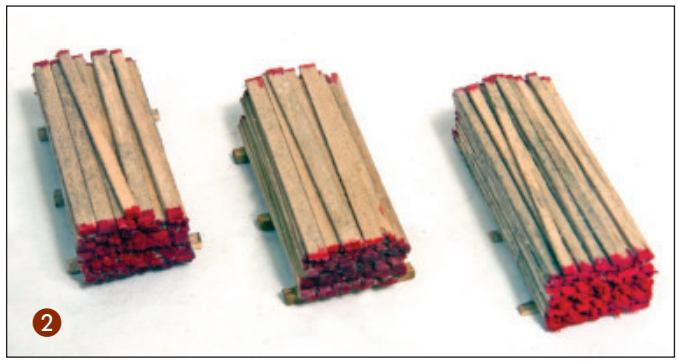
The ends of construction-grade lumber were often painted with a combination of paint and oil to prevent moisture from wicking into the wood. Different colors could indicate different lumber thickness, but sawmills didn't follow a common standard. I added this detail using felt-tip markers and paint pens. You can see examples of the stained basswood strips with painted ends in 1 on the previous page.

With the basswood strips finished, I glued them together. Modified clothespins — I'll share more on that topic in step 3 — made excellent clamps to hold the strips together while the glue dried 2.


2

Step 2 FINISHING OFF THE BUNKS, BOARD BY BOARD


1


2

After stacking the basswood strips to the desired height, I finished the lumber bunks with individual pieces of stripwood. An in-progress photo of stripwood being added to a bunk is shown in 1. As you can see above, I used felt-tip markers and paint pens to color the ends of the boards.

The stripwood can be added to the top layer of the bunk neatly, or you can have a few pieces askew to make it look as though some boards have been removed. Another optional detail is to put spacers under the bottom of the bunk. See 2 for some examples. Taller bunks may have additional spacers at intervals throughout the pile.

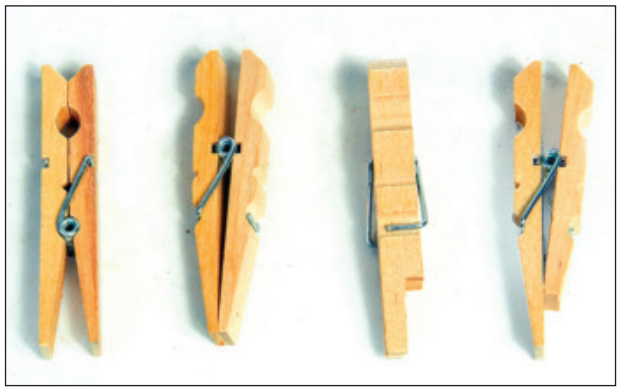
Finish-quality lumber typically doesn't have painted ends and is generally stored indoors. Examples of some finish-quality lumber bunks are shown on my On30 Marshfield & Old Colony RR in 3. Since the model is a cutaway cross section at the front edge of the layout, the bunks are cut in half at the fascia.


3

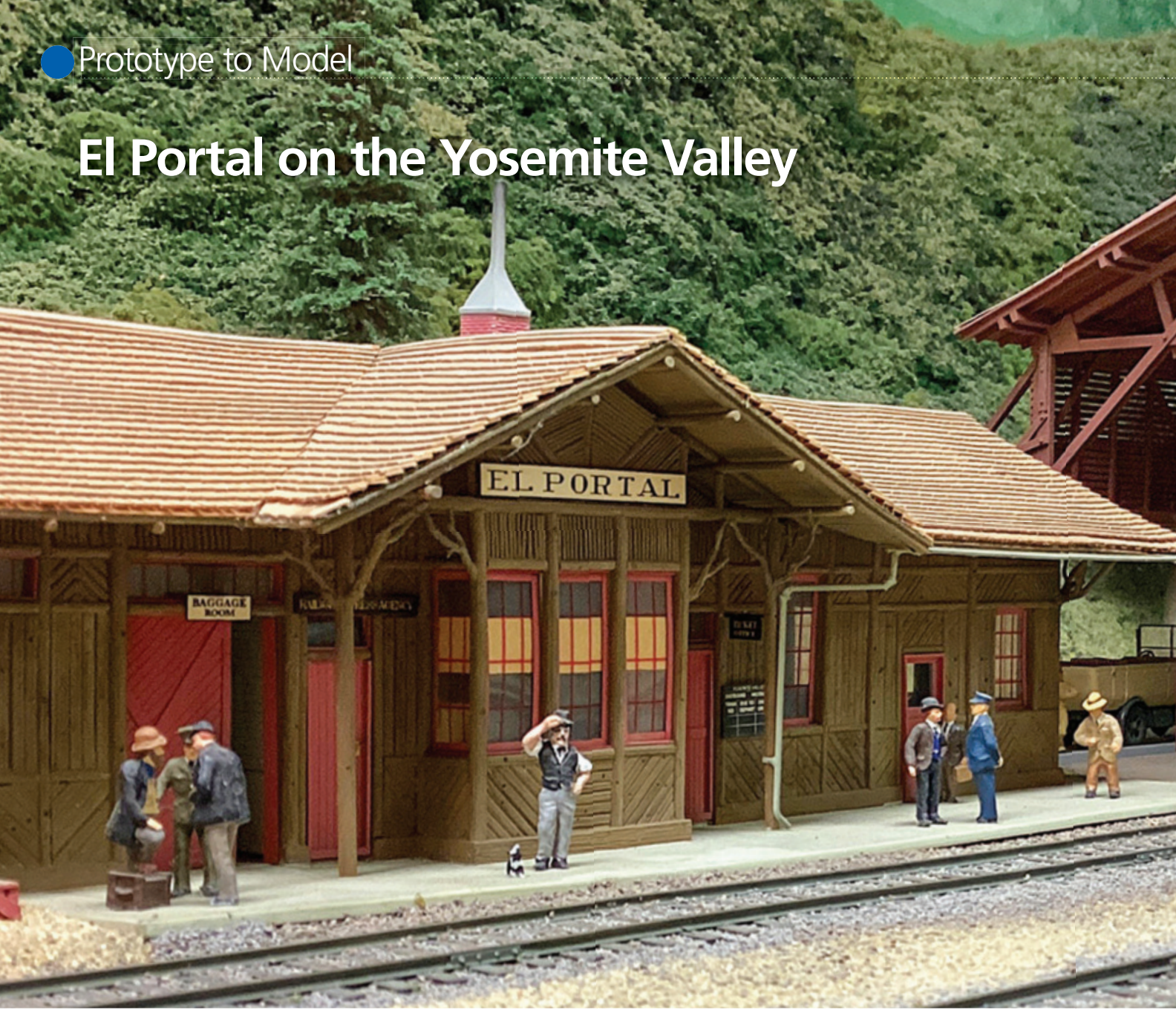
Step 3 QUICK AND EASY CLAMPS

As you saw in step 1, I used modified clothespins as clamps to hold the basswood together when constructing the lumber bunks. If I remember correctly, I first read about these homemade clamps in the tips column of *Model Trains*, a magazine formerly produced by Kalmbach Publishing Co.

The adjacent photo shows, from left, a stock clothespin and one that has been inverted. I've made modifications to the design along the way. For tight spaces, I cut the jaws roughly in half parallel with the edges, as shown third from left. For situations where I want the clamp to be placed closer to the object's center, I shorten one of the legs, as seen at right. MR



El Portal on the Yosemite Valley



The Yosemite Valley Railroad ran from the town of Merced, in the Central Valley of California, to what became El Portal at the western boundary of Yosemite National Park. The station at El Portal, shown opposite, was designed by civil engineer G.H. Nickerson, who had established the route for the YVRR tracks and who also oversaw the construction of the line. The design of the exterior of the El Portal station featured unique patterns of natural incense cedar bark and pine branches.

In the early 1920s, a 125-foot-long trainshed was built adjacent to the station. The trainshed provided room for a Pullman car and the YVRR observation car to be parked in the shade during the hot summer days so the cars would be comfortable for passengers returning from the park. Passengers wanting to board the train waited in the train shed.

Decades ago, I was given a copy of the drawing for this station and the original drawing that had been signed by Mr. Nickerson, which confirmed that it was used for the construction of the building. I scratchbuilt this model of the station entirely from styrene based on that drawing. The texture of strips of styrene used to duplicate the wood siding was crafted by scratching the surface of the material with a wire brush.

I originally planned to have the roof of the station removable to be able to show the inside of the building and to score more model contest points. I actually modeled the different rooms including details such as tables and chairs. But the removable roof didn't work out as I'd hoped, so it was finally glued to the rest of the model.

Prototype photos of the YVRR station at El Portal, Calif., showed that the doors and windows were painted red while the decorative wood sections were left unpainted. That meant that the entire station needed to be painted with brushes rather than an airbrush. MR

Jack Burgess has been modeling the Yosemite Valley as it appeared in August 1939. He started constructing the railroad in early 1980 and considered it finished in June 2011. Jack is making arrangements to donate it to the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento, Calif.

By Jack Burgess



Send us your scenes

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

Jack Burgess scratchbuilt this HO model of the Yosemite Valley's El Portal, Calif., station and trainshed. As in the prototype photo, that's YVRR coach 302, which Jack also scratchbuilt, under the shed. Jack Burgess photo

The Yosemite Valley's east end was at this station and trainshed at El Portal, Calif., on the western edge of Yosemite Valley National Park. The car under the train shed is YVRR coach 302. Note the peeled bark on the sides of the station. Al Rose photo, Jack Burgess collection





An Erie class L-1 articulated camelback 0-8-8-0, No. 2601, is shuffling cars to drop at the New Jersey Zinc plant at Palmerton, Pa., on the West Island Model Railroad Club's HO scale layout. The 2601 is a NJ Custom Brass import in which photographer Vincent Lee added DCC sound, then painted and weathered. The zinc plant was built using Walthers modular wall sections.



Lakeside Lines train 61, bound for Detroit, is moving slowly as it eases onto the second main as it leads its train through the town of North Franklin. The 1036 is a Walthers Proto 2000 Electro-Motive Division GP30 still in L&N paint, but picked up by the Lakeside Lines RR from the lease marketplace. The trees were built using Scenic Express SuperTree material. The Lakeside Lines was featured in the November 2010 issue of *Model Railroader*. Tom Harris photo



A Boston & Main Budd RDC, on loan to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, crosses the road as another MBTA Budd car enters the scene. Joe Uzzo Jr. photographed the scene on his HO scale layout built with help from Peter Porrazzo with scene ideas by his father Joe Uzzo Sr.



An A-B-A set of Electro-Motive Division F3s awaits its next assignment at Mary's Landing on Sigbjørn Andersen's HO scale NorthWestern Pacific RR. His freelanced model railroad is set at the northwest corner of the United States, near the Canadian border. Sigbjørn painted and superdetailed the old Stewart/Kato locomotives for his layout in Norway.
Sigbjørn Andersen photo

Send us your photos

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

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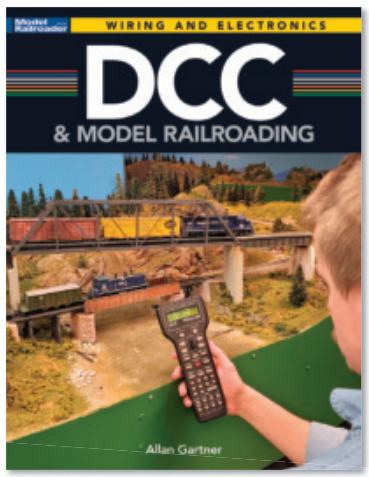
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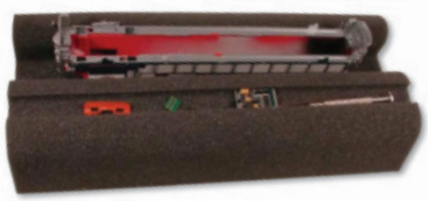
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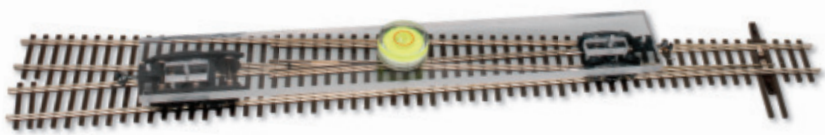












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Schedule of Events Rate: $45 per issue (55 word maximum). Ads will contain the following information about the event: state, city, sponsoring organization and name of event, meet, auction or show, dates, location, times, admission fee, name and/or telephone number and/or email of person to contact for information. Name, daytime telephone number and street address of the person providing the information is also required but need not be included in the ad. Unless otherwise requested, ads will be published in the issue month that the event occurs in. Please specify issue date(s). **Word Ad Rates;** per issue: 1 insertion — $2.03 per word, 6 insertions — $1.89 per word, 12 insertions — $1.77 per word. $40.00 MINIMUM per ad. To receive the discount you must order and prepay for all ads at one time. Count all initials, single numbers, groups of numbers (i.e. 4-6-0 or K-27), names, address number, street number, street name, city, state, zip, phone numbers each as one word. Example: John A. Jones, 2102 South Post St., Waukesha, WI 53187 would count as 10 words. For MR's private records, please furnish: a telephone number and, when using a P.O. Box in your ad, a street address. *Model Railroader* reserves the right to refuse listing. **All Copy:** Set in standard 6 point type. First several words only set in bold face. If possible, ads should be sent typewritten and categorized to ensure accuracy.

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All ads must be prepaid prior to or by Ad Closing Date and pertain to the subject of model railroading. We accept payments by securely storing your Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover card information

Schedule of Events

AZ, GLENDALE: ARHS Model Train Swap Meet. Glendale Christian Church, 9661 North 59th Ave., Glendale, AZ 85302. Saturday, May 9, 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

CO, DENVER: Rocky Mountain Train Show. April 11-12, 2026. National Western Complex, 4655 Humboldt St., Denver, CO 80216. Saturday, 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 9:00am-4:00pm. 3 acres of model trains, all scales, 30 layouts, 900 sales tables, clinics and more. Admission $16.00, under 12/scouts in uniform FREE. Discounted tickets available for military/first responders through VetTix.org. Free Parking. 303-364-0274, www.RockyMountainTrainShow.com

GA, SAVANNAH: Coastal Rail Buffs 37th Annual Model Railroad and Train Show at Pooler Recreation Center, 900 S. Rogers St., Pooler, GA 31322. April 11-12, 2026, Saturday 10:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 10:00am-4:00pm. Adults 2-day admission $10.00; Students/Seniors $7.00, Active-Duty Military $5.00, under 12 FREE. Dealer tables, operating layouts in O, HO, N, G, Z. Visit: www.coastalrailbuffs.com

IL, COLLINSVILLE: 19th Annual St. Louis Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet. Gateway Convention Center, 1 Gateway Dr., Collinsville, IL 62234. July 23-25, 2026. Friday 9:00am-9:00pm and Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm. Admission: $35.00 for both days; $25.00 for Saturday only. Thursday & Friday, 6:00pm-10:00pm layout tours, operating sessions and social gatherings. For information, www.stlrpm.com or Contact: Lonnie Bathurst, bathurst@litchfieldil.com or 217-556-0314

IL, URBANA: Lincoln Square Train Show, 100 W. High St, Urbana, IL 61801. March 28-29, 2026. Saturday, 8am-5pm, Sunday 11am-4pm. Hosted by Illinois Terminal Division, NMRA. FREE public admission. Railroadiana and historical societies. Freemo and T-track set-up and run. Free parking and wheelchair accessible. In memorial Rick Schroeder RIP. Vendor table info at: https://www.illinoisterminaldivision.org/show/show.htm

NC, RALEIGH: Neuse River Valley Model RR Club 9th annual SPRING INTO TRAINS Show. NEW DATES: May 23-24, Sat 9-5; Sun 10-4. Larger venue: Graham Building at NC State Fairgrounds. 400 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

NJ, EAST RUTHERFORD: METCA/NYSME All Gauge Train Show. April 11, 2026. St. Joseph's School, 120 Hoboken Road, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. 9am-2pm. METCA/NYSME members admitted free at 8am, public at 9am. Admission: $5.00 per person 16 and up. Layouts, refreshments, and door prizes. For tables and information, contact the NYSME Office at 201-939-9212 or email: contact@modelengineers.org

NJ, WAYNE: ECTP and Collectibles LLC presents The Wayne Train Show. P.A.L. Hall, 1 Pal Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Sunday, March 22, 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 Wayne Show.

NY, HAMBURG: TCA Upstate NY Chapter Toy Train and Collectible Toy Show! St. Marys of the Lake Church Hall, 4737 Lakeshore Rd. (Rt. 5), Hamburg, NY 14075. Saturday, March 28, 2026. TCA Members: 8:30am, General Public: 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: Adult $5.00, Children 12-17 $3.00, Upstate Chapter Members & children under 12, free. Tables are $20. Dave: 716-208-5842, Email: tca.upstatenychapter.events@gmail.com

OK, GREATER TULSA AREA Train Show. April 24-25. Rhema Ninowski Recreation Center, 1367 West Kenosha, Broken Arrow, OK. Friday April 24, 5-7PM; Saturday April 25, 9AM-3PM. Admission: $10 per adult, kids 12 and under free w/paid adult. Operating Layouts, Door Prizes, Concessions. Over 100 vendors tables. Presented by Heartland Toy Train Association. www.HeartlandToyTrains.org

PA, HAWLEY: Model Train Show & Sale. Hawley Fire Department, 17 Columbus Ave., Hawley, PA 18428. Sunday, April 12, 2026, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission $3.00, under 12 free with adult. Bill Delling, 618 Fern St., Hawley, PA 18428, 570-226-3206.

WA, CHEHALIS: Lewis County Model Railroad Club, Annual Spring Train Show and Swap Meet. Southwest Washington Fair Grounds, Blue Pavilion Building, 2555 N. National Ave., Chehalis, WA 98532. April 11 & 12, 2026. Saturday 10:00am-4:00pm and Sunday 10:00am-2:00pm. Admission $5.00. Free parking. Contact information: Ted, 360-985-7788, or email: TedsTrains@LewisCounty.com

WA, LONGVIEW: April 25, 2026 LK&R Model Railroad Club presents our Spring 2026 Model Train and Toy Swap Meet. Cowlitz County Event Center, 1900 7th Ave. 10am-3pm. 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 Spring Model Train Show, Spokane Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana. Sunday, March 8, 2026, 9:30am-3:30pm. Admission: adults $8, 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 shirley@busnws.com

WI, LA CROSSE / ONALASKA: La Crosse & Three Rivers Railroad Club's 45th Annual Model Railroad Show. Omni Center, 255 Riders Club Road, Onalaska, WI 54650. March 14-15, 2026. Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 10:00am-3:00pm. Adults $8.00, $7.50 with a non-perishable food item, 2-day pass $12.00, children 11 and under free w/adult. Info: Belva Thompson, 608-780-7364

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

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Model Railroader MAGAZINE



Next Issue

Preserving history

An offer to build a diorama for the Eagle River, Wis., historical society resulted in a 4 x 18-foot layout depicting the town in 1910.

Scenic Express heads to Chattanooga, Tenn.

Bill Orman's HO scale Norfolk Southern New Holland Division is one of the layouts you can visit this summer at the National Model Railroad Association convention in Chattanooga. See you there!

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By Tony Koester

Rethinking the operations paradigm



Would you dismantle this gorgeously detailed, finely tuned Colorado & Southern layout for no other reason than it had reached a mature state of completion and greener pastures beckoned? That's why it was built, and that's why it was recently dismantled. Doug Tagsold photo

One has to be careful about one-size-fits-all panaceas. They're sort of like universal solvents: They seem like a great idea until you try to figure out what to store them in. One such panacea I've long espoused is the premise that if you design your railroad to accommodate realistic operation, which means adequate passing tracks, passive staging or active fiddle yards, etc., it will provide a lifetime of fulfilling enjoyment when the construction and model building phases are complete.

I'm not so sure about that anymore. Maybe it's time for a paradigm shift.

As the hobby continues to advance, there is evidence that the model building aspects of it constitute a stronger influence than I had assumed. A number of veteran modelers with perfectly good model railroads are replacing them or building second layouts. The reasons vary, relocations being a primary one, but I think there's a central force at work here.

One of the most prolific model railroad builders I know is Doug Tagsold. When I first met Doug decades ago, he had a basement filled with a combination of the Denver & Rio Grande Western's Moffat line and the Joint Line south to Pueblo, Colo., in HO scale. Next time I visited, the lower-deck Joint Line had been replaced by the Denver Belt to provide more industrial switching. A third visit found me dispatching his new On3 D&RGW Silverton line out of Durango in a reclaimed basement space in an adjoining building most of us would die for. (We might have to; it was in the basement of the mortuary Doug operated!) Another visit found Doug in a new home on the north side of town running a Toledo belt line in HO. My last visit was to operate his unique version of the Colorado & Southern in 1:72. Rumor has it that another visit would find yet a totally different railroad occupying the same footprint.

One might get the impression that Doug enjoys building model railroads as much or more than he likes to operate them.

Doug is among the most proficient layout builders the hobby has ever seen. But his mindset is not unique. Once a railroad is what we might reasonably called "finished," rather than letting it gather dust between weekly or monthly operating sessions, an increasing number of us are finding ways to enjoy the model building aspects of the hobby. In some cases, like Doug, we tear down the railroad and start anew.

I did that when the Allegheny Midland reached the quarter-century mark. In other cases — Tom Johnson's Cass County short line comes to mind — the builder takes a hard look at what has worked and what hasn't and makes tweaks or wholesale changes. Tom revised trackage, added staging, replaced large industries to create more negative (open) space between intensively detailed areas, and so on. He even changed road names a few times over the years.

Tom's friend Tom Klimoski, another shortline modeler, is building a new layout. He's obviously enjoyed the Georgia Northeastern tremendously, but perhaps all the bells have been rung and whistles blown, and it's time to start anew. We look forward to sharing both Toms' future updates with you.

When my old friend Bill Darnaby told me the Maumee Route had officially been declared finished, I asked him what he was going to do with his newfound spare time. He had started out modeling Monon diesel power when he was a member of the Purdue and Batavia model railroad clubs, only to discover that diesel consists' ability to pull longer trains drastically cut the number of trains the Monon had to operate. His interest in timetable and train-order operation was blossoming, and this finding was bad news.

But good Monon steam was not yet available, so he built the proto-freelanced Maumee Route. Today, a Monon steam roster is attainable, and Bill has been acquiring and detailing enough steam power for the roster to almost have reached critical mass. But where to run it?

That's a very interesting question. If I hear anything, I'll let you know. MR



...THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE MODEL BUILDING ASPECTS OF [THE HOBBY] CONSTITUTE A STRONGER INFLUENCE THAN I HAD ASSUMED. — TONY



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