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MARCH 2025 | FREE

MRH

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- Siskiyou Line 2 layout update
- Brad Joseph's Union Pacific
- Vintage Steam Loco Handbook

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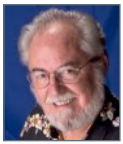

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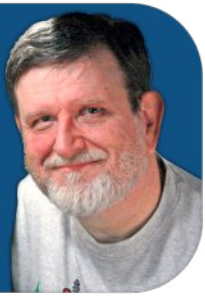


Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2025

JOE FUGATE GIVES THE LATEST ON SISKIYOU LINE 2, PLUS MORE ON OUR NEW *WHO'S WHO IN MODEL RAILROADING* BOOK ...

VIEW READER COMMENTS

THINGS ARE STARTING TO HAPPEN REGARDING SISKIYOU LINE 2, SO IT'S TIME FOR AN UPDATE. The largest impediment to starting Siskiyou Line 2 has been selling a piece of bare land we own here in the Tulsa area. The real estate market for bare land has been dead here in Oklahoma since 2022.

Things are starting to pop here in 2025 now that spring is here. We currently have three different parties expressing interest in our land and I'm hoping that means one (or more) of them will make us an offer. That will give us the funds we need to stand up our prefab steel outbuilding on a concrete slab next to our manufactured home.

Originally I was planning something like a 30x60 building with a garage, MRH office, *TMTV* studio, workshop, and layout space. Now that I'm planning on selling *MRH* by 2030 or so (we've been talking to interested parties), I will not have a huge need for *MRH* or *TMTV* space. In the meantime, we have four bedrooms in our MF home, so I can repurpose one of them for an *MRH* office/*TMTV* studio for a few more years.

Prices have gone up on prefab steel buildings since 2022 when I was first looking, so I've decided to downsize the plans to a

24 x 50 prefab steel building instead [1], with space for just a garage and layout, with a bit of space at one end of the garage for a workshop and a half bath.

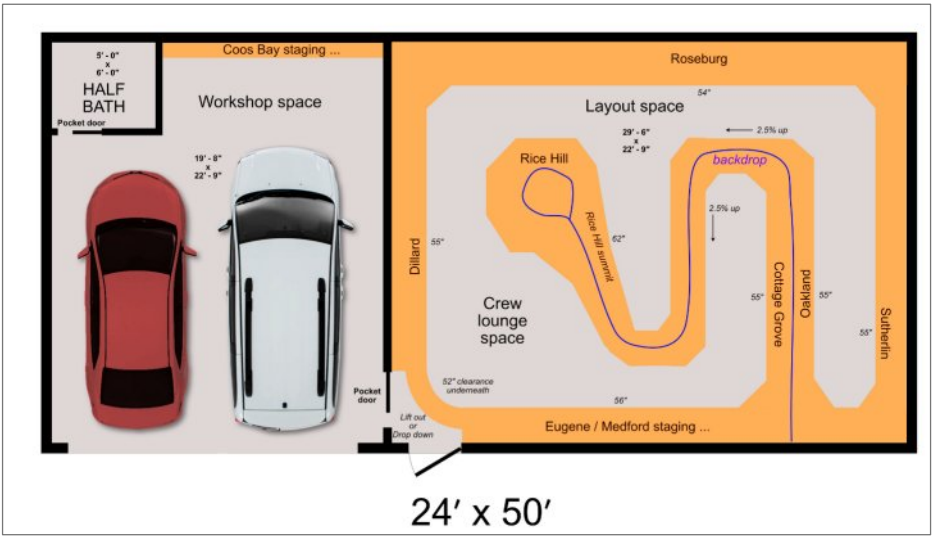
Pushing restart on the Siskiyou Line

Ever since I dismantled Siskiyou Line 1 (SL1), I've become quite excited about the opportunity to build a second iteration of my Siskiyou Line, which I'm calling Siskiyou Line 2 (SL2).

The new layout will follow the same basic concept as SL1 – modeling the prototype Southern Pacific Siskiyou Line through southwestern Oregon in the 1980s.

The approach I'm taking this time is to build SL2 as a TOMA sectional home layout. With TOMA (**T**he "**O**ne **M**odule" **A**pproach), I can build and finish each layout section as I go. TOMA includes the notion that as you finish a module section, you put it into the layout room and hang temporary staging off each end.

Then you run trains on it – no need to wait for a huge room full of benchwork to finally be finished to have op sessions.



1. Siskiyou Line 2 updated plan as of March 2025.

Publisher's musings | 3

I started SL1 in 1991 and a lot of cool developments in the hobby have occurred since then. I'm quite excited about updating my layout building methods with techniques that just were not available back in the 1990s.

New SL2 layout building methods

Besides the obvious difference with building a layout using TOMA versus more traditional monolithic fill-the-room layout building approach, there's a number of exciting new methods in the hobby that I can't wait to take advantage of.

Better turnouts: While handlaying your turnouts has always been an option, for me the cut-and-fit in place method has always been painfully slow. Thanks to new developments like Fast Tracks jigs and the new Central Valley tie strips, I have a leg up on building spot-on-spec turnouts that perform flawlessly.

For SL1, I caved and used a mixture of commercial turnouts because cut-and-fit handlay in place was just too time consuming. Due to mass production batch variations, one commercial turnout may be in spec and the next one out of spec.

I discuss this in my Run like a Dream: Trackwork book and I show how to check and upgrade out-of-compliance commercial turnouts. Ironically, it's not that much harder to just build an in-spec turnout using the Central Valley turnout tie strips and the Fast Track filing jigs.

The resulting "poor man's jig turnouts" look fantastic [2] and they're spot on the NMRA turnout specs. The tie strips provide slots for the track that make things so much easier. You can check out my September 2011 *MRH* article on how to build these great looking and performing turnouts.

When I laid the track on SL1 from 1991-1995, the Central Valley turnout tie strips nor the Fast Tracks jigs existed as an option. Central Valley introduced the turnout tie strips in 1996 and Fast Tracks opened for business in 2003. Prior to that it was handlay or commercial, that was it.

2. Central Valley turnout tie strip "Poor Man's jig-built" turnout. Not only do they look fantastic, they perform flawlessly.

More turnout control options: Back in the 1990s, your turnout control options were pretty much Tortoises or Caboose Industries manual ground throws.

In recent years, the commercial turnout standard has been center-

over-spring points that you can finger flick.

On SL1, I developed a method of using 2" door bolts along the fascia to throw the turnouts. Since all the turnouts on the real Siskiyou Line are manual switch stands, that worked okay, but folks would sometimes have to hunt for the right doorbolt on the fascia.

Once I was able to get past using skewers to reach into a scene and uncouple cars wherever just like the prototype, the notion of reaching into the scene to throw a finger-flicking points turnout just makes all kinds of sense to me.

No confusion which turnout is being thrown!

However, since I'm building my own turnouts, I would have to add my own center-over-springs for point control. Someone on the MRH forum wondered if the repelling force of rare earth magnets could be used to make center-over finger flicking points.

I built a test instance and what do you know, it works! See my article in the May 2022 Running Extra for details on how to build these magnet-controlled points.

So SL2 will have finger-flicking points controlled by rare earth magnets. Rare earth magnets were not really a thing back in the 1990s when I was building SL1. Yet another modern technological development that's helping SL2 be start-of-the-art.

LED strip lights: SL1 used 15W and 25W incandescent light bulbs every two feet to light the layout. Even with such a low wattage, I needed 2800 watts of light bulbs to light the layout.

Those incandescents, even low-wattage ones, gave off a notable amount of heat. During a 4-hour op session, the room might go up 10 degrees in temperature!

Enter LED strip lights for SL2. A fifteen foot strip might be 6 or 7 watts and put out more lumens than those incandescent lights ever did. Had LED strip lights been available, I could have lit the entire SL1 with less than 100 watts of light.

SL2 will use LED strip lights and they won't break the bank. They can all be on a single circuit with plenty of amps left over. I'm thinking I will use LED puck lights for the layout room itself (over the aisles) and then put some switched outlets in the ceiling for use by the LED strip power supplies. That way I can control the entire layout room lighting with one wall switch.

These are a few of the new hobby tech developments that will make SL2 so much more fun to build and operate. I could write several more editorials on even more new developments I'm planning to incorporate into SL2 that didn't even exist when SL1 was built.

Our new *Who's Who in Model Railroading* book

We have a new book on Who's Who in the hobby from Richard Bale and it's available in eBook, paperback, or hardbound.

I've always felt honored that Richard Bale approached me about being our news editor back in the early days of *MRH*. Richard has a long history in the hobby that goes back into the middle of the 20th Century and he has known some of the greats.

For example, Richard actually roomed with John Allen one year at the National Convention. He was good friends with folks like Whit

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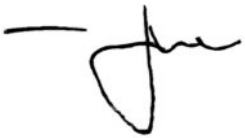
Towers, Cliff Grandt, and Jim Findley – they called him "the kid" - how about that!

I have been asking Richard to somehow document all this historical hobby knowledge in book form and he came up with his *Who's Who in Model Railroading.*

If you've been in the hobby like me since the 1960s, you will find the information in Richard's book to be enlightening and entertaining. It's also helps answer the question of, "I wonder what ever happened to ___" in the hobby.

Or if you're relatively new to the hobby, Richard's book will help you realize how far we've come and who we have to thank for it.

Consider picking up a copy of *Who's Who in Model Railroading* from the MRH Store today! ☑



Last issue likes

Most liked articles in **February 2025 issue** of *MRH* are:

1st NPSF revives rail service over the Raton Line
2nd Electrical Impulses: Control 27 things with one input
3rd Publisher's Musings: Need help with Shenware

Most liked articles in **February 2025 issue** of *Running Extra* ...

1st Publisher's Welcome: All-Wago layout wiring
2nd Modeling water with self-leveling epoxy
3rd Getting Real: 10 lbs of ops on a 5 lb layout: 3

If you want more of this type article, then like the article! Click the *Give us a like* or *comments* button on each article and press the like button on the article's forum page if you want to see more articles like these. ■

Best of the MRH FORUM

Forum MRH mrhmag.com THIS MONTH

Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2025

Compiled by JOE FUGATE

Painting window and door trim

VIEW READER COMMENTS

MRH forum member **sbird** (Bob L.) asked MRH forum members for advice on how to get nice, neat paint lines on structure trim like the photo he posted (above).

Folks posted a lot of suggestions from using quality brushes to using a lighted desk magnifier (with links on where to buy), and more.

One interesting suggestion is to paint the entire structure the window and door trim color first, then hand paint the wall color using a good brush and slightly thinned paint. See the full thread for details!

View the full blog on the MRH website

▶ *MRH'S* MONTHLY GREAT MODELER POSTS

1. *MRH* Author **Charlie Duckworth** kitbashed a Walthers Ford Headquarters structure kit into this government building for his layout.

Kitbash a government building

MRH Author **Charlie Duckworth** recently posted an interesting discussion of how he kitbashed a Walthers Ford Headquarters kit into a nice government building [1].

"Since Jefferson City is Missouri's capital, I wanted to add at least one government style building on city scene I'm working on. The Walthers Ford Headquarters was 'close enough'. Built it out of box but left off the small structure that sat on the roof, filling in the opening with styrene. Looking at photos of the real Mo State Highway Dept building on google maps and vintage postcards, I scribed in various stones to give the building more detail. "

Charlie then goes on to describe in more detail how he detailed and weathered the building. Read the full thread for more!

View the full thread on the MRH website

2. *MRH* forum member **kirkifer** (Kirk W.) asked about where to get larger ship models for a port terminal and he posted this photo of a 1:87 container ship model done by a gentleman who calls himself Dirtspot (he's not on the forum).

Ship models for a port terminal

MRH forum member **kirkifer** (Kirk W.) started a thread discussing where you can find ship models for a larger port terminal scene on a layout.

Kirk says, "My railroad terminates at a large port. I need ships and apart from the ridiculous priced Sylvan models, or the Walthers tug and carfloat, or the couple of Lindberg models, I was stuck with photos or empty docks. Then I found an ebay listing for HO scale ships (gives link)."

Kirk says he talked to the eBay fellow and found out more information. Kirk mentions the eBay models are highly compressed – to demonstrate, he posted a photo of an HO scale model of a "smaller" container ship [2] made by a fellow who calls himself Dirtspot. Read the full thread for more ...

View the full thread on the *MRH* website

Recent photo fun thread

These images posted on a recent *MRH* forum Photo Fun thread show some great modeling of the prototype.

View list of recent Photo Fun threads

3. *MRH* Editor emeritus **Charlie Comstock** posted this "futuristic" shot of his Bear Creek layout with a modern diesel approaching Baynes Creek trestle. Visiting power, courtesy of Paul Mack (**kjd** on the *MRH* forum).

4. **Charlie Comstock** also posted this dramatic shot of the same train rounding the curve at Oak Hill Summit just as the last light of day disappears. Charlie models the 1950s, so this modern power is out of place timewise on his layout. That doesn't prevent Charlie from having some photo fun however. Nice!

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Getting started with realistic ops: determining what trains to run, part 4

Last time we discussed what through trains ran on my HO Siskiyou Line. One of those trains was the Seagull, a through train that ran between Roseburg and Eugene.

Once those Seagull cars from Eugene reach my Roseburg yard, they need to go somewhere. Most would go out on local trains, so let's consider the locals the prototype would run out of Roseburg.

One of the major industries within 10 miles of real life Roseburg in the 1980s is the massive Roseburg Forest Products facility [1]. This one industry complex runs for over a mile along the proto-

2. Panoramic photo of the Roseburg Forest Products facility in Dillard, OR cira 1990.

type, and can originate dozens of railcars a day loaded with lumber. This is *one* industry!

The SP ran a single local just between Roseburg and this *one* industry in the Dillard/Dole area. The SP named this train the Dole Turn, or the "Fruit Loop" as the crews called it (after Dole Fruit). Railroaders love to give cute names to things, and this local was no exception.

A number of the cars from Eugene in the Seagull would be for the Dole Turn.

The SP ran two other locals out of Roseburg yard to industries – one local to the East called the Oakland Turn, and the other local to the West called the Riddle Turn. The Seagull from Eugene would also have cars for these locals.

Note: *A turn* is a special type of local train that runs one direction, switches trailing point spurs, then turns, switching facing-point (now trailing point) spurs, and then returns. Once you get some layout ops experience doing industry switching and you will become familiar with facing point and trailing point turnouts, and you will quickly see the cleverness of the turn concept!

Speaking of trailing and facing point turnouts, this operating core concept next time. ☑

WHAT'S NEAT column

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KEN PATTERSON COVERS THIS MONTH:

- BLI 2-8-4 BERKSHIRE PHOTO SHOOT
- BRAD JOSEPH'S UNION PACIFIC IN HO SCALE
- NEW PRODUCTS FROM BACHMANN

VIEW READER COMMENTS

click to play video

PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF SUPERB MODELS

THIS MONTH, Ken shows off his photo shoot of the Broadway Limited 2-8-4 Berkshire locomotives, Brad Joseph shows off his HO scale Union Pacific layout based in Wyoming with a little help from his daughter and grandson, and Matt Stern and Tyler Haney show off some of the upcoming products from Bachmann.

BLI 2-8-4 Berkshire photo shoot

1. To start the March 2025 "What's Neat" video, Ken takes us out into his backyard overlooking the Mississippi River where he's shooting photos of the new Broadway Limited 2-8-4 Berkshire locomotives.

VIEW READER COMMENTS

2a,b,c. These beautiful steam locomotives feature Paragon 4 sound/DCC and details such as Coffin feedwater heaters mounted on the front of the smokebox. The models Ken was shooting are decorated for Boston & Maine, Santa Fe, and Southern Pacific. The ATSF and SP locomotives were ex-B&M, purchased during World War II. Info: www.broadway-limited.com

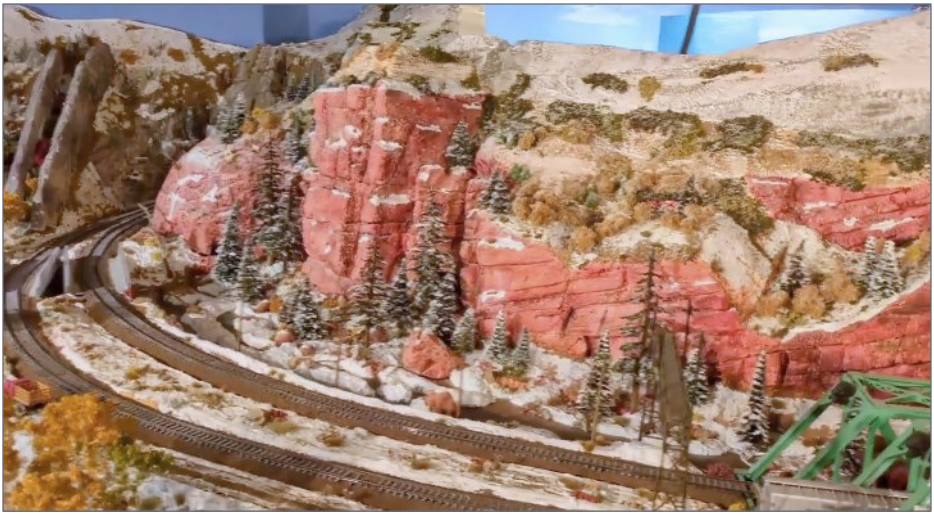
Brad Joseph's Union Pacific in HO scale

3. Brad Joseph, assisted by his daughter Carolyn, welcomes us to his double-deck HO scale Union Pacific Wyoming Division layout.

4. The first section of his layout that Brad built, this scene dates back to 1986.

5. The UP Wyoming Division is based on the prototype, including this city of Cheyenne, where the buildings are painted and signed to match the real ones and the Cheyenne passenger station is true to the prototype, albeit with some selective compression to fit.

6. The structures in Laramie Wyoming feature a variety of construction methods and techniques. Laramie Valley Cement is a combination of scratchbuilt and kitbashed components, while the coal tower in the distance started as a toy that Brad disassembled and rebuilt to resemble the real thing in Laramie.



7. The Utah Canyons area of the layout, including the Devil's Slide on the extreme left, was built as a winter scene. Brad used artistic paste mixed with glitter to get the proper sparkly reflections for snow.

8. Carolyn demonstrates the animation and sound features of the layout, including this stockyard with mooing cows, a haunted house with spooky lights, jack-o-lantern, and a trick-or-treater, and a bar with "neon" lights and the sounds of an event in progress.

9. In addition to the trains running on the layout, Brad has a display case of models he has collected in different scales and gauges, as well as items collected by his mother and father, such as his mother's collection of railroad dining car china.

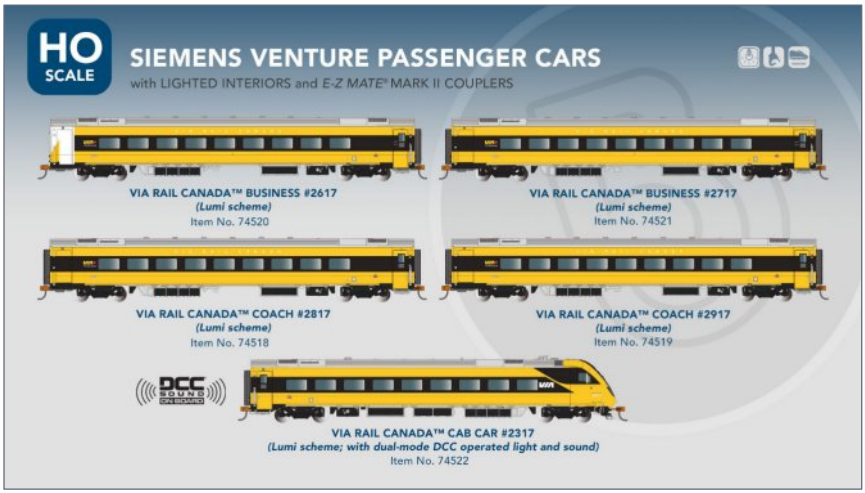
New products with Bachmann's Tyler Haney and Matt Stern

10. Bachmann's Tyler Haney and Matt Stearn dropped in via Skype with a slide show of new products featured in the 2025 Bachmann catalog.

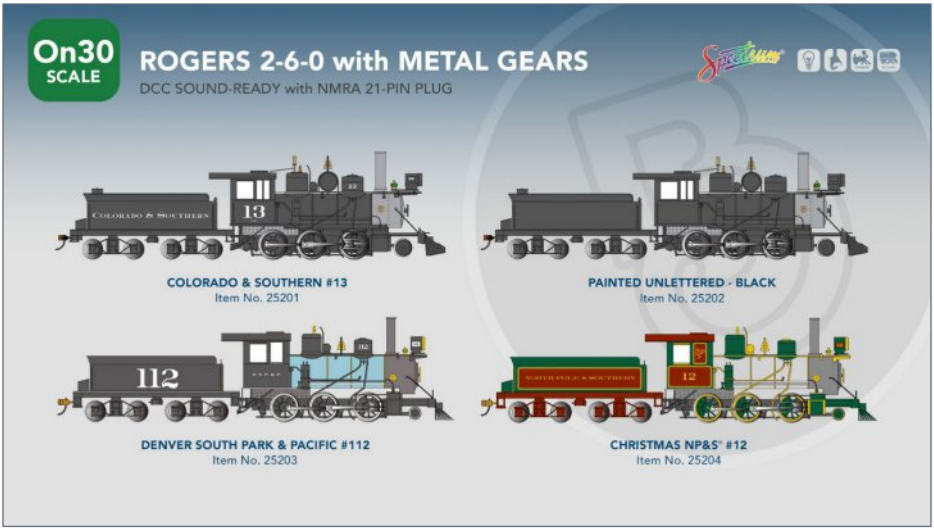
11. An upcoming train set features an EMD GP40 decorated for the Alaska Railroad and two 89′ Princess Cruises Ultra-Dome cars used for cruise excursions on the Alaska RR.

12. The Southern Pacific GS-4 #4449 is back in an HO scale DCC Sound Ready version, with three paint schemes: SP Daylight, American Freedom Train, and a black BNSF Employee Special scheme it wore in the early 2000s.

13. Two new HO scale Siemens Chargers have been announced, Amtrak Midwest #4626, an SC-44 with a streamlined nose more commonly seen on the long range ALC-42 Chargers and the VIA Rail Canada SCV-42 Charger in the Lumi yellow scheme reminiscent of the Turbo Trains that ran between Montreal and Toronto.



14. Along with the SCV-42 in the Lumi scheme there will be a set of Venture passenger cars and a cab car decorated in the same scheme.



15. On30 fans will be happy to see the Rogers 2-6-0 in a DCC Sound Ready version with an NMRA 21-pin plug. Decorated for Colorado & Southern, Denver South Park & Pacific, and North Pole & Southern, it will also be available in an unlettered black version.
Info: bachmanntrains.com

Click on the video link at the beginning of this article to see all the photos of the BLI Berkshires, the complete tour of Brad Joseph's layout, and all the new products coming soon from Bachmann. ☑

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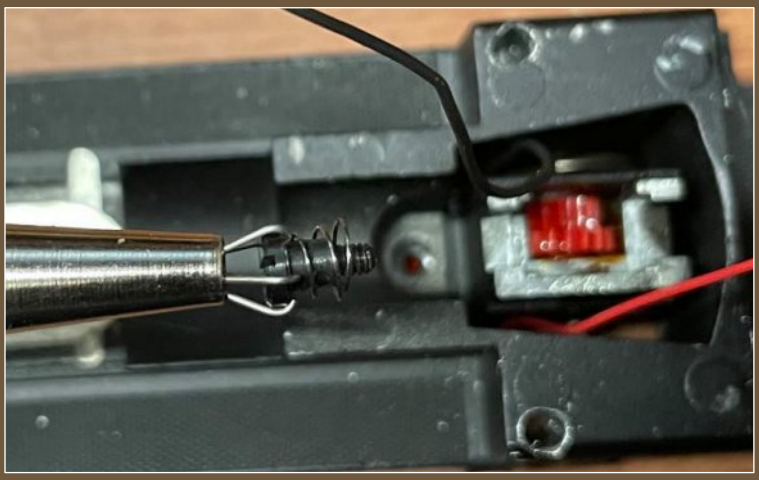

Electrical Impulses

Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2025

VIEW READER COMMENTS

MIKE HUGHES BRINGS NEW LIFE TO A CLASSIC MODEL ...

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, I have acquired several old, used Atlas "yellow box" HO scale diesels with their factory DC wiring. A few were Kato-built RS units, but most were Roco-built models. Among the Roco-built models were some S2 and S4 units that were custom-painted in CP maroon and gray.

These are nice models, and well worth spending time and money to convert into DCC sound units. Although I read about the motors drawing a lot of current and not being great, mine seemed fine.

I decided to start with converting an S2 unit to DCC sound. The S1 through S4 are identical under the shell. This turned out to be a

challenging conversion, mainly due to space limitations in the model. It's almost like working in N scale!

REPAIRING THE CAB

About the only complaint I have with this unit is that the plastic body is very brittle. I dropped the cab from my S-2 unit off my workbench. A chunk of the rear roof overhang broke off in several pieces [1].

To replace the overhang, I cut a strip of 0.020″ Evergreen styrene to length, and attached it with Tamiya Liquid Cement. Unfortunately, the uneven edge of the break left some unsightly gaps [2].

Filling the gap satisfactorily with modeling putty proved challenging. No matter how much I thought it looked right before priming, problems became readily apparent [3, 4].

1. The broken cab roof.

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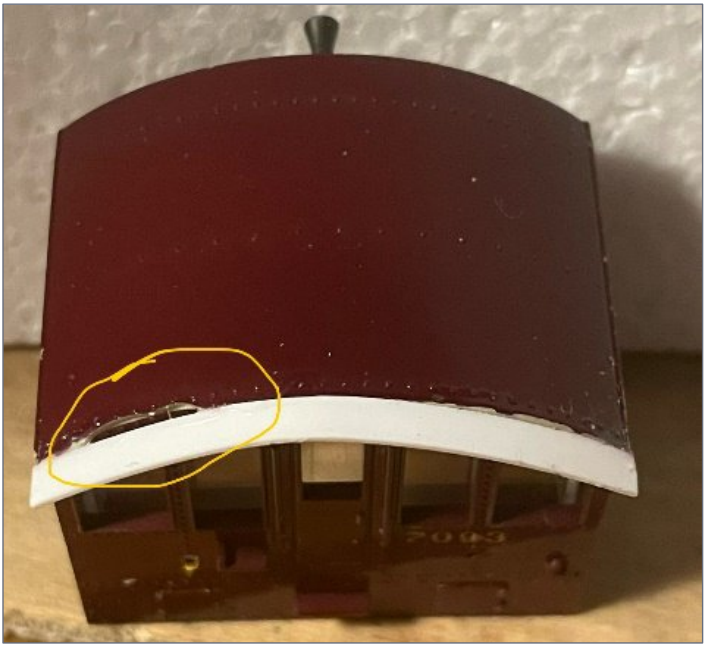
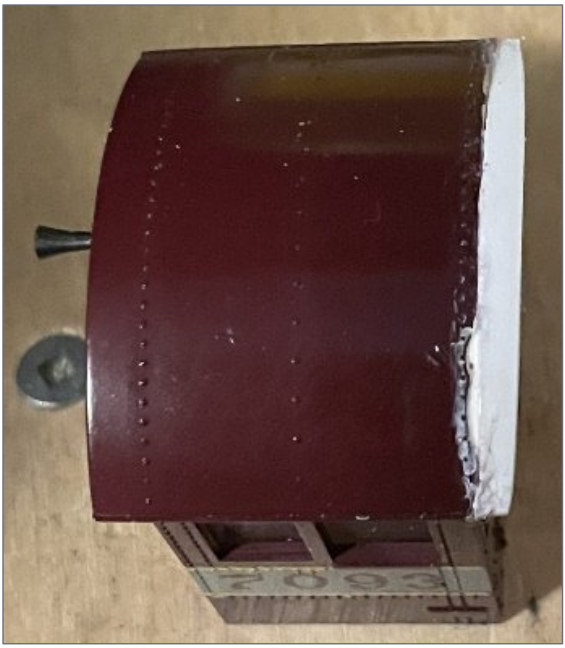


2. A gap remains.



3. First putty fill effort.

VIEW READER COMMENTS

4. The first layer of primer revealed unacceptable putty lines.

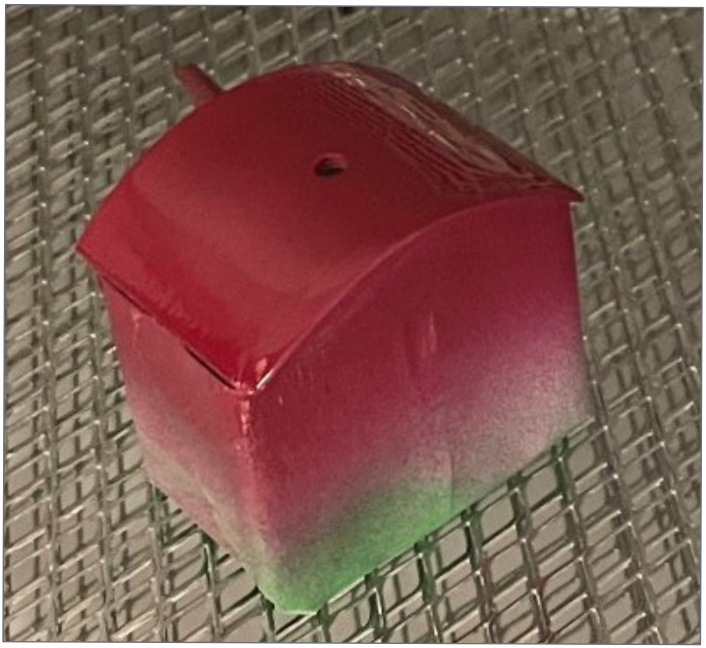
It was only after many cycles of puttying, sanding, priming, and baking that I achieved results I found bearable [5]. With that, I masked and painted the cab roof [6, 7].

After all this effort, I broke out the sidewall and split the rear of the cab during about a dozen test fits. Thankfully, I didn't lose any parts, so I was able to do something useful with the cracks. Since the S2 was built about 1940, and my layout is set in the fall of 1968, it would look well-worn after 30 years of service.

MEASURING THE MOTOR CURRENT DRAW

Having read about the Roco motors' high current draw, I started testing using test rollers from DCC Specialties to check the free-running current [8]. The locomotive ran very well, so I was glad that a motor swap was not required.

5. These results were finally approaching passable.



6. Cab masked and painted.

7. The cab repair is complete.

I also tested slipping and full-stall currents. I was very interested in seeing just what kind of current these old Atlas Austrian S1 through S4 locos could draw, to make sure I picked the right decoder.

It turns out there is a substantial difference in the current from freewheel, to wheel slip, to stall, at 420 milliamps, 520 milliamps, and 1.24 amps respectively. In a couple tests I made before doing the video, I saw stall current readings as high as 1.6 amps.

Ideally, this stall current would make a 2-amp decoder ideal, but there aren't many of that rating that would fit the loco. Since I considered a stall scenario unlikely, I felt safe installing a typical 21-pin decoder on a Decoder Buddy.

ESU 21-pin decoders are rated for 1.5 amps, making them the safest option. However, since I already had several Soundtraxx

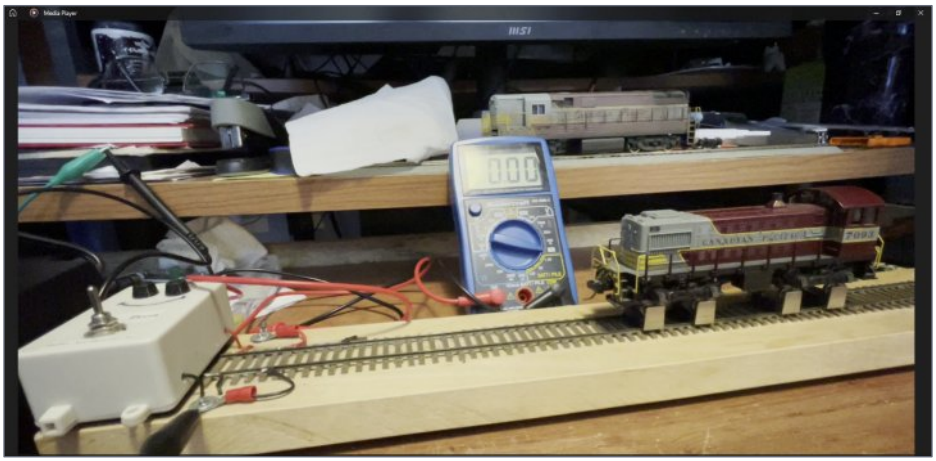
Tsunami 2, 21-pin decoders with Alco sounds on hand, I chose one of those, even though they are rated for only one amp.

DISASSEMBLY

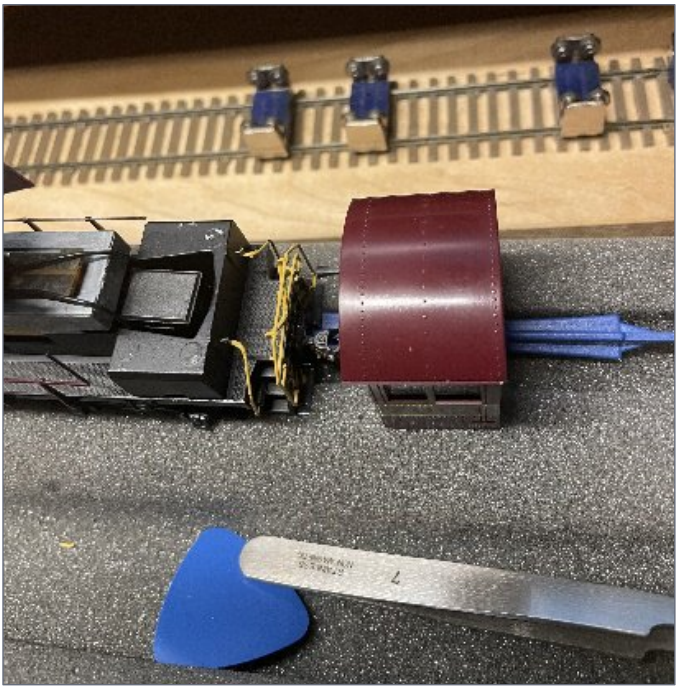
The main cab needs to be very gently spread at the bottom to disengage the tabs, and then lifted straight up with a gentle side-to-side motion [9]. Be careful of the rear handrails. I use a variety of soft plastic wedge tools to prevent the tabs from re-engaging, though many people use card stock.

Once the cab is clear, the long hood pivots upward at the back, tilting toward the front [10]. There is a small tab at the front of the hood that engages the frame. Take care not to break it off [11].

We can now have a look inside the shell. A light pipe is used to capture the glow of the incandescent bulb on the OEM motherboard, and direct it to the front bezel and the number boards [12].

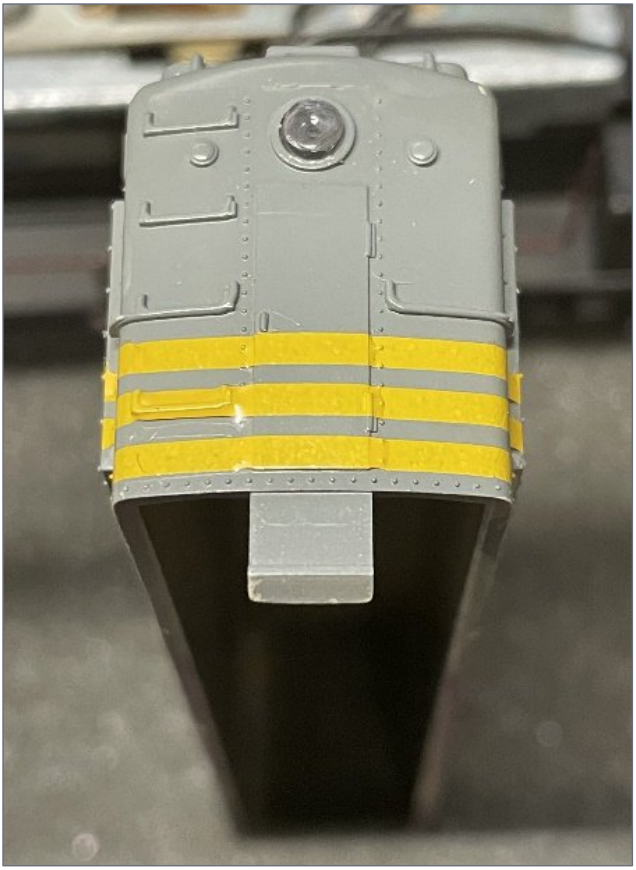


8. Roller setup for testing the locomotive's free-running current. This photo is from a video I made to demonstrate tests for free-running, slipping, and full-stall current (youtu.be/Ddy3ZeJVJFA).



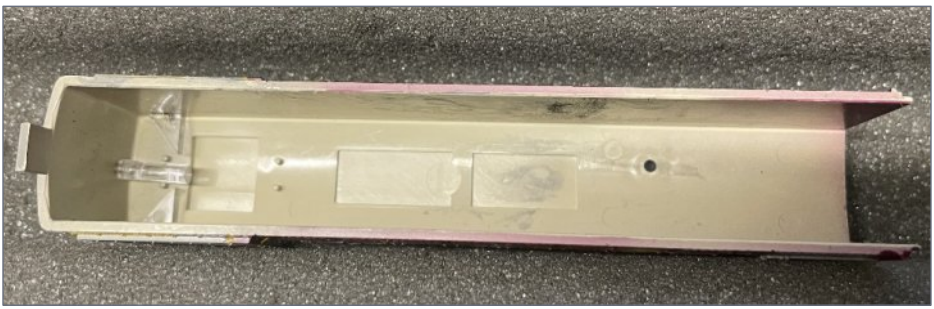
9. Cab removed.

10. Tilting up the long shell.



11. Be careful not to break this tab.

VIEW READER COMMENTS



12. Inside the long shell.

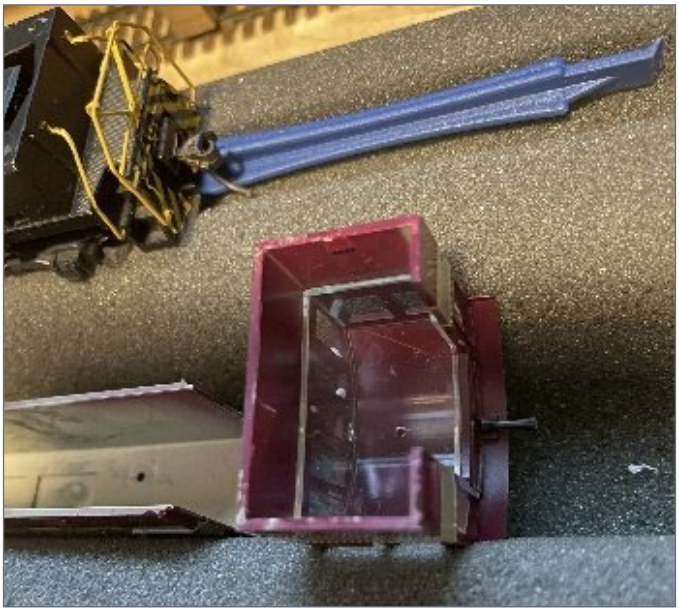
The cab did not have a light. The window glass seemed to be glued, so I decided to leave it alone, but that hole in the middle of the roof looked promising for a future roof beacon.

Removing the circuit board and the top weight was a simple matter of removing one screw [14].

I lifted the circuit board away from the weight. I initially left the wiring attached to enable easier testing to see which wires go where [15]. I eventually cut the wires off off the board, and threw it and the metal screw into my parts bin, since I had no further use for it on this model.

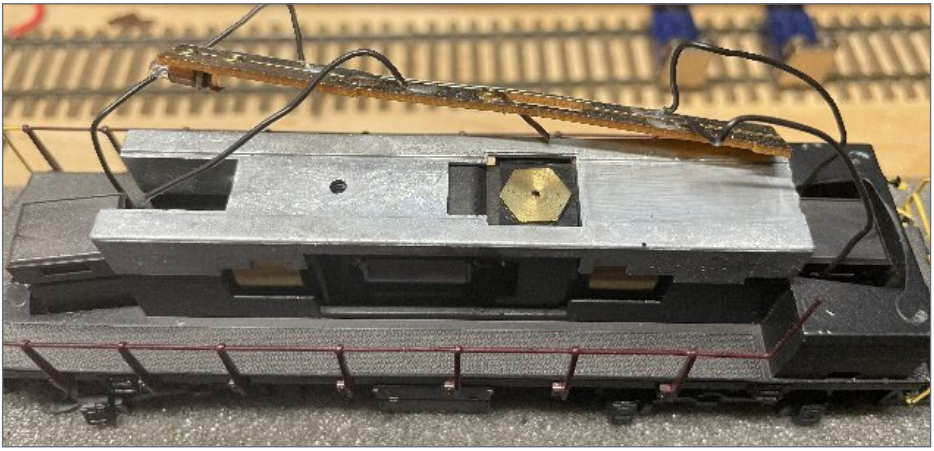
I removed the weight to determine its weight and dimensions [16].

I removed the side handrails so I could safely clamp the frame for milling work. They came off easily with very gentle prying between the side sill and the stanchion mounts with a tiny flat-blade screwdriver [17].



13. Inside the cab.

14. Circuit board removal.



15. Circuit board removed with wiring intact.

16. Weight removed.

17. Handrail removal.

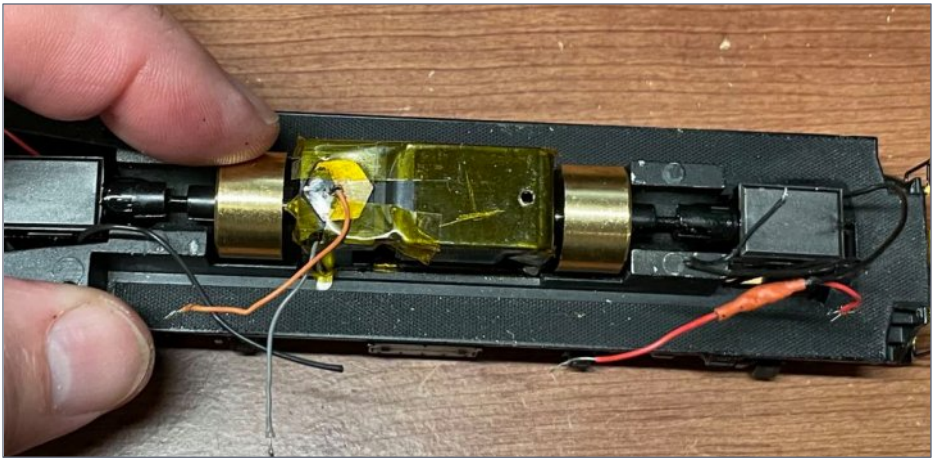
DISASSEMBLING THE DRIVE TRAIN

Removing the trucks is necessary to clean and lube them, to repair broken track power pickup wires, or to fix any wheel wipers that are not making proper contact. Removing the bottom screw will free the motor, but be careful not to lose the tiny dogbones of the drive system [18, 19]. Before removing the motor, mark the top side to make re-wiring it for correct run direction easier.

With the motor removed, the next step is to remove the gear tower covers to expose the worm gears [21]. A fingernail or a flat screw-driver will do the trick.

Pulling the worm gear out reveals a bolster screw fastening the truck to the frame, just underneath the worm gear's U-joint. Be careful not to drop the bushing and washer from the end of the worm gear shaft.

The screws have a suspension spring you do not want to lose. I find using a Kadee gripper tool helps with removing all the parts



18. I broke a red truck wire while inspecting the gear box lubrication during current testing, so I needed to remove and disassemble the trucks. The gear tower covers need to be removed to access the trucks for disassembly.

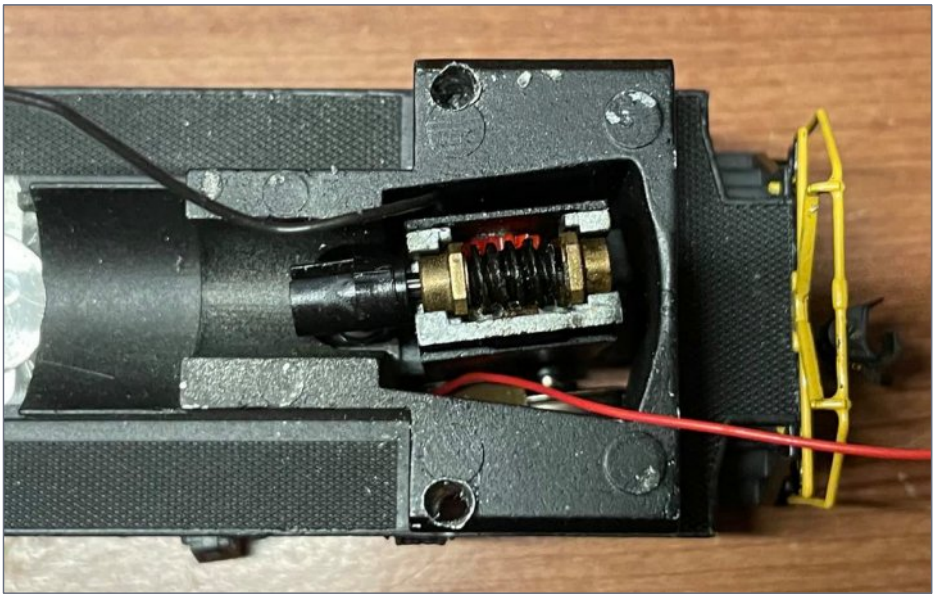
19. At center is the hole for the motor mounting screw.

VIEW READER COMMENTS

intact [22]. With the bolster screw removed, the truck can drop down out of the frame.

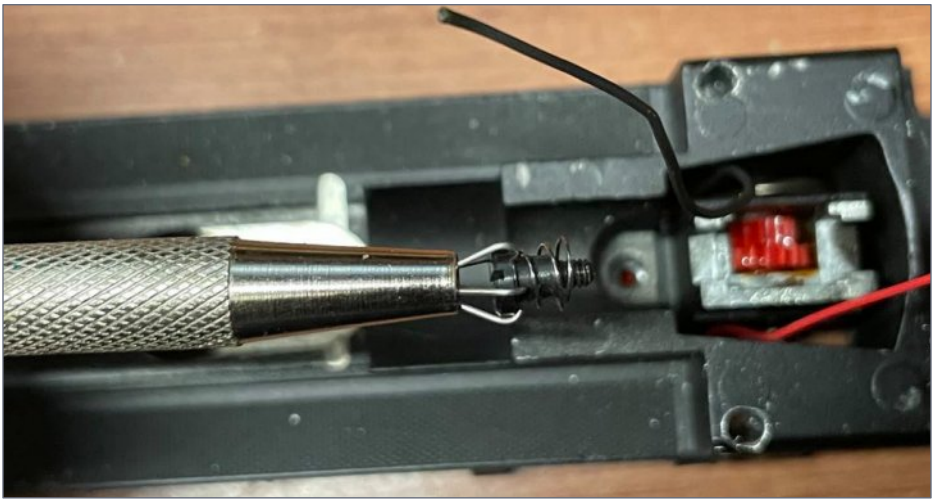
The underside of the truck has two screws holding the bottom cover to the truck frame [24]. Undoing those screws and removing

20. The motor attaches to the frame with a screw. The dogbones are tiny, so don't lose them.

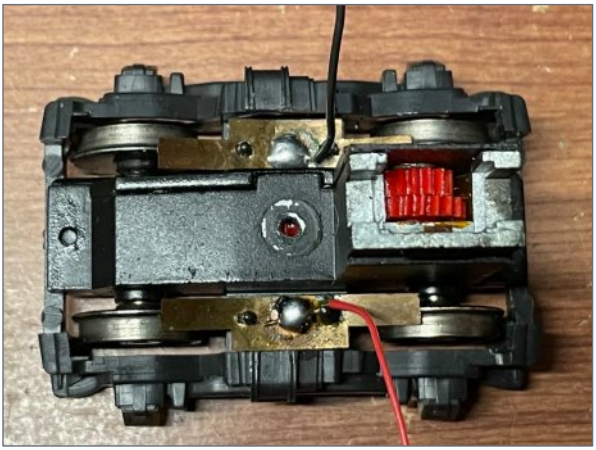


21. The exposed worm gear. A bolster screw fastening the truck to the frame is hidden just beneath the U-joint.

the cover reveals the gears and wheelsets, and the truck side frame can also be removed [25]. Make careful note of the gears and how they are oriented.

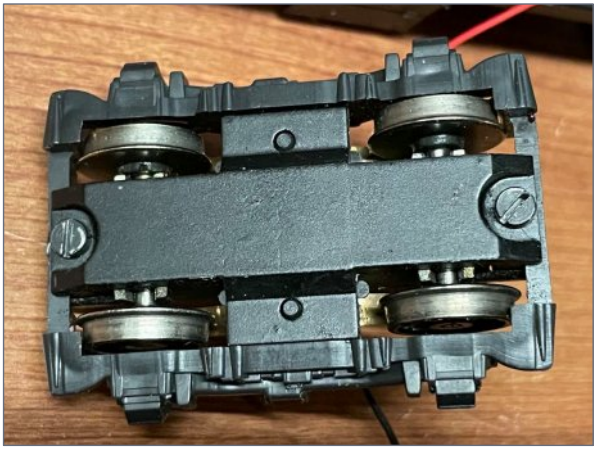


22. The Kadee gripper was handy to grab and remove the bolster screw and spring together. After breaking the tension on the screw with a screwdriver, I could even use the gripper to turn the screw out the rest of the way, reducing the risk of losing the spring.

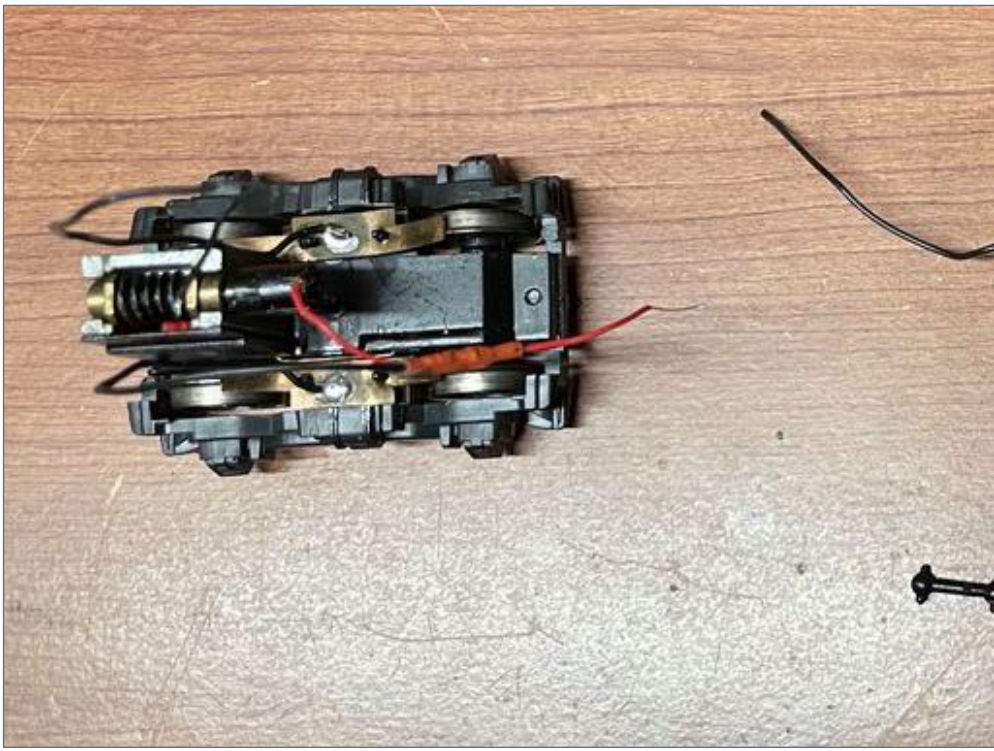


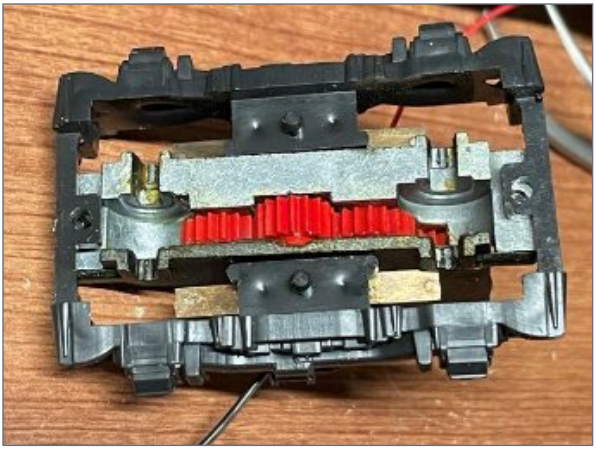
23. Top iew of of the truck.

VIEW READER COMMENTS

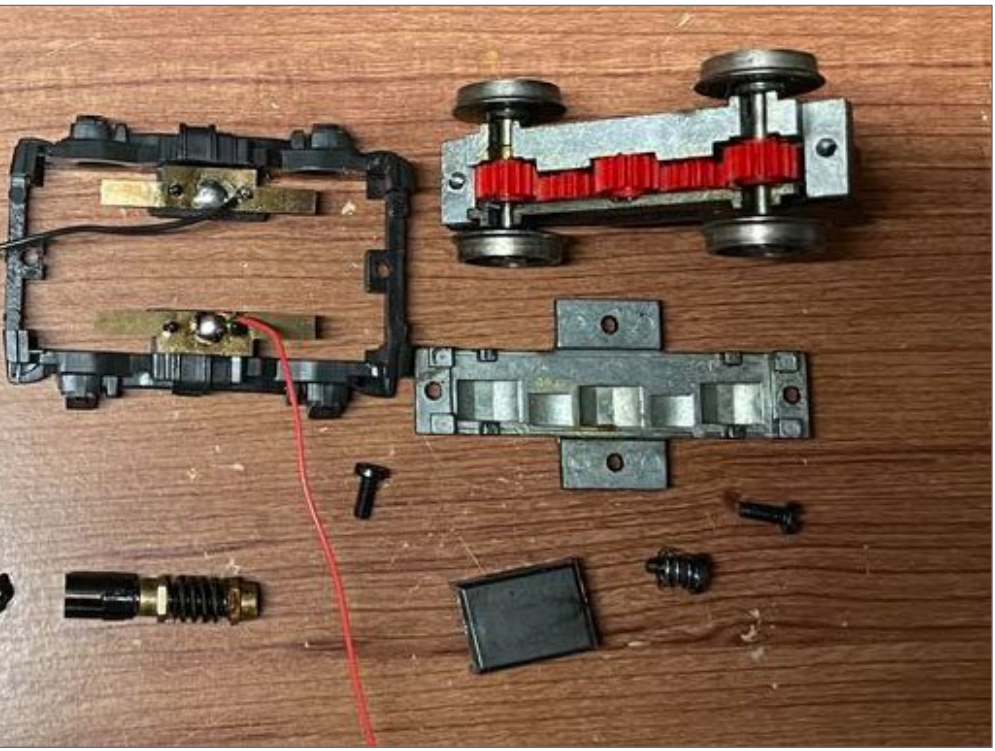


24. The two screws on the bottom of the truck hold the cover and side frames in place.





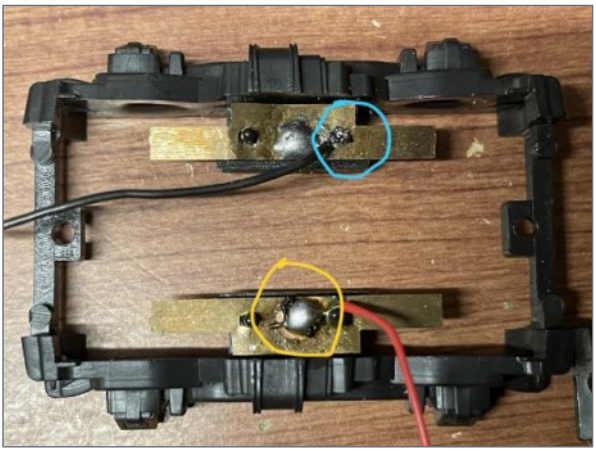
25. With the bottom cover removed, the geared wheelsets came out, and then the truck side frame piece came off. I made note of the order so I could reverse it for reassembly. The frame must go on first, since the wheel wipers will block installation of the gear wheels otherwise.



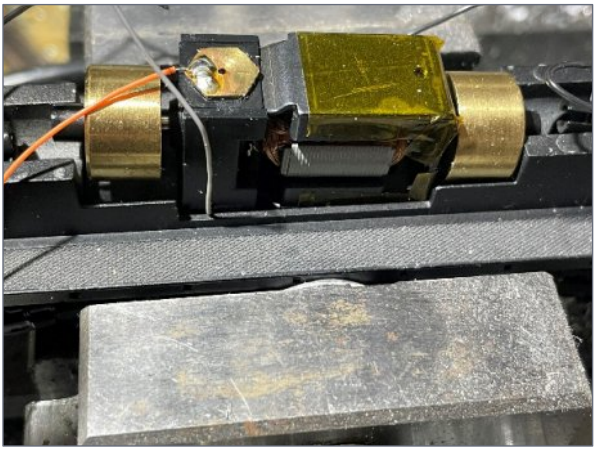
26. An assembled truck and a disassembled truck.

My gears were clean, but it's not unusual to find gear towers of this age fouled with hardened grease. This cleans off well with soapy water or alcohol, but work in a container away from your sink so no tiny parts disappear down the drain.

I had broken off a truck lead from the wheel wiper, so I soldered on a red wire to replace it. I noticed the opposite wheel wiper was loose at one end, as its mounting pin had broken or melted off. I pressed the wiper down on to the base



27. The repair to the wire is circled in yellow, and the repair to the wiper mount in blue.



28. The frame was too tight to fit a decoder wire without risking a cut that might cause a short.

firmly with tweezers, and touched the hole for a tenth of a second with the soldering iron, melting just enough plastic to flow up through the hole to grab the wiper [27].

To reassemble, reverse the order of disassembly. It's a good idea to test the trucks before reinstalling the worm gear to make sure everything turns freely, and that both wheelsets turn with the gears.

Preparing the Frame

With work on the trucks complete, I turned my attention to the motor. I soldered an orange wire to the motor's brass brush cap on top, and a gray wire to the cap on the bottom.

DCC requires complete isolation of the motor. Keeping the ohm meter on hand to be certain the motor is isolated is a must! On this model, the frame grasps the motor extremely tightly, and there is no clearance for the gray wire coming up from the bottom [28]. I was concerned the lack of clearance could lead to crimps in the wire, or worse, wire insulation tears that could lead to a short and a burned decoder.

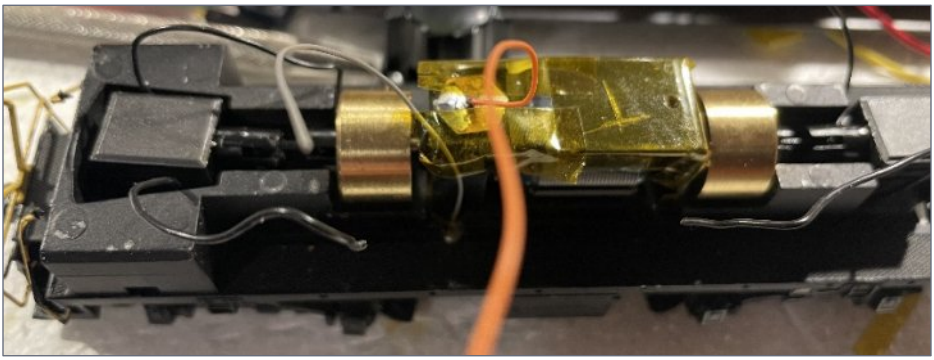
I milled a small channel in the frame to permit passage of the 30AWG wire from the bottom motor terminal without crimps [29]. I first used a 3/8″ milling cutter to clear out a recess under the bottom motor brush to eliminate risk of the solder joint working through the isolation tape to touch the frame. I then used a 3/32″ cutter to mill a clearance channel.

[Note that motor tool with a cutoff attachment and a grinding bit can be used for the same purpose if you do not have access to a mill. Editor]

Once the wires were in place, I carefully applied Kapton tape to the top and bottom of the motor to ensure insulation from the frame, and triple checked everything metal on the motor to be sure there was no path between the motor and the wheels or

frame. I re-installed the motor using nylon screws to avoid any potential contact from metal screws, and made sure the dogbones between the motor drive shaft and worm gears were properly in place [30].

29. The frame is milled to give the bottom motor terminal and its wire better clearance.



30. Tape covers every metal surface, top and bottom.

With the motor back in place, I was ready to proceed with the big decisions of which decoder to use, and how to fit it in the tight spaces of this S2 unit. I will discuss this process and conclude the project with final assembly and weathering next month. ☑

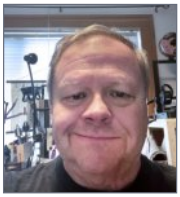

J. Regier

SHORT PREVENTION

The author calls for covering all surfaces of the motor with Kapton tape and using nylon screws instead of the factory-provided metal screws to mount the motor. Although an abundance of caution is in order to avoiding electrical shorts and the burnt-up decoder that usually follows, this method is overkill.

The motor has two key points requiring isolation – the phosphor-bronze caps at the motor's two poles. Generally, a motor's sides do not carry power. Be sure to double-verify with your ohmmeter, but you should be able to use the original screws. ▪

MIKE HUGHES



Mike is a Certified Management Consultant focused on IT strategy and process innovation. He presently serves as Director of Information Technology and Systems for an organization in Vancouver, BC. He has an education in engineering physics and marine biology and has been model railroading for over 5 decades in multiple scales from N to 1-1/2″ live steam. His travels over many years with Ernst & Young, his own firm, and KPMG permitted many stop overs at cool train stores in many U.S. and Canadian cities. Notables were Central Hobbies in Vancouver (now InterCity Hobbies and Trains) and the old Caboose Hobbies in Denver where he once took 14 clients for a visit and then to dinner after the second leg of a flight was canceled enroute to Dallas for a PeopleSoft Conference. ■

MRH Marketplace

Great Northern's Seattle Terminal

Brian Morgan introduces his layout ...

INDEX TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. King Street Station and its freight houses are the focal point for my switching layout.

Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2025

VIEW READER COMMENTS

I HAVE 50 YEARS' EXPERIENCE AS A MODEL RAILROADER. In June 2015, I was well on my way to completing my large N scale Burlington Northern layout when I returned home from vacation to a flooded basement.

The restoration company gave me three days to empty the basement. My only option was to cut up my layout and retreat to the garage to salvage what I could.

Forced to make a fresh start, I decided this was an opportunity to future-proof the layout for when we might decide to downsize our home. A switching terminal railroad was more suited to an eventual smaller space (11′x12′), but would still offer lots of operation for multiple people.

Since I had always wanted to model the King Street Station (KSS), the Seattle's South of Downtown (SoDo) neighborhood was the logical choice [1]. I decided to change my era slightly, from 1970 Burlington Northern to 1967 Great Northern, to maximize the mail, LCL (Less than Car Load) and passenger train traffic, since in the fall of 1967, most of the U.S. mail had shifted from railways to airlines.

THE BACKGROUND

In the early 1900s, the city of Seattle wanted a belt railway to serve its port. The railways resisted, and it went to court. In 1919, Seattle was divided into 13 switching zones, assigned among the competing railroads. Each was required to provide reciprocal switching.

In 1967, KSS still saw 16 passenger train departures/arrivals per day. The Railway Express Agency, numerous LCL freight forwarders, and freight houses of the competing railways occupied the area immediately behind the KSS.

- The KSS is located at the South Portal of GN's Seattle Tunnel, which allowed trains to travel under the downtown, and was the start of the SoDo neighborhood. At this time, the SoDo neighborhood was 100% industrial, and included a large portion of the port.

As part of my research, I came across a newspaper article, "Box Car Shortage Serious? Ask Any Mill Operator," from the March 20, 1966 edition of the *Eugene Register-Guard.* I learned the area's plywood mills were not designed to hold inventory. As plywood was made, it was loaded in boxcars, and the boxcars were essentially used as warehouses on wheels.

When Eastern railroads did not promptly return empty boxcars to the West, the mills were forced to shut down. The railroads were under fire from both the mills and government officials.

Plywood mills got switched more than once daily, and Seattle had numerous plywood mills and other industries that needed a steady flow of cars.

In this era, boxcars carried just about everything. Perfect – that's the kind of industries I wanted. I already had a lot of boxcars, including double-door cars which were commonly loaded with plywood/lumber.

CAR CLASSIFICATION AND SWITCH LISTS

Since this was to be a switching layout, I abandoned my previous colored-dot method of indicating where a car was to be delivered. Instead, I incorporated the variety of strategies local railroad offices and shippers used in 1967.

1. *A flow commodity* was a material that was received regularly enough that a receiving industry could provide the railroad with *standing instructions* to spot it.

2. The "On Arrival" method allowed the shipper to call the railroad while the car was on the road and give specific instructions on where to spot the car when it arrived.

3. Alternatively, a railroad clerk called the receiving industry to inform them that a specific car had arrived and ask where they would like it spotted.

4. Lastly, a cut of cars could be delivered for an industry and the loading dock foreman would instruct the switch crew where to spot the cars.

To efficiently identify car types, GN used the "General Superintendent of Transportation Codes" to describe rolling stock. For example, a 40-foot boxcar with a six-foot door opening was a B2. A 40-foot boxcar with a door opening greater than 12 feet was a B8. Forty-foot boxcars were given even numbers; 50-foot boxcars had odd numbers [2].

These codes were brief, effective, and easy for the railroad employees and '60s-era computers. The Northern Pacific also used these codes; I suspect so would have the CB&Q and SP&S. They were used well past the BN merger date.

The Great Northern Seattle Terminal was designed for operation, with a focus on moving railroad cars the last few miles to their destinations. Using switch lists for my car forwarding scheme allowed for the variety I wanted. It also realistically slowed things down.

My pocket-sized switch lists are replicas of Great Northern Railway's, printed on 110-pound yellow paper. I intended them for single use, so operators can mark them up as needed [3].

I use DCC, and my locomotives are each set with heavy momentum and with braking function. To switch effectively, you must keep speed under 10 MPH. Each operator uses a single GP7 engine with a ProtoThrottle, which has been ideal for my requirements.

It's not how fast the locomotive runs, but rather getting things done in the fewest switching moves that counts. To keep true to a prototype railroad, I have avoided switching puzzles.

THE LAYOUT PLAN

My layout has two levels: the lower staging area at 29 inches in height and the upper operating level at 46 inches [4, 5]. My plan was to design it with six switching zones. Each zone requires different strategies to successfully switch it, and this makes a more challenging layout with a greater variety of industries.

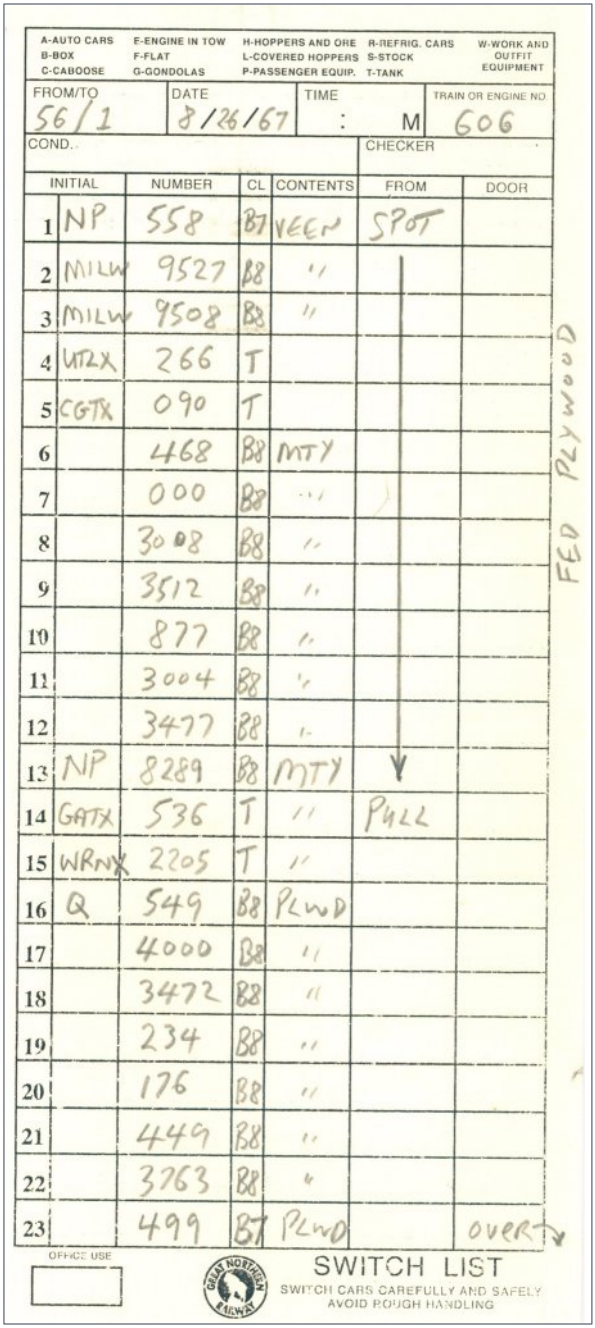
Zone 1 has industries that feature flow commodities, a plywood mill, and a large flour mill [6].

General Superintendent of Transportation Codes

B1	50' Box w/6' Door Opening	**F2**	Bi Level Auto Rack	**HS**	Hart Selective
B2	40' Box w/6' Door Opening	**F3**	Tri Level Auto Rack	**MW**	Maintenace Of Way
B3	50' Box w/8' Door Opening	**F4**	40' Flat	**PB**	Passenger Box
B4	40' Box w/8' Door Opening	**F5**	50' Flat	**PR**	Passenger Refigerator
B5	50' Box w/10-12' Door Opening	**F6**	60' Flat	**P5**	Mail Car Passenger
B6	40' Box w/10-12' Door Opening	**F7**	Piggyback Flat, Less than 89'	**PE**	Passenger ALL Others
B7	50' Box w/Door Opening > 12'	**F8**	Piggyback Flat, 89' and Over	**R2**	Reefer w/Ice Bunkers
B8	40' Box w/Door Opening > 12'	**F9**	Articulated Flat	**R3**	Mechanical Reefer
B9	60' and Longer Box	**FL**	Log car	**R5**	Insulated Box
BD	40' Box w/Load restraining Devices	**FS**	Special Service (well) Flat	**R8**	Bulk Potatoe
BE	50' Box w/Load restraining Devices	**G1**	50' Gondola	**R9**	60' and Longer - - Insulated Box
BG	Box w/Grain Access Doors	**G2**	40' Gondola		
C2	2 Bay Covered Hopper	**G3**	60' Gondola	**RR**	Reefer w/Racks - Rails
C4	Covered Hopper < 4000 C.F.	**GC**	Covered Gondola	**S3**	Stock, Single Deck
C6	Jumbo Covered Hopper	**H1**	Ore Car	**S4**	Stock, Double Deck
CA	Airslide Covered Hopper	**H4**	Triple Hopper	**T**	Tank
F1	Bulkhead Flats	**H6**	Quad Hopper	**WC**	Wood Chip

GN SoDo

2. General Superintendent of Transportation Codes as used by the Hill Lines.



A-AUTO CARS B-BOX C-CABOOSE E-ENGINE IN TOW F-FLAT G-GONDOLAS H-HOPPERS AND ORE L-COVERED HOPPERS P-PASSENGER EQUIP. R-REFRIG. CARS S-STOCK T-TANK W-WORK AND OUTFIT EQUIPMENT

FROM/TO 56/1 | DATE 8/26/67 | TIME : M | TRAIN OR ENGINE NO. 606

COND. | CHECKER

	INITIAL	NUMBER	CL	CONTENTS	FROM	DOOR
1	NP	558	B7	REEF	SPOT	
2	MILW	9527	B8	"		
3	MILW	9508	B8	"		
4	UTLX	266	T			
5	CGTX	090	T			
6		468	B8	MTY		
7		000	B8	"		
8		3008	B8	"		
9		3512	B8	"		
10		877	B8	"		
11		3004	B8	"		
12		3477	B8	"		
13	NP	8289	B8	MTY		
14	GATX	536	T	"	PULL	
15	WRNX	2205	T	"		
16	Q	549	B8	PLWD		
17		4000	B8	"		
18		3472	B8	"		
19		234	B8	"		
20		176	B8	"		
21		449	B8	"		
22		3763	B8	"		
23		499	B7	PLWD		OVER

FED PLYWOOD

OFFICE USE

SWITCH LIST

SWITCH CARS CAREFULLY AND SAFELY AVOID ROUGH HANDLING

3. A replica Great Northern Railway switch list. Since most of my cars are GN, I do not mark "GN" in the recording marks column. While most of the prototype switch lists I have seen are brief, I fill mine with much more detailed information.

Zones 2 and 3 feature food commodities, a brewery, and a large grocery distributor.

Zone 4 has the LCL freight houses, with cars being spotted by door number.

Zone 5 has a variety of smaller industries, and splits time switching KSS and the Postal Annex.

Zone 6 (on lower staging level) simulates Pier 91, but has not been run so far.

A zone (or zone 2 & 3 together) can keep one operator busy for a two-hour operating session. I also played to N scale's strength of allowing large scenes to represent large industries, versus many small ones.

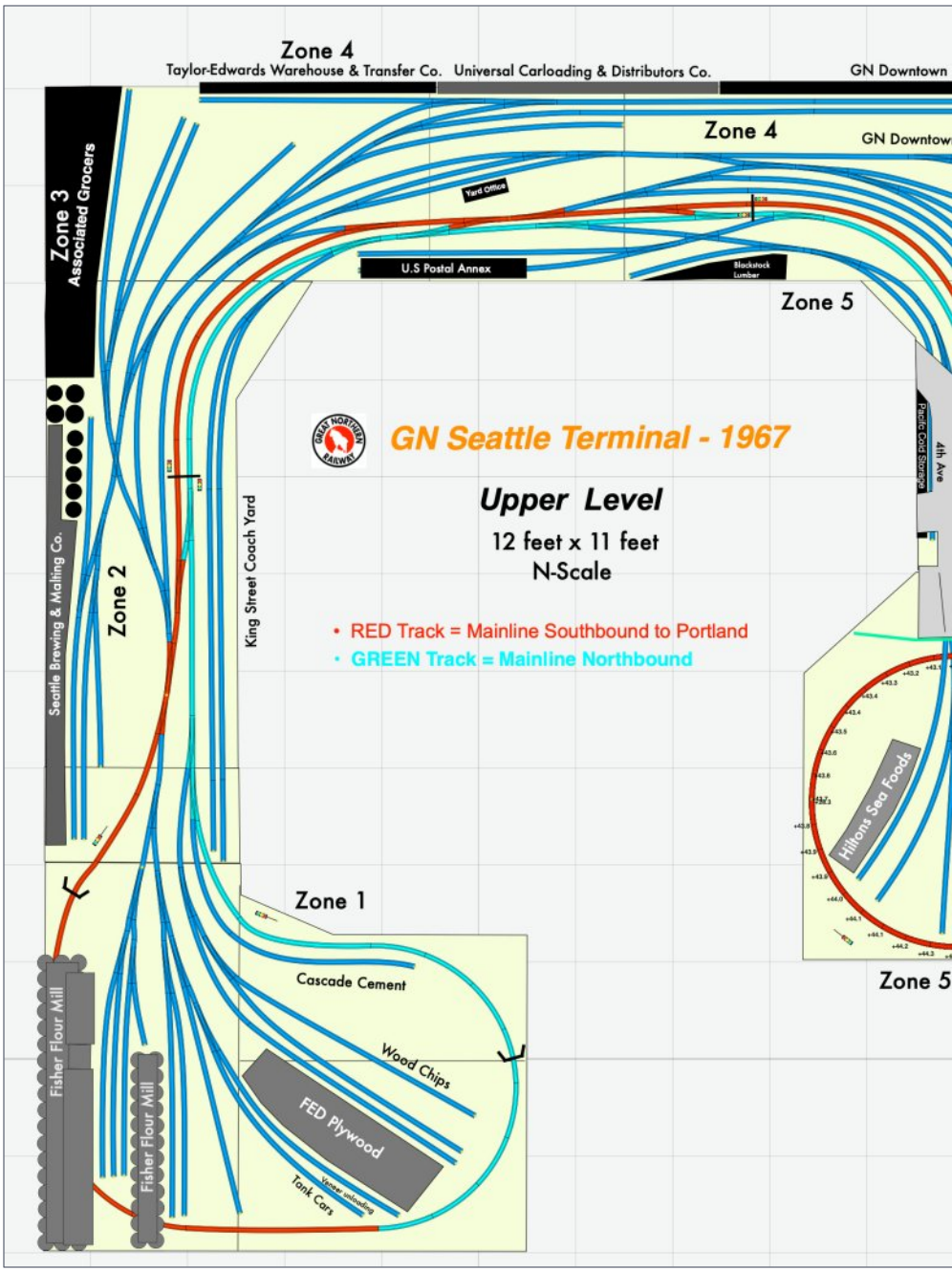
Thankfully, I was able to repurpose many of the industries salvaged from my previous layout. Seattle's King Street Station (KSS) was a major construction project and is a focal point.

SETTING UP THE OP-SESSION

I make the op-session setup as fast and easy as possible. I need the correct type of cars, in the correct quantities, to be delivered to each industry. For this layout, I made up a Block to Track Table job aid [7].

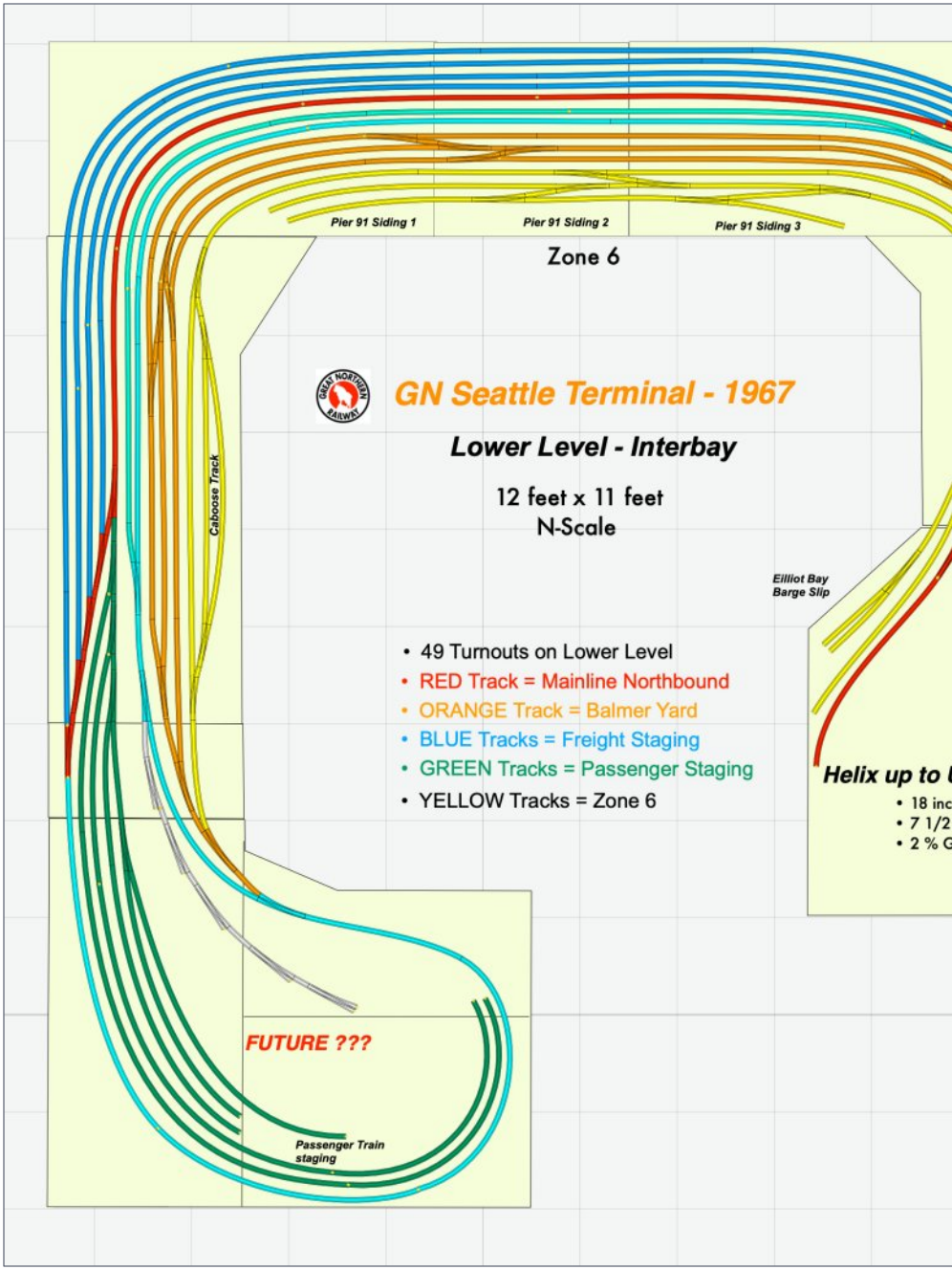
The lower level of the GN Seattle Terminal represents Interbay, location of Great Northern's principal yard in Seattle, Balmer yard. While sitting in a chair, using my Block to Track Table, I can quickly five-finger the blocks of cars for each Switching Zone.

This job aid lists the type & quantity of cars for each industry, grouped by zone, in sequence order. The right side of my Block to Track Table represents the Helix side of the layout. The number on the right in the red circle is the absolute maximum number of cars. In practice, I like to be a few cars less than the maximum. I incorporated the General Superintendent of Transportation Codes [2] to describe the rolling stock I need.


Zone 4
Taylor-Edwards Warehouse & Transfer Co.
Universal Carloading & Distributors Co.
GN Downtown
Zone 4
GN Downtown
Zone 3
Associated Grocers
Yard Office
U.S Postal Annex
Blackstock Lumber
Zone 5
GN Seattle Terminal - 1967
Upper Level
12 feet x 11 feet
N-Scale
• RED Track = Mainline Southbound to Portland
• GREEN Track = Mainline Northbound
Seattle Brewing & Malting Co.
Zone 2
King Street Coach Yard
Pacific Coast Steel
4th Ave
Hillons Sea Foods
Zone 5
Zone 1
Cascade Cement
Wood Chips
FED Plywood
Tank Cars
Fisher Flour Mill
Fisher Flour Mill

4. GN Seattle Terminal-1967 upper level, with switching zones 1-5.

VIEW READER COMMENTS


Pier 91 Siding 1
Pier 91 Siding 2
Pier 91 Siding 3
Zone 6
GN Seattle Terminal - 1967
Lower Level - Interbay
12 feet x 11 feet
N-Scale
Caboose Track
Eilliot Bay
Barge Slip
• 49 Turnouts on Lower Level
• RED Track = Mainline Northbound
• ORANGE Track = Balmer Yard
• BLUE Tracks = Freight Staging
• GREEN Tracks = Passenger Staging
• YELLOW Tracks = Zone 6
Helix up to
• 18 inc
• 7 1/2
• 2 % G
FUTURE ???
Passenger Train
staging

5. GN Seattle Terminal-1967 lower level, with switching zone 6 and staging.

VIEW READER COMMENTS

STAGING

The layout's lower staging level is a critical part of the layout. Staging allows trains to come onto and off of the layout easily, as needed. At times, I participate in multi day op-session events.

Because I have ample staging, I can pre-stage several days' worth of op-sessions ahead of time. If I were to fill up 100% of my freight train staging, it would hold 338 40-foot cars, plus there's staging for five passenger trains. My typical freight train has 30 40-foot cars with locomotives.

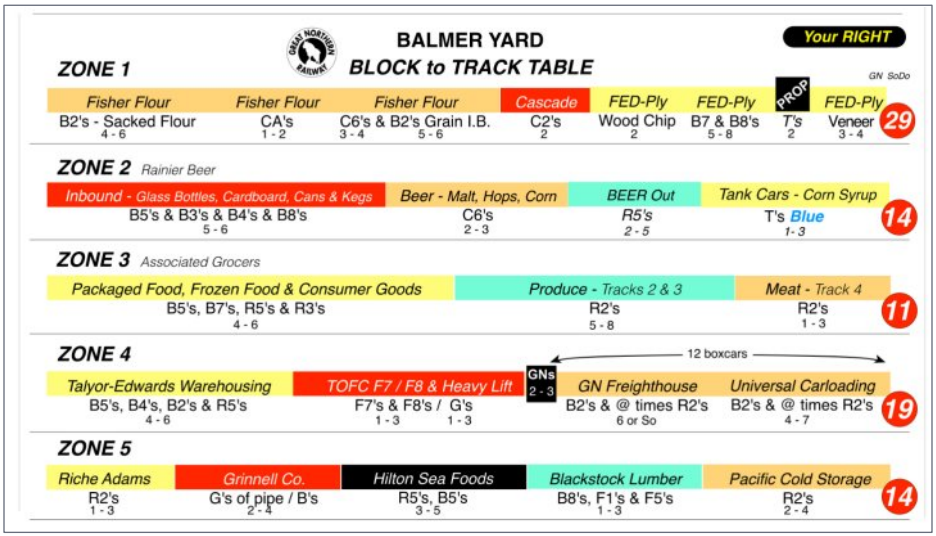
6. Switching Zone 1, from left to right, Cascade Cement, FED Plywood, and Fisher Flouring Mill. The elevated stand holds a copy of the track maps book and a lineup of the trains that will be run during this shift, making them easy to read, and freeing up the operators' hands.

To manage staging, I depend on my ESU ECoS DCC command station [8]. Using the ECoS's touch screen allows me to see all of my staging turnouts and track occupancy at a single glance. If needed I can change the ECoS display for a detailed description of each train using the ESU's Railcom technology.

OPERATING SESSIONS

On my previous BN Selkirk Division layout, I ran a sequential timetable. Time was not considered, and train orders were verbal via five-channel radios. For my much smaller Seattle Terminal layout, I wanted to use time to set a tempo.

In 1967, GN's freight trains all ran as extras, and only first-class passenger trains still ran by timetable. By adding time, the KSS (Zone 5) operator would know when a passenger train should be departing. Time could also be used for inbound passenger trains running up to KSS from the staging level [9].



7. The Block to Track Table I use when making up cuts of cars on the staging level for each switching zone. Occasionally, I have used a switcher loco to assemble each block, but my five-finger switcher is significantly faster.

8. ESU's ECoS DCC Command Station (lower left) has a screen display that's handy for monitoring the turnouts in staging.

GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY

4 PM to 12 PM Night Shift

King Street Station Line Up

FIRST CLASS				FIRST CLASS		
27	SWG 2/671	STATIONS	LOCAL 3/672	360	6 TOFC	28
11.13	A 10.30	Interbay	L 6:20 PM	4.23	6.19	10.17
A 11.30 PM	9.00 PM	King Street Station	6.35 PM	L 4.05 PM	L 6.00 PM	L 10.00 PM
	8	Auburn	8:30			
ARRIVALS				*DEPARTURES*		
Western Star	From Portland 2nd set of transfer cars to Balmer		To Portland transfer cars from Balmer	The International	The PIG	Western Star

GN SoDo

9. KSS Evening Shift Train Lineup: The train lineup consists of a Departure side and an Arrivals side. First-class trains are expected to depart on time. However, freight trains may experience delays. To ensure the safety of first-class passengers, it is crucial to keep switch jobs clear of the trains. This necessitates the use of a clock to monitor the train's movements.

Iowa Scaled Engineering made the fast clocks I use. You can have three preset start times, time can be put on hold with the push of a button, and you can display real time.

The layout has two wireless fast clock displays. One is in the Rainer Brewery building, the other in the KSS roof. Additionally, the time is displayed in each ProtoThrottle's LCD display.

The primary job on the GN Seattle Terminal is *Switch Foreman.* The switch foreman is in charge of a switching crew working one of three shifts, each of which has a different switching emphasis.

During a day shift, KSS is busy with passenger trains and Zone 1's flow commodities will need to be switched regularly. The evening shift switches Zone 1, while Zones 4 and 5 collect mail, express and TOFC cars for "The Pig," a scheduled medium-distance freight train to Spokane meant to compete with the trucking industry.

KSS also receives the Western Star late in the shift. The graveyard shift switches Zones 2 and 3, and gets KSS ready for the next day, including switching the just arrived Western Star.

There are standing instructions for the flow commodities for each shift. Occasionally, there will be instructions from a loading dock foreman or clerk [10].

Each operator will also be provided with a small pocket-sized book containing brief instructions and track maps in the order of the Switching Zone [11].

I know when things are going well; the layout room gets quiet as the operating session hums. Some of the operating scenes are in [12-17].

I've added an extra track or two to give each zone's switching crew some room, but as the op-session progresses, that will not be enough. We will need to initiate a transfer run from KSS to Interbay (a Tramp job).

Once a Tramp is started, each zone can bring a block of pulled cars to the KSS [18]. This keeps the flow of switching on track

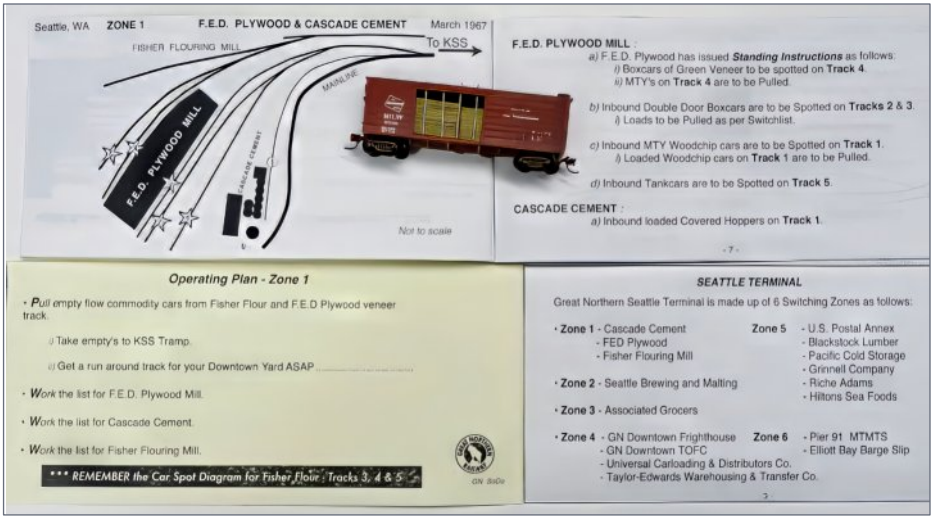
and encourages interaction between operators. In addition, north bound freight trains arriving from Portland, can pick up blocks of cars as they proceed to Interbay.

CONCLUSION

On my former basement-sized BN Selkirk Division, nothing moved between operating sessions. With my smaller layout, I can actually run it by myself, one job after another. It might take a few days to finish switching one zone, but I enjoy the variety.

The ideal crew size is three. If someone cancels, we simply run short. The diversity and challenges of a switching layout have provided a flexibility my previous empire never could! ☑

10. To enhance interaction between operators working in close proximity, an occasional instruction from a loading dock foreman adds variety and enjoyment.



11. An example from the booklet of track maps. Each zone will have an "Operating Plan," which provides concise instructions on how to proceed. These aids are designed to be easily accommodated in a back pocket.

12. Zone 1 crew members going on shift with GN 606. Universal Carloading, an LCL freight forwarder, is in the background.

13. Looking south, King Street Station just after 4PM. On the far left is Zone 5's GP7 locomotive pushing a four-car cut. The Zone 5 job splits its time with running King Street Station. Tonight, the GN Orange & Green F-Units will power the Western Star's 10 PM departure. The GN Big Sky Blue F-Units are assigned to the "Pig" to Spokane, with a scheduled departure at 6PM. In 1967, GN had a downtown TOFC facility right behind KSS running alongside its freight house. Just under the KSS awning is tonight's Northbound International to Vancouver, British Columbia, departing at 4:05 PM.

14. Zone 4, GN 612 pulls the Great Northern freight house. Several of these cars are required for tonight's Pig. In this era, a brakeman would use chalk to mark a car as needed, I use stick-on color dots for this purpose.

15. The left two tracks represent KSS Coach Yard. The third track from the left is the Northbound main track, the fourth is the Southbound track. The next 2 tracks represent the downtown yard. Further to the right is Rainier Brewery. The crossover track features green LED lights controlled by a DPDT toggle switch. This switch determines the polarity of the track, and sets the LEDs to reflect that. GN 606 (foreground) will be pushing cars into Zone 1. There is a plexiglass barrier at far left to prevent stray coaches from falling over the edge in case of derailment.

16. GN 606 will initially switch the Federal Plywood Mill. The most prevalent car for plywood on the GN in 1967 was a B8.

17. GN Seattle Terminal as you walk into my 11′ x 12′ N scale layout. The lower level is staging which connects via a helix to the upper level representing the Seattle SoDo neighborhood. On the left is Zone 1. In the middle is Zone 2's Seattle Brewing & Malting Co. known for its Rainier Beer.

BRIAN MORGAN

Brian has had a life-long interest in trains, which likely started with numerous family trips on trains in the 1950s.

His first model train was a Revell HO set for Christmas, and in his early twenties he returned to model railroading, this time, in N scale. From there he never stopped.

The GN Seattle Terminal is his 4th N scale layout.

He is now retired with his wife, living near Vancouver B.C. He enjoys their grandchildren, and hosting op-sessions on his layout. ■

VIEW READER COMMENTS

18. Observing the Seattle Tunnel's south portal directly in front of us, this evening's Western Star's lead F-Unit is visible. To the right, the Tramp prepares to make a transfer run with cars from the SoDo district to Interbay.

Learnings of an operations newbie

Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2025

VIEW READER COMMENTS

Ken Heywood's journey getting into realistic ops ...

Like many, I used to believe model railroads, no matter how fancy they might appear to be, basically just go around in circles. I recently discovered realistic operations and found a fascinating new dimension to model railroading.

I've been interested in model railroading ever since I had a train set as a kid and have enjoyed watching trains all my life. As I approached retirement, I started thinking about model trains again. I knew enough to know the model railroading hobby includes many other hobbies within it, so I pondered if doing a layout would help keep my mind active.

Thinking back to my first train set, it was a Lionel circle around the floor beneath the decorated evergreen on Christmas morning [1]. That small set eventually morphed into something of a "layout" with third rail and a squashed figure-eight configuration on a 4x8 plywood slab.

I had locomotives with smoke and Magna-Traction to prevent derailments. Accessories like a talking depot, unloading milk car, and turnouts added interest, but it was still an around-the-loop operation, with turnouts adding a runaround track. Getting older and starting a career pushed all that to a distant memory.

With retirement a couple of years out, I bought a pile of used snap track and set it up in the shape of a kidney for a grandkid visit. I had an old Athearn blue-box F7 and some horn-hook coupler rolling stock from long ago to run on it.

1. First Lionel train around the Christmas tree.

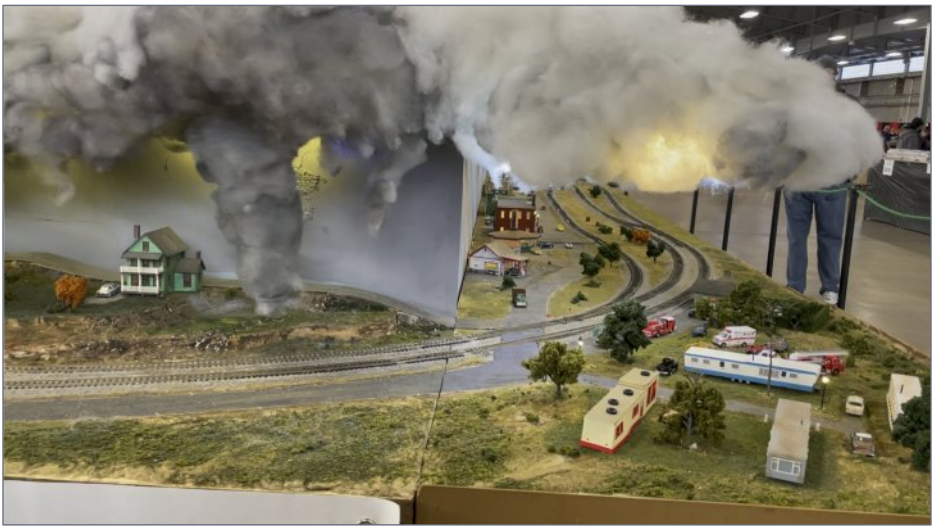
The loop kept the kids' interest for maybe half an hour, and got me thinking seriously about doing a real layout.

LOTS OF GLORIFIED LOOP LAYOUTS

As I researched layout design examples, I found most to be "glorified loops." Public model railroads seem to always be big loops [2]. One of my favorite hobby shops offers an impressive Christmas display of models from TT to G scale each year, each running on a big circle of track.

Model railroads presented at Kansas City Union Station, the Henry Ford Museum, and other museums are all glorified loops, as are most display layouts at model train shows. A train on such a layout if it's not very large tends to chase its tail. Run multiple trains, each on their own loop, and you can garner more interest from the public.

I researched magazines, and they feature lots of big layouts. I also researched track plans on the internet. Many seemed quite



2. A modular layout at the Oklahoma City Train Show that's just a big loop.

involved and soon made me glassy-eyed. I decided to design my own layout.

Using XtrkCAD planning software, I designed a simple, single-track branch line based loosely on one serving Cape Cod, Massachusetts [3]. The signature element: a working model of the prototype lift bridge spanning the Cape Cod canal.

The layout still was a continuous loop, but with two small yards – Upper Cape Yard serving Rochester, Onset, and Buzzards Bay, and Lower Cape Yard serving Falmouth, Yarmouth. I also included one town, Hyannisa, along with a sprinkling of industries and passenger depots.

I envisioned a road switcher at each yard doing pickups and setouts, with a couple of FAs to handle short freights, and a couple of RDCs to move passengers.

As I worked on the layout and started running trains, something was missing. I explored car movements with operations software to add interest and provide a reason to run trains. I added more industries, but still that still didn't seem to be "that whatever" that was missing [4].

I decided perhaps it was my lack of experience. Surely visiting other layouts would help me gain a better feel for operations and give me fresh ideas for what to do with my Cape Cod Railroad.

I attended the Oklahoma City Train Show and met Joe and Patty Fugate in person. I mentioned I was new to the area and couldn't find much model railroad activity. Joe said there is a large group in the Tulsa area who host operations sessions. He offered to put me in touch.

INITIATION – SPAENDAHL YAMANEE & DENSUM RAILROAD

I received an email invitation from "Razor" to an operations group lunch meeting. I introduced myself as a newbie, having never

operated besides running trains around in circles. Razor (Steve Gillett) arranged an operating session on his model railroad for me and a few other rookies.

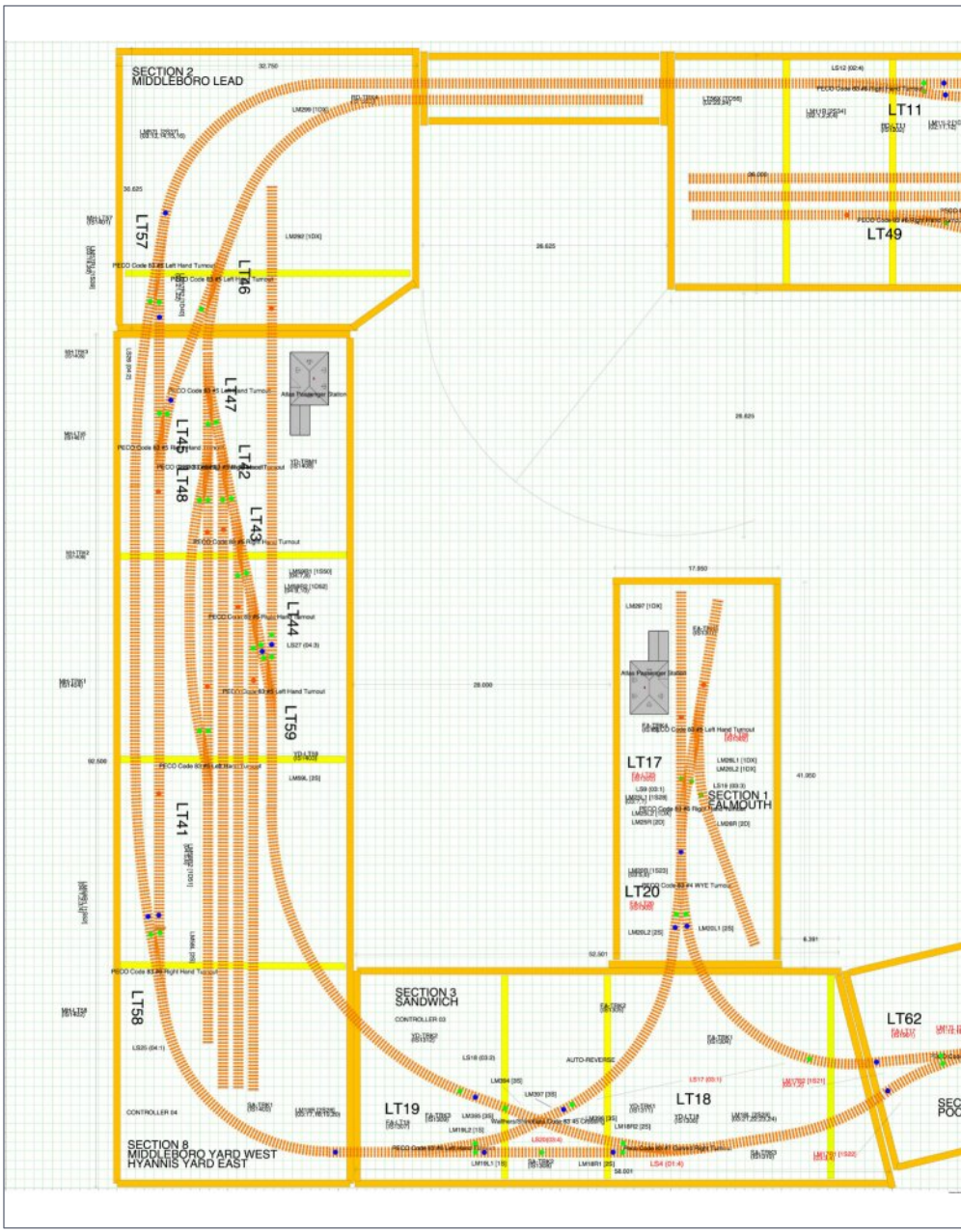
The Spaendahl Yamanee & Densum (SY&D) Railroad represents the New York Central Railroad in 1960 Mattoon, Illinois. SY&D includes yard operations, freight movement from East Saint Louis through Mattoon to Indianapolis, and the fictional Gillett Industrial Park (GIP) [5].

I worked the GIP. This operation required picking up cars from industries and assembling them on a departure track for pickup by a local freight. That freight also would drop off cars to be distributed to the industries.

This introduced me to switch lists as rolling stock movement orders. Steve had the list coded by car color. Even so, I spotted the wrong reefer at an industry. Next time, I need to read the car number more closely!

Once I had finished with the setouts, it was time to run a long freight around the layout. The SY&D requires all trains to operate with cabooses. The train was long enough that I couldn't always see the end, but when I could see the end, the caboose helped me know my train was still intact.

When half the train decoupled somewhere in the hidden helix, I found out the next time the end of the train came into view and the caboose wasn't there. Having a caboose can really help to clearly mark the end of the train on this layout!



3. Cape Cod Railroad 1.0.


SECTION 4
ROCHESTER
CONTROLLER 02
LT10
LT9
LT50
LT53
LT52
LT51
SECTION 5
ONSET
SECTION 6
BUZZARDS BAY
CONTROLLER 01
LT3
LT1
LT2
LT61
SECTION 7
BUZZARDS BAY BRIDGE
POWER FEED
ISOLATOR
UNCOUPLER

4. More industry for operations.

5. The SY&D's Gillette Industrial Park provided an engaging area of operations.

With this (admittedly limited) experience, I began to wonder if my current layout could even run a decent operations session. Sure, it had some industries and two small yards, but could a couple of operators keep busy with something as unimpressive as my little branch line? I had my doubts.

LDOP – Layout Design and Operations weekend

Within a month or so, Indian Nations MRC and the Tulsa modelers hosted a Layout Design and Operations (LDOP) weekend. David Doiron presented 'The Function of Traffic Patterns in Operations." He showed how an operator could even keep busy on a one-turnout layout!

Sammy Carlisle (The Santa Fe Hereford Sub Layout), Phil Monat (Aspects of Yard Design, Aspects of Yard Operation), and John Parker (Designing and Operating the BNSF Fall River Division) added still more meat to my operations platter.

Maybe my little empire could be interesting to a few operators after all. Still, I felt I needed more experience on established layouts to really get the concepts under my belt.

Pandora & San Miguel

The Pandora & San Miguel (P&SM) represents the Colorado Rio Grande Southern in 1942 [6]. I ran the northbound freight from Rico to Ridgeway with a head-end locomotive and a helper behind the caboose. Mountain railroading doesn't have much space for runarounds, so I found the helper useful for facing-point jobs.

I missed one setout on my run and was slow making it. Aside from the speed limits, managing the two locomotives and my inexperience with car cards slowed my progress.

I learned it can help to keep the cars together (known as "blocking") in the train based on their final destination. That

extra organization effort really helps you keep things straight as you switch.

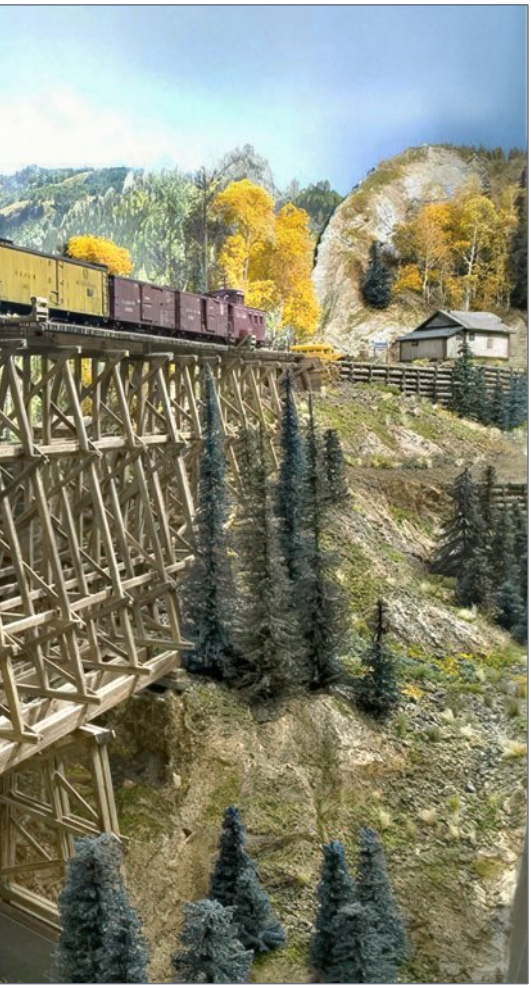
SOUTH BROOKLYN TERMINAL

Next, I got to operate on the Brooklyn Terminal [7]. The line is based on a planned but never-built urban prototype in the late 1950s. Brooklyn Terminal uses car cards, a new experience for me [8].

This was my first run on this layout, and frankly, I was totally confused. First, I did not know where the industries were located. I learned that surveying the route ahead of time to get an idea what industries are where can be extremely helpful.

I also found keeping the car cards in the same order as the cars on the train helps with efficient yard shunting and with setouts.

Brooklyn Terminal uses a "self-switching yard." There is no yardmaster to break up inbound trains or to sort them for outbounds. After making pickups from industries, operators must sort their cars to the appropriate yard tracks for later operators to pick up.

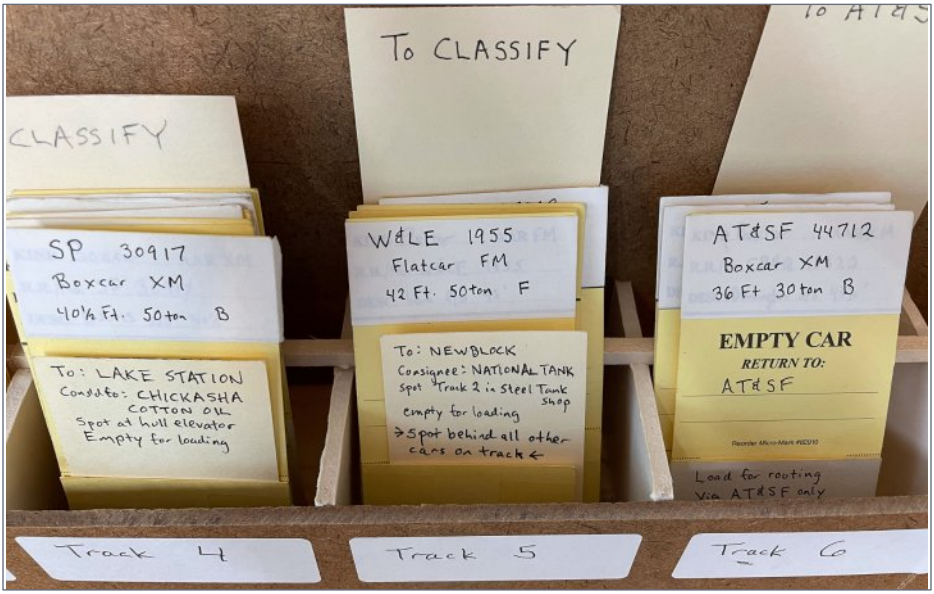


I just took my random assortment of cars over to the yard and proceeded to shunt back and forth, plugging up the yard in the meantime. Razor suggested I block the pickups by destination while picking them up before dragging them to the yard.

I did this the next time and boy did it made things go so much faster! I also paid better attention to the car cards during the next session, when I worked the car float [9].

6. P&SM in the mountains.

7. The Brooklyn Terminal railroad.



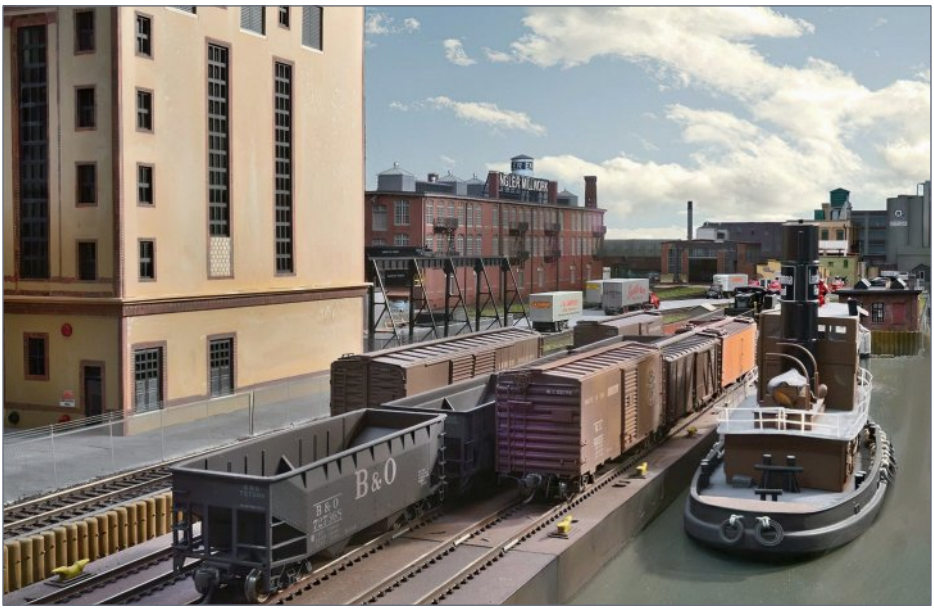
8. Car cards were a new experience for me.

KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN RAILROAD 3RD SUBDIVISION

A few weeks later, I operated on the Kansas City Southern Railroad 3rd Division, which represents the KCS between Watts and Heavener, Oklahoma in 1982 (also see the January 2025 *MRH*). The layout uses CTC with a dispatcher, and I learned to contact the dispatcher to clear routes and activate turnouts.

I was assigned to the quarry, a nice little job where I learned a lot more about switch lists.

I also learned to start thinking creatively. There were three runs "around the mountain" from the quarry to the mainline junction to meet freights, and all moves around the mountain had to be pulls (no shoves allowed) [10].



9. Working the car float on the Brooklyn Terminal presented a new set of challenges.

Once at the junction to collect setouts from through freights, I had to run around the cars to pull them back to the quarry (remember, no shoves). However, there was no runaround track in the quarry!

My solution was to use two road switchers and a two-knob throttle, with one locomotive at each end of the train when going back and forth to and from the quarry.

The main turnout to the quarry branch was locked at the junction [11], so I had to call the dispatcher on the phone, identify as the quarry train, and request track and time on the main. The dispatcher granted access, unlocked the turnout, and I would throw the switch as needed.

There was already a cut of cars waiting to return to the quarry on the siding. I pulled the outbound cars I was pulling onto the siding, coupled to the cars destined for the branch, and shoved them onto the branch into the waiting second locomotive on the branch. I then put the outbound cars back onto the siding and moved my loco to couple onto the other end of the cars for the branch.

Then I set the branch turnout back to normal and called the dispatcher to announce the quarry junction was clear before departing.

There were several other freights with which I had to exchange cars, which meant several trips to deliver the pickup cars for the freight, and to return with the inbound cars.

I learned that taking my time (not getting into a rush), thinking creatively, and thinking ahead were all keys to smooth operation.

TULSA JUNCTION RAILWAY

Tulsa Junction is a freelanced Sand Springs railroad set in 1930. It's an all-steam, all-freight industrial switching layout that is a work in progress. I worked as part of a two-person engineer/conductor crew to switch an industrial district. We traded roles halfway through the session [12].

10. Working the quarry.

11. Quarry Junction with the main at Marble City.

We pulled our train out of the yard and started switching the trailing-point industries. We also used runarounds to work the facing-point industries.

Things could get cramped because of runaround limitations. This taught me how important it is to be very aware of runaround track car limits as you work.

FRISCO CHEROKEE SUB

The Frisco Cherokee Sub is a representation of Tulsa in 1950. Three Class I railroads: Frisco, Santa Fe, and Katy, met in Tulsa at that time. I worked the Frisco industrial zone 3 [13].

Control was "Mother My I?" – which means crews communicate verbally in a ad hoc manner to negotiate access to common track. The industrial area had a main right through the industrial area headed to the yard.

12. Working east facing- and trailing-point industries.

Each new layout means getting familiar with what's where, and this layout was no different. I started to get the hang of things with the car cards, so after doing the switching I took my train to the yard. The yardmaster pointed out that I has messed up one or two of the pickups (darn)!

The yardmaster told me it was no problem, it would all work out in the next session.

This taught me that errors are not the end of the world in an op session – if you mess up, it can be corrected in the next session. It also reminded me that operating sessions should be fun, not frantic!

HOLLYWOOD CLAREMORE

Hollywood Claremore is an extensive freelance layout featuring mountains, industrial areas, passenger facilities, and even a scrapyard. I worked the west industrial and storage area [14].

This section includes a quarry, lumber products, furniture, scrapyard and above/below ground level storage facilities.

13. Cherokee Sub Frisco industrial zone 3.

I worked in a two-person crew, first as conductor and then as engineer. We worked two tracks in the yard, leaving track 1 open for runarounds. We had to contend with passenger engines needing track 1 to access the engine maintenance facility.

We worked out the logistics with the passenger crew by conversing with them. This taught me how communicating with other crews to work things out is also part of keeping operations flowing.

Of course, communication is key when you're a two-person crew – you need to pay attention and discuss the moves with your other crew member so no one is in the dark.

I learned a neat trick from my crew partner to offset the couplers for a shove move into a long spur. Use the coupler pick to first offset the couplers [15], then shove the rolling stock into position

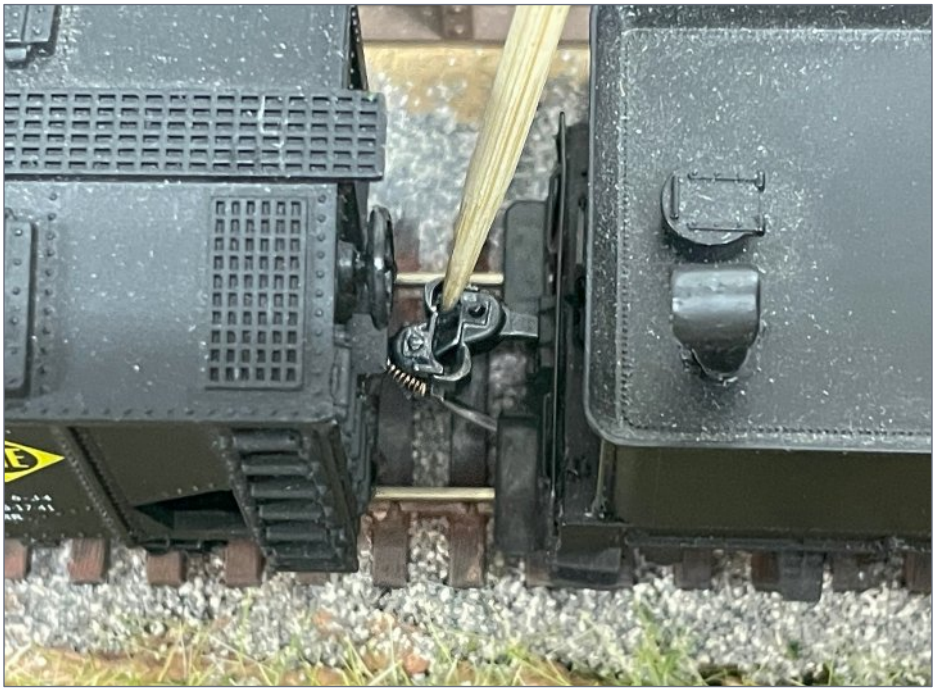
14. Hollywood Claremore west industrial area.

and drop it off well outside my reach for manual uncoupling. Pretty neat!

MY TAKE-AWAYS

Each layout has its unique operational considerations. Just like prototype railroads, each has limitations that challenge train crews attempting to complete a task. Experience with different layouts helps me spot potential challenges and plan ahead for solutions.

Real railroads don't go around in circles. They connect suppliers with customers. Operations sessions attempt to simulate the process of transporting people to their destination and moving goods to market.



15. Offset coupler shoving trick.

Some larger layouts offer long point-to-point runs. Other layouts are modest and offer lots of rolling stock shunting. Each provides hours of engagement.

All this learning prompted me to re-evaluate my layout infrastructure and operations strategy. My first ever layout is also my last ever layout. It's modest, but it can be modified to enhance operational interest.

Taking suggestions from experienced operators, I realize I need to define the type of operational control to use on my layout and to outline a schedule of operations. I also need some staging space for trains to interact with the real world as to sources and destinations for cars/trains.

MY CAPE COD RAILROAD 2.0

The current upper cape section is to the west of the Cape Cod Canal and the lift bridge [16]. It represents the towns of Buzzards Bay, Onset, Rochester, and Middleboro. Middleboro exists only in name on this layout.

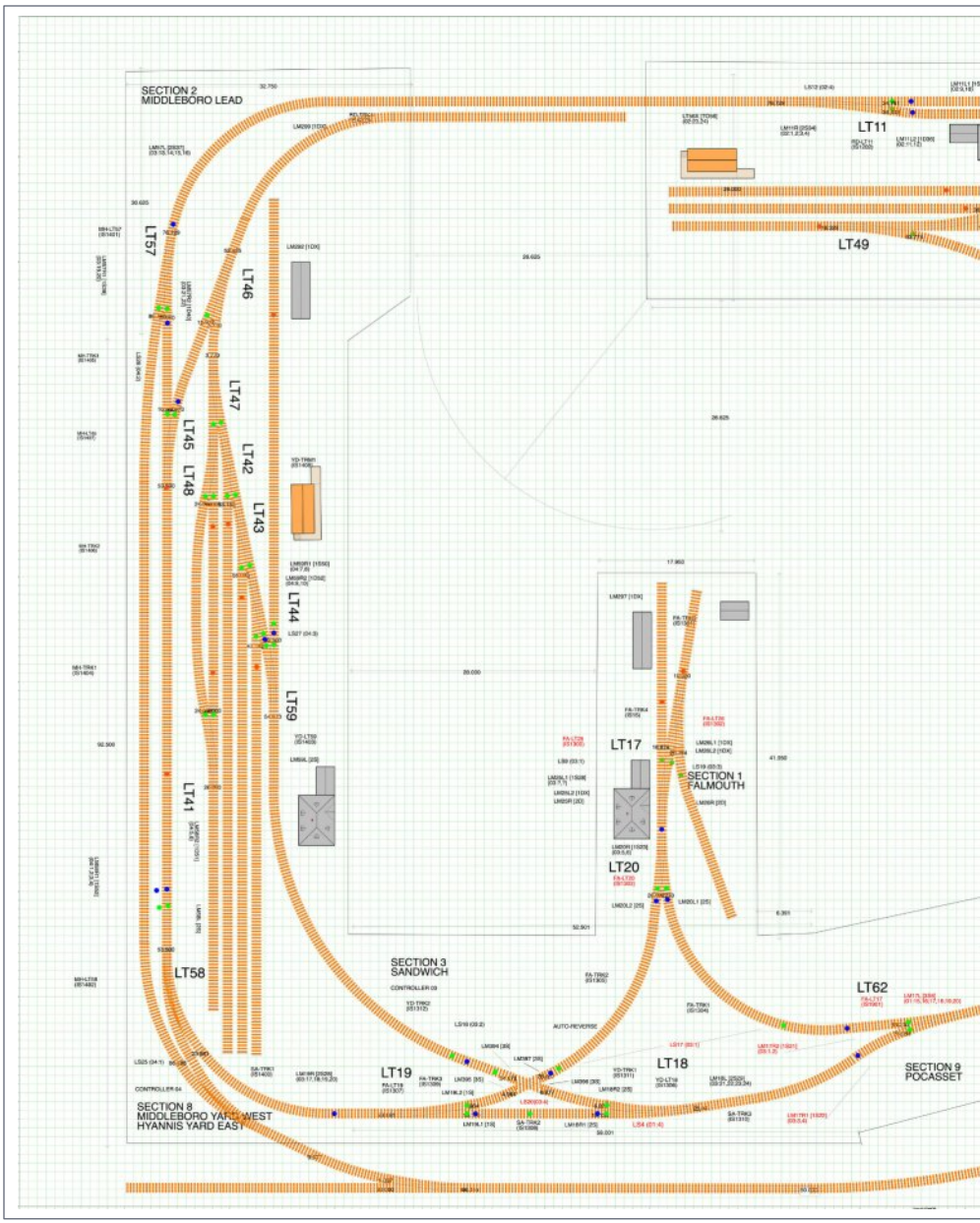
The lower cape section is to the east of the Canal and represents Falmouth, Yarmouth, and Hyannis. Additional staging could simulate an interchange at South Boston yard for destinations south, west, and north.

My original design had one road switcher crew to serve customers in the upper cape, and another crew for the lower cape. With the addition of South Boston yard, I would use a local freight to deliver and pick up from upper and lower cape yards. That freight will require another operator.

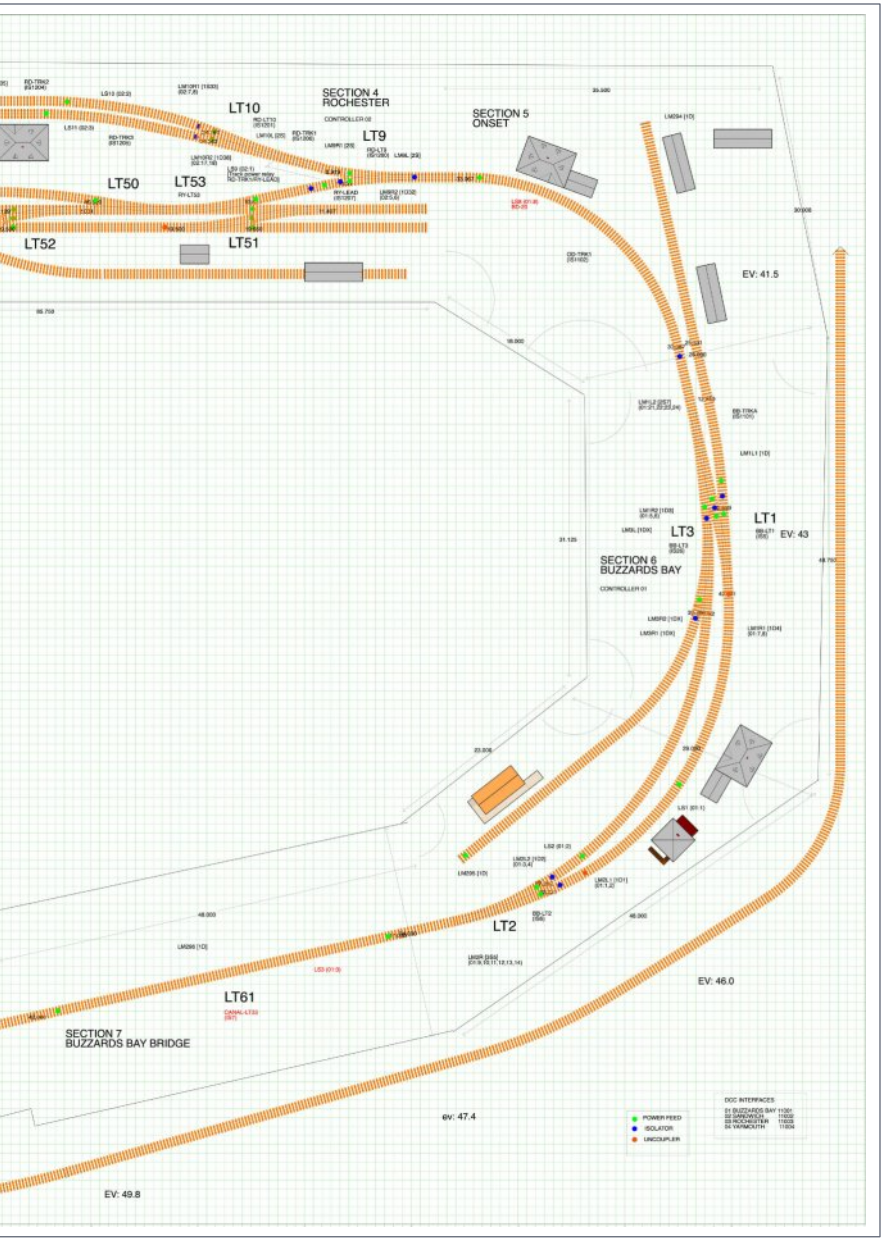
The freight engineer could use a small switcher to classify the South Boston yard when not running the local freight. Alternately, an operator could be assigned as yardmaster, and the freight engineer could make an RDC passenger run to each town depot while the yardmaster builds another train [17].

16. This lift bridge is my layout's signature element.

17. An RDC visits Buzzard's Bay depot and tower.



18. Cape Cod Railroad 2.0 Upper modifications at LT58 (lower left). The “hidden ramp to staging” descends off the main level at the



lower left corner and wraps around the back of the layout. Compare to [3].

TIME TO VISIT THE CAD SOFTWARE AGAIN

My layout is a free-standing modular structure. There is no opportunity to expand outward, so I must dive under the layout using the free-standing legs as support.

I picked up an idea from the Spaendahl Yamanee & Densum layout: the hidden helix. My "hidden helix" is actually a hidden long ramp that descends behind the layout [18].

The around-and-around should be broken at the entrance to Hyannis. I'll do that with a curved crossover. The crossover will

19. The "hidden ramp to staging" under construction.

VIEW READER COMMENTS

never be used except for convenience or grandkid visits. Turnouts LT58 and LT57 will be locked, thus forcing the layout to operate in point-to-point mode.

Westbound trains will leave Rochester (upper center of the plan), and travel directly to Boston staging on the lower level. The ramp to the lower level must be a 5% grade to clear the module superstructure [19].

That grade sounds excessive, but when trying it out, two FA locomotives have no trouble with a 12-car train plus caboose. The lower-level holds hidden the South Boston staging and classification yard.

An idea I picked up from the Cherokee Sub is that staging yards don't have to be double-ended [20].

The switcher will hide in the yard lead and will pull the train from the locomotives on the arrival track. This part is still under construction, but I hope to have a shakedown operating session in a few months.

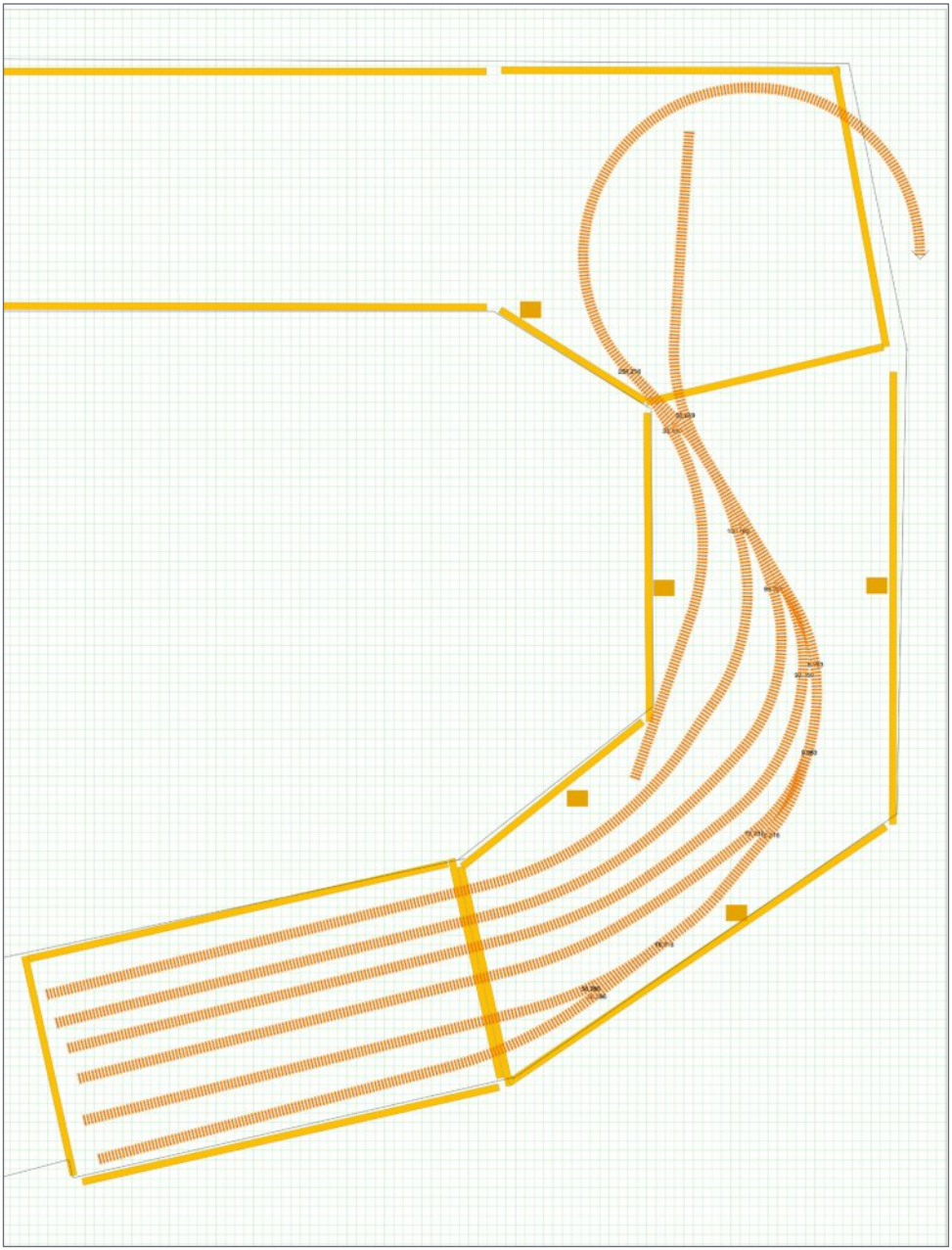
FUTURE OPERATIONS

My operational plan is to run under "Mother-May-I" control. Crews will coordinate access to the mainline verbally with each other on an ad hoc basis. Future operation may be by schedule, especially if I introduce passenger operations.

Current signaling runs ABS or under CTC. I could later add a dispatcher into the mix using the CTC signaling.

So far, I see the potential crews being:

- Upper cape
- Lower cape
- Local freight alternating with local/express passenger
- Boston yard drill
- Dispatcher



20. Lower-level South Boston yard.

J. Fugate

WHY LEARNING OPS MATTERS

When I talk to folks new to the hobby and they ask my advice, I tell them to get themselves invited to layout operating sessions as soon as possible. So what Ken has done here is exactly the right thing to do to learn how to make the hobby more satisfying.

Ideally, you visit layouts and operate on them before you build your first serious layout. Notice how after running trains on several layouts, Ken wanted to go back and make changes to his layout plan. In his case, Ken realized he had not made any real allowances for staging on his track plan.

As a result his ops experience, Ken is now retrofitting staging onto his layout using hidden trackage. With hidden trackage, you need to make sure it's the best performing track on your entire layout – you do not want to deal with derailments in hidden trackage!

From the sounds of it, Ken is being careful and testing his hidden trackage as he goes, and we wish him well. But if you can avoid an excessive amount of hidden trackage, that's preferable.

Getting yourself invited to run trains on a lot of different layouts will literally "open your eyes" to what's possible to make a layout more engaging and fun.

I also hear new modelers say, "I'm not sure what a good track plan for my space would be." If you don't have any experience operating on some layouts, then you have no experience regarding what track routing will be fun to run versus one that will just be a total headache to run.

I see many hobby newcomers whose first track plan was developed because they thought it "looked cool." They had no idea about facing-point or trailing-point turnouts, runaround tracks, switching leads, or staging tracks. If you're a newcomer and those things on a track plan are just lines to you, then you sorely need to go get some operating experience!

With experience running trains on other layouts, you will soon learn what all those lines mean and you start to understand what makes

WHY LEARNING OPS MATTERS *CONTINUED ...*

running trains easier or harder. Because our layouts are selectively compressed, that means the mainline between towns is quite short compared to the amount of track within a town or yard.

Switching a town or yard still takes the same amount of time as it does for the big boys, and with compressed distances between towns, the number of trains coming at you will be dramatically increased due to the selectively compressed and shortened mainline.

This all means if you can make a town or yard more efficient to switch, you're giving the switching crew a leg up as compared to the much shorter mainline between towns/yards. If you're modeling the prototype like me (the SP Siskiyou Line), then you will become aware of the bottlenecks on the prototype – and you may even "cheat" like I've done and make your version a bit easier to switch.

And how do you make switching more efficient? If you've operated on lots of model railroads, you will know what's needed to make switching more efficient by experience. An expert track planner (and/or a real-life railroader) will be able to look at a track plan of any yard or town and quickly be able to point out some problem areas.

If you get operating experience on some layouts, you too will be well on your way to understanding what it takes to make any track arrangement a joy to operate – fun and engaging, without being totally frustrating to run.

Or at least if a track arrangement is a real challenge to switch, you will go into the track plan fully aware of what you're getting in for. ▪

I'll start with a manual switch list, then decide later if I want to use computer software to generate the switch list or to develop car cards.

WHERE I GO FROM HERE

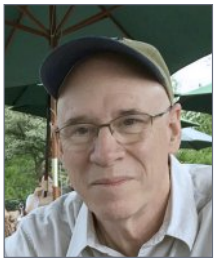
I want to continue learning by operating established layouts as I develop my CCRR. The CCRR already has some operator challenges built in. It's a simple, small layout that might be perfect as a novice learning tool.

As one model railroading sage commented: "Three hours of back-and-forth, back-and-forth".

Many thanks to the experienced Tulsa modelers for their patience while breaking me in to the ways of operating a model railroad. The only way to really appreciate how engaging "serious ops" can be is to experience the operations on a well-designed model railroad.

I'm looking forward to learning a lot more! ☑

KEN HEYWOOD



Ken has a BS in Computer Science from Boston University.

He has 45 years experience in sales support, marketing, process control applications, computer network management, systems integration, and ISO17025 Calibration Laboratory management.

Retirement gave him the opportunity to experiment with HO scale modeling and operations.

His 11X17 modular layout allowed him to develop networking with Loconet, signaling, servo controlled animation, software based MU consisting, and automation with JMRI software. ■

First LOOK column

Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2025

VIEW READER COMMENTS

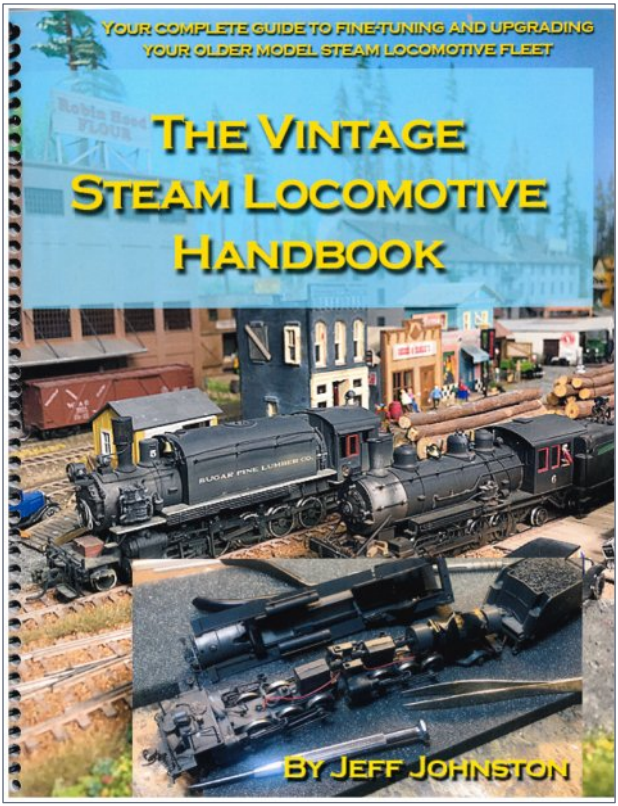
The Vintage Steam Locomotive Handbook by Jeff Johnston

Jeff Shultz reviews a book on upgrading older steam locomotives ...

In the June 2024 issue, *MRH* published a First Look article on *The MDC Shay Handbook* by Jeff Johnston. Shortly after, Jeff published a second book, *The Vintage Steam Locomotive Handbook.*

Jeff has made improving the performance and upgrading the looks of older steam locomotive models one of his specialties. In this book, he upgrades several specific locomotive models, as well as covering the methods for improving the performance of just about any model steam locomotive produced since the late 1950s.

While most of the models Jeff covers began as mass production plastic and kits, he also includes a couple of brass locomotive models.



1. The cover of *The Vintage Steam Locomotive Handbook.*

The first chapter introduces the book, with Chapters two through six covering tips and techniques that can be applied to any steam locomotive model. Jeff says he feels Chapter 2's topic covers the most critical technique for improving the performance of any steam locomotive model: installing contact wipers to increase the number of wheels being used for electrical pickup.

Most steam locomotive models of the vintage being discussed in the book pick up current from only on the right-side wheels of the locomotive and from the left-side wheels on the tender. Jeff shows how to add pickups to the other side of both the locomotive and tender wheels, producing a smoother operating locomotive with a far longer all-wheel pickup wheelbase.

Chapter 3 describes the many ways of adding weight to a locomotive model, from using lead weights, to birdshot and tungsten putty/powder. While there may be many different places to add additional weight in a steam locomotive, care must be taken to not throw the locomotive out of balance. If you get the wrong balance, you risk reducing the traction of some wheels while overweighting others.

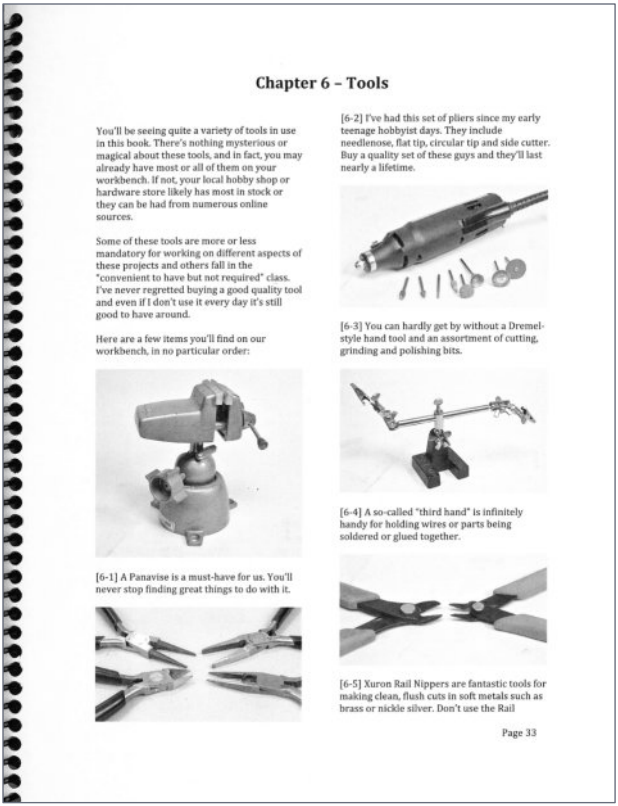
Chapter 4 covers driveline improvements – drivelines incorporating worm gears, rubber tubing, or universal joints. Some drivelines can be improved and made quieter by replacing older parts (such as stiff rubber tubes or metal universal joints) with more modern materials such as silicon rubber RC aircraft fuel hose tubing or installing NorthWest Short Line's (NWSL) modern universal joints made of Delrin.

Chapter 5 covers a topic that seems unimportant at first glance, but can be critical if storing a locomotives for any period of time or shipping them to someone else – packaging. While modern packaging is nearly bulletproof, with one manufacturer famously demonstrating theirs by dropping a model from the second floor, in the mid-to late 20th century, packaging could vary from cardboard and shredded wood fiber to foam that would eventually attack the finish on the model as it deteriorated.

Jeff shows how thin plastic and medium-density foam can protect your investment – and details – from damage. Jeff also discusses a couple commercial options.

Chapter 6 is the last on maintaining all locomotives and has a simple title: Tools. While not at the level of The Tool Junkie™, Jeff covers a variety of tools varying from mandatory, such as a motor tool with an assortment of bits, to nice to have, such as a small tack hammer.

One tool that surprised me (since I don't do much work in metal) is a brass wire brush of the sort I last saw in the Army-issue



Chapter 6 – Tools

You'll be seeing quite a variety of tools in use in this book. There's nothing mysterious or magical about these tools, and in fact, you may already have most or all of them on your workbench. If not, your local hobby shop or hardware store likely has most in stock or they can be had from numerous online sources.

Some of these tools are more or less mandatory for working on different aspects of these projects and others fall in the "convenient to have but not required" class. I've never regretted buying a good quality tool and even if I don't use it every day it's still good to have around.

Here are a few items you'll find on our workbench, in no particular order:

[6-1] A Panavise is a must-have for us. You'll never stop finding great things to do with it.

[6-2] I've had this set of pliers since my early teenage hobbyist days. They include needlenose, flat tip, circular tip and side cutter. Buy a quality set of these guys and they'll last nearly a lifetime.

[6-3] You can hardly get by without a Dremel-style hand tool and an assortment of cutting, grinding and polishing bits.

[6-4] A so-called "third hand" is infinitely handy for holding wires or parts being soldered or glued together.

[6-5] Xuron Rail Nippers are fantastic tools for making clean, flush cuts in soft metals such as brass or nickle silver. Don't use the Rail

Page 33

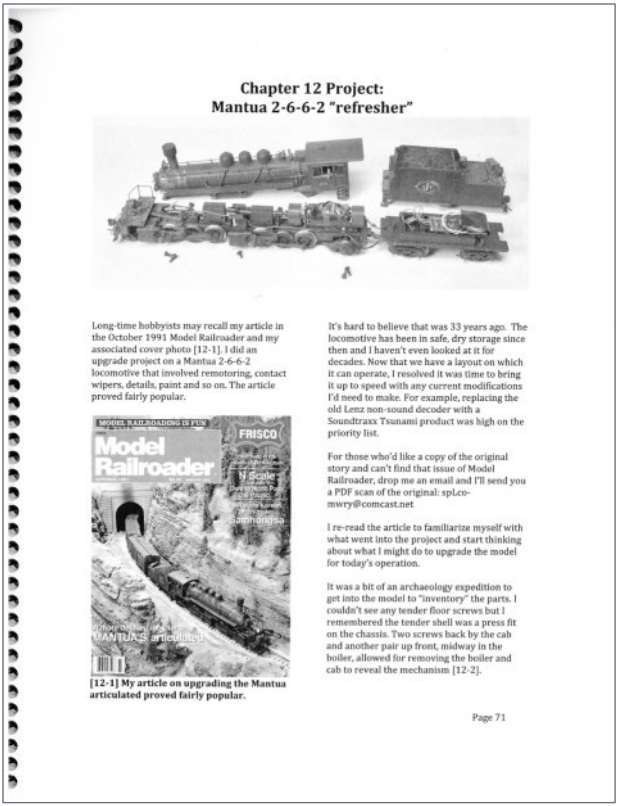
2. First page of Chapter 6.

cleaning kit for an M16A2. Jeff's recommendations serve as a reminder that tools for working on models may be found in a variety of stores, many not aimed at hobbyists.

Jeff also covers an assortment of Kadee couplers in multiple shank lengths and head offsets with the aim to easily find the one that's a proper fit for your model.

Chapters 7 through 13 cover locomotive-specific modifications on models from manufacturers such as Mantua (2-6-6-2), MDC (2-8-0), Rivarossi (2-8-8-2), Bachmann (2-8-0, 4-8-4), IHC (2-8-0), and Athearn (2-8-2).

Since most of these models predate DCC, Jeff gives instructions for upgrading the electrical systems and installing decoders,



Chapter 12 Project:
Mantua 2-6-6-2 "refresher"

Long-time hobbyists may recall my article in the October 1991 Model Railroader and my associated cover photo [12-1]. I did an upgrade project on a Mantua 2-6-6-2 locomotive that involved remotoring, contact wipers, details, paint and so on. The article proved fairly popular.

[12-1] My article on upgrading the Mantua articulated proved fairly popular.

It's hard to believe that was 33 years ago. The locomotive has been in safe, dry storage since then and I haven't even looked at it for decades. Now that we have a layout on which it can operate, I resolved it was time to bring it up to speed with any current modifications I'd need to make. For example, replacing the old Lenz non-sound decoder with a Soundtraxx Tsunami product was high on the priority list.

For those who'd like a copy of the original story and can't find that issue of Model Railroader, drop me an email and I'll send you a PDF scan of the original: spl.co-mwry@comcast.net

I re-read the article to familiarize myself with what went into the project and start thinking about what I might do to upgrade the model for today's operation.

It was a bit of an archaeology expedition to get into the model to "inventory" the parts. I couldn't see any tender floor screws but I remembered the tender shell was a press fit on the chassis. Two screws back by the cab and another pair up front, midway in the boiler, allowed for removing the boiler and cab to reveal the mechanism [12-2].

Page 71

3. First page of Chapter 12.

including sound in some of the models. Also Jeff covers how to disassemble the locomotives, which in many cases may not be self-evident.

In the Mantua and MDC chapters, Jeff gives additional information on a Mantua 4-4-0 upgrade and a kitbash of an MDC 0-6-0T and 2-8-0 frame into a 2-8-2T. As well as the addition of DCC, most of the models get weight added, LEDs installed, and additional details.

The Bachmann 2-8-0 gains a functional front Kadee coupler while the Rivarossi gets its drivers regauged and new traction tires added. Each chapter includes a tool and parts list at the end.

Chapter 14 covers a brass Pacific Fast Mail (PFM) Heiser geared locomotive, which received a DCC decoder and contact wipers for

better electrical pickup. It also required Jeff to make a custom screwdriver with a 90-degree tip in order to reach a screw located under the motor!

In chapter 15, Jeff does remotoring and adds a sound decoder to a brass NWSL 2-6-2T locomotive. *MRH* readers may recognize this chapter as an article from the February 2023 issue.

The final chapter, 16, shows how Jeff installed a sound decoder in an NWSL Rayonier 2-8-2 #70. This chapter was first published in the August 2023 Running Extra magazine.

The Vintage Steam Locomotive Handbook is 106 pages long with over 322 black and white photographs. You can find the book at thesugarpineshop.bigcartel.com priced at $34. ☑

Savvy Modeler Online

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Wiring turnouts for reliable operation

YouTuber **ThunderMesaStudio** (*MRH* columnist emeritus, Dave Meek) shares some excellent insights on wiring turnouts in this 9-minute video.

View reader comments

Dave covers the basics nicely, not assuming a lot of prior knowledge on your part. He gets into one of our favorite methods of powering a frog: using a frog juicer. We love this well-made tutorial on powering a frog with these boards. One small complaint: Dave's hand is in the way when soldering! Oh well, nobody's perfect. ☑

GREAT MODELER VIDEOS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

MARCH NEWS column

RICHARD BALE AND JEFF SHULTZ

REPORT THE LATEST HOBBY INDUSTRY NEWS ...

VIEW READER COMMENTS

INDUSTRY NEWS

Charlie Slater (1946-2025)

Charles A. Slater passed away at his home in Bakersfield, CA on February 21, 2025. Mr. Slater was 79 years old. During his career as a conductor for the Santa Fe and BNSF railroads, he assembled a collection of over 22,000 photos of ATSF freight cars. An exceptional model maker, Slater produced nearly half of the masters used by Sunshine Models. Slater has also provided photos, historical data and some resin masters to Westerfield, Resin Car Works, Walthers, ExactRail, Tangent, Athearn, Kadee and ClassOneModelWorks.com. In 2008 the Santa Fe Historical Society presented Charlie Slater with a Lifetime Achievement Award, followed by the Master Santa Fe Modeler Award in 2016.

Morgan Turney (1948-2025)

Morgan Turney, founder and editor of *Canadian Railway Modeller Magazine (CMR),* died at the age of 77 on February 6, 2025. CRM was published six times a year from 1989 until the summer of 2017 when ill health forced Turney to retire. He launched CRM for Canadians when the train and modeling

industry was overwhelmingly influenced by US interests. He succeeded in his goal to showcase the work of Canadian model railroaders. In addition to CMR and *Railfan Canada,* a prototype magazine, Turney created Canadian train-themed Christmas cards, postcards and collector cards. He also published *Canadian Railway Heritage Guide,* which provided information about Canada's railway museums and attractions. An indefatigable promoter of Canadian modelers and railfans, Turney was president of the Winnipeg Model Railroad Club and founder of Winnipeg's fall train show, now known as Mega Trains.

O SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

Atlas O Premier series models of the GE C44-9W are scheduled to be shipped this month to participating dealers.

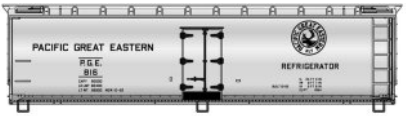
Road names scheduled for this release are Norfolk Southern, Santa Fe, Southern Pacific, Union Pacific and a unique Alabama & Gulf Coast Railway unit specially decorated to honor America's Veterans. Both two-rail and three-rail versions of the C44-9W will be available.
Info: shop.atlasrr.com

HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

This Wisconsin & Southern 50′ steel boxcar with double plug doors is among the newest economy priced HO scale kits coming soon from **Accurail.**

Accurail's easy-to-assemble HO scale kit for an ACF twin-bay covered hopper will be available decorated for CSX and Chesapeake & Ohio.

Future HO scale kits scheduled for release by Accurail include early 40′ wood refrigerator cars with ice bunkers and hinged doors decorated for Grand Trunk Railway and Pacific Great Eastern Railway (predecessor to the British Columbia Railway).



All Accurail car kits come with appropriate trucks with Delrin wheelsets and Accumate knuckle couplers.

Info: accurailinc.com


R. Bale

EMD SD60M AND SD70M DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES

In 1984 EMD introduced the 3,800hp turbocharged SD60 road switcher. It became a winning design for EMD with 537 being sold. EMD began offering the SD60 with a wide-nose North American safety cab with a three-piece high-visibility windshield in 1989. Units with the safety cab and "Tri-Clops" windshield were identified as SD60M. Continuing on the successful SD60-series, EMD launched the next step in locomotive evolution with the 4,000hp SD70-series high-horsepower road switcher in 1992. While the shape and location of a few appurtenances such as traction motor blower housings, radiator intake grilles and walkways were juggled around, the general appearance of the SD60 and SD70 were similar. The major difference between the two locomotives was internal, with the SD70 getting an upgraded 4,000hp prime mover, eventually upgraded to 4,300hp, a new alternator and new traction motors – all controlled by microprocessors. Another significant change was upgrading the standard HT-C high-traction trucks to the revolutionary HTC-R high-traction self-steering radial truck.

Athearn is now booking reservations for models scheduled for delivery in October 2026. Heading the production list is a Genesis edition of an HO scale EMD SD60M diesel electric locomotive. All road names in this release will have front ditch lights and K3LA horns. This Wisconsin & Southern locomotive is an ex-UP unit built in the late 1980s.

SD60Ms decorated for Soo Line represent prototypes EMD delivered before the Soo was fully owned by Canadian Pacific.

Norfolk Southern acquired this series of SD60Ms from BNSF in 2014.

After being purchased from Union Pacific, in 2022, OmniTRAX SD60M No. 6293 was repainted and assigned to the 113-mile Illinois Railway.

Athearn has included three fantasy paint schemes in this release including an ex-UP unit decorated for GATX.

Additional SD60M fantasy decorating schemes include Grand Trunk Western and Kansas City Southern.

R. Bale

EMD GP38-2 Diesel Electric Locomotive

Electro Motive Division's GP38-2 was a popular moderate speed road switcher produced between 1972 and 1986. Top speed was limited to 65 mph. The GP38-2 was powered by EMD's reliable 2,000hp 645E V16 diesel prime mover. The essential difference between the GP38-2 and the basic GP38 was the Dash 2 used modular electronics. The primary spotting difference is the water sight glass on the engineers side of the locomotive, below and just in front of the radiator grilles.

A Genesis series HO scale model of an EMD GP38-2 is included in Athearn's October 2026 production schedule. All GP38-2 road names in this release will have working classification lights and number boards and 4-wheel Blomberg-M trucks. The CPKC GP38-2 is an ex-Soo Line Phase 2 unit with a corrugated radiator grille and a Stratolite beacon on the cab roof.

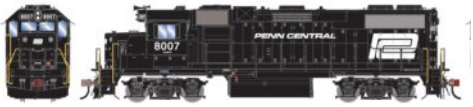
Athearn's GP38-2 decorated for OHCR-Genesee & Wyoming represents EMD's Phase I production with chicken wire radiator grilles, front and rear ditch lights and a three chime horn mounted at the rear of the locomotive.

Athearn will offer three road numbers for ex-TP&W GP38-2s wearing Santa Fe's short-lived Kodachrome scheme. A blue and yellow Yellow Bonnet scheme will also be available. Both ATSF units are Phase 2 locomotives with corrugated radiator grilles and Leslie 3-chime horns.

GP38-2 locomotives decorated for Buckingham Branch, L&N and Penn Central all represent Phase 1 production with dynamic brakes and chicken wire radiator grilles. The BB model is an ex-Norfolk Southern locomotive with a 5-chime horn mounted at the rear.

Athearn's version of the L&N GP38-2 will have a Gyralight in the number board housing.

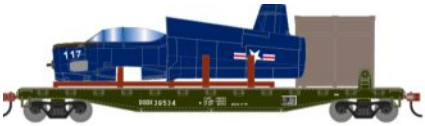
Completing the October 2026 production run of Genesis GP38-2 diesels is a Penn Central unit with front and rear snowplow pilots.



Athearn's Genesis series SD60M and GP38-2 have similar features, including cab interior details and see-through cab windows, uncoupling levers, MU stands, flexible trainline and MU hoses, windshield wipers, wire grab irons, Celcon handrails, illuminated number boards and classification lights, lift rings, realistic walkway tread, detailed fuel tanks with fuel fillers, fuel gauges, and breather pipes. The all-wheel drive system is driven by a 5-pole skew wound motor with flywheels. Operating systems include basic DC with a 21-pin NEM connector, and on-board DCC with SoundTraxx Tsunami2 sound decoder.

In a significant new step to realistic modeling, Athearn has introduced factory produced distressed and worn models. Named CarKnocker, the new series begins with a slightly swayback Railgon gondola with a deformed body and bulged and dented side panels.

The initial CarKnocker model will be available in the fall of 2026 in seven Railgon schemes, three CSX schemes, and painted black with data only. Although the model appears to be in rough shape, Athearn notes that the trucks and couplers remain precise and are designed to meet the recommended practices and standards of NMRA.



Also coming from Athearn in the fall of 2026 is a 50′ DODX flat car with a North American T-28B Trojan airplane on board. Decorating schemes on the airplane and flatcar will include US Navy, US Army, US Air Force, and US Marine Corps. A flatcar decorated for Athearn will include a T-28B decorated for Horizon

Hobby. Athearn reports that the 1:87 scale airplane will feature a detailed radial engine, landing gear and cockpit interior. The model will be disassembled for transportation. The T-28B airplane will also be available as a separate purchase.

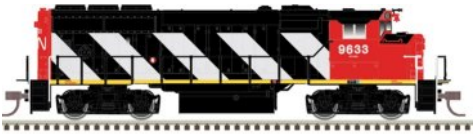
A 20,900 gallon tank car decorated for Trinity Industries-Dupont, Honeywell International, British Columbia Rail, Eaglebrook Chemical, and two UTLX schemes is included in Athearn's October 2026 production schedule. The HO scale tank car will come with 100-ton roller-bearing trucks with 36″ machined metal wheels.

This 50′ FMC 5327 cu. ft. boxcar with plug doors is coming from Athearn in late 2026. Features on the HO scale model include photo-etched cross-over platforms and separately applied grab irons, end ladders, and brake wheel. Road names in this release will be East Camden & Highland, Green Bay & Western, Bay Line Railroad, Wisconsin Central, Riverport Railroad and Saratoga & North Creek Railway.

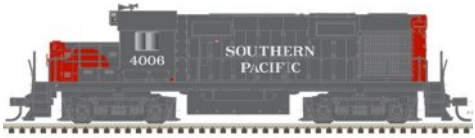
Athearn's list of new HO scale products coming in October 2026 concludes with two versions of a Berwick Bathtub gondola. Cars in their original design with standard sides will be available decorated for Procor, Sultran Industries, GBRX-Greenbrier Leasing, and black with data only.

Road names for Berwick Bathtub gondolas with extended sides, to increase the cars volume, will be Infinity Transportation, Massachusetts Coastal, and black with data

only. All Athearn models mentioned in this report will come with McHenry knuckle couplers.
Info: www.athearn.com



New HO scale models scheduled for release this month from **Atlas** include a GMDD GP40-2(W) diesel locomotive with a wide-nose safety cab. Prototype details include a 3,000 gallon fuel tank, etched-metal radiator fan grilles, directional lighting, detailed cab interior with crew figures, separately applied scale windshield wipers and grab irons, walkway safety tread, trainline and MU hoses, and uncoupling levers. Road names will be Canadian National, Alabama & Tennessee Railway, Bangor & Aroostook, Foster Townsend Rail Logistics, Indiana Harbor Belt, Kansas City Southern, Pan American Railways, Guilford, and two Great Western schemes.



Also due for release to Atlas dealers this month are HO scale Alco RS-32 and RS-36 road switchers. The HO scale Trainman series models are based on the 2,000hp RS-32 Alco built during 1961-1962, and an 1,800hp RS-36 introduced in 1962. Externally the RS-32 and RS-36 are virtually indistinguishable. Features on the economy priced Atlas Trainman models include directional lighting and locating dimples for subsequent installation of grab irons. The RS-32 will be available decorated for Delaware-Lackawanna, Penn Central, Tishomingo Railroad, and Southern Pacific. Road names for the RS-36 include Southern New England (two schemes), Lehigh Valley, Delaware & Hudson, and Nickel Plate Road.

Atlas Gold series DCC locomotives come with a factory installed LokSound Select Dual-Mode decoder. Atlas Silver series locomotives are for standard DC operation with an NMRA

compliant socket for installation of an aftermarket DCC decoder. Info: shop.atlasrr.com

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R. Bale

THE SIEMENS CHARGER

The Siemens Charger is a family of diesel electric locomotives designed and manufactured primarily for Amtrak in Sacramento, CA by Siemens Mobility. All are powered by a Cummins 16-cylinder diesel engine. There are five variants of the Charger, tailored for different operators and types of service: The initial version is the SC-44 which entered service in 2017. A year later the SCB-40 was introduced on Florida's inter-city Brightline. The long distance ALC-42 entered revenue service in 2022 on the Empire Builder. The unique dual power model ALC-42E was designed for the Northeast Corridor. The SCV-42 was developed for Canada's VIA Rail.

Bachmann Trains is selling the Siemens ALC-42 in four distinctive paint schemes including Amtrak Phase VI, Amtrak Midwest, Amtrak Cascades, and Amtrak Pacific Surfliner.

The Surfliner units feature the prototypically accurate spoilers on the rear of their roofs that match the height of bi-level California and Surfliner cars.

Bachman's HO scale ALC-42 consists of a plastic body shell on a diecast metal frame with separately applied metal handrails

and grab irons. Additional detail parts include horns, brake hoses, MU cables, windshield wipers, antennas, and mirrors. Features include operating ditch lights, marker lights, lighted number boards, roof-mounted strobes, destination board, and directional headlights.

The control system includes a TCS WOWSound dual-model sound decoder and Keep-Alive that maintains electrical continuity during brief power interruptions. The locomotives come with magnetically operated E-Z Mate Mark II couplers. A 22″ minimum track radius is recommended.

Also in stock are Bachmann's new EMD BL2 locomotive in HO scale. Introduced in 1947, the "Branch Line" locomotive was an attempt to improve the locomotive crew's visibility to the rear over the F series cab units. Largely unsuccessful with only 58 locomotives built for nine railroads, the GP7 would be its successful follow-on.

Bachmann's initial release includes locomotives decorated for Chesapeake & Ohio, Monon, Rock Island, and Western Maryland. The model comes with a DCC On Board® motor and lighting decoder, a speaker enclosure for modeler-performed sound decoder upgrades; road name specific headlights, steam generator exhaust, radiator, and cab window sunshades; separately applied detail parts, blackened metal RP25 wheels, and

magnetic EZ Mate Mark II couplers.
Info: www.bachmanntrains.com

R. Bale

MLW M630 LOCOMOTIVE

The M630 is a 3,000hp diesel electric locomotive built by Montreal Locomotive Works (MLW), a subsidiary of the American Locomotive Company (Alco) of Schenectady, NY. After Alco quit the locomotive business in 1969, MLW continued to build derivations of Alco units under license, including the C630 road switcher which was identified as the M630. The C630/M630 were among the first diesels to use an alternator rather than a generator. Between 1969 and 1973 MLW built a total of 105 M630 units. All of the Canadian-built M630s rode on six-wheel high-adhesion trucks manufactured by Dofasco.

Photo courtesy of Conner Frasier

Bowser continues to book reservations for an HO scale MLW M630 diesel road switcher.

Road names available on the next M630 release will be CP Rail, Pacific Great Eastern, Bay Coast Railroad, British Columbia Railway, Delaware Lackawanna Railroad, Minnesota Commercial Railway, and Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad.

Features on the HO scale model include air hoses, separate windshield wipers, wire grab irons and uncoupling bars, operating headlight, window glass, and a can motor with flywheels.

A choice of operating systems includes standard DC analog (DCC ready with a 21-pin socket) and DCC/Sound with an ESU LokSound V5 decoder.
Info: bowser-trains.com

Broadway Limited is preparing a new production run of HO scale EMD F3/F7 diesel locomotives that will include some fallen flag favorites plus restored and operational units. Availability is planned for September 2025. The production schedule includes Norfolk Southern F units with newly-tooled roof arrangements and operating recessed ditch lights.

Additional road names include Atlantic Coast Line, Boston & Maine, Chesapeake & Ohio, Lackawanna, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Pennsylvania, Aberdeen Carolina & Western, Amtrak, New Haven, Chicago & North Western, and Reading & Northern.

A theater car and F9 A/B units decorated for Wheeling & Lake Erie will be available exclusively from Chase's Train Garage. An

F7A unit decorated in a Christmas scheme will be available only through TrainWorld.


Broadway Limited has scheduled a rerun of 2-8-0 Consolidation steam locomotives in six decorating schemes plus one painted but unlettered version. Road names for the HO scale steam locomotive will be Santa Fe, Baltimore & Ohio, CB&Q, Union Pacific, Northern Pacific, and Denver & Rio Grande Western. A 2-8-0 Consolidation decorated for Strasburg Railroad No. 90 will be available only through TrainWorld.

Operating systems for the F3/F7 diesels and the 2-8-0 Consolidation will include Stealth (No-sound / DCC-ready) and Paragon4 Sound/DCC.

Long range projects currently under development at Broadway Limited include brass/hybrid models of an Illinois Central class A1a 2-8-4 Berkshire and a Union Pacific 2-8-8-0 with a Vanderbilt tender. BLI's new products team is also working with the CB&Q Historical Society in developing an accurate HO scale model of a Burlington E5 diesel.
Info: www.broadway-limited.com


R. Bale

GENERAL ELECTRIC U18B

GE launched the U18B as a branch line road switcher in 1973. The locomotive was plagued with reliability issues and at 1,800hp were considered underpowered. Just 118 were built, plus 45 for Mexico, before production ended in October 1976. The standard truck for U18Bs was GEs two-axle floating bolster truck, however, many were delivered with EMD Blomberg trade-in trucks.

Intermountain Railway is booking reservations through March 31, 2025, for a new production run of GE U18B diesel locomotives. The HO scale ready-to-run model will have etched metal and wire formed details and operating metal knuckle couplers. Ten paint schemes will be available including the return of five popular road names previously released by InterMountain.

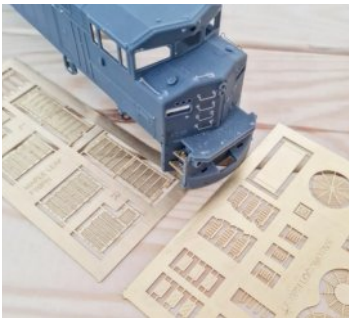
Road names on this new run will be Providence & Worcester, Seaboard Coast Line, Pickens Railway, CSX (Grey Ghost scheme), CSX (ex-Seaboard faded, patched), SBD (ex-Seaboard faded, patched), Illinois Southern, Weyerhaeuser Railroad, General Electric (Demo), and five variations of Maine Central – Guilford Line.

Both sound equipped and DCC-only versions of InterMountain's U18B will be available on this release.

Info: www.intermountain-railway.com

A 40′ PS-1 boxcar decorated for the Rutland Railway is **Kadee's** latest ready-to-run model. The HO scale model is decorated in the 1957 as-built yellow and green scheme.

Details include 8′ Pullman Standard sliding doors and see-through running board and brake step. The model comes with Kadee Magne-Matic metal couplers and self-centering Bettendorf-type plain bearing trucks with metal wheelsets.
Info: www.kadee.com



Maple Leaf Trains has released a new 3D-printed kit of the EMD F59PH locomotive in HO scale. Used widely by GO Transit, F59PHs were also sold or leased to Dallas' Trinity Railway Express, British Columbia's West Coast Express, and Southern California's Metrolink. After GO Transit began replacing them with MPI MP40PH-3Cs, some locomotives were sold to North Carolina DOT, Montreal's AMT, Chicago's Metra, and RB-Railway Group.

Designed to fit a modified HO scale Atlas GP38/40 frame, the kit is available for the Phase I, II, III, and IV versions of the locomotive. The kits include road and era specific parts, etched metal and wire formed details, clear lighting parts, and laser cut clear sheet cab windows and windshield.
Info: www.mapleleaftrains.com

Rapido's previously announced plans to produce an HO scale version of a 60′ Trenton 6348 cu. ft. double door boxcar have been on hold for several months. The project has now been revived with a new order deadline of April 15, 2025.

The model is based on a prototype built in 1993/94 by Trenton Works at Trenton, Nova Scotia. The product development team at Rapido used both original blueprints and field measurements in creating the HO scale model. Spotting features include box non-terminating ends and both a plug door and sliding door on each side.

Decorating schemes will include CN (as delivered), CN (with conspicuity stripes), CN (small noodle), ROLX-Railroad of Lies, and painted but unlettered. For some unknown reason cars did not receive the usual French spelling of Canadien National, however, operational and warning labels were bilingual. Rapido's Trenton boxcars will come with Barber S-2 cast steel trucks and metal knuckle couplers.

Also in the works at Rapido is another production run of HO scale AutoFlood III open hopper cars. The model replicates the modern-day rapid discharge 4,200 cu. ft. aluminum prototype that can be quickly unloaded through five unique bay doors, or in a rotary dump system when equipped with rotary couplers.

In addition to a new ROLX-Railroad of Lies scheme, road names on this release include BNSF, DKPX-Duke Power, GACX-General American, NOVX-First Union Rail, TVAX-Tennessee Valley Authority, TXUX-TXU Electric, and Union Pacific.

The HO scale model features highly detailed end cages with separate air and brake piping, interior K-member and rivet detail, separate grab irons, and etched see-through cross over platforms. The AutoFlood models will come with a removable magnetic coal load facilitated with a wand and Barber S-2 100-ton trucks with 36″ machined metal wheels. Reservations to ensure availability close on April 15, 2025.

Rapido is booking reservations for another production run of 8,000 and 10,000 gallon class X3 tank cars. New in this release are HO scale models of X3 tank cars modified with the addition of heater coils outside of the tanks with wagon-style insulation and jacketing. Distinctive in appearance, these cars were used primarily for the transportation of special transformer oil which was used to insulate and cool transformers.

Cars with a capacity of 8,000 gallons will be available decorated for UTLX-Skellysolve (Silver 1930s, all others are black), UTLX-Skellysolve (1960s), UTLX-(1927), UTLX-1950, UTLX Hexane (mid 1950s), Products Tank Car (mid 1950s), Procor Limited (1955+), and undecorated. Decorating schemes for 10K tank cars include UTLX (late 60s), UTLX (1950s), and undecorated.

X3 cars modified with heater jacketing will be available decorated for UTLX (1930s scheme), UTLX (1950s), and undecorated. The order deadline for Rapido's X3 tank cars is May 15, 2025.

Rapido has scheduled another production run of its HO scale general service drop-bottom gondola. The HO scale model

replicates a 41′ 6″ car built by Pressed Steel Car Company for Northern Pacific in 1940. The models feature a fully detailed interior and underframe.

Rapido is including four NP versions in this new release plus six new road names that owned virtually identical cars: C&NW, D&RGW, Illinois Central, New Haven, Soo Line, and Union Pacific. The cars will be available either as single cars or in six-packs.

The deadline for ordering this new production run is May 15, 2025. Product photos and illustrations are courtesy of Rapido Trains.
Info: www.rapidotrains.com

A wood chip version of the NP drop-bottom gondola with a 9-board extension will be available exclusively through the **Northern Pacific Railway Historical Association.**
Info: store.nprha.org

Pullman Standard's series of PS-2 triple-bay covered hoppers, introduced in 1960, included some specialty designs like the 2929 cu. ft. version intended primarily for phosphate service. **Tangent Scale Models** has recreated the 100-ton 2929 with numerous details including a high-brake wheel, Morton brake steps, metal sill steps, flexible rubber air hoses, and 100-ton S-2 trucks.

Tangent's 1965 ACL car, available in 12 numbers, features an Apex roof walk and Wine gravity outlet gates.

This CSX car represents a 1989 repaint of an ACL car. It has an Apex roof walk, eight round roof hatches, and an Ajax brake stand. It is also available in 12 numbers.

This PS-2 decorated for Louisville & Nashville in gray paint reflects the earliest Pullman-delivered 2929. The car has 10 roof hatches in a staggered pattern. All other Tangent models in this release have eight hatches. Additional prototype details include a Klausing model 1700 power brake and Enterprise discharge gates.

Norfolk Southern's 2929 in original gray paint represents a prototype delivered in 1966. Notable features include eight round roof hatches and an Ajax brake stand. The same features are on the 1980-era USEX-Texas Industries model which is an ex-NS car.

Tangent's 2929 is also available as an unpainted plastic kit.
Info: www.tangentscalemodels.com

VIEW READER COMMENTS

R. Bale

SCALE TEST CAR

Loaded freight cars are weighed to verify the amount of cargo it is carrying. The information is used to determine how much the railroad's customer is to be charged for handling the freight. It is essential that track scales be accurate. A scale test car, aka test weight car, is a unique non-revenue car of precisely known weight that is used to calibrate the accuracy of the scales used to weigh loaded railroad cars. Scale test cars require special handling to prevent damage which might alter their weight. They are reweighed periodically on accurate scales at the railroad's shops. The weight of the scale car can be adjusted by adding or removing small amounts of lead in a compartment accessed through a small door on each side of the car. Very early scale test cars were small, old railroad cars carrying heavy metal weights. In 1917 the Pennsylvania Railroad, in conjunction with the US Department of Commerce, developed a 13′ scale test car with an 80,000 lb. cast body riding on four 36″ wheels.

A newly tooled scale test car is coming from **Walthers** this fall. The HO scale Proto series model represents a prototype used to calibrate track scales at industries, railroad shops, yards, and other facilities. Features include a diecast body, two different styles of hand brakes, three different side access doors, wire grab irons, and photo-etched brass placards. Road names on this release will be Archer Daniels Midland, Canadian National, Burlington Northern, Chesapeake & Ohio, Conrail, Union Pacific, and Rock Island. A gray car with data only will also be available.

A new production run of 85′ Amtrak Viewliner sleepers is coming from Walthers this fall. The Proto series model is based on the double window prototype that entered service in

1995. Walthers is upgrading its HO scale model with full interiors details, improved diaphragms and GSI metal trucks with 36″ machined metal wheels. Options include no interior lighting or factory-installed LED lighting. Decorating schemes for this release include Amtrak Phase IV, Phase VI (early), Phase VI, and Phase VII.

Walthers has announced a new run of the ML-8 industrial switcher. Based on a prototype built by the Plymouth Locomotive Works of Plymouth, Ohio, between 1910 and 1997 Plymouth built more than 7,000 similar locomotives, switching from gasoline to diesel powered engines in 1927.

The Mainline series HO scale model will have a heavy diecast metal underframe and hood, low-speed gearing, an etched metal see-through radiator guard and metal handrails. The ML-8 will be available for standard DC operation and with an ESU LokPilot non-sound DCC decoder. Additional electrical features include directional LED lighting and a built-in capacitor for electrical continuity during brief power interruptions.

Decorating schemes available in this release will be USAF, Coastal, M. Lummus, Red (Yellow pilot stripes), Black body (Yellow stripes), Silver body (Black stripes), and a White body. Availability is expected sometime during the winter of 2026.

Walthers plans to release a 40′ double-sheathed wood boxcar this summer. The HO scale model is based on a prototype upgraded from a World War 1-era car. Some rebuilds of the well-designed prototype remained active into the 1960s with a few still in MOW service in the 1980s.

Features on the Walthers Mainline series model include a steel fishbelly underframe, AB brake gear, National sliding

wood doors, Murphy 5-5-5 steel ends, a simulated wood running board on a flat metal roof, and a horizontal brake wheel mounted on a vertical steel shaft. This wood boxcar will come with Andrews plain-bearing trucks with 33″ machined metal wheelsets.

In addition to the St. Louis & Southwestern version shown here, road names available on this release will be New York Central, Florida East Coast, Rock Island, Northern Pacific, St. Louis-San Francisco (Frisco), Northwestern Pacific, and Delaware, Lackawanna & Western.

All Walthers models mentioned in this report will come with ProtoMAX metal knuckle couplers.
Info: www.walthers.com

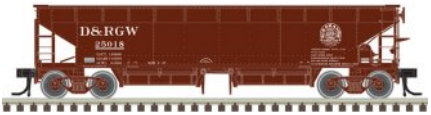
N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS

This N scale 50′ FMC 5327 cu. ft. boxcar with plug doors is coming from Athearn in late 2026. Road names in this release will be East Camden & Highland, Green Bay & Western, Bay Line Railroad, Wisconsin Central, Riverport Railroad, and Saratoga & North Creek Railway.

Athearn's list of new N scale products coming in October 2026 includes two versions of a Berwick Bathtub gondola. Cars in their original design with standard sides will be available decorated for Procor, Sultran Industries, Greenbrier Leasing, and black with data only.

Road names for Berwick Bathtub gondolas, with extended sides to increase the cars volume, will be available for Infinity Transportation,

Massachusetts Coastal, and black with data only. Athearn N scale models mentioned in this report will come with McHenry knuckle couplers.
Info: www.athearn.com



Atlas plans to release an N scale 70-ton Hart ballast car to its dealer network this month. Built by ACF between 1940-1953, the Hart design incorporated specially designed doors which allowed the lading to be discharged one of three ways: to the center of the rails, to the center and sides of the rails, or to the side of the rails only.

Atlas's N scale model features a diecast chassis, a detailed interior including cross-bracing and side stiffeners and 70-ton plain-bearing trucks. Road names on this release include Alaska Railroad, Conrail, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Southern Railway, British Columbia, Canadian Pacific, Great Northern, Union Pacific, and Wisconsin Central.
Info: www.shopatlasrr.com

An N scale version of EMD's upgraded GP38-2 is coming from **Bachmann** this spring. The model will have all-wheel drive, illuminated number boards, magnetically operated E-Z Mate Mark II couplers and separately applied handrails, horns, and clear window glass.

Road names will be BNSF, B&O Chessie System, Milwaukee Road, and Norfolk Southern. Bachmann's DC GP38-2 will have a socket to simplify installation of an aftermarket DCC decoder.

Bachmann has released a series of smooth-sided passenger cars in N scale decorated for the Pennsylvania Railroad's Fleet of Modernism. Introduced in 1938, the Fleet of Modernism consisted of 52 new lightweight cars from Pullman Standard.

Three 85′ coaches and one 85′ observation car are included in this release. All cars include lighted interiors, undercarriage details, blackened metal RP25 wheels, body mounted EZ-Mate Mark II couplers, and Celcon trucks with needlepoint brass axles.
Info: www.bachmanntrains.com

Kato is preparing a group of N scale GE Evolution Series ES44 locomotives for release this summer. Designed to meet the EPA's 2005 Tier 2 emission standards, the prototype ES locomotives were equipped with AC traction motors and a GEVO 12-cylinder diesel engine that produced the same power as the 16-cylinder AC4400CW, but with fewer emissions and greater fuel economy. A spotting feature is a redesigned air-to-air dual-fan heat exchanger that give the ES44 locomotives a distinctive oversized radiator.

N scale models of the ES44AC will be available decorated for Union Pacific, CSX, BNSF, Canadian National, and CPKC. Kato's summer release will

include a CSX ES44DC and an ES44C4 with A1A-A1A trucks wearing the colorful scheme of the Florida East Coast Railroad.

All versions of Kato's N scale model will have directional headlights, illuminated ditch lights and preprinted number boards. Operating options will include DC, DCC, or DCC with sound.

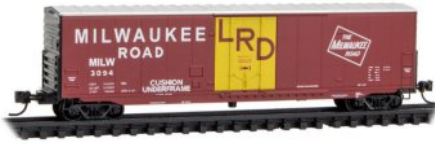
Info: www.katousa.com

RailSmith is producing a complete consist of N scale streamlined cars for two Great Northern name trains: The Empire Builder and the Western Star. Reservations are being booked now for GN Glacier series cars decorated in the original 1947 paint scheme of Omaha orange and Pullman green.

Info: www.lowellsmith.net

New N scale models from **Micro-Trains Line** include this Reading 40′ boxcar. The DF designation on the door identifies that this 1940s-era boxcar is equipped with Damage Free loaders.

MT's heavily weathered Union Pacific 50′ steel gondola represents a 70-ton prototype built in the late 1950s. The N scale model includes a covered load of a disassembled twin-rotor helicopter.



Also new from Micro-Trains is this 50′ Milwaukee Road boxcar. The bold LRD designation on the yellow plug door indicates the car has Evans Load Dividers. Info: Contact a dealer.

NEW STRUCTURES & SCENIC SUPPLIES

Berkshire Valley Models has released a craftsman-style kit for a classic wood Interlocking Tower. Notable features on the HO scale model include a unique hip-roof and a well-detailed stairway. The principal components in the kit consist of laser-cut basswood and thin veneer plywood. This is a former American Model Builders kit.
Info: www.berkshirevalleymodels.com

Iconic Replicas, of Baco Raton, FL has scheduled a 2025 summer release for new decorating schemes for its 1:87 scale MCI (Motor Coach Industries) D4000 motor coach.

The diecast model with injection molded detail parts will be available decorated for Greyhound, Greyhound Canada, Blue Ridge Trailways, Peter Pan, Riverside County Sheriff, Vermont Transit, MTA New York City and Ontario Northland.
Info: www.iconicreplica.com

Monster Models is selling a shallow backdrop kit for John Burney's Carriage Shop; an 1800s brick structure based on a prototype located in Dublin, Indiana. Both HO and S scale kits are currently available. Components include 3D engraved

American Bond brick walls with stone foundation, laser-cut wood storefront header, windows, doors and roof trim; raised seam metal roofing, and assorted signage. The model can be built as a carriage shop, repurposed with different signs or updated with a modernized store front. Assembly and painting are required.
Info: www.larkspurlaserart.com

HO scale vehicles released by **Oxford Diecast** include a dark blue 1942 Packard Clipper sedan and a 1964 Ford station wagon.

Trucks available from Oxford include a 1948 Dodge B-1B pickup with wood railings and a 1930s-era Chevrolet half-ton truck with a canvas covered load.
Info: www.walthers.com

Showcase Miniatures is selling an HO scale kit for a standard grade crossing signal. The kit includes pewter, stainless photo-etched, and cast resin detail parts, brass tubing and a choice of crossbucks. A nice feature is a magnetic break-away base. In addition to the kit, the signal is also available painted and assembled with LED lights.
Info: www.showcaseminiatures.com

Tichy Train Group is selling an HO scale kit for a standard PRR watchman's shanty. The injection molded kit includes a separate door and windows with precut glazing

material. The shanty is available in 2-packs and 10-packs. Tichy is also offering a plastic kit for a standard four-wheel wooden baggage wagon. It is available singly and in a 10-pack. Both items are molded in gray styrene and require assembly and painting.
Info: www.tichytraingroup.com

NEW DECALS, SIGNS AND FINISHING PRODUCTS

HO scale water slide decals available from **National Scale Car** for Pacific Fruit Express reefers include class R-40-25 cars (above) and class R-30-4, R-30-9 and R-40-4/8 rebuilt and reconditioned cars (below).

Also available are PFE decals for class R-50-5 and R-30/40-16 rebuilt cars with alternate UP medallions.
Info: nationalscalecar.com

Switchline Decals has N, HO and O scale decals for Metra F59PHI V2 locomotives.
Info: www.switchlinedecals.com

Briefly noted at press time ...

Accurail is selling a 3-pack of 41′ steel gondolas kits decorated for Central of Georgia, Western Railway of Alabama and Southern Pacific …

New releases from **Atlas** include HO scale U30C locomotives and 50′ GARX reefers, and N scale GP40s and 3500 Dry-Flo covered hoppers …

New items just released to dealers by **Bachmann** include HO scale EMD BL2 branchline diesels and N scale 85′ smooth-side coaches and observation cars …

Kadee has introduced an HO scale long-shank SBE shelf whisker couplers. O scale versions are expected soon … ■

SELECTED EVENTS

March

Please submit your event information, including website, to model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contact/News_event_-_product_announcement

Ongoing 2024

ONLINE, Zoom, dates vary, see website. Operation Special Interest Group Meetups – limited attendance available.
Info: www.opsig.org/Virtual
Archive: www.youtube.com/c/OperationsSIG

ONLINE, Zoom & YouTube, Wednesday & Saturday, see Facebook page. "New Tracks" Meetup, hosted by Jim Kellow, MMR.
Info: newtracksmodeling.com
YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCMA_VhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA

ONLINE, Facebook & YouTube, dates vary, see Facebook page. "NMRAx" organized by Gordy Robinson, Martyn Jenkins, Speed Muller, Jordan Kramer.
Info: www.facebook.com/groups/nmragroup

ONLINE, YouTube, every other Saturday. 4th Division, Pacific Northwest Region, NMRA hosts online layout tours and clinics. Archive: www.youtube.com/c/4DPNRMovies

ONLINE, YouTube, March 17-20, 2025. NMRA Northeastern Region NERx annual virtual convention. www.youtube.com/c/NMRAORGModelRailroading
Info: nerx.org

ONLINE, Zoom, Second Tuesdays, 8pm Eastern. "Off the Beaten Track" featuring Narrow Gauge layouts, clinics, and manufacturers.
Info: groups.io/g/NNG

AROUND THE USA, IN-PERSON, Various dates. ScaleTrains.com Road Trip.
Info: www.scaletrains.com/roadtrip

March - April 2025

CANADA, ALBERTA, CALGARY, April 5-6, 2025. Supertrain 2025, sponsored by the Calgary Model Railway Society. Olympic Oval, University of Calgary.
Info: www.supertrain.ca

CANADA, ONTARIO, HAMILTON, April 25, 2025. Steel Town RPM, sponsored by the HO Model Engineers Society. Eva Rothwell Centre, 460 Wentworth St N.
Info: steeltownrpm.wordpress.com

CANADA, ONTARIO, PRESCOTT, April 12, 2025. 2nd Annual Prescott Model Train Show sponsored by the Prescott Model Railway Group. Leo Boivin Community Centre, 444 Prince Street.
Info: www.facebook.com/PrescottRailroadModelClub

(HYBRID)CALIFORNIA, SAN LUIS OBISPO, March 27-30, 2025. Daylight Limited – Pacific Coast Region Convention. Embassy Suites by Hilton San Luis Obispo, 333 Madonna Road. Info: pcr2025.org

GEORGIA, MACON, March 28-29, 2025. Central Georgia RPM. Lundy Chapel Church, 2081 Forest Hill Rd. Info: www.centralgarpm.com

ILLINOIS, CALLEDONIA, April 2, 2025. Rock River Valley Division Monthly Meeting/Clinics. Paulsons Agricultural Museum, 6950 Belvedere Rd. Info: rrvd-nmra.com/event/rock-river-valley-train-show

ILLINOIS, MACHESNEY PARK, March 29-30, 2025. 2025 Rock River Valley Train Show, sponsored by the Rock River Valley Division. Harlem High School, 9229 Alpine Rd. Info: www.rrvd-nmra.com/show.php

INDIANA, NAPPANEE, March 15, 2025. 20th Annual Elkhart Model Railroad Club Train Show. Claywood Event Center, 13924 N 1100 W (County Line Road). Info: www.emrrc.com

MAINE, TOPSHAM, April 26, 2025. 2025 Great Falls Model Railroad Club Tain Show. Mt. Ararat High School, 68 Eagles Way. Info: www.greatfallsmodelrrclub.org/events/event/2024-gfmrrc-train-show

MINNESOTA, PLYMOUTH, March 14-15, 2025. 8th Annual Twin Cities Division, NMRA Modelers Retreat. Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, 12235 Old Rockford Rd. Info: tcdnmra.org/modelers-retreat

MINNESOTA, WOODBURY, April 26, 2025. Newport Model RR Train Flea Market. Woodbury High School, 2665 Woodland Dr. Info: www.newportclub.us

MICHIGAN, WYOMING (Grand Rapids), April 12, 2025. The Greater Grand Rapids Spring 2025 Train Show, sponsored by the Grand River Valley Railroad Club. HSB, Inc (Home School Building), 5625 Burlingame Ave SW.
Info: www.facebook.com/grandrivervalleytrainclub

NEW HAMPSHIRE, NORTH SUTTON, April 13, 2025. 8th Dartmouth/Lake Sunapee Region Model Railroad Show. Kearsarge Regional Middle School, 32 Gile Pond Rd. (Exit 10 - Sutton – I-89)
Info: cvrr.railfan.net/cvmrr

OHIO, WEST CHESTER (Cincinnati Area), March 15, 2025. 2025 Annual Division 7 NMRA Spring Model Train Flea Market. Lakota West Freshman Campus, 5050 Tylersville Rd.
Info: cincy-div7.org

OHIO, WOOSTER, March 15, 2025. Wooster Train & Toy Show. Wayne County Fairgrounds Event Center.
Info: www.facebook.com/events/2105028099952980

OREGON, CORVALLIS, March 15, 2025. Winterail 2025 railroad photography exposition and rail collectible sale. Corvallis High School, 1400 Northwest Buchanan Avenue.
Info: www.winterail.com

OREGON, ELSIE, April 5, 2025. Pacific Model Loggers' Congress. Camp 18 Restaurant and Logging Museum, 42362 US Hwy 26.
Info: pacificmodelloggerscongress.org

PENNSYLVANIA, YOUNGWOOD, March 21-22, 2025. RPM-EAST Railroad Prototype Modeler Seminar. Westmoreland County Community College Student Achievement Center, 145 Pavilion Lane.
Info: www.hansmanns.org/rpm_east

TENNESEE, MEMPHIS, April 26, 2025. Memphis Model Railroaders Open House. 4445 Malone Road.
Info: www.memphismodelrailroaders.com/events.html

Future 2025 by location

AUSTRALIA, QUEENSLAND, BRISBANE, August 22-24, 2025. Brisbane 2025, NMRA Australasian Regional Convention. Flight One, Qantas Drive, Archerfield.
Info: nmra.org.au/nmra-ar-convention-2025

CANADA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, BURNABY (Vancouver), May 23-25, 2025. Railway Modeller's Meet of British Columbia. Simon Fraser University.
Info: railwaymodellersmeetofbc.ca/wp

CANADA, ONTARIO, BURLINGTON, October 17-19, 2025. Real Rails 2025 Convention, sponsored by the Canadian Pacific Historical Association. Holiday Inn and Candle Wood Suites, 3060 South Service Road.
Info: www.cptracks.ca/realrails2025.html

NEW ZEALAND, MOSGIEL, May 3-4, 2025. Dunedin Model Train Show. Taieri Bowling Club, 12 Wickliffe Street.
Info: dunedinmodeltrainshow@gmail.com

COLORADO, DURANGO, May 15-18, 2025. NMRA Rocky Mountain Regional Convention. Durango Doubletree, 501 Camino Del Rio.
Info: www.rmr-nmra.org/2025%20Convention/Home.html

ILLINOIS, CALLEDONIA, May 4, 2025. Rock River Valley Division Monthly Meeting/Clinics. Paulsons Agricultural Museum, 6950 Belvedere Rd.
Info: rrvd-nmra.org

ILLINOIS, COLLINSVILLE (St. Louis, MO), July 24-26, 2025. St. Louis Railroad Prototype Modeler Meet. 1 Gateway Center Drive.
Info: stlrpm.com

LOUISIANA, BATON ROUGE, June 26-29, 2025. Blues Express 2025, NMRA Lone Star Regional Convention. Holiday Inn Baton Rouge South, 9990 Airline Way.
Info: bluesexpress2025.com

MARYLAND, LINTHICUM (Baltimore), September 11-14, 2025. Mid-Atlantic Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet. DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Baltimore-BWI Airport.
Info: www.marpm.org

MASSACHUESETTS, SPRINGFIELD, May 30-June 1, 2025. New England/Northeast RPM, in association with the Amherst Railway Society. Springfield Sheraton Monarch Place, One Monarch Place.
Info: nerpm.org

MINNESOTA, WILMAR, May 15-18, 2025. 2025 NMRA Thousand Lakes Region Convention. Location TBD.
Info: www.thousandlakesregion.org/blank

MICHIGAN, NOVI, July 14-19, 2025. Station No. VI, 2025 NMRA National Convention. Sheraton Hotel, 21111 Haggerty Road.
Info: nmra2025.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE, CONCORD, September 11-14, 2025. Concord Flyer - North Eastern Region NMRA Annual Convention, hosted by the Seacoast Division NMRA. Grappone Conference Center, 70 Constitution Avenue.
Info: conventions.nernmra.org/home/home-2025

NORTH CAROLINA, HIGH POINT, May 3-4, 2025. RPM Carolinas: School of Railway Prototype Modeling. 4050 Premier Drive.
Info: www.facebook.com/groups/1895473627515807

OHIO, DUBLIN (Columbus), May 15-18, 2025. The Buckeye Express, NMRA Mid-Central Regional Convention. Dublin Embassy Suites, 5100 Upper Metro Pl.
Info: buckeyeexpress.div6-mcr-nmra.org/Main.html

OREGON, CHILOQUIN, June 14-29, 2025. Train Mountain Triennial 2025. Train Mountain Railroad Park, 36941 South Chiloquin Road.
Info: trainmountain.org

PENNSYLVANIA, MOUNT UNION, July 18-20, 2025. Central Pennsylvania Shortlines RPM. Bricktown Museum, 300 W. Small St.
Info: rpm.pennsyrr.com

TENNESSEE, GATLINBURG, September 17-20, 2025. Smoky Mountain Rails Convention, sponsored by the Southeastern Region of the NMRA. Glenstone Lodge, 504 Airport Rd.
Info: 2025serconvention.org

TENNESSEE, JOHNSON CITY, May 30-31, 2025. George L. Carter Railroad Museum Inc. Big Train Show. ETSU Mini-Dome on the East Tennessee State University Campus.
Info: johnsoncityrailroadexperience.org

WASHINGTON, PASCO, May 9-11, 2025. The Ainsworth Connector, NMRA Pacific NW Regional Convention, Red Lion Hotel, 2525 N 20th Ave.
Info: pnr5d.org/pnr-5th-division-home-page/2025-pnr-convention ■

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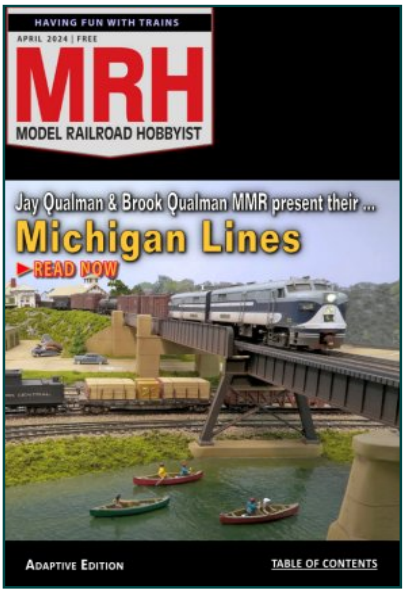
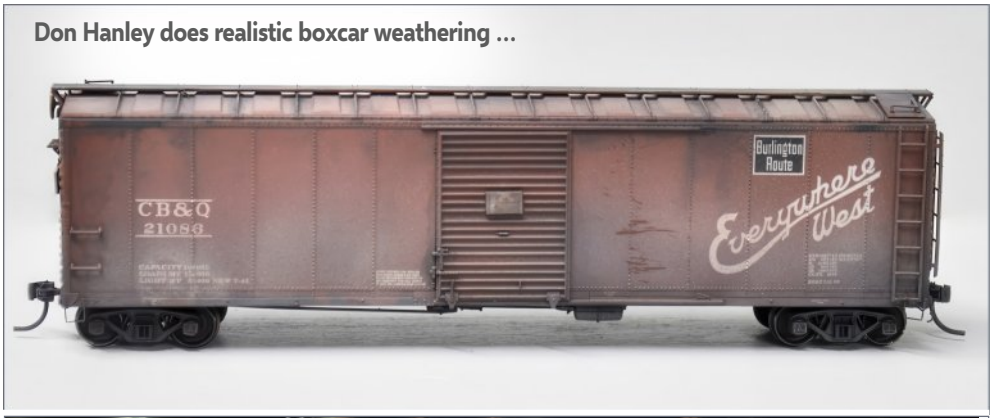
Coming next month in MRH ...

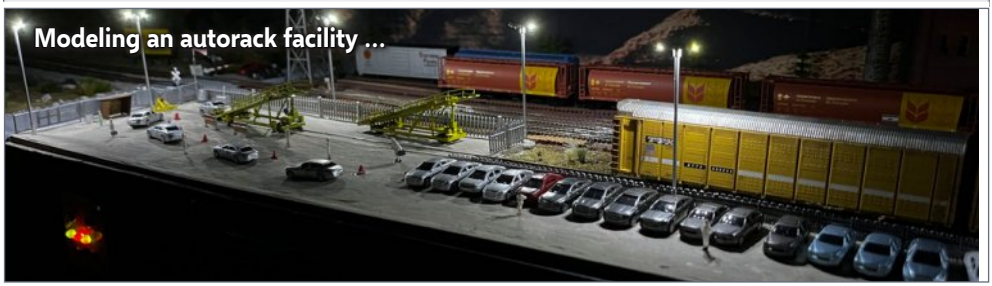


... coming April 15th in the April MRH

Coming next month in Running Extra ...

... all the MRH articles and ads, PLUS:





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