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Willie Clonts' ...
Soddy Daisy Southern

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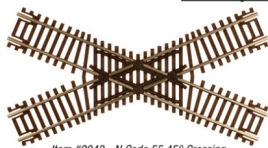
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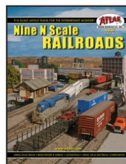
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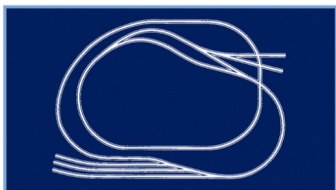


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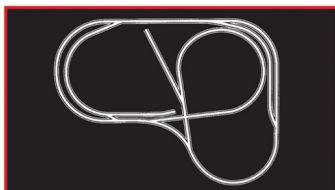
N CODE 80: N-7 TWICE AROUND VIA "UP & OVER"

From Book #6: *Introduction to N Scale Model Railroad*

Minimum Table Size Required: 32" x 45"

Products Required: Straight sections, radius sections, turnouts, a crossing, bumpers, insulated joiners and terminal joiners, necessary electrical components

If you enjoy watching a long train work its way up and down the grades of a long winding main line, the N7 is the layout for you. On this layout, yard tracks are available for breaking up and storing long trains, and a passing track with two industry spurs is available to provide additional operating diversions.



HO CODE 83/100: HO-7 THE JUNIOR PRETZEL

From Book #9: *Beginner's Guide to HO Model Railroad*

Minimum Table Size Required: 6' x 8'

Products Required: Straight sections, radius sections, Snap-Switches, rerailers, terminal sections, a crossing, bumpers, rail joiners and the necessary electrical components

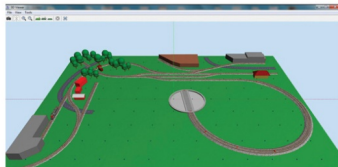
Since it is built on an extended platform, there are many possibilities with the HO-7; such as longer runs, longer trains and more realistic operations.

Atlas Track Planning Software

Atlas is proud to offer Atlas Track Planning Software to help you design your dream layout. This software allows you to create and customize a layout, view it as a 3D model and then generate a shopping list to make your dream layout a reality. Note - this software works on Windows OS only.

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- Layout libraries will be available with future library updates



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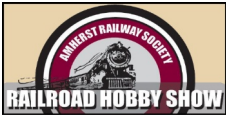
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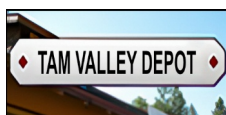
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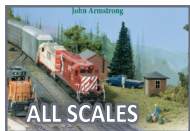
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Let's talk ops: More on ops before you plan

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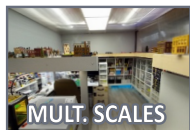
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Willie Clonts' Soddy Daisy Southern

the MRH STAFF



Make the layout room more inviting

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Savvy Modeler online: Chain link fences made easy

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PUBLISHER'S MUSINGS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | April 2026

JOE FUGATE STORIES COVERED IN THIS MONTH'S MAGAZINE ...



WE HAD TO MAKE A LAST-MINUTE ADJUSTMENT TO THIS MONTH'S LAYOUT COVERAGE, but we think you'll be pleased with how it turned out. Our planned feature on Pelle Søbørg's Daneburg Sub layout – the impressive ScaleTrains-owned (formerly ExactRail) model railroad – will be postponed to May.

As we pulled together the latest information to do Pelle's layout justice, we found ourselves up against our publication deadline. Rather than rush the story, we decided to give it the time it deserves.

Stepping in to fill that space is Willie Clont's Soddy Daisy Southern, and honestly, we couldn't be happier about it. This layout is a love letter to the hobby's golden age, an era when freelanced and wonderfully whimsical layouts like John Allen's legendary Gorre & Daphetid were considered the hobby's pinnacle.

Willie's creation captures that same spirit beautifully, with scenery and structures that are simply outstanding. Shooting this layout was an absolute delight; every angle revealed thoughtful detail and craftsmanship that reminds us why we fell in love with model railroading in the first place.

Look for the full layout story inside, and stay tuned for the Daneburg Sub story coming next month.

Banishing layout gremlins

Nothing stalls a great operating session faster than a “ghost short” – a phantom electrical fault that trips your DCC breakers and vanishes before you can find it.

Standard absolute DCC voltage readings are notoriously unreliable for tracking these down, which is why we've spent months researching a systematic, safety-first approach to layout diagnostics.

As part of researching this debugging series, I came upon a possible nightmare scenario.

In the modern DCC era, we rely on “smart” devices to handle our electrical chores. Frog Juicers manage turnout polarity in microseconds, while electronic circuit breakers stand guard over our booster district sub-blocks. But what happens when these two devices get locked in a logic war over a single “ghost” short?

The resulting scenario that can defy conventional troubleshooting. Imagine a turnout where you have an intermittent wire sliver bridge between the frog and a closure rail, keeping the frog juicer actively maintaining the frog polarity to match. It isn't a “dead” short yet; it's a lurking trap.

In this scenario, the moment a loco wheelset hits that frog from the other route, a high-speed “digital war” begins:

- 1. The trigger:** The loco wheels approach the frog from the diverging rail end wanting to make the polarity of the frog opposite that of the polarity of the closure rail. The Frog Juicer detects a phase mismatch through the loco wheel and snaps the polarity to match the approaching loco.



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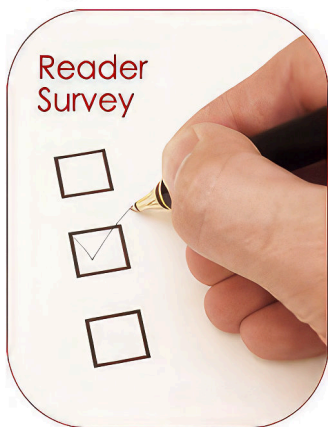
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- 2. The instant conflict:** Because of that hidden wire sliver, the moment the Juicer flips the frog's polarity, the frog is now electrically tied to the other rail, a polarity that's backwards to the closure rail that's shorted to the frog via a hidden wire sliver.
- 3. The high-frequency "squeal":** The Juicer sees a new short, thinks it made a mistake, and flips back. It enters a solid-state "death loop," switching thousands of times per second. Without a physical relay to slow it down, the Juicer emits a high-pitched electronic squeal – a distressed, metallic whine – as the MOSFETs oscillate into a dead short at kilohertz speeds. You may even catch the faint scent of ozone as the components begin to bake.

- 4. The abort:** While the Juicer is “sprinting,” the sub-block circuit breaker is watching. After a few milliseconds of this chaos, the breaker decides enough is enough and shuts down the entire sub-block.

To the operator, the train stutters, the lights flicker, the electronics “scream,” and the layout goes dead. Resetting the breaker only restarts the war.

The solution?

This scenario is exactly why a method we call the millivolt scalpel is the ultimate fix. This is one of the methods we will be covering in our upcoming Debugging DCC electrical gremlins series.

In one of the methods we will be presenting (called method C below), you swap your DCC booster for a “dumb” 12V DC power pack and an #1156 bulb, effectively lobotomizing the “smart” electronics.

The Juicer stops trying to be clever, and the breaker stops tripping. The high-pitched squeal vanishes instantly, replaced by the silent, steady glow of the taillight bulb.

Now, you can “walk” your multimeter along the rails. The voltage drop will lead you straight to the frog, pinpointing that microscopic sliver of wire to within a fraction of an inch.

Demystifying DCC debugging

Why hasn't this been explained before? Most hobby literature treats DCC shorts as a simple “on/off” problem. They assume your wiring is perfect and your breakers are all you need.

But as layouts grow larger and electronics become more complex, the old “quarter test” just isn't enough.



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Model Railroad Hobbyist is about to change that. In an upcoming exclusive three-part series, we are going to unveil the mystery and give you the ultimate masterclass in DCC forensics:

- **Part 1: The Machete.** How to use Binary Search (Method A) to chop a giant layout down to size without losing your mind.
- **Part 2: The Scanner.** Using Ammeters (Method B) to see the invisible current flow and find the “Leaky” shorts traditional meters miss.
- **Part 3: The Scalpel.** Master the Millivolt Method (Method C) to pinpoint “ghosts” and wire whiskers with surgical precision.

If you've ever been haunted by a short that wouldn't stay caught, or a circuit breaker that wouldn't stop clicking, you cannot afford to miss this series.

We're moving beyond the basics – it's time to master your layout's DNA.



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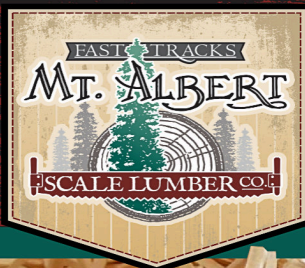
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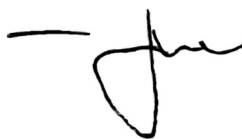
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MONTH**

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Compiled by **JOE FUGATE**



Modeling pulpwood cars

MRH forum member **Danno164** asked the forum members if Athearn pulpwood cars were still available anywhere.

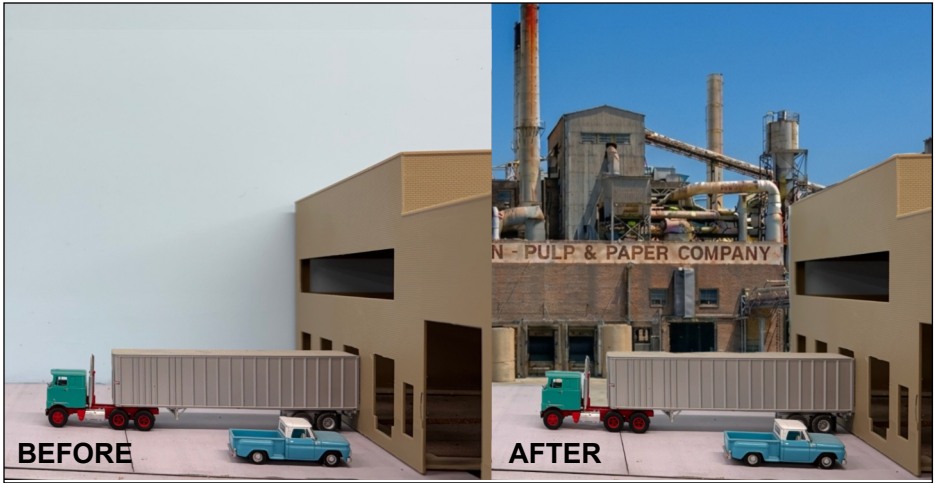


A number of folks responded that the Athearn pulpwood cars were getting scarce and they were not all that accurate either. MRH Author Bill Gill posted a modified Athearn flatcar (with images and details of how he kitbashed it) that looks quite nice as another option.

To see what other examples have been posted, visit the thread!

[View the full thread on the MRH website](#)

▶ **MRH'S MONTHLY GREAT MODELER POSTS**



1. MRH author **Jason Miller** posted this before and after example of how he used AI to generate a photo backdrop for this factory scene.

Using AI to generate photo backdrops

MRH forum member **Tim VanMersbergen** kicked off a thread about using AI to generate photo backdrops for his layout.

Several forum members chimed in and posted their own examples. One great example came from MRH Author Jason Miller:

“I’ve been using the Pro Version of Gemini for a bit now and the results are pretty impressive. Like you mentioned it’s all in how much detail you provide Gemini, get a good base, and little tweaks from there. On my layout the York Haven - Pulp & Paper Mill takes up about 8’ - 10’ and I need some specific backdrops to blend into the background scene. Here is the Gemini generated backdrop for the left hand side of the P&PM that is the loading area [1].”

Visit the thread for more great examples of this technique.

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2. *MRH* forum member **chepp** (Charles H.) posted details on a new source of 3D printed vintage scale automobiles he just found.

Source of vintage automobile models

MRH forum member **chepp** (Charles H.) has a long-running journal thread where he discusses various topics. Recently he posted:

“By chance, I came across a link to this niche model car. C'mon, how much demand could there be for an HO 1938 Oldsmobile car? It will be an excellent addition of a year-old car to my modules. This company offers a bunch of other 3D printed automobile and light-to-medium truck kits depicting 19teens to 1950s vehicles.”

Charlie continued: “Toys In The Attic also has some great 3D kits of autos up into the 1970s.. Those are too new for me but I do have two 1938 Plymouth cars and a 1933 Willys car that should be arriving any day. More “everyday” car kits of the 1930s: two four-door sedans and a convertible.”

Read Charlie’s full journal/blog thread for insightful discussions on a number of fascinating hobby topics.

[View the full thread on the *MRH* website](#)



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Recent photo fun thread

These images posted on recent *MRH* forum Photo Fun threads illustrate that you don't need a lot to get a great looking model scene.

[View list of recent Photo Fun threads](#)

3. *MRH* forum member **NSCedartownDistrict** (Baxter B.) posted this photo: "Finished up NS 6171, it's a ex-Norfolk and Western Phase 2 SD40-2. Built from a mix of Kato SD38-2 and SD40-2 parts along with other detail parts." Nice work and a simple but very effective scene.



4. **JJankauskas** (Justin J.) says, "My first of four new Bowser RS3ms to be weathered and put in service on my D&H Penn Division layout." There is nothing like a nice scene to set off the weathering and detailing of a locomotive. Some ballast, track weathering, static grass, and a few details make for a great photo setting. ✓



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More on ops before you plan ...

IN MY LAST COLUMN, I MADE A STRONG CASE THAT YOU NEED HANDS-ON OPERATING EXPERIENCE before designing your dream layout.

Some readers pushed back, pointing out that books like John Armstrong's *Track Planning for Realistic Operation* can also teach you what those track lines really do. They had a point – and it got me thinking.

While I stand by the core argument that you need operational understanding before you design a track plan, there's more than one way to get there. I have been trained in the four different styles on how people learn and I failed to account for that, so let's look closer at my core contention with additional insight into learning styles.

The hands-on approach

Some of us learn by doing. If that's you, attending operating sessions on other modelers' layouts remains the gold standard. There's nothing quite like throwing a switch, spotting a car, and discovering firsthand why that runaround needs to be longer than you thought. You'll make mistakes, ask questions, and internalize lessons that no book can fully convey. Seek out local clubs, reach out to layout owners, and get your hands on a throttle.

The observer's method

Others learn by watching and reflecting. YouTube has transformed this pathway: you can now watch detailed videos of actual operating



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sessions, complete with commentary explaining the whys behind each move. Pause, rewind, and study how experienced operators work through switching puzzles. You'll spot the patterns and understand the flow without leaving your desk.

Learning through stories

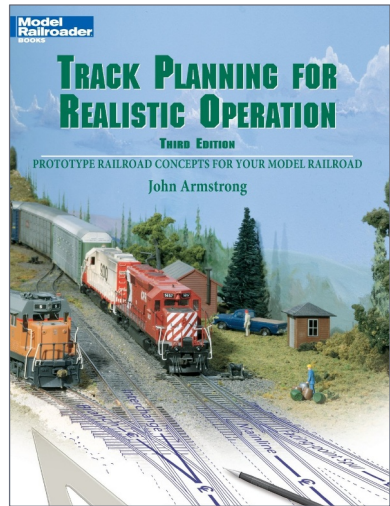
Some people absorb knowledge best through narratives and personal experiences. If that's your style, seek out modelers who regularly attend ops sessions and ask them about their experiences. What surprised them? What track arrangements worked brilliantly? What seemed like a good idea on paper but failed in practice? These success stories (as well as any cautionary tales) can be quite instructive.

The theoretical path

Finally, some minds work best with systematic, theoretical knowledge. Armstrong's *Track Planning for Realistic Operation* and similar books offer exactly that: a comprehensive framework for understanding how operations drive design decisions. If you're someone who needs to grasp the underlying principles first, this analytical approach is perfectly legitimate.

Your Path Forward

The point isn't *how* you gain operational understanding – it's *that* you gain it before committing to a track plan. Whether you learn by doing, watching, listening, or reading, pursue the path that matches how your mind works best. The goal remains the same: understanding what those lines on your track plan actually do when the trains start moving.



1. *Track Planning for Realistic Operation* by John Armstrong can impart a lot of great operation insight and improve your track planning. Visit the comment link for this article for a link to buy this book.

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WHAT'S NEAT

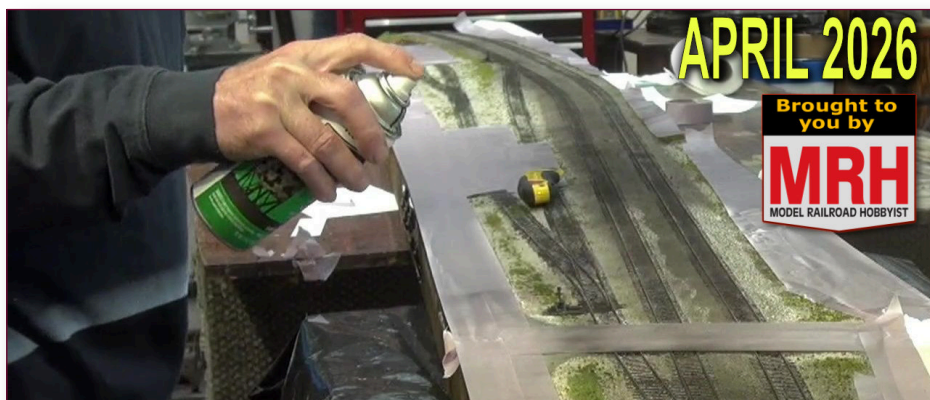
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Model Railroad Hobbyist | April 2026

KEN PATTERSON COVERS THIS MONTH:

- BACHMANN'S DREYFUSS HUDSON WITH 20TH CENTURY LIMITED
- BLI'S HO SCALE COLLECTOR'S CLUB ES44AC LOCOMOTIVES
- LAYOUT CONSTRUCTION: REBUILDING THE LAYOUT PART 5
- KEN INTERVIEWS DENNIS BARTHOLOW OF DIVISION POINT MODELS



WHAT'S NEAT with Ken Patterson
Layout rebuilding, part 5

click to play video

PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF SUPERB MODELS

KEN GETS OUT IN HIS SUNNY MISSOURI

BACKYARD TO SHOW off the Bachmann 1938 Dreyfuss Streamlined Hudson with 20th Century Limited passenger cars and the BLI Collector's Club GE ES44AC locomotives. In his workshop, Ken finishes up the module that will sit across the window of this basement in the 5th and final segment of the rebuild. Finally, Ken interviews Dennis Bartholow of Division Point Models, a brass importer.

Bachmann's Dreyfuss Hudson and the 20th Century Limited



1. On a beautiful, sunny Missouri day, Ken pulled one of his layout modules outside to photograph the HO scale Bachmann Dreyfuss Streamlined Hudson locomotive in its 1938 livery and Scullin drivers.

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2. Following the locomotive, Bachmann also sent Ken the 72' baggage car #5017, the 85' coaches "City of Chicago" and "City of Rochester," the 85' diner #685, and the 85' observation car "Manhattan Island." Info: shop.bachmantrains.com

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BLI Collector's Club ES44AC locomotives



3. Broadway Limited sent Ken three of the GE ES44AC locomotives from the Collector's Club series, UP #7400, CPKC #4805, and CSX #1852. These are plastic models, unlike the diecast metal SD70ACe Ken showed in the January and February 2005 “What’s Neat.”



4. CSX #1852 replicates the Western Maryland heritage unit. The BLI units are equipped with DCC/sound and smoke. Info: broadway-limited.com



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Layout (re)Construction, part 5 and final



5. After moving the layout back to his workshop area, Ken temporarily attached the plywood sheathing fascia to the module. Using a small, battery-powered router with a trimming bit, he rests the ball-bearing tip on the road surface and uses that to guide the bit cutting the plywood. He then sands all sides and edges of the plywood to eliminate splinters.





6. Ken uses the router again to carve the grooves in the bottom of the foam that will hold his wiring, including track power and accessory power for lights.



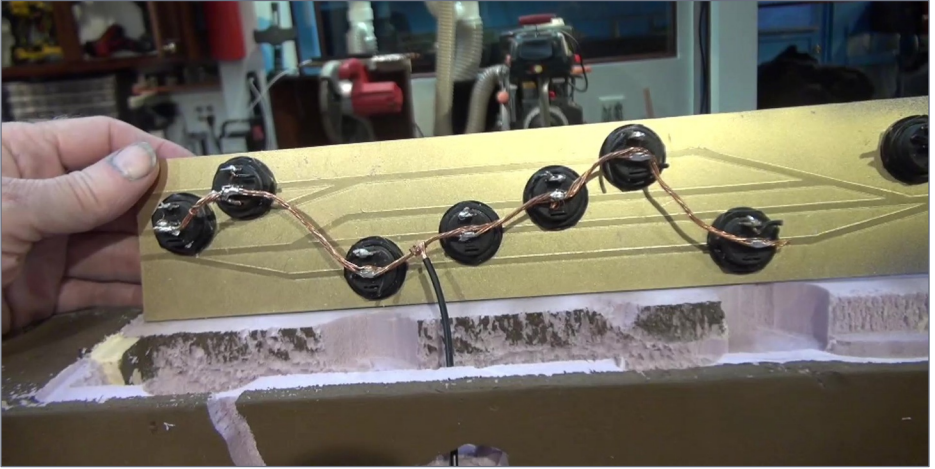
7. He uses brass tubes as guides to run the track feeder wires through the foam.



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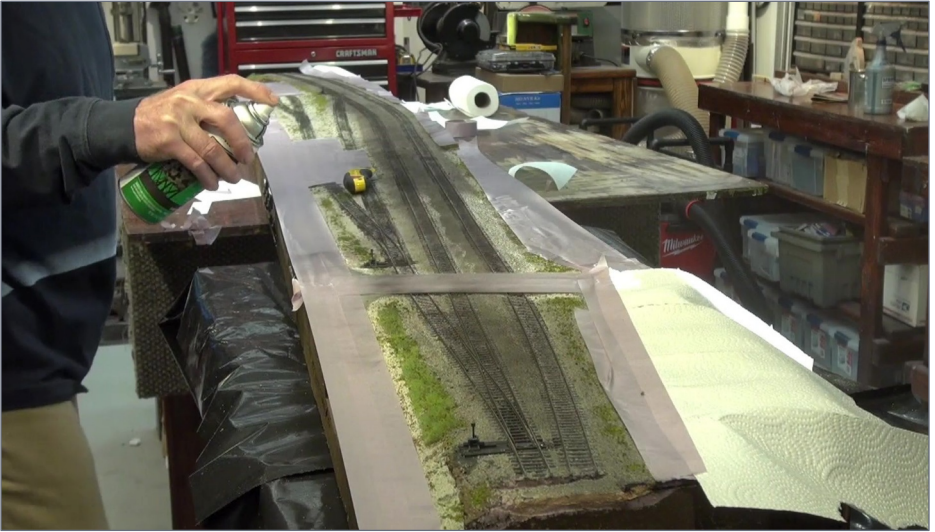
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8. He only needs to run the wiring from one side of the track bus through the control panel to turn off individual blocks of track.



9. After covering the frog points, Ken sprays the entire module with Woodland Scenics Scenic Cement to glue down the scenery and seal the roads. He covers the module thoroughly with up to three bottles of the Scenic Cement. He hasn't attached the fascia boards yet.



10. One of his finishing touches is to mask the roads and spray the entire module lightly with Rustoleum Camouflage Flat Earth Brown spray paint to blend the scenery, track, and ballast together.



11. After carefully cutting the hole for the control panel, Ken glues and staples the fascia boards onto the module.



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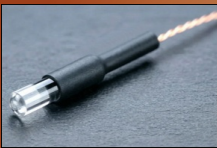
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12. With the fascia in place, the module is functionally complete. Joshua Barton brought over a radio-controlled 1:87 scale Volkswagen Bus, and found the roads and parking lots smooth enough to drive on.

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An interview with Division Point Model's Dennis Bartholow



13. Division Point Models is a brass model importer owned by Dennis Bartholow, who has a great deal of experience in the brass model industry. He and Ken discuss the history of modeling in brass, beginning with its origins in Japan shortly after WWII, up to the current day, where the number of models in a run may be much fewer than in the past, but the details and running qualities of those models far exceed those from before 2000. They're even equipped with DCC and sound.





14. A model that would be unlikely to have enough demand for a mass-produced plastic model can be profitably made in lower numbers in brass. This model of Union Pacific steam turbine #1 is one of only 80 sets built.

Info: divisionpoint.com

To see the complete video of the models in Ken's backyard, all the steps Ken used to finish up the module, and see the full interview with Dennis Bartholow, including information on upcoming projects, click on the YouTube link at the beginning of the article.

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Electrical impulses: Debugging problem shorts-1



Electrical
Impulses

Model Railroad Hobbyist | April 2026



JOE FUGATE TELLS HOW TO TROUBLESHOOT THE PHANTOM MENACE OF MODEL RAILROADING ...

YOU'RE RUNNING YOUR PRIZE LOCOMOTIVE THROUGH A FAVORITE LAYOUT SCENE. The loco glides smoothly along the track, then without warning – *click!* Your circuit breaker trips. The loco stops, lights out, and the sound decoder falls silent mid-horn blast.

You reset the breaker. Now the locomotive runs fine. You run it through the same section again. No problem – life is good.

Half an hour later: *click*. The breaker trips again.

Welcome to the maddening world of **ghost shorts** – intermittent, elusive electrical faults that appear and disappear like phantoms.

Unlike a dead short (which trips the breaker consistently, and can be traced with simple continuity testing), ghost shorts are *intermittent*, temporary, and unpredictable.

Traditional troubleshooting methods fail because they rely on the fault being *present and consistent* during testing. A continuity tester is useless if the short isn't happening at that moment. Visual inspection fails when the problem is a tiny metal whisker the naked eye can't spot.

But here's the worst part: What if the fault won't even stay active during testing? What if it appears randomly, refuses to be reproduced, and vanishes the moment you start investigating?

This month, in Part 1 of our three-part diagnostic guide, we're tackling the most frustrating scenario: random, non-reproducible ghost shorts that simply won't cooperate.

We'll explore the **Divide-and-Conquer Section Isolation method** – the only diagnostic approach that works reliably when faults refuse to stay active.

The beauty of this method is its elegant simplicity:

- You don't need expensive test equipment
- You don't need the fault to be present during testing
- You don't even need to understand electrical theory

What you need is a systematic, logical approach based on a binary search – the same principle computer scientists use to find bugs in millions of lines of code.

In subsequent parts, we'll cover the AC ammeter method (fastest for multi-district layouts when faults are reproducible) and the constant-current millivolt method (best for precise pinpointing of active faults).

But today, we're focusing on the scenario that drives modelers to despair: the ghost short that appears randomly, trips your breaker unpredictably, and vanishes before you can investigate.

Let's hunt down those phantoms.





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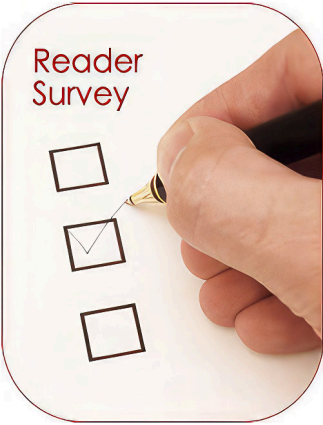
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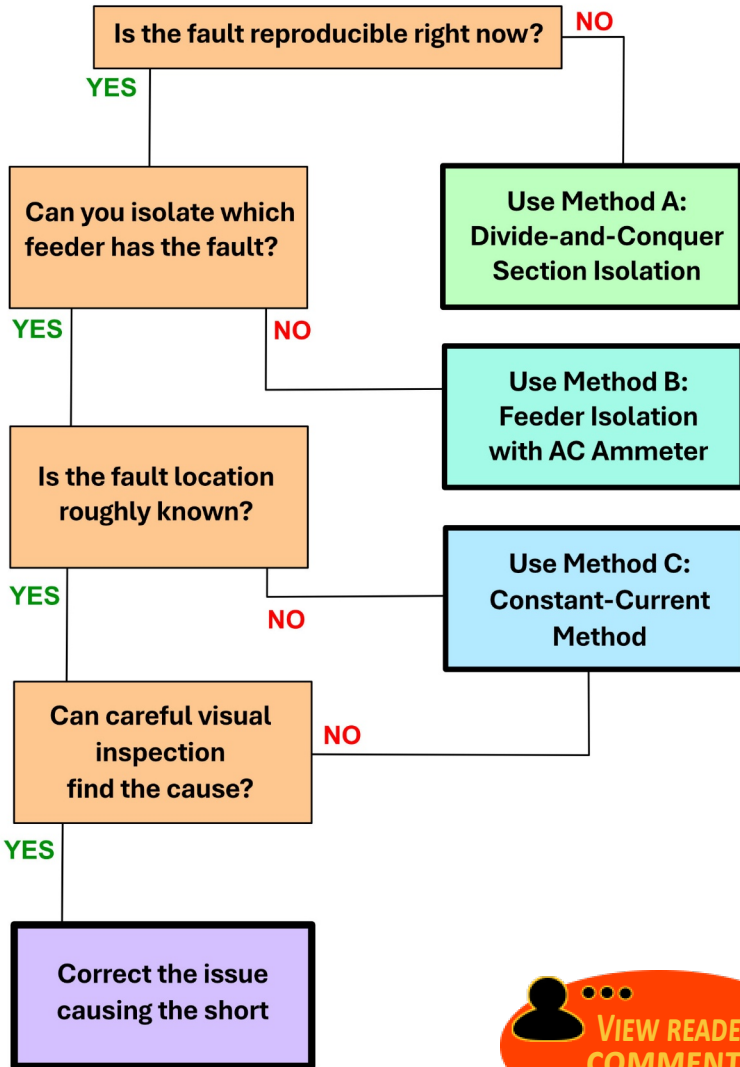


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Diagnostic decision tree



1. Diagnostic decision tree flowchart.

CHOOSING THE BEST METHOD

Before grabbing any tools, we need to ask some strategic questions to find the fastest path to solving the problem.

Use the decision tree [1] to identify the right diagnostic method for your fault. The flowchart will route you to the appropriate technique based on your specific situation.

SPECIAL CASES:

Short only appears when there's equipment on the track:

- Try weight simulation (place weights on track to trigger the fault)
 - If weight simulation works → Use **Method C** with weights in place
 - If weight simulation fails → Use **Method A: Divide-and-Conquer**

Hidden wiring or inaccessible track:

- Method C (constant-current) can't reach these faults
- Use **Method A (section isolation)** or **Method B (ammeter)** first
- Once you isolate the section, then retrofit with terminal strips or Wago connectors for future easy modular debugging, or accept the approximate location of the fault and replace all components in the hidden area.

Motion-dependent shorts (triggered by vibration, not static weight):

- Weight simulation won't work
- Use **Method A: Divide-and-Conquer** to narrow-down location
- Accept approximate location and perform total component replacement





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CRITICAL PREREQUISITE: SERVICEABLE WIRING ARCHITECTURE

These methods assume you have modular wiring with disconnectable sections. This means terminal strips, Wago connectors, or quick-disconnect adapters that let you isolate track sections without wire cutters.

If your current wiring requires you to **unsolder or permanently cut feeders** to disconnect sections for testing, these debugging methods are drastic and painful, requiring permanent modifications to your layout's electrical wiring.

The good news: Retrofitting your feeders with a modular architecture is a straightforward long-term investment that pays off later every time you troubleshoot. Terminal strips are inexpensive (~\$1-3 per strip), cost cents per connector (when bought in bulk), and the time you'll save on future diagnostics will repay the retrofit effort many times over.

If you currently have non-serviceable wiring, we address practical options at the end of this article. But understand upfront: a serviceable wiring architecture is the foundation that makes systematic troubleshooting straightforward.

THE THREE METHODS

Rather than a single "best method," effective ghost short diagnosis requires selecting the right tool for your specific situation.

Here are three approaches with different strengths:

Method A: Divide-and-conquer section isolation: The machete (Part 1 – this guide)

Systematically disconnect track sections to isolate which section contains the fault.

Divide your layout into logical sections (existing power districts, yards, mainline segments), disconnect half, run locomotives on the remaining powered sections, and repeat this binary search until you've narrowed it down to a single section.

This is the only method that works reliably for random intermittent faults that won't stay active during testing – exactly the scenario we're addressing.

Method B: Feeder Isolation Using AC Ammeter: The Scanner (coming in Part 2)

Use a clamp-on AC ammeter (~\$25-\$40) to measure current flowing through each feeder wire while a locomotive runs on the layout.

The feeder with the short will show non-zero current even when the loco isn't drawing power in that section. Clamp the ammeter around each feeder wire, one at a time; the one showing current flow contains the fault.

This is the fastest approach for multi-district layouts when you can reproduce the fault.

Method C: Constant-current method: The scalpel (coming in Part 3)

Apply DC voltage through a current-limiting automotive lamp bulb and use a digital multimeter to measure millivolt drops along the rail.

This is the most precise method for pinpointing exact fault location, but requires the fault to be present and active during testing.

Each method has its place. The skill isn't mastering one technique – it's knowing when to use each one.

METHOD A – DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER SECTION ISOLATION

When to use this method:

You're facing the worst-case scenario. The fault appears randomly – maybe once an hour, maybe once every operating





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2. Once you've been able to isolate the fault to within an area a few feet long, it's time to get out the Optivisor and a flashlight and do a thorough investigation.

session. You can't reproduce it on demand. It won't stay active long enough to test.

The core principle is elegantly simple: binary search.

You systematically divide your layout into sections, isolate half, and run trains on the remaining powered sections until the fault appears. When it does, you know which half contains the problem.

Then you divide that half again, and repeat. Each iteration cuts your search space in half, rapidly zeroing-in on the culprit section.

DIVIDING YOUR LAYOUT INTO LOGICAL SECTIONS

The first step in the Divide-and-Conquer method is breaking your layout into testable sections. This isn't about creating perfect electrical districts – it's about establishing logical boundaries that let you systematically eliminate half your layout at a time.

Ideally: Aim for sections that support several minutes of operation. This gives the ghost enough time to appear if it's lurking in that section, while keeping your testing cycles manageable.

For traditional point-to-point or loop-based layouts, the mainline provides your natural division framework. A 40-foot mainline might divide into four 10-foot segments:

1. Staging to Junction A
2. Junction A to Midpoint Yard
3. Midpoint Yard to Junction B
4. Junction B to staging

Treat branch lines and yards as separate sections – a classification yard with multiple tracks should be one section initially.

Multi-room layouts have natural boundaries at room transitions and module joints. Small shelf layouts might only have three or four sections, which is fine – the binary search still works. If you have existing power districts, use those boundaries since disconnection is already built in.

PRACTICAL DIVISION GUIDELINES

Regardless of layout type, follow these principles:

Natural breaks matter. Don't divide your layout mid-scene or in the middle of a continuous mainline run. Use junctions, yards, staging areas, and scenic transitions as boundaries. This makes disconnection easier and keeps clear your mental model of "which section is which."

Balance section sizes. Aim for roughly equal sections of track as to total length.

Document your divisions. Sketch a simple track diagram, and label each section: "Section A: Staging," "Section B: Mainline to Junction," "Section C: Yard," etc. You'll reference this diagram throughout testing.



Plan your disconnection method. For each section boundary, decide *how* you'll disconnect. Will you remove a feeder wire from a terminal strip. Throw a toggle switch? Make this decision before you start testing, and note it on your diagram.

Consider accessibility. If a section requires crawling under the layout to disconnect feeders, factor that into your testing plan. You might group that section with an adjacent easy-to-disconnect section to minimize under-layout gymnastics.

The goal isn't perfection – it's practicality. You're building a framework that lets you systematically eliminate half of the layout at a time. Whether you end up with four sections or 12 doesn't matter, as long as each section is testable and you can disconnect them easily.

Pro tip: Most shorts are at turnouts. Once you narrow down the location, suspect the exact spot likely involves a turnout or other complex trackwork like a crossing.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE: EXECUTING THE DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER METHOD

Now that you've divided your layout into logical sections, here's how to execute the systematic search.

Pre-diagnostic setup

Step 1: Create your section map.

Draw a simple diagram showing all sections and their boundaries. Label each section clearly (A, B, C, etc., or use descriptive names like "Staging," "Mainline East," "Yard"). Mark which feeders or connections control each section.

Step 2: Prepare your disconnection method.

For each section, verify you can disconnect it cleanly. If you're removing feeder wires, label them with masking tape so you know where each wire goes when reconnecting. If you're using

insulated rail joiners, have them ready. If you're toggling switches, test that they actually isolate the section.

Before you start troubleshooting, practice one complete disconnect-reconnect cycle.

Step 3: Establish your test protocol.

Decide how you'll test each iteration:

- Which locomotive(s) will you run?
- What route will they follow?
- How long will you run before declaring "no fault"? (Recommendation: at least 10-15 minutes of back-and-forth running across the powered sections)
- What constitutes a "fault"? (Circuit breaker trip? Locomotive stall? Flickering lights?)

Step 4: Set up your record-keeping.

Keep a testing log [3]. This log becomes your road map. Reference it to avoid re-testing combinations, and to track your progress.

The iteration process

Step 5: First iteration – divide in half.

Disconnect about half your sections. Don't worry about an exact 50/50 split; close-enough works.

<i>Iteration</i>	<i>Sections Powered</i>	<i>Sections Disconnected</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Time Tested</i>
1	A, B, C, D	E, F, G, H	A, B, C, D	12 min
2	A, B	C, D	C, D	15 min
3	C	D	C	10 min

3. Keep a testing log so you know your exact progress. Note we started with 8 sections, we found the bad section in 3 tries.



Power-up the still-connected sections and run your test protocol. Run locomotives through all powered sections for your predetermined time or trips. Watch for the fault.

Step 6: Interpret the result.

- **If the fault appears:** The problem is in the powered sections. In your next iteration, focus on these.
- **If the fault does NOT appear:** The problem is likely in the disconnected sections. In your next iteration, focus on these.

Step 7: Second iteration – divide the guilty half.

Take whichever half contains the fault and divide it in half.

Example: If your first iteration tested sections A-B-C-D (powered) vs. E-F-G-H (disconnected), and the fault appeared, you know the problem is in A-B-C-D. For iteration 2, disconnect C-D and test only A-B. If the fault appears again, the problem is in A-B. If it doesn't, the problem is in C-D.

Step 8: Continue narrowing.

Repeat the process. Each iteration cuts your search in half.

With eight sections, you'll isolate the fault in three iterations maximum [3]. With 16 sections, four iterations maximum.

“Stop Divide-and-Conquer and switch to visual inspection once you’ve isolated the fault to a 2-3 foot section.”



DECISION POINTS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

What if the fault appears in *both* halves?

This suggests multiple faults, or a problem in shared infrastructure (bus wiring, power supply, or the circuit breaker itself). It's rare, but it happens.

Solution: Isolate sections one at a time instead of in groups. Test section A alone, then section B alone. Continue until you've identified all sections that trigger the fault. You might have two independent ghost shorts.

What if the fault NEVER appears during testing?

The fault might be more intermittent than you thought, or it might need specific conditions you're not reproducing (temperature, humidity, vibration, or a particular locomotive's weight).

Solution:

Extend your test time. Run for 30 minutes per iteration instead of 15. Try different locomotives. Vary your train speed. Gently tap the benchwork to induce vibration. Spray a fine mist of water on the track to simulate humidity.

Sometimes you need to provoke the ghost.

What if you isolated a single section but it's still too large?

You've narrowed the fault to "Section C: Mainline East" (a 12-foot run), but maybe that's too much track to visually inspect or test effectively.

Solution:

Subdivide that section further. Treat it as a mini-layout and divide it into three or four sub-sections. Continue the binary search within that section.

Keep subdividing until you've isolated the fault to a 2- or 3-foot segment – small enough for visual inspection or precise electrical testing.



What if you isolated a tiny section but the fault still won't appear?

You've narrowed it down to a three-foot section, but when you test just that section, the fault doesn't show up reliably.

Solution:

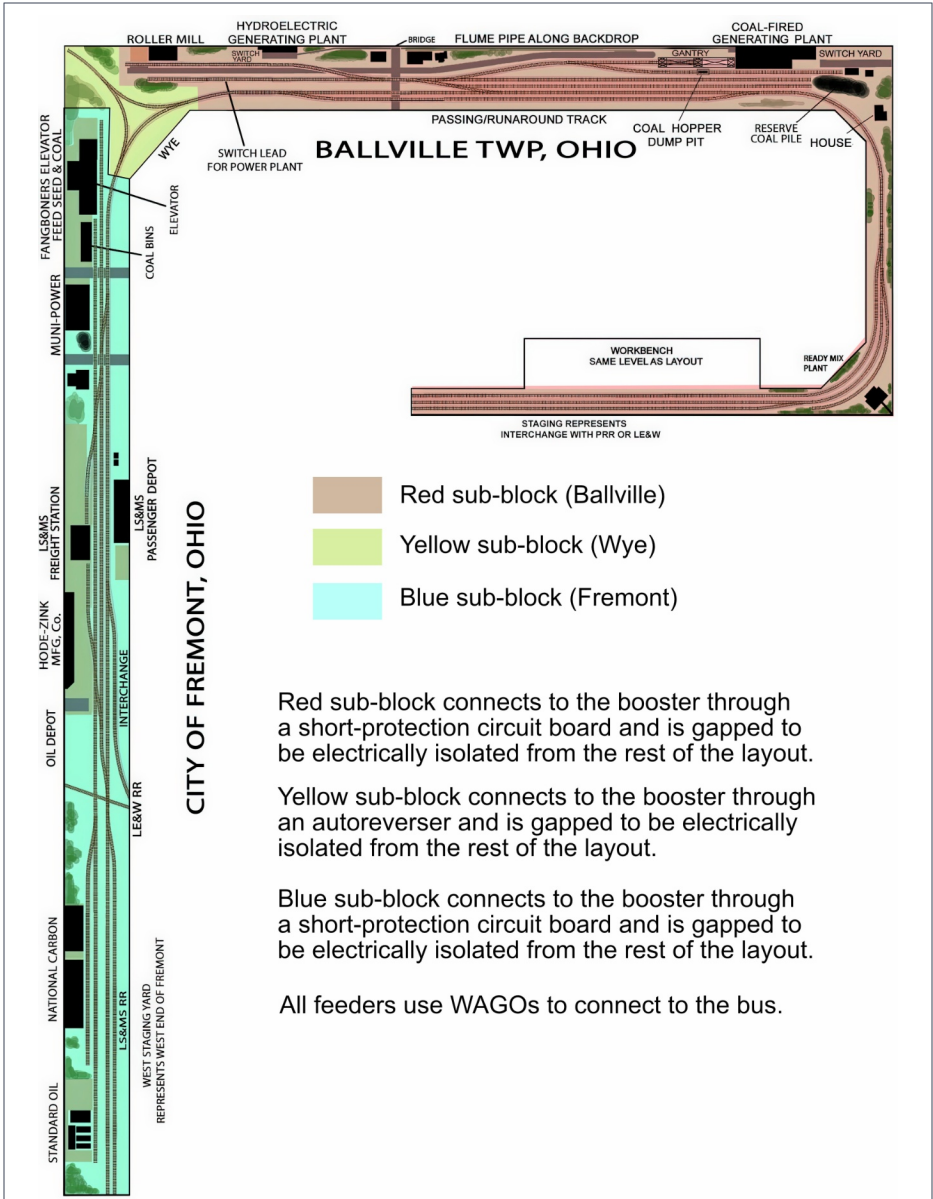
This might be a load-dependent fault that requires the weight of a locomotive plus several cars to trigger. Try running a longer train through the isolated section.

When to stop and hand off

Stop Divide-and-Conquer, and switch to visual inspection once you've isolated the fault to a 2'-3' section. If the fault becomes reliably reproducible during testing, hand off to Method C (constant-current millivolt method) for precise pinpointing. If you've isolated the fault to a specific feeder wire, look for the exact wiring fault on that piece of track, and correct it.



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4. Let's use Jim Six's new Ballville layout as a debugging example. The layout is wired with three feeder sub-blocks as shown here.



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Record-keeping best practices

Document your iteration log: Record which sections you powered/disconnected, whether the fault appeared, how long you tested, and any observations (fault timing, location near landmarks, etc.). Use consistent terminology throughout and photograph your setup before disconnecting anything.

EXAMPLE: DIAGNOSING RANDOM STALLING ON JIM SIX'S BALLVILLE LAYOUT

Let's walk through hypothetical example of the Divide-and-Conquer method using a real layout: Jim Six's Ballville Township layout, the construction of which he covers in his monthly "Limited Modeler" column in *Running Extra*. The example is for illustrative purposes only – it did not happen (yet).

The layout and the problem

Jim operates his Ballville Township, an HO-scale layout with two towns connected by a wye, running on NCE DCC with two districts and an auto-reverser. Jim and his fellow modeler Tim Moran wired the layout using WAGOs, making disconnecting feeder wires simple.

Over two weeks, locomotives stalled randomly in several areas – sometimes recovering on their own, sometimes requiring circuit breaker resets. Diagram [5] shows each stall example:

1. First stall on the main with a train in tow. Recovered on its own.
2. Second stall later the same day while switching the gantry spur. Breaker had to be reset.
3. Third stall a few days later was on a train headed into staging. Recovered on its own.

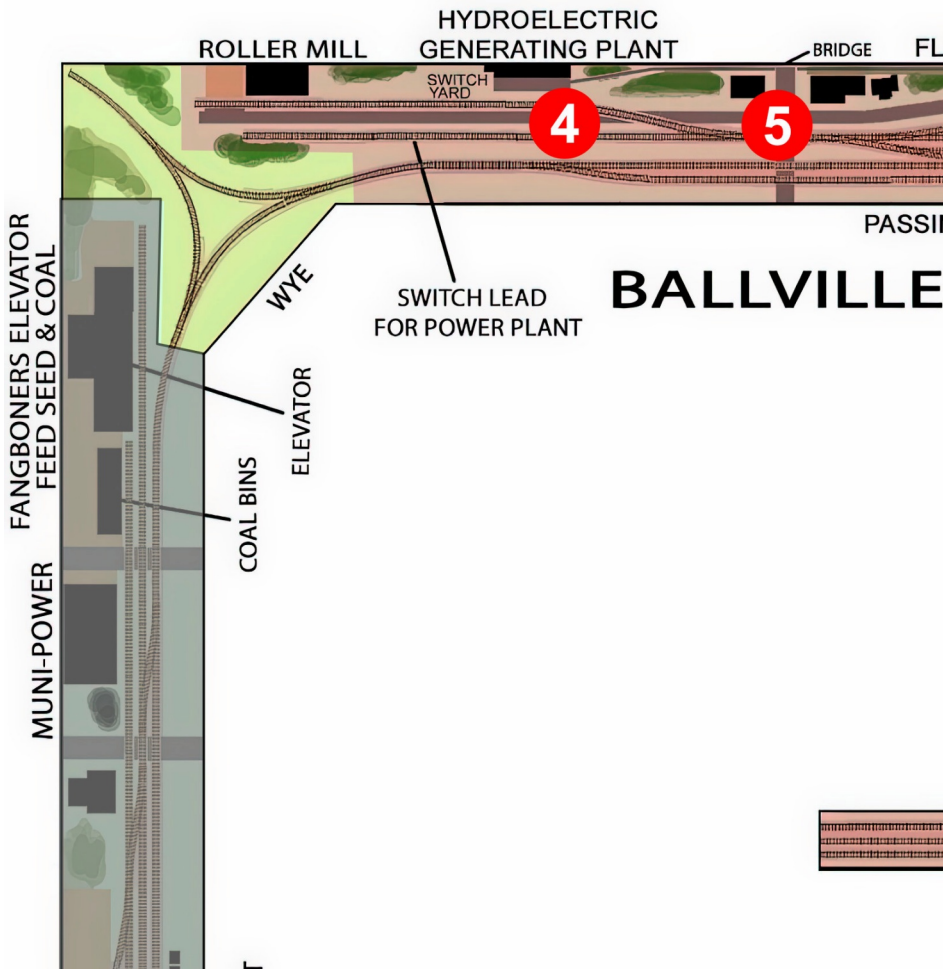
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4. Fourth stall was a day after that, while switching the power plant yard. Breaker had to be reset.

5. Fifth stall was later that day while pushing some cars down the yard ladder to the main. Breaker had to be reset.



5. A history of the ghost shorts that have been happening in this hypothetical example.

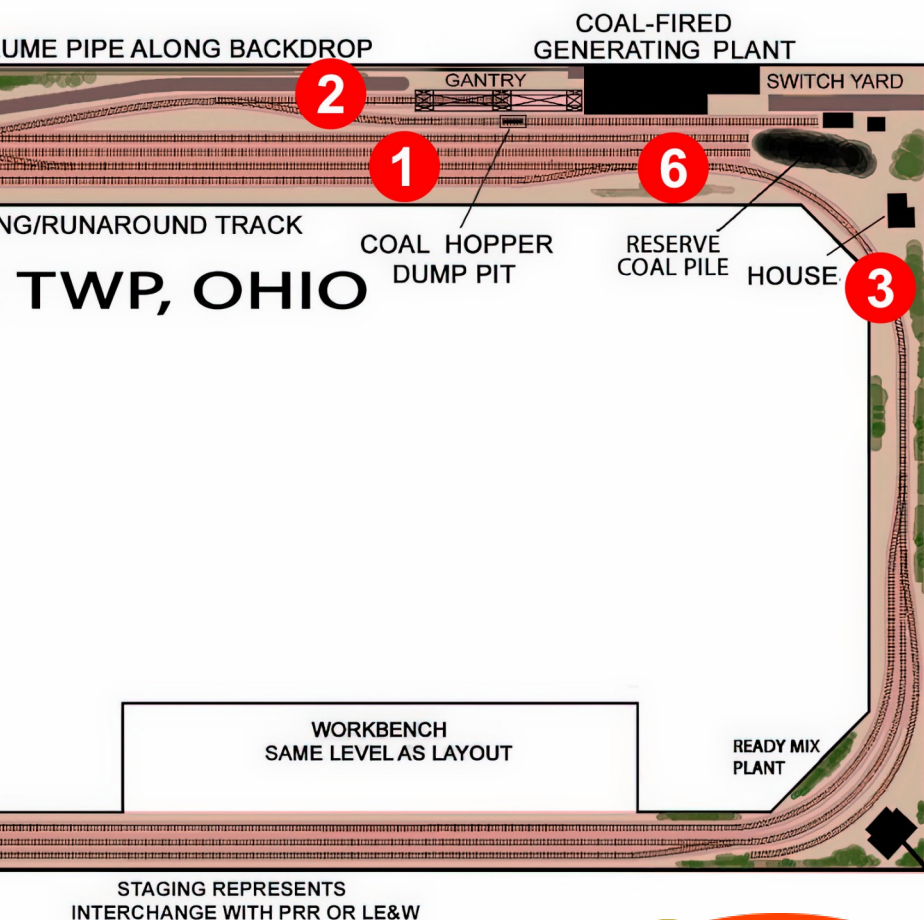


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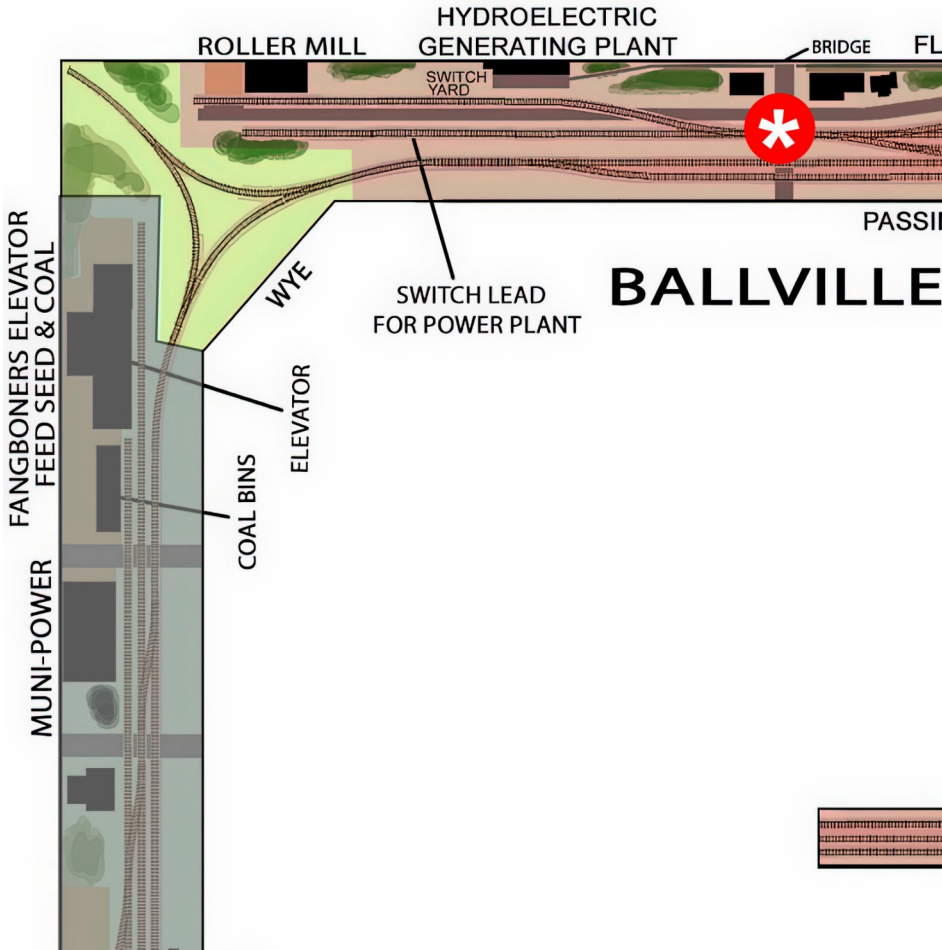
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6. Sixth stall was when a train was leaving Ballville headed toward staging. Recovered on its own.



No obvious pattern was apparent, other than they all seemed to involve the Ballville section, but otherwise the shorts are all over that section. Visual inspection of the layout in and around Ballville revealed nothing.

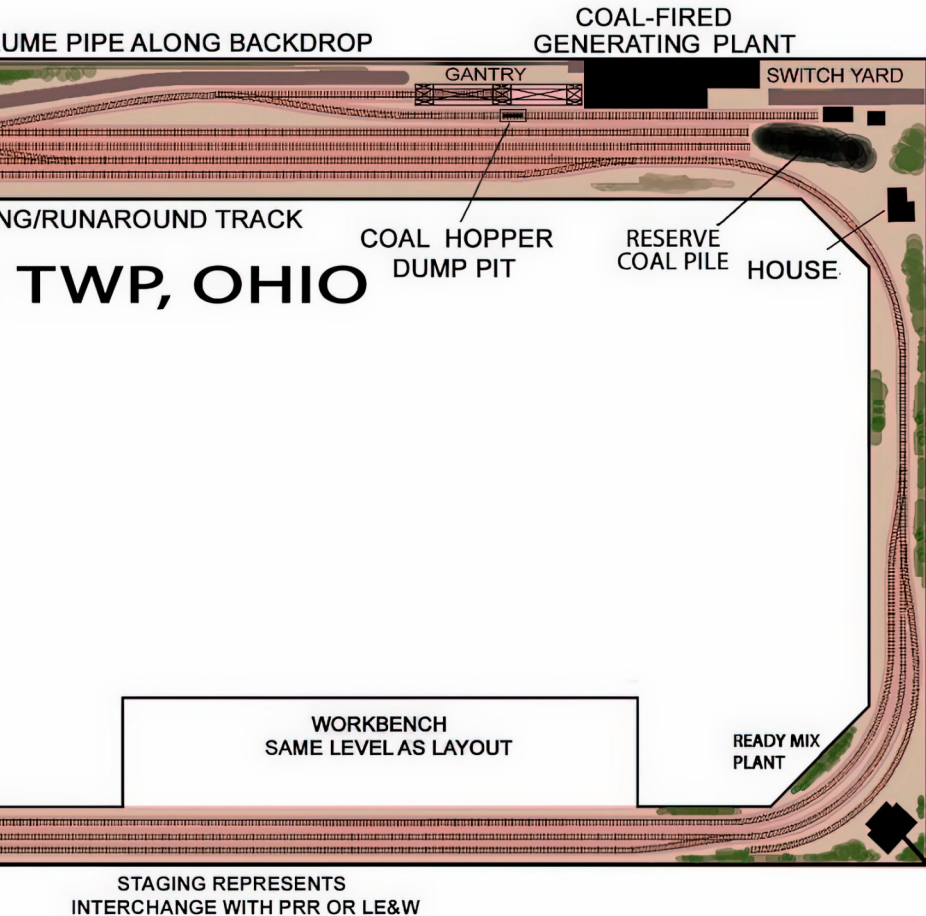
Jim decided to use the Divide-and-Conquer method to pinpoint the short location.



6. On iteration 2, they got a short as shown here.

SETUP AND TESTING

Based on how the layout is wired, Jim and Tim eliminate the Freemont section and disconnect the bus wire, making the section dead. They start running trains on the wye section and in Ballville.



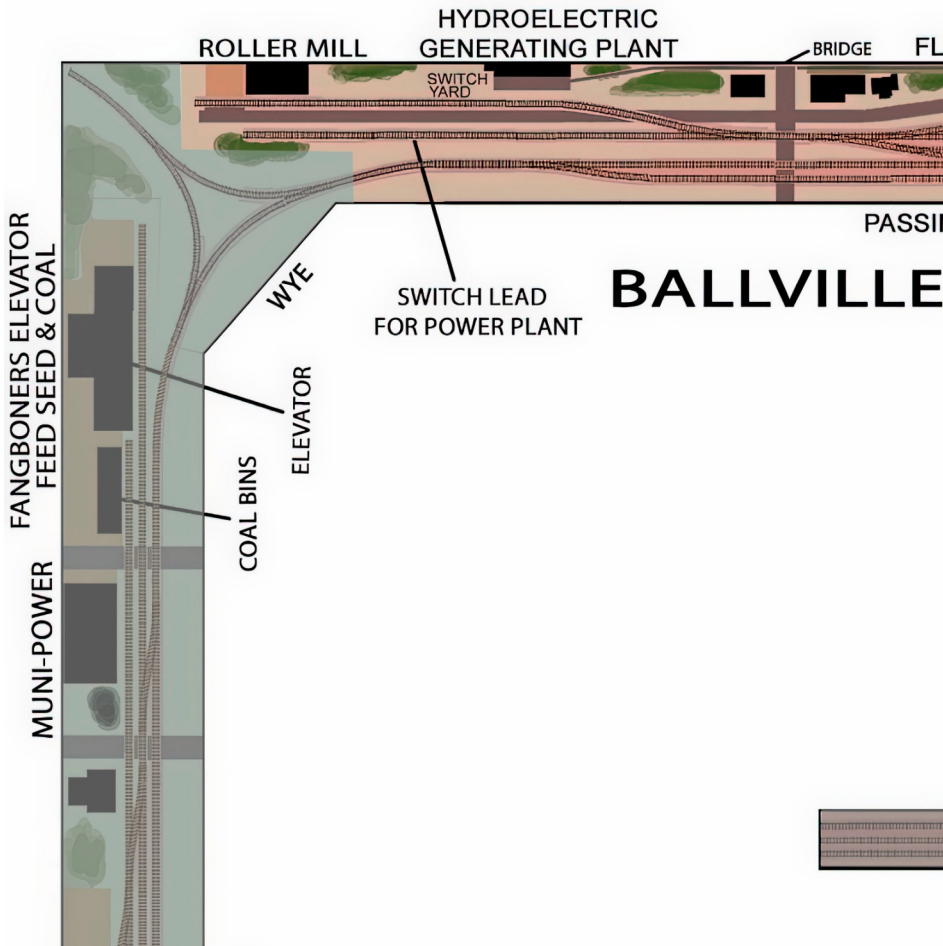
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They can run onto the wye tail track but because the Fremont section is dead, they cannot use the far leg of the wye. They hope this will not matter.

They establish their test protocol: they run a NYC 4-6-0 ten-wheeler [10] for 15 minutes and note any stalling or flickering.

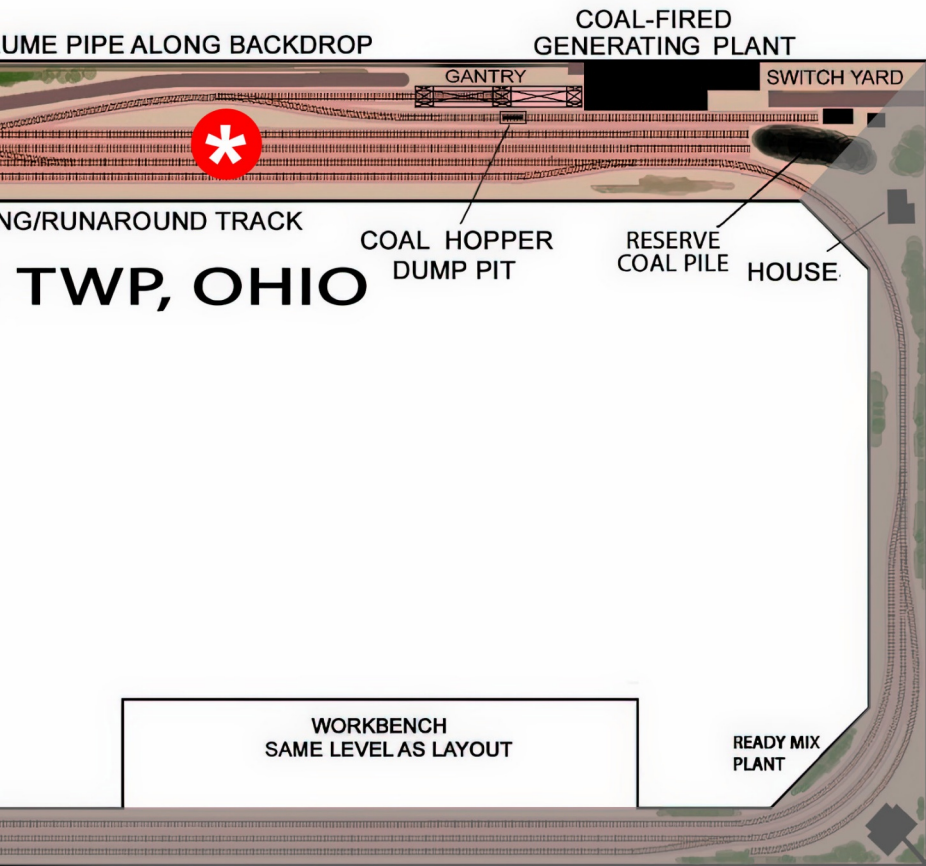


7. On iteration 3, a short appears on the second track inbound from the main.



For iteration 1 they get no stalls.

They decide to add a train and try again [11]. About 8 minutes in on iteration 2, they get a short at the point shown in [6].

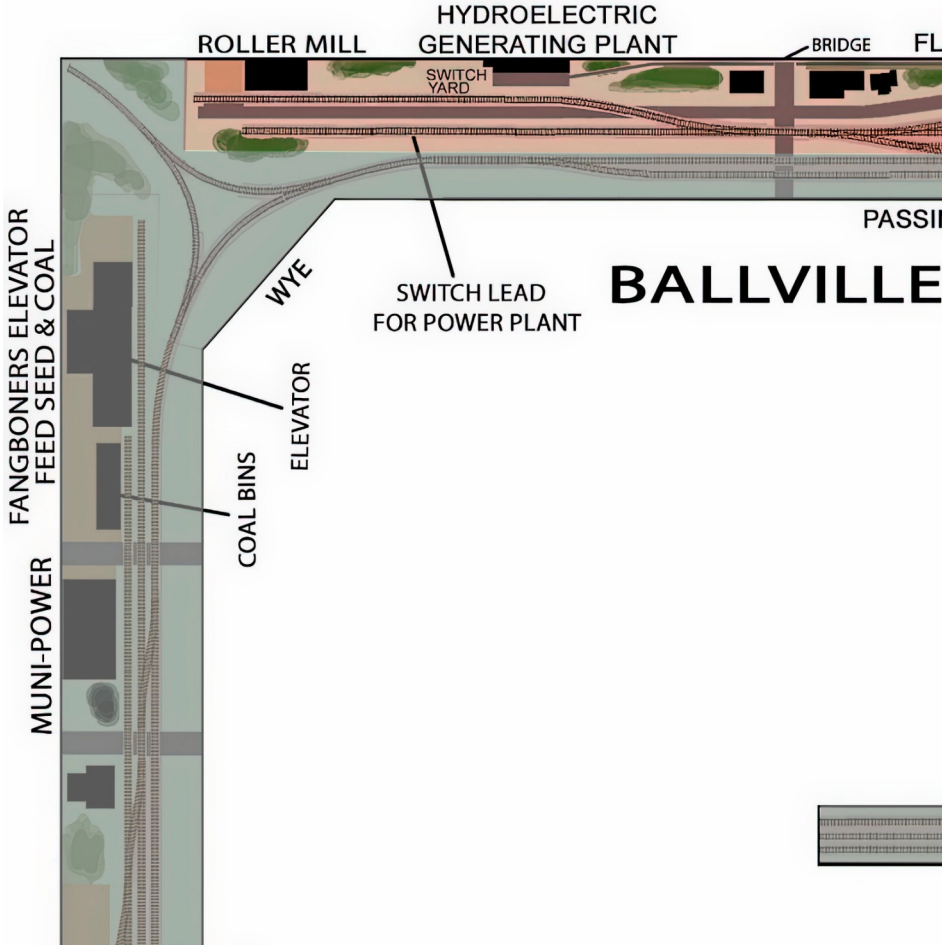


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MORE ITERATIONS

They disconnect the wye section and also disconnect the staging area so they are both unpowered, and try again. At 11 minutes in on iteration 3, they get a short at the point shown in [7].



8. On iteration 4, no shorts appeared.



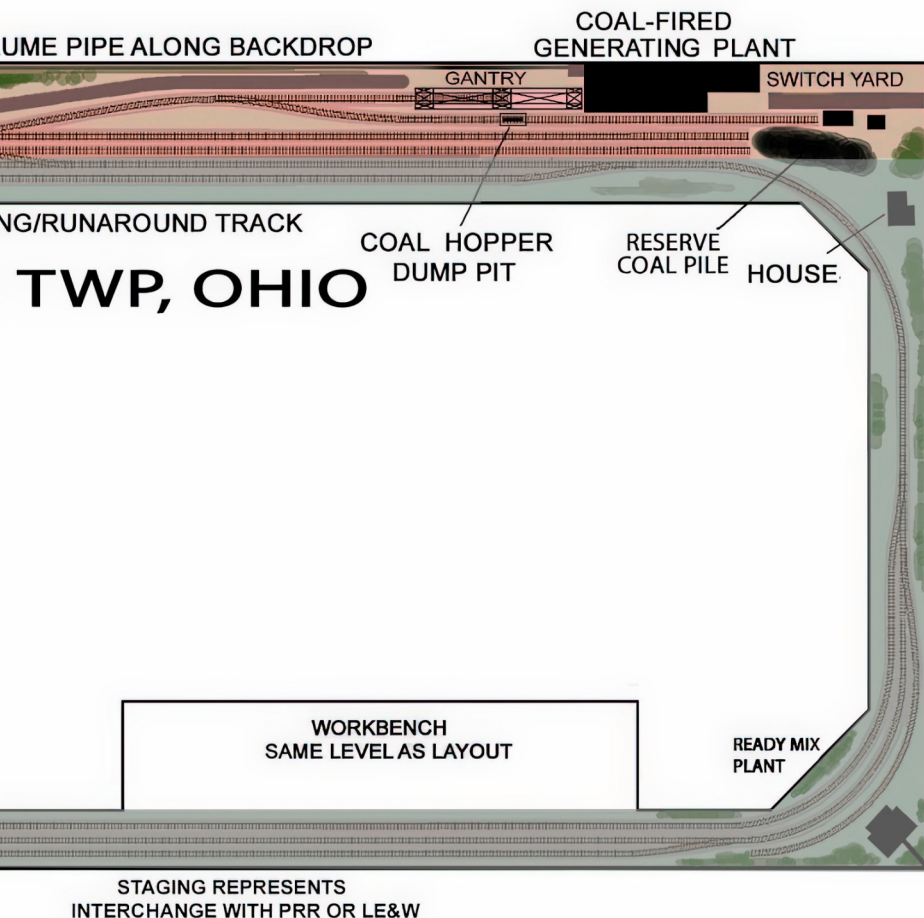
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For iteration 4, they disconnected the main and passing siding, focusing on just the industry tracks and the small yard. No shorts appeared.

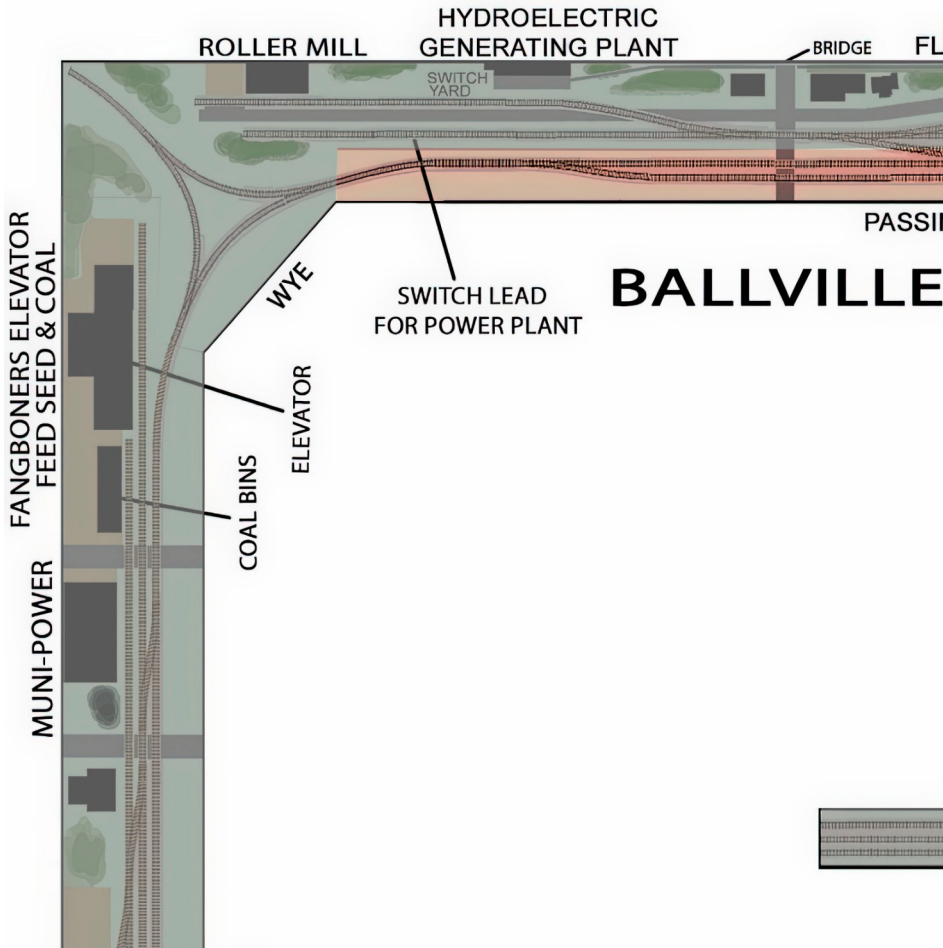
For iteration 5, they disconnect all the industry and yard tracks, leaving only the main and the first turnout to the industry tracks.



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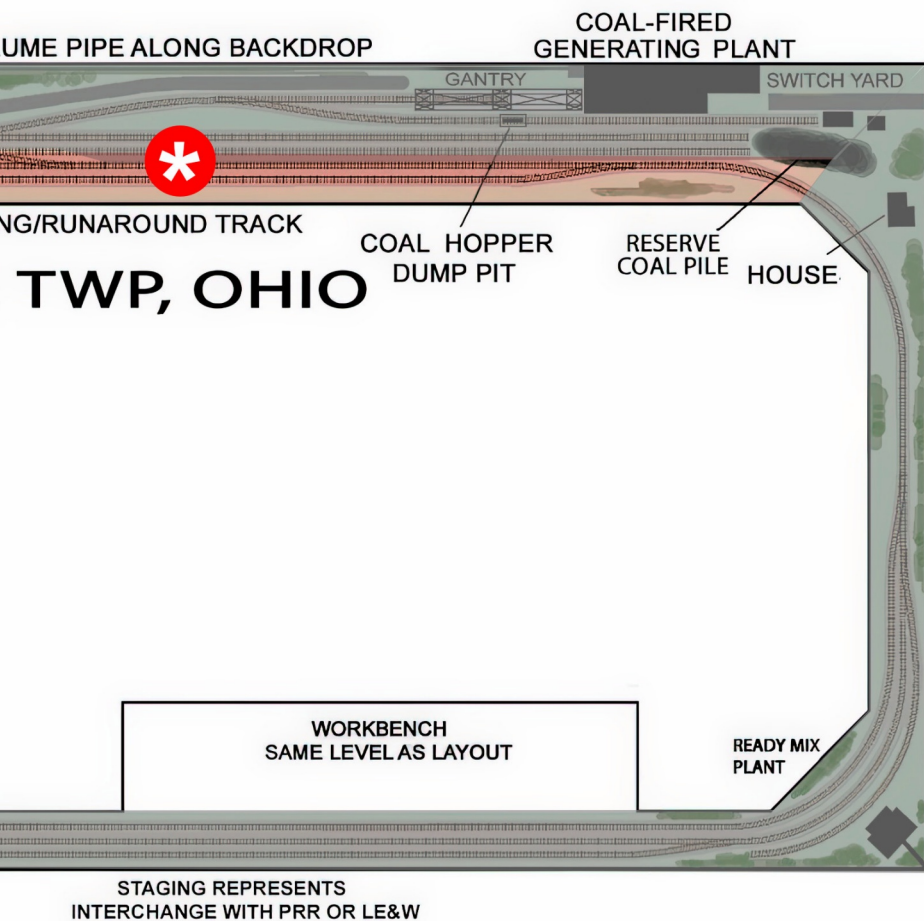
They have a hunch the turnout off the main may be the culprit since it leads to the yard and industry sidings where a number of the shorts were. They throw that main turnout to the diverging



9. On iteration 5, they leave the turnout on the main thrown for the yard ladder and run cars back and forth on the yard ladder. 14 minutes in, a short appears on the main.



route and run cars up and down the yard ladder – and finally at 14 minutes in, they get a short that trips the breaker.



VISUAL INSPECTION AND RESOLUTION

With the fault narrowed to likely being the turnout off the main, Jim switches to visual inspection. He grabs a flashlight and magnifying visor to examine the turnout, focusing on the frog area.

After eight minutes, he finds the culprit: a tiny strand of pre-tinned copper wire (likely a stray piece left from installing feeders) wedged under a plastic tie between the frog and a closure rail. The silver strand is barely visible (about 2mm) but positioned so that when wheels roll over it, the strand sticks up slightly.

When pressed just right, it makes contact between the frog and the opposite-polarity rail, creating a momentary short.

Testing with just the locomotive didn't trigger shorts, but adding the cars did. More wheels increased the chance of pressing the strand into contact.

Jim removes the stray wire with tweezers, cleaned the frog area with mineral spirits, and tested again. The fault is gone.

Time analysis

Jim's total diagnostic time:

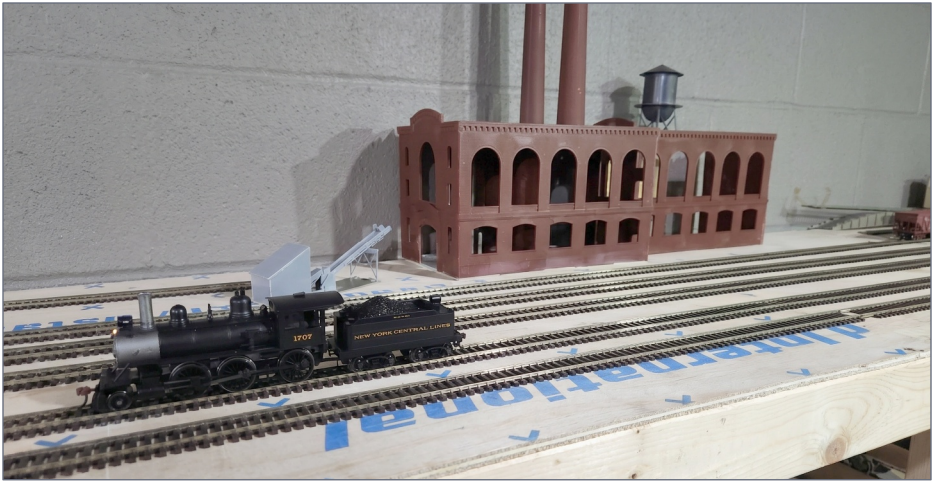
- 5 iterations: ~90 minutes total (including setup time)
- Visual inspection: 8 minutes
- Total: ~98 minutes (about 1 hour 38 minutes)

ALTERNATIVE APPROACH (RANDOM TRIAL-AND-ERROR)

If Jim had randomly inspected turnouts and track sections hoping to find the fault, he might have spent 10 minutes per turnout \times 8+ turnouts in the Ballville area = 80+ minutes minimum, assuming he got lucky.

More realistically, he would have spent hours without finding the tiny wire sliver. The silver wire's lack of contrast against the rails





10. Jim and Tim started out with just a locomotive, but were not able to reproduce the fault.



11. Jim and Tim added some cars to the test and that worked – they started getting faults.

and ties make it nearly invisible. He likely would have given up in frustration or replaced turnouts unnecessarily.

The Divide-and-Conquer method guaranteed he'd find the fault in three major iterations, plus two sub-iterations to narrow down to the specific turnout. The systematic approach saved time and eliminated guesswork.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE

Binary search works.

Jim isolated the fault in five iterations. Each iteration cut his search space roughly in half, ensuring progress.

Subdividing is powerful.

When the Switch Yard was still too large, Jim treated it as a mini-layout and continued the binary search. There's no limit to how far you can subdivide.

Record-keeping prevented confusion.

Jim's log sheet kept him organized. He never re-tested the same combination, never forgot which sections he'd disconnected, and always knew his next step.

The method handed-off cleanly to visual inspection. Once Jim and Tim isolated the fault to a single turnout, visual inspection became practical. The Divide-and-Conquer method did its job – it transformed “somewhere on my entire layout” into “in this specific turnout frog.”

Patience paid off. Jim and Tim ran each iteration for a full 15 minutes, even when the fault appeared earlier. This ensured he wasn't getting false negatives – declaring a section innocent when the fault just hadn't shown up yet.

The Divide-and-Conquer method isn't glamorous. It doesn't involve fancy equipment or advanced electrical theory. But it works – reliably, systematically, and efficiently – even when the ghost-short refuses to cooperate.



FOR LAYOUTS WITHOUT SERVICEABLE WIRING

If your layout uses permanent solder joints throughout, you're facing a real constraint: **Divide-and-Conquer becomes impractical** because every diagnostic iteration forces you to tear apart permanent electrical connections.

After the third or fourth iteration, you're spending more time with a soldering iron and wire cutters than troubleshooting.

Many older layouts were built this way – and they work fine until a ghost short appears.

Here's what you can still do:

Option 1: Use Method B (Feeder Isolation with AC Ammeter) to narrow the field.

Even without disconnectable sections, you can clamp an ammeter around each feeder wire from your command station or booster. The feeder carrying unexpected current contains the fault.

This narrows your search from “entire layout” to “one feeder” without touching a soldering iron. If you have multiple feeders, this is a significant win.

Option 2: If you're on a single feeder, use Method C (Constant-Current) on accessible track.

Once you know the fault is on your feeder (via ammeter), you can still use the constant-current millivolt method on any track sections you can reach with multimeter probes.

This pinpoints the fault to a 10-12 inch zone, then visual inspection takes over. You won't be able to test hidden-track wiring, but you can diagnose faults on visible track.

Option 3: Accept that this is the moment to retrofit.

If the ghost short is causing operational headaches, retrofit key feeder points with terminal strips. You don't need to rewire your entire layout – just the main feeder distribution points.

“When you’re facing a ghost short that appears once every twenty minutes, then vanishes before you can grab your multimeter, and refuses to cooperate with any diagnostic equipment – divide-and-conquer is your method.”

Install a few terminal strips at the command station, one at each major power district, and one at any frequently tested section. This transforms your troubleshooting capability.

The cost is small, and the time savings on your *next* ghost short will make the investment worthwhile.

The bottom line:

Non-serviceable wiring doesn’t make troubleshooting impossible, but it makes it slower and far more frustrating. Method B (ammeter) can still narrow the fault to a feeder. Method C (constant-current) can still pinpoint it on accessible track.

But the investment in serviceable wiring pays dividends in troubleshooting speed the first time you diagnose a ghost short.

CONCLUSION: DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER IS YOUR BEST FRIEND

Let’s be honest: the Divide-and-Conquer method isn’t glamorous. There’s no fancy equipment, no impressive meter readings, no thermal imaging cameras. It’s just you, your layout, and a methodical process of elimination that feels more like detective work than electrical engineering.



But here's what makes it indispensable: **Divide-and-Conquer is the only reliable method for truly random intermittent faults that won't stay active during testing.**

When you're facing a ghost short that appears once every twenty minutes, then vanishes before you can grab your multimeter, and refuses to cooperate with any diagnostic equipment – this is your method. It doesn't care whether the fault is present right now. It doesn't require the fault to be reproducible. It just requires patience, discipline, and the ability to disconnect sections.

The method's strengths are significant:

- **No special equipment required.** You're using tools you already have: your command station, your circuit breaker, and your hands. No \$30 ammeter, no \$200 thermal camera, no specialized test equipment. Just systematic thinking.
- **Works on any layout architecture.** Whether you have one power district or twelve, whether your wiring is pristine or a rat's nest, whether your track plan is simple or Byzantine – the binary search logic works the same way. Divide, test, narrow, repeat.

Transforms an unsolvable mystery into a solvable problem. That maddening "it happens sometimes" ghost short becomes a concrete location you can identify, inspect, and fix. The psychological relief alone is worth the time investment.

But let's acknowledge the limitations

Time-intensive. Even on a well-organized layout with accessible wiring, expect 20-40 minutes minimum. On a complex layout with difficult access, you're looking at an hour or more.

Demands patience and discipline. You must resist the temptation to skip steps, make assumptions, or test multiple sections simultaneously "to save time." The moment you deviate from the binary search protocol, you waste iterations and extend the diagnostic process.

Can be frustrating with fleeting faults. If your ghost short appears once every thirty minutes, you might spend twenty minutes narrowing sections only to have the fault vanish before you isolate it to a single feeder. Truly random intermittent faults are maddening by definition.

Requires disconnectable sections. As we discussed in the previous section, if your layout uses permanent solder joints throughout, this method becomes impractical. You need serviceable wiring architecture to make Divide-and-Conquer work efficiently.

WHEN IS METHOD A THE RIGHT CHOICE?

Use Method A when:

- The fault is truly random and you can't make it happen on demand
- The fault appears so infrequently that waiting for it during testing is impractical
- You need to eliminate sections of track systematically without knowing where to start
- You're willing to invest the time for a definitive answer

Don't use Method A when:

- The fault appears reliably at a specific location (visual inspection is faster)
- You have a multi-district layout and can narrow the fault to a specific feeder (Method B is dramatically faster)
- The fault is reproducible on demand (Method C can pinpoint it more precisely)

The Divide-and-Conquer method is the hero for random intermittent faults. It's the method that works when nothing else will. But – and this is important – **many layouts don't have that problem.**

Many ghost shorts appear reliably when a locomotive hits a specific spot. Many layouts have multiple power districts where the



fault is clearly in one feeder. Many builders can reproduce the fault on demand by running a specific train or pressing on a specific section of track.

For those situations, there's a faster way.

Next month: Method B – Feeder isolation with AC ammeter

We'll show you how a \$30 clamp-on ammeter can slash troubleshooting time from hours to minutes on a multi-district layout.

No disconnecting sections. No tedious binary search.

Just clamp the ammeter around each feeder wire, read the current, and pinpoint the problem circuit in less than ten minutes.

If you've been wasting an hour on Divide-and-Conquer when a quick ammeter test would do the trick, you don't want to miss that column.

See you next month.



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J. Fugate

THE PROBLEM WITH VOLTMETERS AND DCC

The instinct is natural: grab a multimeter, measure track voltage at various points, and look for a voltage drop that reveals the fault location. Seems logical – if there's a short, voltage should drop there, right?

In theory, yes. In practice, no.

DCC isn't simple AC

DCC (Digital Command Control) track voltage isn't normal AC alternating current at 50-60 Hz. DCC does not have a smooth sine wave frequency like household AC. Instead, it uses a bipolar square wave where the "frequency" varies to encode digital bits (ones and zeros). The frequency typically ranges between 5 kHz and 9 kHz.

The NMRA standard specifies 12-22 volts (RMS), but here's the problem: different digital multimeters interpret this complex waveform differently. Some measure peak voltage, others measure RMS, others use averaging algorithms.

The result: different meters give wildly different readings on the exact same track.

Testing on identical track sections with different meters yielded readings ranging from 11.2V to 16.3V – a five-volt spread. Now imagine diagnosing a ghost short by measuring voltage at different points. You measure 14.2V at point A and 13.8V at point B. Is that 0.4V drop significant, or just measurement noise from meter variance?

Hard to say.

Absolute vs. relative measurements

The core issue is using an **absolute measurement** (voltage at a specific point) to detect a **relative change** (voltage drop caused by a fault). When your measurement tool varies by several volts due



to waveform interpretation differences, detecting a voltage drop of a few hundred millivolts becomes nearly impossible.

This is why Divide-and-Conquer bypasses voltage measurement entirely. Instead of trying to detect tiny voltage changes in a noisy DCC signal, binary search uses a simpler, more reliable signal: does the fault appear or not? That's a binary answer – yes or no – with no ambiguity.

It's not elegant. But it works. ■

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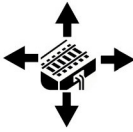
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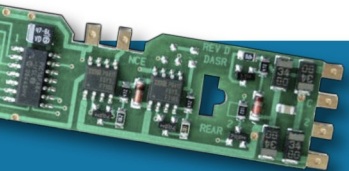
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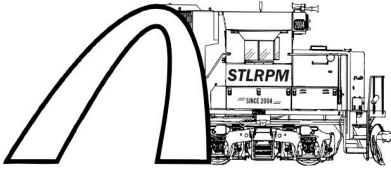
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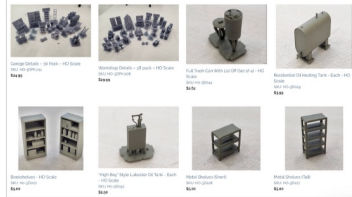
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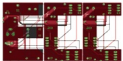
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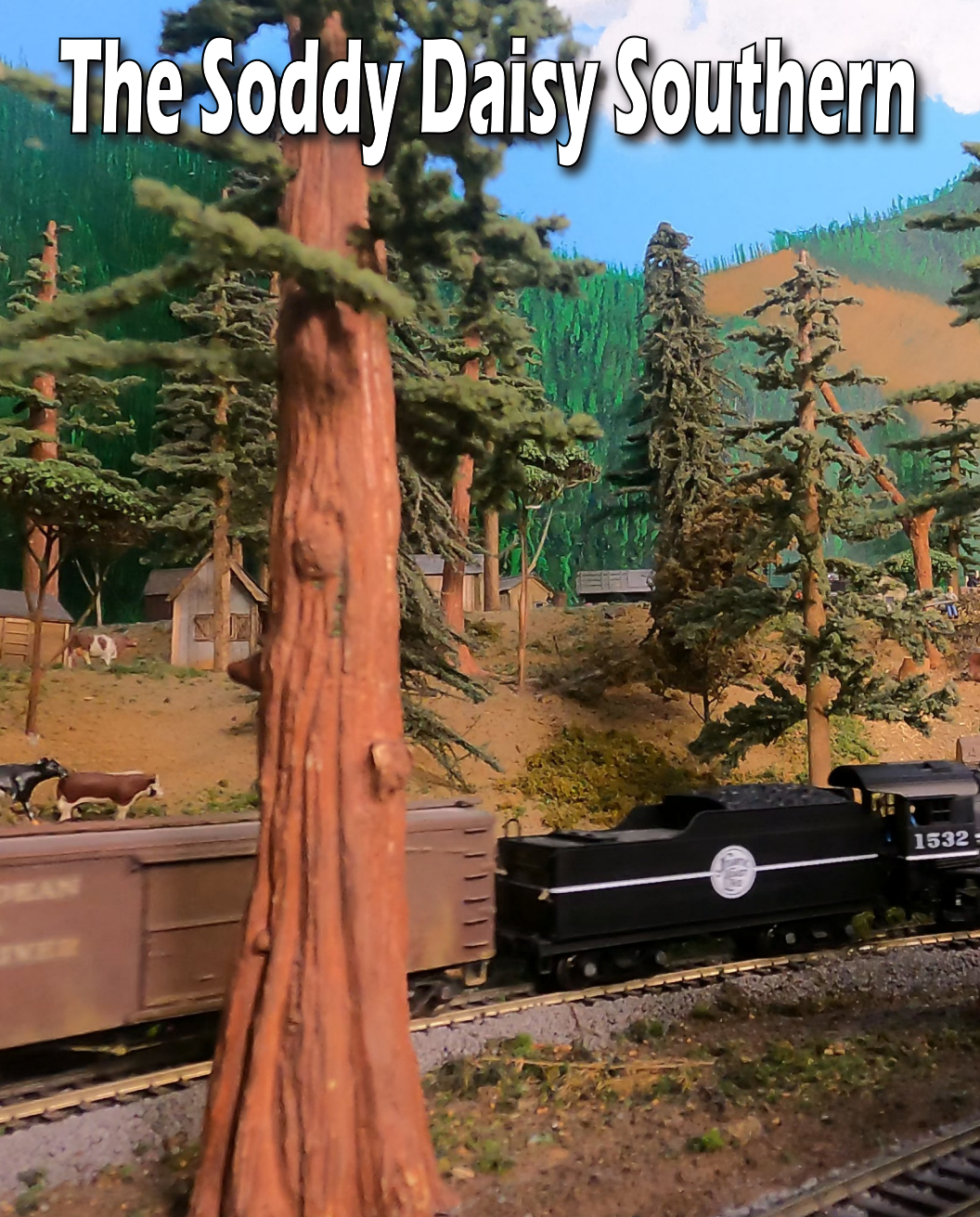
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WILLIE CLONTS HAS SPENT THE LAST TWO DECADES BUILDING SOMETHING many model railroaders dream about: a large, detailed layout that captures the feeling of real railroading. Named for his hometown north of Chattanooga, Tennessee, his Soddy Daisy Southern occupies a sprawling 40 by 16 feet of space, and showcases a freelanced 1930s-40s railroad. This layout draws inspiration from the golden age of model railroading, when legendary builders like John Allen pioneered detailed, scenery-rich, whimsical freelanced layouts built for operation.

For many hobbyists (including the legendary John Allen), the switching, car forwarding, and scheduling that mimics real railroad work is the highest goal of a layout – but Willie chose a different path. He’s built his layout for railfanning: simply sitting trackside and watching trains go by, as if you were standing beside a real railroad line decades ago.



Willie Clonts

This approach prioritizes visual and aesthetic experience over operational complexity. Willie has a whimsical and eclectic sensibility in his modeling reminiscent of the “Wizard of Monterey.” His layout isn’t about operational engagement, but rather in the details and scenery that make watching trains a pleasure itself.

This philosophy has guided every decision, from the dogbone track plan that allows continuous running, to Willie’s

meticulous attention to scenery and his sometimes-tongue-in-cheek collection of beautifully detailed structures. When we visited Willie, he shared how he built the Soddy Daisy Southern, what keeps him motivated after 20 years, and why he believes this hobby has room for all kinds of approaches.

THE RAILROAD AND ITS ORIGINS

What's in a name? For Willie's layout, quite a bit of railfan philosophy and family history.

MRH Staff (Joe Fugate): Willie, tell us about your railroad. What's it called?

Willie Clonts: The Soddy Daisy Southern.

MRH: That's a somewhat unusual name. Where does it come from?

Willie: Soddy Daisy is a small community north of Chattanooga, Tennessee. I grew up there, so I named my railroad after my hometown.

MRH: That explains it! So, tell us about the layout itself. What era are you modeling?

Willie: I'm modeling the 1930s and 1940s era. It's a freelanced railroad, so I have the freedom to do what I want with it. I'm not trying to model any specific prototype, but I am trying to capture the feel of railroading in that time period.

MRH: And when did you start building this layout?

Willie: I started in 2003, so it's been about 20 years now. Of course, it's never really finished. There's always something more to do.

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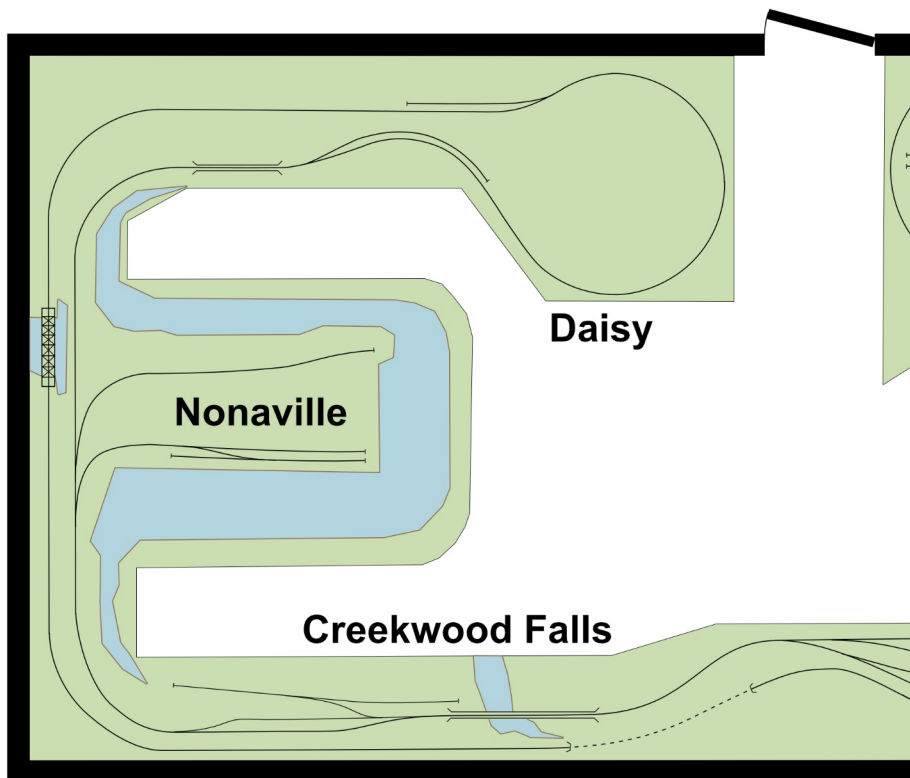
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LAYOUT DESIGN AND PHILOSOPHY

Understanding Willie's design approach reveals a lot about his philosophy.

MRH: Tell us about the track plan. What kind of design did you go with?



Willie Clonts' Sodd

HO scale - Ro

1. Here is a track plan of the Soddy Daisy Southern.

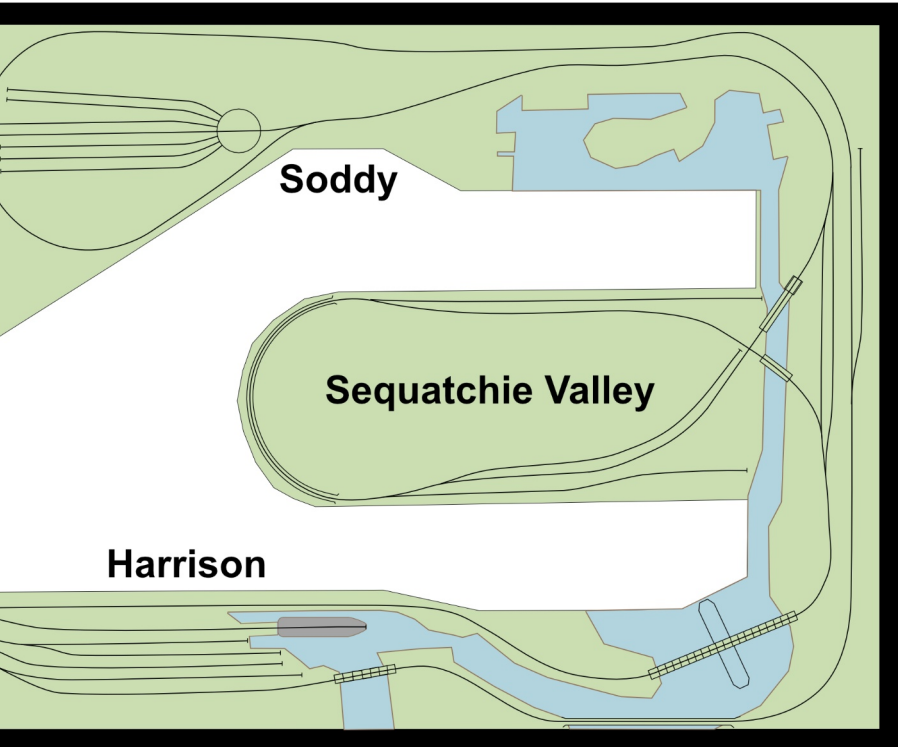


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Willie: It's basically a dogbone design. The layout goes around the room with a turnback loop at each end. That gives me continuous running capability, which is what I wanted. I'm more interested in railfanning – just watching the trains run through the scenery – than I am in operations.



y Daisy Southern

om size 40' x 16'



MRH: So, you're not doing a lot of switching and car-forwarding?

Willie: No, not really. I know a lot of modelers are really into operations, and that's great. But for me, the appeal is in building the scenery and the structures and then running the trains through it. I like to just sit back and watch the trains go by, like you would if you were trackside, watching real trains.

MRH: There's definitely something relaxing about that. How big is the layout?

Willie: The room is about 40 by 16 feet. The layout takes up most of that space, going around the walls with a peninsula that



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comes out into the room. When I first started, the room was smaller, but I was able to expand it later, which gave me more space to work with.

MRH: That expansion must have been nice. Did you have to rebuild sections when you expanded?

Willie: Some of it, yes. But it was worth it to get the extra space. It allowed me to add more scenery and make the curves broader, which looks better and runs better.



2. A visitor to the Soddy Daisy Southern – Southern Railway’s 3854 – thunders across the trestle near Daisy with freight in tow, a reminder of an era when major carriers exercised trackage rights across smaller regional lines.





3. A Southern Railway 4-4-0 in attractive green paint makes a station stop at Crestwood Falls, its passenger train waiting to resume its journey across the Soddy Daisy Southern. These small steamers bring a touch of elegant simplicity to the layout's 1930s-40s roster.



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4. Down at the riverside in Nonaville, a boxcab climax switcher tends to its work, maneuvering the 36-foot railcars that wait at the dock. Willie's attention to structure detail – evident in the dock buildings and rigging – transforms this industrial scene into a window of a 1930s-40s American waterfront.





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SCALE, POWER AND CONTROL

Let's look at the technical decisions Willie made.

MRH: What scale are you working in?

Willie: HO scale. That seems to be the most popular scale, and there's certainly the most equipment and structures available for it.

MRH: Let's talk about your motive power. What kind of locomotives are you running?

Willie: I run steam locomotives exclusively, which is appropriate for the era I'm modeling. Most of my locomotives



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are from Broadway Limited. They make excellent steam engines with good sound and smooth operation. I've got a variety of types – some smaller switchers for yard work and some larger road engines for the main line.

MRH: Are you using DCC?

Willie: Yes, the layout is DCC controlled. I use a handheld controller; that is tethered. Plans are to put plug-ins all around my layout so I can follow the trains.



5. Clont's Automotive Service sits in the commercial district of Soddy, a fitting inclusion on Willie's railroad, given his own automotive business in real life. The meticulous painted signs and weathering bring authenticity to this small-town garage, a reminder that much of depression era America was built on local enterprise and family-run businesses.





6. Perched at the Sequatchie Valley peninsula's end, this towering trestle echoes some of the dramatic bridge scenes on John Allen's *Gorre & Daphetid*. The freight-laden 4-4-0 carefully traversing it embodies Willie Clonts' ability to create a moment certain to thrill railfans.



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BUILDING THE SCENERY

One of the hallmarks of the Soddy Daisy Southern is its detailed scenery.

MRH: Now, let's talk about the scenery. What techniques do you use?

Willie: I use a combination of plaster and foam. For the basic landforms, I'll use foam insulation board, which you can carve and shape pretty easily. Then I'll cover that with plaster or Sculptamold to create the surface texture. Once that's dry, I paint it with earth-tone colors and then add ground foam, static grass, and other ground cover materials.

MRH: And what about trees? How do you handle those?

Willie: I use a variety of methods. Some are commercial trees that I've modified and enhanced.

7. The structures tucked into the clifftop at the inside of the trestle loop [6] showcase the depth of Willie Clonts' commitment to detail. Every building, every texture, every weathered surface creates a scene of such visual richness that it can border on sensory overload – the result of countless modeling hours.



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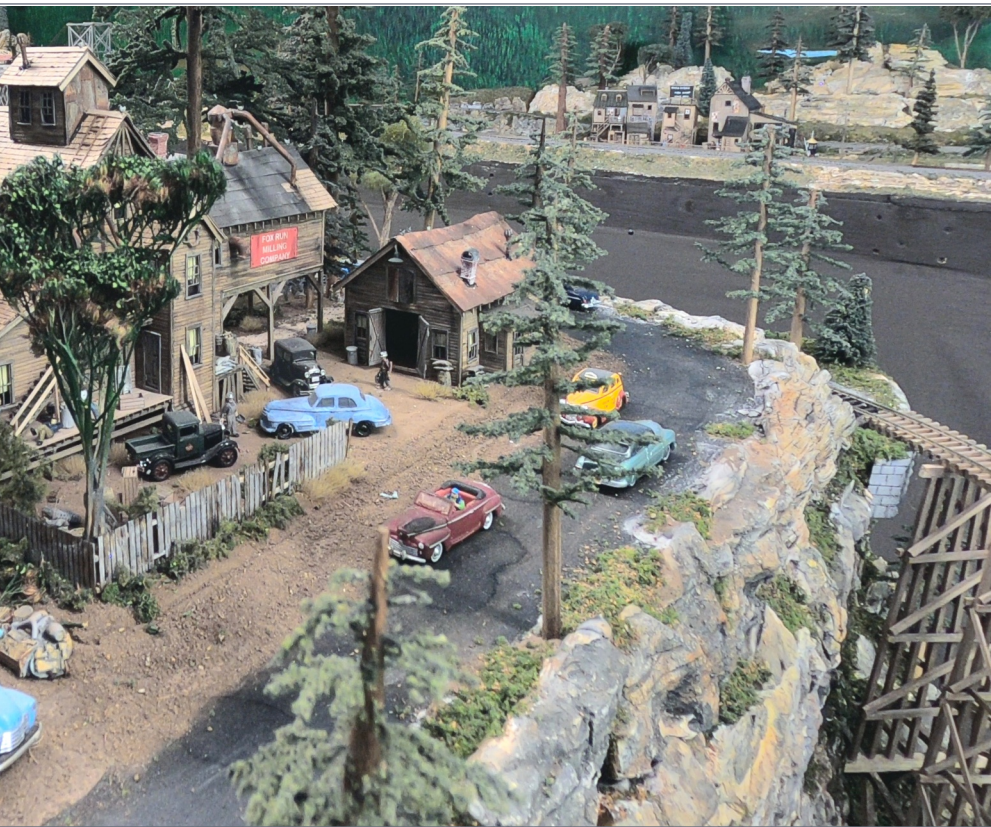
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Others I make from natural materials – twigs and branches that I find outside. I'll add foliage material to them to create realistic-looking trees. The key is to use different sizes and types to create variety, just like you'd see in nature.

MRH: Variety is definitely important. What about water features? Do you have any streams or rivers?

Willie: Yes, I've got a couple of creek scenes and several structures on the waterfront. For those, I create the flat area for the water, paint it with dark colors, and then use gloss medium or realistic water products to create the water surface. I'll add rocks along the banks and some vegetation to make it look natural.

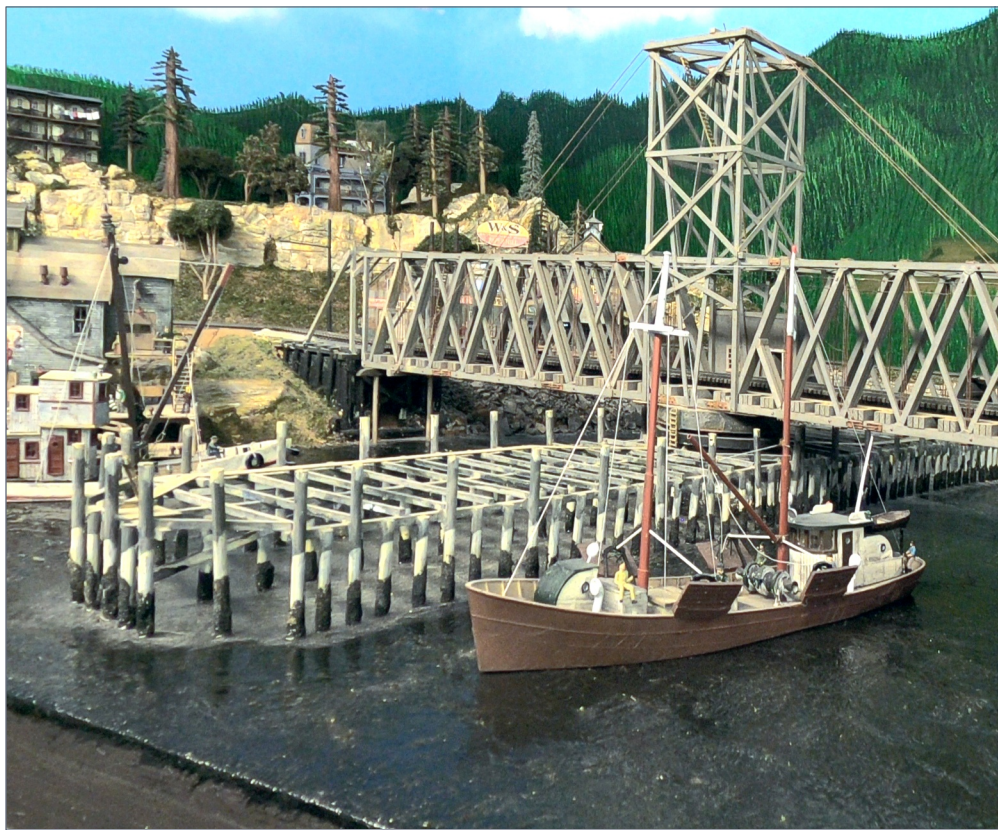


STRUCTURES AND DETAILING

Willie's structures are where the layout really comes to life.

MRH: Let's talk about structures. I notice you have quite a few buildings on the layout. Where do those come from?

Willie: Most of my structures are wood kits from companies like Bar Mills and Fine Scale Miniatures. I really enjoy building those kits. They're laser-cut wood, and they go together nicely, but they also give you the opportunity to add your own details and weathering to make them unique.



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MRH: Do you modify the kits or build them pretty much as designed?

Willie: I usually build them fairly close to the instructions, but I always add extra details – things like window treatments, interior details if you can see inside, signs, weathering, and things like that. I want each structure to tell a story and look like it belongs in that particular location.

MRH: That attention to detail really shows. How long does it typically take you to build one of those structure kits?

Willie: It depends on the complexity of the kit and how much detail I'm adding, but I'd say anywhere from a week to a month, working on it in my spare time. I don't rush it. I enjoy the building process, so I take my time and try to do it right.

MRH: That's a good philosophy. Better to take your time and do it well than to rush through it. Do you do much scratchbuilding?

8. Between Harrison and Sequatchie Valley, commerce on the river depends on this large wooden swing bridge – a showcase example of Willie Clonts' bridge modeling skills. This detailed bridge scene speaks to both the practical demands of the modeled waterway and Willie's dedication to richly detailed scenes.



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Willie: Not a lot. I've done some scratchbuilt details and small structures, but for the most part, I use kits. There are so many good kits available now that you can usually find something that fits what you need. And like I said, I enjoy building the kits.

RUNNING THE LAYOUT

For Willie, the real reward comes from operating the layout.

MRH: Let's talk about operations. You mentioned you're more into railfanning than operations, but do you run the layout regularly?

Willie: Oh yes, I run trains probably three to five times a month. Sometimes it's just me running trains and enjoying the layout. Other times I'll have

9. Tucked alongside the swing bridge scene [8], this modest riverside dock cleverly adds visual interest. Willie Clonts' meticulous modeling transforms what could be a throwaway scenic space into a scene buzzing with activity and texture, turning the riverbank into a visual delight.



friends over and we'll run multiple trains at once. It's very informal – just running trains and enjoying the hobby.

MRH: Do you have a regular group that comes over?

Willie: I'm part of a round robin group. There are about six or eight of us, and we rotate between each other's layouts. Once a month or so, we'll get together at someone's house, run some trains, talk about the hobby, and just enjoy each other's company. It's a great group of guys.

MRH: That sounds like a lot of fun. How long has that group been meeting?



Willie: Several years now. It's been a great way to see different layouts and different approaches to the hobby. Everybody does things a little differently, and you can learn a lot from seeing what other people are doing.

MRH: That's one of the best things about the hobby – the community and the sharing of ideas.

THE BUILDER'S CHALLENGE

Building a large layout over two decades comes with its own set of challenges and rewards.



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MRH: What would you say has been the most challenging aspect of building this layout?

Willie: Probably just staying with it and keeping motivated over the long haul. When you start a big project like this, it's easy to get excited at first, but then as the years go by, you can lose momentum. You have to keep reminding yourself why you started the project in the first place and what you're trying to achieve.

MRH: How do you keep yourself motivated?

Willie: I try to set small, achievable goals. Instead of thinking about everything that still needs to be done, I'll focus on finishing one scene or one structure. When you complete something, even if it's small, it gives you a sense of accomplishment and motivates you to keep going.



10. A humble steel truss bridge spans the river along the far inside wall of the Nonaville peninsula, its simple lines framing the passing Soddy Daisy Southern caboose. Willie Clonts' painted backdrop complements the scene.



And running trains regularly helps too. When you can run a train through a newly completed scene, it reminds you of why you're doing all this work.

MRH: That's excellent advice. What about mistakes? Have you made any major mistakes that you've had to fix?

Willie: Oh sure, plenty of them! I think everybody does. Sometimes you build something and it just doesn't look right, or it doesn't work the way you thought it would. When that happens, you just have to be willing to tear it out and do it over. It's frustrating, but it's part of the learning process.

MRH: Can you give us an example?

11. As the ferry draws into Harrison, the docking apron stands ready to lower and align with the ferry's track, enabling the switchyard operations that keep river commerce flowing. Like every scene on the Soddy Daisy Southern, this scene tells a story.



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Willie: Well, early on I had some track work that wasn't quite right. The curves were too sharp in a couple of places, and the trains didn't run smoothly through them. I lived with it for a while, but it bothered me every time I ran trains. Finally, I just tore it out and re-laid that section of track with broader curves. It was a lot of work, but it was worth it. Now the trains run smoothly, and it looks better too.

MRH: **Sometimes you just have to bite the bullet and fix things. What's been the most rewarding aspect of the layout?**





12. Soddy's riverside district showcases Willie Clonts' structure modeling at its finest. Every building, every architectural detail, every weathered surface tells a story of meticulous craftsmanship – a densely layered composition that rewards close inspection and invites the viewer to linger.



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Willie: Just seeing it come together over the years. When I started, it was just bare benchwork and track. Now it's got scenery and structures, and it looks like a real railroad.

When I run a train through a completed scene, especially when I've got friends over and they comment on how good it looks, that's very rewarding. All the hours of work are worth it at moments like that.

MRH: I can imagine. What advice would you give to someone who's thinking about starting a layout?



Willie: I'd say start with a plan, but don't be afraid to modify it as you go. Things change, and what seemed like a good idea on paper doesn't always work out in reality. Be flexible.

Also, don't try to do too much. It's better to have a smaller layout that's finished than a huge layout that's only 10% done. And most importantly, build the kind of layout that you'll enjoy. Don't worry about what other people think you should do.

This is your hobby, so do what makes you happy.

MRH: That's great advice. Build for yourself, not for others.

Willie: Exactly. I know my approach isn't for everybody. Some people would be bored with a layout that doesn't have a lot of operations. But for me, this is perfect. I enjoy building the scenery and structures, and I enjoy running the trains and watching them go by. That's what the hobby is about for me.



13. Walk along Soddy's riverside and you'll encounter structure modeling of a high order. Saloons, shops, and service establishments cluster together with the kind of authentic disorder that speaks to real American commerce of the depression era. Willie Clonts' craftsmanship makes each building a small masterpiece.

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MRH: And that's what makes this hobby so great - there's room for all different approaches. What are your plans for the future? What's next for the Soddy Daisy Southern?

Willie: Well, there are still some areas that need scenery work. I've got a couple of towns that need more structures. I want to add more details throughout the layout - vehicles, people, animals, all those little things that bring a scene to life.

And I'm always looking for ways to improve what's already there. I'll see something that doesn't look quite right, and I'll go back and rework it. Like I said earlier, it's never really finished.



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MRH: The journey is the destination, as they say.

Willie: That's right. If it was ever completely finished, what would I do then? Part of the fun is always having something to work on, always having a new project or a new scene to build.

THE HOBBY TODAY

Willie has watched the hobby evolve significantly over his 20 years in it.

MRH: Do you do much research for your modeling? Looking at prototype photos and things like that?

Willie: Some, yes. Even though it's a freelanced railroad, I want it to look believable. So, I'll look at photos from the era I'm modeling to see how things looked back then – the types of structures,



14. Peter Piper's "Pampered Pickle"
Pickling Plant modeled from the American Model Builders craftsman kit proves that Willie Clonts' playful approach knows no bounds. This quirky structure near Sequatchie Valley, with its modeled open vats, adds a layer of personality and humor to the Soddy Daisy Southern that recalls the best traditions of creative model railroading.

the way they were built, the colors, the weathering, all of that. I'm not trying to model any specific prototype scene, but I want to capture the general feel of railroading in the 1930s and '40s.

MRH: That's a good approach. You get the flavor of the era without being locked into modeling a specific prototype.

Willie: Right. And it gives me the freedom to do what I want. If I see a structure kit that I like, I can use it without worrying about whether it's prototypically correct for a specific railroad or location. As long as it fits the general era and style, it works.

MRH: Let's talk a bit about the hobby in general. You've been in the hobby for a long time. How has it changed over the years?

Willie: Oh, it's changed tremendously. The quality of the equipment available now is just amazing compared to what was

15. Southern Railway's 3854 leans into the curve between Daisy and Nonaville, its freight consist swaying behind. The weathered rails and stone retaining wall frame the moment with a sense of authentic decay, portraying a working railroad from a bygone era.



available when I first got into the hobby. The locomotives run better, they sound better, they look better.

The structures and detail parts are much more realistic. And DCC has been a gamechanger in terms of how we control our trains. It's a great time to be in the hobby.

MRH: What about the community aspect? Has that changed?

Willie: I think the internet has made a big difference there. You can connect with other modelers all over the world now. You can see photos of their layouts, read about their techniques, ask



questions, and get answers. That's something we didn't have years ago.

Back then, you pretty much learned from magazines and from the few other modelers you might know in your local area. Now the whole world is your local area, in a sense.

MRH: That's a good way to put it. Do you participate in online forums and things like that?

Willie: I do some, yes. I enjoy seeing what other people are doing and sharing ideas. But I also think there's still value in face-to-face interaction, which is why I enjoy the round-robin group so much. There's something about actually being there in person, seeing a layout in three dimensions, talking with the builder, that you just can't get from looking at photos online.

MRH: Absolutely. Both have their place. What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the hobby today?

Willie: I think it's attracting younger people. The hobby seems to skew older, and we need to find ways to get younger people interested. Part of that is just exposure – a lot of young people today have never seen a model railroad, so they don't know what it's about. If we can get them to see what's possible, I think some of them would be interested.

MRH: What do you think would appeal to younger people about the hobby?

Willie: I think the creative aspect would appeal to a lot of them. This hobby combines so many different skills – carpentry, electrical work, painting, weathering, scenery building, structure building. It's very hands-on and creative.

And with DCC and sound, the technology aspect is pretty cool, too. You're basically building a miniature world, and I think that would appeal to a lot of people if they knew about it.

MRH: That's a good point. It's a very creative hobby. Any final thoughts you'd like to share?



Willie: Just that this is a wonderful hobby, and I'd encourage anyone who's interested to give it a try. Start small if you need to, but start. Don't wait until you have the perfect space or the perfect plan or the perfect budget.

Just start building something, even if it's just a small shelf layout. You'll learn as you go, and you'll have fun doing it. And don't be afraid to ask for help. Model railroaders are generally very friendly and willing to share what they know.

We all started as beginners at some point.

MRH (Joe): That's great advice, Willie. Thank you so much for sharing your layout and your thoughts with us today. The Soddy Daisy Southern has some beautiful modeling, and it's clear that you've put a lot of time and love into it.

Willie: Thank you, Joe. It's been my pleasure. I hope folks get some ideas or inspiration from seeing what I've done. That's what it's all about – sharing the hobby and helping each other enjoy it more. ☑

The Soddy Daisy Southern will be on tour at the NMRA National Convention in Chattanooga, TN later this summer from July 27 – August 2, 2026. For more information about the convention, see: nmra2026.org.



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16. The Soddy Daisy Southern rewards viewing from every angle, as this scene from above Creekwood Falls demonstrates. The caboose disappearing into the distance serves as a fitting farewell – a reminder that Willie has created not just a model railroad, but a complete world, worthy of the freelanced railroad tradition pioneered by John Allen.



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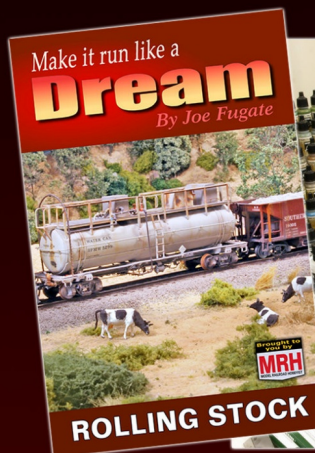
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Constructing an inviting layout room



1. An unconventional use for greenhouse panels mitigates dust while allowing light to fill the layout room.



Model Railroad Hobbyist | April 2026

JIMMY ANDERSON CONSTRUCTS A PARTIALLY FINISHED BASEMENT SPACE INTO A CLEAN, BRIGHT, AND INVITING LAYOUT ROOM ...

WHEN MY TRAVELING MODULAR CLUB

DISSOLVED, I decided to expand my home hobby room to include a shelf layout. The club's 20x40 foot modular layout provided space to run long trains, but my home layout was a tiny 5'x6' table in a partially finished basement. There was not enough space to run longer trains, and it didn't make sense to rework it for switching operations.

The room was large enough to expand the layout, but it was not inviting. Cold concrete floors, an unfinished ceiling, and poor lighting needed to be addressed before I began any new layout construction.

There are plenty of articles, videos, books, and other resources for track planning, wiring, scenery, and benchwork construction, but I found very little in the way of preparing the layout space. I compiled what I learned from others and my own experience to present a starting point for others to consider when making a nice space for a model railroad room.

Obviously, it is easiest to address the construction aspects in an empty room, but I didn't know I wanted to make this space a dedicated layout room until I was far along into building my first small layout. Only after being in the room for a while and understanding its limitations could I then imagine what layout expansions were possible. Although I would have preferred to have started with an empty space, the materials and techniques I used easily fit in the space I had.

My 11-by-16-foot room lends itself to an around-the-walls track plan. I determined a shelf-style layout built on top of my storage cabinets would work well. By using The One Module Approach (TOMA), I could build the benchwork in the garage and keep the layout room clean.

CEILING

The first item I needed to address was the ceiling. Lighting and dust control were the main factors in determining what approach to take. I didn't want to close-in the ceiling with a permanent solution like drywall because I wanted access to pipes and wiring.

I used conventional suspended-ceiling grid components, but instead of acoustic tiles I used clear twin-wall polycarbonate panels typically used for greenhouses. The larger panels were cut to 4x4-foot squares. Plenty of light shines through the panels, and they have the advantage of being cleanable and removable.





2. Exposed floor joists and utilities create a visual mess that detracts from the layout.



3. Polycarbonate panels are lightweight but rigid, easy to cut, and diffuse light evenly.

FLOOR

I wanted a light-colored floor to keep the space bright, as there are no windows in this part of the house. Paint was ruled out because of the cracks in the floor. No matter how the cracks are sealed, they will always reappear, and I knew that visual distraction would bother me [4].

I found a good deal on vinyl plank flooring [5] in a light color that was easy to install and keep clean. I used PVC exterior trim for baseboard.



4. Bare concrete floor is difficult to keep clean. Cracks and stains make it unattractive.





5. Vinyl plank flooring is easy to cut and it's waterproof.



6. The finished floor is light and easy to keep clean.

WALL

Two of the walls were already finished and painted, but there was no separation between the layout and the utility area. I needed to maintain access to air ducts, water pipes, and other utilities, so designing and building a conventional framed wall would have been difficult. There was no way to build a straight wall without giving up a lot of available layout space [7].

After working with the polycarbonate panels for the ceiling, I realized they also could work as a wall between the layout area and the utility space [8].

The panels are rigid enough to stand without framing but flexible enough to bend around the obstacles. The panels form



7. Working around pipes made designing a framed wall nearly impossible without severely cutting into the already limited layout space.



a gentle curve from the ceiling to the floor, and bookcases on the other side lightly bend them into shape. The wall floats – it is not attached to anything but is held in place by gravity and friction. The gentle curve it creates is not noticeable after the backdrops are in place [9, 10].



8. The panel wall curves away from the ceiling then straightens out behind the benchwork giving a cleaner look.

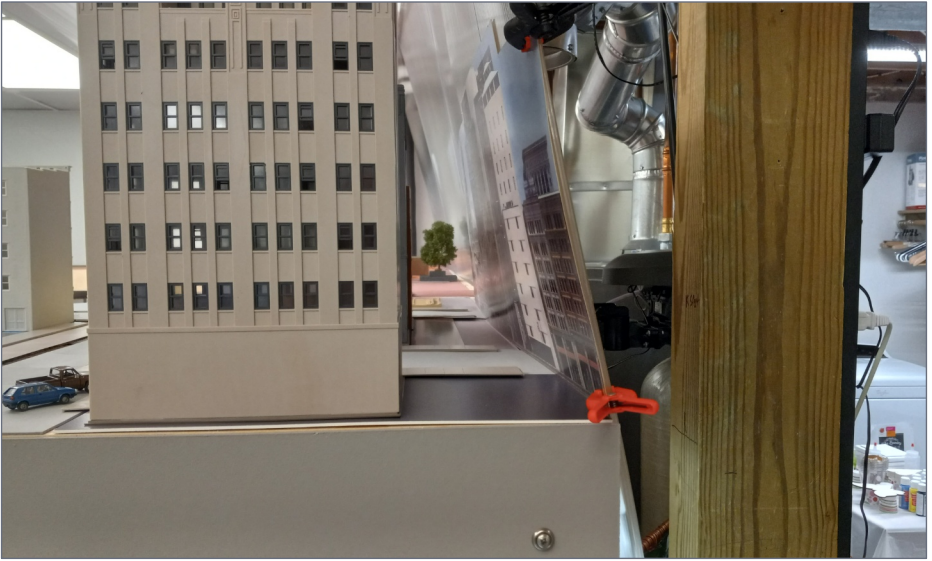
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9. The angle of the backdrop is only noticeable from one spot in the room that will be easy to disguise.



10. Viewed from straight-on, the slope of the wall is not apparent.



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LIGHTING

For overall room lighting, I added three 2'x4' LED panels into the ceiling grid. I also found some inexpensive LED shop light fixtures, and placed them above the planned track route.

I added a strip of RGB (red, green, blue) LEDs so I could simulate moonlight for night operations [12].

Another strip of RGB LEDs was installed under the bookcases. This creates an under-glow for safety when the room lights are dimmed during night operations [13].



11. LED light panels are more versatile than fluorescent. Some brands have built-in switches to adjust color temperature, and most are dimmable.



12. The RGB strip gives a nighttime feel for night operations.



13. LED light strips are an inexpensive and creative way to add color accents. Magnets hold this strip to the metal shelf legs.



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CONCLUSION

Enclosing the ceiling and covering the floor has cut down the dust on my layout by 90%, allowing more time for modeling and reducing the time needed for cleaning. Better lighting and using brighter colors for surfaces made the room more inviting. ☑

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JIMMY ANDERSON



Jimmy's journey into model railroading began at age 10, when he stumbled across an old Tyco HO train set buried in the basement of his childhood home. After upgrading couplers, wheels, and adding weights to the tired old cars, he splurged on a new Athearn blue-box CNW GP-50.

These days, Jimmy's layout takes loose inspiration from the Chicago Great Western in Minnesota, but his real passion lies in building structures. An avid fan of mid-century architecture, he's always gathering photos of interesting buildings to recreate in miniature.

Now retired from a career in information systems, Jimmy and his wife, Joy, travel across the country attending model railroading events and gathering even more inspiration. Outside the hobby, he serves as a volunteer first-responder, and remains active on several boards and committees in his community. ■

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SAVVY MODELER *Online*



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Easy chain link fence modeling

YouTuber Gormo of the **Great Chesterford Junction Model Railway** channel shows how he makes a chain link fence easily using hardware netting as an instant frame.

He starts out with a more manual alternative but then quickly abandons that for the simpler approach using the hardware wire netting as instant fence frame. As this wire netting is available in various sizes of mesh, this method can work for more than just HO scale as he shows. This 18 minute video is definitely worth a watch!



▶ GREAT MODELER VIDEOS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

2026 NMRA National Convention – Chattanooga, TN July 27 to August 2, 2026



Tennessee Valley Model Railroaders



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- **Prototype Tours**
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APRIL NEWS

column

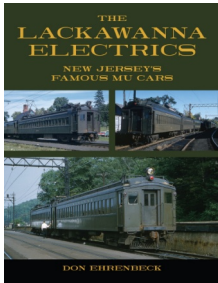


Model Railroad Hobbyist | April 2026

RICHARD BALE AND JEFF SHULTZ
REPORT THE LATEST HOBBY
INDUSTRY NEWS ...



NEW PRODUCTS FOR ALL SCALES



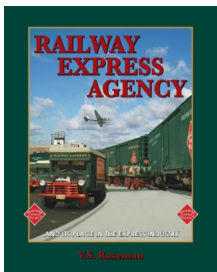
Coming in August from **Garbely Publishing** is *The Lackawanna Electrics: New Jersey's Famous MU Cars*. Authored by Don Ehrenbeck, *The Lackawanna Electrics* covers the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad's fleet of electric multiple unit (MU) cars from their introduction in 1930 through their end under NJ Transit in the 1980s. Including over 150 images and historical documents, the book is both a tribute and technical history of the car fleet. 8.5" x 11" softcover, ~80 pages. Preorders are due by July 1, 2026. Info: www.garbelypublishing.com

Maple Leaf Trains has introduced an online scale calculator that can convert measurements from prototype to scale, scale to scale, and scale to prototype. Measurements can be in metric or Imperial lengths, and scales included are Z, N, TT, HO, S, O, and G (1:22.5). A custom ratio can also be converted. The converter is located at: www.mapleleaftrains.com/scale-calculator
Info: www.mapleleaftrains.com

THE LATEST MODEL RAILROAD PRODUCTS, NEWS & EVENTS



White River Productions has released two new books. The first is the *On30 Annual 2026*, edited by Chris Lane. In its 21st year, the On30 annual includes articles on layouts, structures, scenery items and more. 8.5" x 11" softcover, 116 pages.



The second book is *Railway Express Agency and its place in the express industry* by V.S. Roseman, who has also written for MRH. The book covers the entire history of the REA, from its origins and the corporate structure at the top to the daily express operations at the base. Chapters cover rolling stock, terminals and facilities, air express service, logos and emblems, and the

large truck fleet responsible for the last miles of the delivery. The book includes over 300 photographs, diagrams, and technical drawings, which include original illustrations by the author. A chapter on modeling REA equipment makes the book a valuable guide for the pre-1975 modeler.

Info: shop.whiteriverproductions.com/products

O SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



M.T.H. Electric Trains has announced

the December 2026 release of a Premier O scale 4-8-8-4 Big Boy. The first is the UP #4014 excursion scheme for the coast-to-coast trip, the second is as #250 in a Sesquicentennial paint scheme. Updated to accurately replicate the updated details on the prototype #4014, the 2026 edition of the #4014 Excursion will be available in both two and three-rail versions.

Info: www.mthtrains.com



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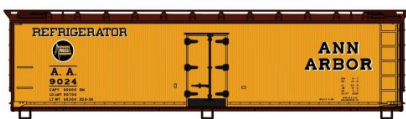
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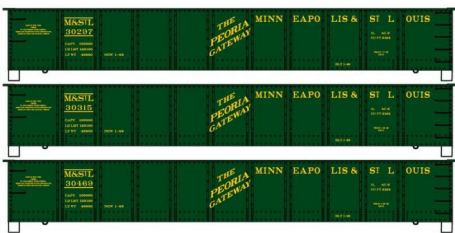
HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



The March 2026 **Accurail** announcements include a run of three Canadian road 40' riveted steel boxcar kits, with one for Canadian/Canadien National, a Canadian Pacific grain service with wheat sheaf, and a Pacific Great Eastern clean loading boxcar. The cars will also be available as singles.



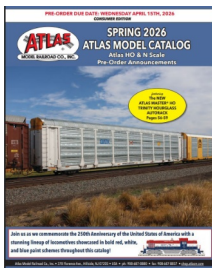
A 40' wood refrigerator car kit with a six-foot hinged door decorated for the Ann Arbor Railroad is part of the March announcements.



Also in the March announcements is a three-car set of 41' steel gondola kits decorated for the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad. Singles with random car numbers will also be available. All

Accurail kits include appropriate trucks with Delrin wheelsets and Accumate couplers. The kits in this announcement are expected to be produced in July 2026.

Info: accurailinc.com



Atlas has released its Spring 2026 catalog containing all the HO scale announcements seen here. It is available at download.atlasrr.com/0226MCPDF/HONSpring2026MSRPOOnly1.pdf Preorders for models announced in the catalog are due April 15, 2026 with an estimated arrival of 4th Quarter 2026.



In HO scale, Atlas is taking preorders for Alco RS-1 locomotives. Road names in this run are Arkansas & Missouri,

Black River & Western (2 schemes), Central Railroad of New Jersey, Long Island Railroad, Maryland & Delaware, New Haven, Spokane Portland & Seattle, and Vermont Railway. Limited collector series models will be available in Genesee & Wyoming Bicentennial and Livonia Avon & Lakeville. Both Master Gold with ESU LokSound DCC/Sound and Master Silver Sound Ready versions are available.



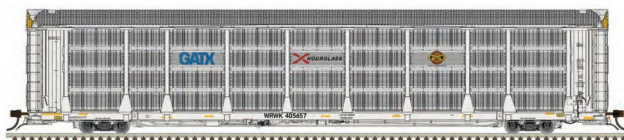
Next is the HO scale EMD GP40 locomotive, which will be available decorated for CSX (ex-RFP), GATX Leasing, Grand

Trunk, MBTA, Metra, Norfolk Southern, Soo, and Utah Railway. Limited Collector series models will be available in American Association of Railroads and Wheeling and Lake Erie. Both Master Gold with ESU LokSound DCC/Sound and Master Silver Sound Ready versions are available.



The Master Series HH660 locomotive will be decorated for Boston & Albany, Buffalo Creek, Delaware Lackawanna, Green Bay & Western,

Port of Longview, Portland Terminal Company, New Energy (Relco), and Walla Walla Valley. A limited-edition collectors edition paint scheme of American Cast Iron Pipe in Bicentennial paint is also part of this run.



A new model from Atlas in HO scale is the Trinity Hourglass Auto

Rack. Featuring a distinctive hourglass profile with wide ends and a wasp waist, the model features see-through etched metal



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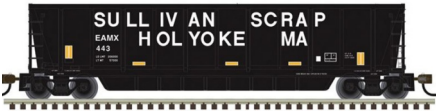
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side panels. Road names in the first run are BNSF, Canadian Pacific, Norfolk Southern, Providence & Worcester/GATX and Union Pacific.



New paint schemes and road numbers are included in the HO scale release of the Master line F89J 89' flat car. Due in the 4th Quarter 2026, road names are James E. Strates (JESX), a carnival midway show company, KTTX with a large TTX logo, MTTX with conspicuity stripes, TTX in a 1970s paint scheme, and two PTTX cars, one with a silver pipe load and one with a green pipe load.



A Master line Coalveyor Gondola will be available decorated for David J. Joseph (DJJX), Hampton Capital (SWIX), Nebraska Public Power (NPPX), Sullivan Scrap Metal (EAMX), Transload America (TLAX), The Tie Yard of Omaha (TYOX), and Wisconsin Public Service Corp. (WEPX). The models come with a removable coal load and a die-cast chassis.



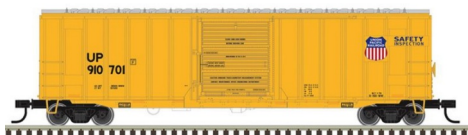
Also announced are the three and six bay cylindrical hoppers in HO scale. New paint schemes on three-bay covered hoppers include Davison Catalysts (CRDX), General Aniline & Film Corp. (NAHX), and Morton Salt (USEX). New road numbers on three bay covered hoppers are available for Chessie System (B&O), International Minerals & Chemical (NAHX), Missouri-Kansas-Texas (BKTY), and Stauffer Chemicals (ACFX). New road numbers on six-bay covered hoppers are Burlington Northern and Frisco. In limited edition collectors series paint schemes are ACF Center Flow Demonstrator (ACFX) and Chessie System (CSXT patch). Each paint scheme except the collectors series comes in three road numbers.



In the HO scale Trainman line, new paint schemes are available on the PS-2 two-bay 2003 cu. ft. covered hopper. The paint schemes are Central Soya (CSX), Chicago North Western, Conrail, Haliburton (HWCX), Ready-Mixed Concrete (RMIX), Borden Animal Feeds (SDCX), Southern Pacific, and SOO Line. The models are equipped with 50-ton solid bearing or 70-ton roller bearing trucks as appropriate.



Also in the Trainman line is the HO scale C&O cupola caboose. Originally built by Magor in 1937 for the C&O, St. Louis Car Company and ACF also built cabooses for the C&O using a similar design. Pere Marquette, Missouri Pacific, and Chicago & Eastern Illinois also had similarly built cabooses. Cabooses in this release are decorated for Buckingham Branch, Chessie System (C&O), Ferrocarril Chesapeake & Ohio, Chihuahua Al Pacifico, Chicago & Eastern Illinois, New Jersey Transit, and Pere Marquette. A limited-edition collectors series caboose is done in a special Christmas Caboose scheme from the Detroit, Toledo and Ironton Railroad.



The Trainman HO scale 50'6" boxcar model will be available in BNSF, CSX (ex-A&WP), Maine Central (Guilford), Missouri Pacific (ex-Railbox), Railbox (Graffiti), Union Pacific ("Blizzard Bus"), and Union Pacific (MOW). A limited-edition collectors series paint scheme of Wheeling & Lake Erie is also available in this release.

Info: shop.atlasrr.com

Bachmann Trains has announced the availability of a new run of the 4-4-0 American steam locomotive in HO scale. DCC Ready models are equipped with a 21-pin NMRA DCC socket, and the



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DCC Sound Value-equipped versions include a SoundTraxx Economi DCC/Sound decoder. Models currently available are

the Central Pacific Jupiter (both DC and DCC Sound Value), Central Pacific #63 "Leviathan" (DCC ready), North Pole & Southern #1 (DCC Ready), Northern Central #17 "The York" (DCC Sound Value), Old Colony "Highland Light" (DCC Sound Value), Pennsylvania #566 (DCC Ready), Santa Fe #91 (DCC Ready), Union Pacific #119 (both), Virginia & Truckee #12 "Genoa" (DCC Sound Value), and Western & Atlantic "The General" (DCC Sound Value).



Also available is the 40' three-dome tank car, replicating a riveted tank design introduced between the late 1920s and early 1940s. Roadnames available are

Protex Industries (PDAX), Pennsylvania RR, UTLX, Quaker State, Ambrose Wine Co. (NATX), Texaco, Kanotex, and West Chemical Products (GATX). The models feature blackened metal wheels with RP25 contours.

Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com



Broadway Limited has announced a new production run of the

HO scale Commodore Vanderbilt Hudson. All the paint schemes in this run are fantasy schemes. One of the paint schemes is The Rexall Locomotive, which is based on a real locomotive, albeit a Mohawk instead of a Hudson, which lead The Rexall Train to all 48 states in 1936 and was streamlined in a similar style to the Commodore Vanderbilt.

Other paint schemes include a Century Green scheme, a Pacemaker Red scheme, a NYC Lightning Stripe scheme, and



two United States Army Air Force inspired schemes, “Moonbeam McSwine” and HV-U. Two special Collector’s Club fantasy paint schemes will be an America250 flag-based scheme and the 2026 Merry Christmas holiday scheme. All paint schemes will be available with Paragon4 sound/DCC or in a no-sound/DCC-ready version with a 21-pin NMRA socket. Orders are due by June 25, 2026, with an estimated delivery date of December 2026.



Also announced is the ACF Type 27 6,000-gallon tank car, built between the late 1920s through the 1940s. Available in two-

packs, the road names in this release are Columbia Southern (SACX, 2 schemes), Dow Chemical (GWEX), Dupont (DUPX), Ethyl Corporation (EBAX, 2 schemes), Hooker Chemicals (HOKX, 2 schemes), Penn Salt (TELX), Stauffer Chemical (SHPX), UTLX, Virginia Chemical (VCSX), and Wyandotte Chemicals (SHPX). Orders are due by May 21st, 2026, with an estimated delivery date of Summer 2026.

Info: www.broadway-limited.com



Kadee’s March release is an HO scale 50’ PS-1 boxcar decorated for the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad. Built in 1963 and repainted and shopped 4-1981, the RTR model features a 9’ Pullman Standard door and a cushion underframe.

Info: www.kadee.com



New from **Prairie Shadows** is a Thrall 5800 pellet hopper. Equipped with



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pneumatic outlet gates, the four-compartment covered hopper prototype was introduced in 1983. Produced until 1998, over 7,000 of the hoppers were built in several phases for multiple customers. Road names have not been announced, but multiple body and brake component variations will be produced. Outlet gates, roof hatches, stirrups, roping equipment, and other details will be applied per prototype. They will be equipped with 36" CNC metal wheels in prototype specific 100-ton trucks.

Info: prairieshadows.com



Rapido Trains has announced that in partnership with **HomeShops**, they will be releasing the HO scale Alco FA-1 and FB-1 locomotives decorated for the Virginian & Ohio Railroad. Available with DCC/

Sound or in DC only, preorders are being taken for the FA-1 #240 and FB-1 #233 together and FA-1 #232 separately. These locomotives will ship in a few months with the current run of Rapido FAs, so order directly from Rapido.



Rapido is celebrating the retirement of the LRC passenger cars after 45 years of service with LRC gift box sets containing one LRC locomotive,

three LRC cars (2x VIA 1 Coach, 2x Coach or 3x Amtrak coach), a 48-page full color book on the history of the LRC written by Kevin J. Holland, two LRC commemorative glasses, an LRC tie clip and cuff links set, and anything else Rapido can come up with prior to their release.

Individual locomotives and cars are available for preorder, including four locomotive paint schemes: standard VIA Rail, Amtrak Phase III, VIA Rail Blue Test Scheme, and Grey LRC Test



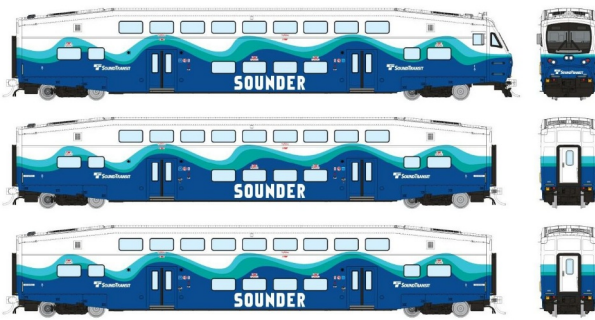
Scheme. Improvements in this release include tooling improvements to the body, a MoPower

capacitor system, a LokSound V5 DCC/Sound decoder with remastered sounds, and new strong bass speakers. A DC/silent version of the locomotive is also available in each paint scheme. See the Rapido website for road numbers.



Club cars, VIA 1 cars, Business class, and Coach cars are available

for preorder in As Delivered, Canada, Renaissance, and The Future Is On Board schemes. Amtrak Phase III is available on the LRC Coach. The Preorder deadline for all LRC products is June 15, 2026.



A new run of HO scale Bilevel Commuter Cars including new CEM (Crash Energy Management) design cars is now available for preorder.

Introduced in the 2010s, the CEM cab cars are distinctive with their full width window and streamlined appearance. All of the CEM cars have a redesigned roof profile that slopes to the end of the car. Paint schemes for the CEM cab and coach cars are ACE (Altamont Corridor Express), Coaster (San Diego), GO Transit (Toronto and surrounding area), and Sounder (Seattle).



The original Bilevel cars are available in GO Transit,

MetroLink (Southern California), Northstar (Minneapolis),

SunRail (Orlando, FL), Trinity Railway Express (Dallas/Ft. Worth), Tri-Rail (Greater Miami), and West Coast Express (SW British Columbia). The cab cars are only available as part of a cab and two coach car sets. The preorder deadline for all Bilevel cars is August 17, 2026.



The final announcement in HO scale for Rapido is the Railroad of Lies (ROLX)

NSC Ballast Hopper. They are available now – no preorder. Three road numbers are available - 9002, 9005, and 9008.

Info: www.rapido trains.com

All artwork and graphics are courtesy of Rapido Trains



New from **Rock Island Hobby** is two 1880s-style passenger cars. Both a coach and combine are available

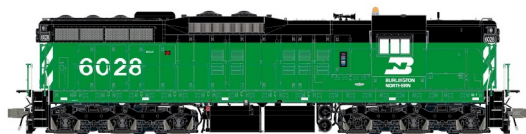
decorated for Pennsylvania RR, Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and B&O Chessie. The cars feature blackened RP25 contour wheels with metal axles and Bachmann knuckle couplers with springs.



Also new from Rock Island Hobby is an HO scale flatcar with removable crate load,

available in U.S. Army, Reading, ATSF, and Southern Pacific. They also feature blackened RP25 contour wheels with metal axles and Bachmann knuckle couplers with springs.

Info: rockislandhobby.com

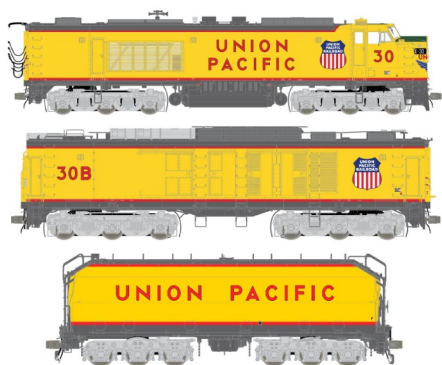


A new run of Rivet Counter SD7s and SD9s has been announced by **ScaleTrains**. Preorders are being taken for eight

road names with 16 unique variations. The SD7 is being released in four Burlington Northern variations and in a HypoTypical Nevada Northern paint scheme – it is HypoTypical because a few unique details are missing.



The SD9 is available for preorder in Chicago & Illinois Midland (2 variations), Chessie System (B&O), Conrail (2 variations), Denver & Rio Grande Western, Penn Central (2 variations), Southern Railway (2 CofG variations). A HypoTypical Nevada Northern SD9R in an America 250 paint scheme is also available. Both DCC/Sound and DC/DCC ready models will be produced. Preorders are due April 27, 2026, with delivery this winter.



In the Museum Quality line, eight road numbers of the HO scale Union Pacific “Big Blow” Turbine are being run – #3, #6, #8, #12, #17, #18, #26, #30. Several of these have features unique to the road number and two are preserved in railroad museums. The models include an ESU designed “PowerPack” with dual super capacitors in both the A & B units. Both DCC/Sound and DC/DCC ready models will be produced. Preorders are due April 27, 2026, with delivery this winter.



ScaleTrains has Operator series HO scale Pullman-Standard Silverside Coal gondolas available in-stock. A former Fox Valley Models car, the models are available in five paint schemes, with SOU reporting marks and variations



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on SOUTHERN or the NS logo on the side of the car.

Info: www.scaletrails.com



A Pennsylvania RR G28 52'6" drop end gondola is the newest product from **Speedwitch Media**. The

kits feature a single-piece cast resin body, resin, styrene, wire, and etched metal details, and Kadee couplers. Decals are included.

Info: speedwitchmedia.com

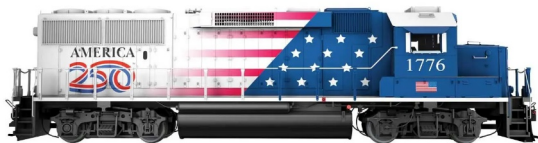


Tangent Scale Models has released a new model for March 2026, the North American Car Corporation (NACC) 1963-design 20,500-

gallon non-insulated tank car, class ICC-111A-100-W-1.

Produced between 1963 and 1966, they were legal for interchange service up to 2013-2016. Four paint schemes and two unlettered but painted cars are available, including A.E. Staley (AESX, 1963), NATX (black lease delivery, 1966), Anderson Clayton Foods (NATX, 1973+), NATX (black lease repaint, 1990+), Unlettered (RTR white body and underframe), and Unlettered (RTR black body and underframe).

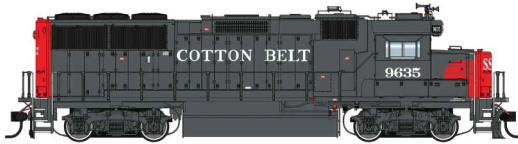
Info: www.tangentscalemodels.com



Walthers is releasing specially decorated equipment in HO scale as part of the officially

licensed America250 Collection. The collection will include America250 specific models as well as models depicting sesquicentennial paint schemes applied to prototype railroad equipment. Currently the list of items to be produced as part of

the collection includes TTX #636710, a 60' high cube boxcar, GE ES44AC GEVOs in the Canadian National #1776 Screaming Eagle scheme and #2026 Air Force One scheme, GE Tier 4 CPKC #1776, a 72' modern reefer in #1776 and #2026, and a GP60 in #1776 and #2026. All models are available for preorder, with availabilities expected through 2026 and 2027. Preorders for the America250 licensed products are due August 15, 2026.



Walthers has announced a run of the WalthersProto GP60 in HO scale. With an

expected delivery of Winter 2027, the models come equipped with LokSound 5 DCC/Sound or standard DC with a 21-pin DCC socket. Both versions include a 28mm round speaker. Road names in this run are BNSF, Cotton Belt, Denver & Rio Grande, Norfolk Southern, Southern Pacific, Union Pacific and Undecorated.



In WalthersMainline, a 73' Greenville 7,000 cu. ft. woodchip hopper has been announced with an expected delivery date of

Summer 2026. Equipped with metal wheels and Proto MAX metal couplers, the woodchip hopper will be available decorated for CSXT (Seaboard patch), CSXT (SCL patch), CSXT (Louisville & Nashville patch), Illinois Central Gulf, and undecorated. Each paint scheme will have two road numbers available.

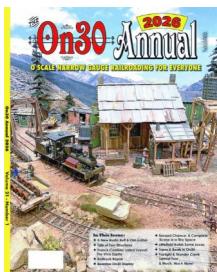


WalthersTrack is expanding its product line of Code 83 HO scale track with the addition of 30-, 45-, and 60- degree crossings. Expected in Fall 2026, the track features thin profile plastic ties

molded in brown with tie plate and spike detail.

Info: www.walthers.com

N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



Atlas has released its Spring 2026 catalog containing all the N scale announcements seen here. It is available at download.atlasrr.com/0226MCPDF/HONSpring2026MSRPOnly1.pdf Preorders for models announced in the catalog are due April 15, 2026 with an estimated arrival of 4th Quarter 2026.



A new N scale model, Atlas is introducing an EMD SW9/1200 switching locomotive to its lineup. Road names in the first run are Burlington Northern,

Central RR of New Jersey, Conrail, Illinois Central Gulf, Pittsburg & Shawmut, Southern, Union Pacific, and Wisconsin & Southern. In the Limited-Edition Collectors Series, a Chessie System/B&O locomotive will be available. Both Master Gold with ESU LokSound DCC/Sound and Master Silver Sound Ready versions are available.



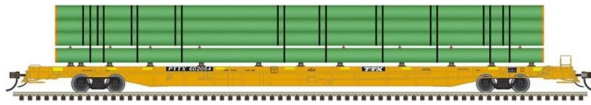
In N scale, Atlas is taking preorders for Alco RS-1 locomotives. Road names in this run are Arkansas &

Missouri, Black River & Western (2 schemes), Central Railroad of New Jersey, Long Island Railroad, Maryland & Delaware, New Haven, Spokane Portland & Seattle, and Vermont Railway. Limited collector series models will be available in Genesee & Wyoming Bicentennial and Livonia Avon & Lakeville. Both Master Gold with ESU LokSound DCC/Sound and Master Silver Sound Ready versions are available.



Next is the N scale EMD GP40 locomotive, which will be available decorated for CSX (ex-RFP), GATX Leasing,

Grand Trunk, MBTA, Metra, Norfolk Southern, Soo, and Utah Railway. Limited Collector series models will be available in American Association of Railroads and Wheeling and Lake Erie. Both Master Gold with ESU LokSound DCC/Sound and Master Silver Sound Ready versions are available.



New paint schemes and road numbers are included in the N

scale release of the Master line F89J 89' flat car. Due in the 4th Quarter 2026, road names are James E. Strates (JESX), a carnival midway show company, KTTX with a large TTX logo, MTTX with conspicuity stripes, TTX in a 1970s paint scheme, and two PTTX cars, one with a silver pipe load and one with a green pipe load.



Continuing with the Spring 2026 announcements, a Master line Coalveyor Gondola will be available

decorated for David J. Joseph (DJJX), Hampton Capital (SWIX), Nebraska Public Power (NPPX), Sullivan Scrap Metal (EAMX), Transload America (TLAX), The Tie Yard of Omaha (TYOX), and Wisconsin Public Service Corp. (WEPX). The models come with a removable coal load and a die-cast chassis.



The Master line N scale Greenville 100-ton twin hopper is available in new paint schemes and numbers. Roadnames in this release are

Hanson (GIHX), Southern (NS logo), Southern Pacific, Trumix (TCCX), Wheeling & Lake Erie, and Wisconsin Central. A Wheeling & Lake Erie "On Track for The Cure" paint scheme is also part of this run.





All new paint schemes are featured on this release of the N scale Russell Snowplow. Road names are Canadian National, Finger Lakes Railway, Lamoille Valley, Maine Central, New Haven, Rock Island, Soo Line, US Air Force, and Wisconsin Central. Where appropriate the plows are equipped with a roof mounted horn.



The final Master Line announcement in N scale is the Bay Window Caboose. Featuring all-new paint schemes, the road names in this run are Chessie System (B&O), Conrail, CSX, Indiana Harbor Belt, Norfolk Southern, Southern, and Susquehanna (NYS&W). Multiple road numbers are available for each paint scheme except Norfolk Southern.



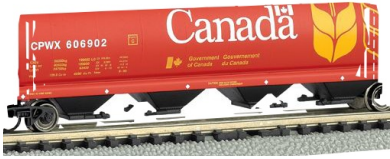
A Trainman line N scale 90-ton hopper is available in new paint schemes and road numbers. The paint schemes in this run are ATSF, Bessemer & Lake Erie, C&O (CSX Transportation), Kansas City Southern, Pittsburg & Shawmut, Soo Line, and Southern Pacific.



The Trainman N scale 50'6" boxcar model will be available in BNSF, CSX (ex-A&WP), Maine Central (Guilford), Missouri Pacific (ex-Railbox), Railbox (Graffiti), Union Pacific ("Blizzard Bus"), and Union Pacific (MOW). A limited-edition collectors series paint scheme of Wheeling & Lake Erie is also available in this release.

Info: shop.atlasrr.com

Bachmann Trains has N scale Canadian 4-bay cylindrical grain hoppers available. Paint schemes available are Alberta –



(silver & yellow), Great Northern, Potash Corporation, and Saskatchewan – Wheat Herald.

Heritage Fund, Alberta – Vermillion River, Canada Grain, Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, Government of Canada (orange & yellow), Government of Canada



Baltimore & Ohio, Boston & Maine, Canadian National, Norfolk Southern, and Union Pacific.

Info: shop.bachmanntrains.com

Also back in stock is the N scale EMD GP40. Available in DC only, the paint schemes available are Alaska,



built from a combination of new parts and parts recycled from I-10sa 2-8-0 locomotives, they only served for about 10 years on the Reading, Western Maryland, and Pennsylvania Railroads. Paint schemes for this run are the in-service Reading #2113 and #2120, The American Freedom Train #1 restoration appearance, #2101 Chessie Steam Special, #2102 in its current appearance on the Reading & Northern RR, and a holiday fantasy scheme.

Broadway Limited has announced a new run in N scale of the Reading T1. A 4-8-4 Northern locomotive



will be the Reading T1 4-8-4 Northern in both an American Freedom Train #250 paint scheme and a fantasy America250 American flag-based paint scheme. All paint schemes will be available with Paragon4 sound/DCC or in a no-sound/DCC-

The N scale 2026 Collector's Club locomotive



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ready version with a 21-pin NMRA socket. Orders for the Collector's Club locomotives are due by June 26, 2026, with an anticipated delivery date of December 2026.

Info: www.broadway-limited.com



New from **HomeShops** are **Atlas** Trainman N scale 50' postwar boxcars in Virginian & Ohio and Allegheny Midland paint schemes.

Two road numbers in each paint scheme are available for these limited-edition models.

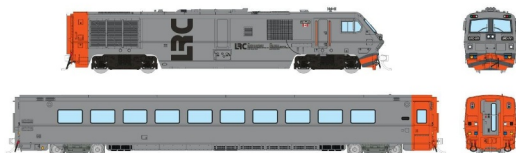
Info: homeshops.net



Railsmith has announced N scale Baggage/Dorm cars are

available for pre-order in multiple paint schemes. In the Empire Builder scheme, GN #1201 and SP&S #75 are being offered, with NYC #8964 being offered in 20th Century Limited two-tone-gray, and Amtrak #1550 available in Phase I "Pointless Arrow."

Info: lowellsmith.net



Rapido Trains has made a conditional announcement of the LRC locomotive and sets in N scale. The deadline for

preorders is June 15, 2026, with the project proceeding to tooling only if the required number of orders is met.

The sets consist of a locomotive and cars, with the VIA Rail sets including a VIA 1 coach and two coaches, the Amtrak set including three coaches and an MLW/Dofasco Demo set including the LRC-JV1 and one coach in a unique paint scheme. Locomotives with different road numbers are available separately in the VIA Rail and Amtrak paint schemes. All sets

and locomotives are available with DCC/Sound and MoPower capacitors and in a DC/Silent version.

Info: www.rapidotrains.com

All artwork and graphics are courtesy of Rapido Trains

STRUCTURES & SCENIC SUPPLIES



Atlas' Spring 2026 catalog introduced a new HO scale 2007 Ford Expedition SUV. Available to order in white, black, Amtrak, BNSF, CSX, MBTA, Metra, Norfolk

Southern, Reading and Northern, Union Pacific, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Fire Dept. – Battalion Chief, Fire Dept. – Command Unit, and Police – Truck Enforcement, the vehicles feature five or six spoke wheels as appropriate, rubber tires, and interior and underbody detail.



In N scale a new run of the 1997 Ford F-150 pickup trucks is available to preorder. Paint schemes available are Black, White, Yellow, BNSF, Canadian

National, CSX, Metra, Montana Rail Link, Norfolk Southern, RJ Corman, Trailer Train, and Union Pacific. The N scale vehicles are sold in two-packs.

Info: shop.atlasrr.com



New from **Berkshire Valley** is the N scale Transfer Building, formerly an American Model Builders kit. A large 2-story structure suitable for many sorts of manufacturing or warehousing, it is assembled out of notched, interlocking, laser-cut parts. The



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finished structure measures 6.5" long X 4.75" wide X 3" high.
Info: berkshirevalleymodels.com



Bollinger Ederly Scale Trains (BEST) has recently added 20 new New England Brownstone castings in hydrocal plaster by Russ Greene to their catalog.

Many of the castings will interlock with each other or by using an adapter piece.

Info: www.besttrains.com/bricks_and_stones.html



Conowingo Models has released a kit named "Bush's Mill" in O scale. A small building with a waterwheel and flume, it features Tichy doors, windows, and details, real oak shingles, real oak shingles, Foggy Mountain rock paper, and stripwood.

Info: conowingomodels.com



DigCom Designs has released a paper model kit of a Paint Booth in N and HO scales. Designed to fit within the Express Paint & Body Shop structure, the paint booth includes the booth and an integrated air filtration with extractor ducting. The structure comes as a PDF designed to be printed on a color inkjet or laser printer on 120-160 gsm matte photo or presentation paper.

Info: www.digcomdesigns.net



Fos Scale Models has continued to expand the Humanity to

Scale figures line with offerings such as the HO scale *Go Long* – a set of a father and son passing a football back and forth, *Roped In*, an HO scale waterfront figure draped in coiled ropes, and *Upholstered*, with two HO scale gentlemen carrying a couch. The Humanity to Scale line is now up to 80 different products, including several different memorials and animal figures.

Info: fosscalemodels.com



Inter-Action Hobbies has released a laser-cut kit for Jack Wilson's Cabin in HO scale. Based on a structure that was in Sandon, British Columbia, the kit includes the main structure, constructed of laser-cut basswood and engraved

resin impregnated board, a laser-cut foundation, a laser-cut outhouse structure, window glazing, paper shingles, aluminum tubing chimney, 3D-printed chimney cap, and two 3D-printed cats. The completed main structure measures 2" wide X 3.8" deep (4.7" with stairs) X 2.5" tall.



An O scale version of Professor Fake's Phantom Submersible kit, previously announced in HO scale, is now available. Constructed primarily of 3D-printed parts and including two figures, it measures 3.3" wide X 5.3" long X 3.6" tall.

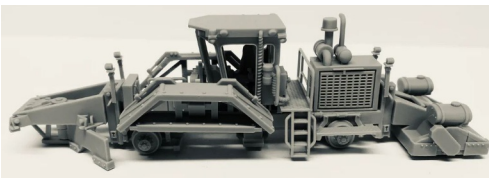
Info: www.interactionhobbies.com



An April Fools joke by **miniprints** has unexpectedly resulted in a new product line – miniscat. Bernard Hellen, the proprietor of miniprints, decided that 3D-printed poop from various animals – dogs, cows, and horses, for example, would make a funny April Fools post. The joke was on him – he went so far as to add the items to his online catalog and people ordered them. And a new product line was born. Available in HO, S, and O scales.
Info: miniprints.com



Monster Modelworks has released a new jointed concrete sidewalk kit in N, S, and O scales. It was already available in HO scale. Jointed in scale 5' sections and including curbs, the MDF pieces can be arranged in any pattern needed, and multiple kits can be combined for a larger area. Each unpainted kit contains four 40' straight sections and four 10' rounded corner sections.
Info: larkspurlaserart.com/monster-modelworks



Silver Spike Designs has introduced a Kershaw 4600 Phase III ballast regulator kit to its line of MOW equipment. A spotting feature of the Phase III ballast regulator is the new cab shape. Parts for the kit include the operator seat, see-through steps, separate wheels, and positionable front blade and rear broom assembly.
Info: silverspikedesigns.com

Wallace Locomotive Works has released some new detail products. The first is Locomotive Jacks, available separately in



both lifted and down versions. Four jacks (one for each corner of the locomotive) are included in each package.



An HO scale scrap aluminum load is the newest product from Wallace Locomotive Works. The modeler makes a car insert in the shape of the desired load, brushes on white glue and shakes the 2 oz bag of material onto the glue.

Info: store.wallacelocoworks.com



Coming in HO scale from **Walthers** in Summer 2026 is a modern brick Yard Tower, a five-story building kit based on the Plaster Creek tower at Wyoming Yard in Grand Rapids, MI. Featuring brick walls and separately applied windows, doors, and other details. The finished kit measures 3-7/16" x 3-7/16" x 7-1/16". A Yard

Light will be available separately, replicating a tall metal lattice tower topped by four lights. It includes four warm-white LEDs, wires, and a simulated concrete base. The finished kit measures 1-3/32" x 29/32" x 8-1/32".



Also expected in Summer 2026 is an HO scale Farm Detail Set, which includes a Milk House, a Pump House, and an Outhouse. Molded in one color, the milk

house measures 2-25/32" x 2-25/32" x 2-1/16", the pump house measures 1-3/8" x 2-15/32" x 1-7/32" and the outhouse measures 13/16" x 11/16" x 1-1/32". Figures and



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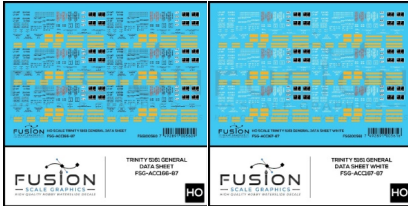
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details not included.

Info: www.walthers.com

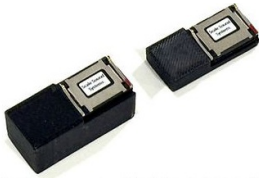
NEW DECALS, SIGNS, AND FINISHING PRODUCTS



Fusion Scale Graphics is offering Trinity 5161 cu. ft. covered hopper white general data decal sets and Trinity 5161 cu. ft. covered hopper general data decal sets in N, HO, and S scales.

Info: fsdecals.com

ELECTRONICS



Scale Sound Systems has announced the availability of a new Rectify series speaker system for early run Athearn Genesis Veranda Turbines in HO scale. The early Veranda turbines can be identified by their dual, flat round speakers. The system

consists of the UFIT-1535 which fits in the rear speaker location and the LLPR-PAXF which fits in the front speaker location.

Info: scalesoundsystems.com

Train Control Systems has released version 3.8 software for the UWT-100 and UWT-50 throttles. The firmware upgrades are free and fix bugs and introduce new features. Download the firmware updates from Info: www.tcsdcc.com.

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! BRIEFLY NOTED AT PRESS TIME ...

Black Cat Decals has announced an HO scale CPR steel horse car with either AB or K brakes.

Info: www.blackcatdecals.com/whats-new

Kadee's April car is an HO scale PS-2 2-bay covered hopper decorated for Frisco.

Info: kadee.com

Kato has announced a new supply of HO scale GE P42 locomotives in the Amtrak 50th anniversary schemes. They will come with sound and flashing ditch lights.

Info: katousa.com

Lionel has released it's Spring 2026 HO scale catalog with new product announcements.

Info: catalogs.lionel.com/2026/HOSpring ■



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APRIL

Please submit your event information, including website, to [model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contact/News event - product announcement](https://model-railroad-hobbyist.com/contact/News_event_product_announcement)

Ongoing Online and In-Person

ONLINE, Zoom & YouTube, Wednesdays at 7pm Eastern. New Tracks Modeling Live Weekly

Info: newtracksmodeling.com

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCMA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMAVhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA)

[VhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMAVhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA)

ONLINE, Zoom, Second Tuesdays, 8pm Eastern. "Off the Beaten Track" featuring Narrow Gauge layouts, clinics, and manufacturers.

Info: groups.io/g/NNG

ILLINOIS, CALEDONIA, Monthly Meetings of the Rock River Valley Division, Midwest Region. Paulson's Agriculture Museum of Argyle, 6950 Belvidere Rd. See Events page on website for dates.

Info: rrvd-nmra.com

April - May 2026

AUSTRALIA, SYDNEY, April 18, 2026. Sydney RPM. Concord Community Centre, NSW.

Info: sydneyrpm.com

CANADA, ALBERTA, CALGARY, April 25-26, 2026. Supertrain. Olympic Oval at the University of Calgary, 288 Collegiate Blvd NW.

Info: www.supertrain.ca

CANADA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, BURNABY (Vancouver), May 22-24, 2026. Online Kickoffs April 30, May 14th. Railway Modellers Meet of British Columbia. 3rd Floor, West Mall Centre, Simon Fraser University.

Info: railwaymodellersmeetofbc.ca

CANADA, ONTARIO, HAMILTON, April 18, 2026. 2026 Steel Town Railway Prototype Modelers Meet. Eva Rothwell Centre, 460 Wentworth St.

Info: steeltownrpm.wordpress.com

CANADA, ONTARIO, HAMILTON, May 1-3, 2026. Bayview Junction, Niagara Frontier Regional Convention. Mohawk College, 135 Fennell Avenue West.

Info: nfrhamilton.ca

CANADA, ONTARIO, THUNDER BAY, May 21-24, Superior Rails, Thousand Lakes Regional Convention. Delta Hotel, 2240 Sleeping Giant Parkway.

Info: www.thousandlakesregion.org

CALIFORNIA, LOMITA, May 30, 2026. Southern California N Scale Meet. Calvary Assembly of God-Lomita (Gymnasium).

Info: socalnscale.com

CALIFORNIA, ROHNERT PARK, April 30 – May 3, 2026. Extra 2026 North, Pacific Coast Regional Convention. Doubletree by Sonoma Wine Country, One Doubletree Drive.

Info: pcr2026.org



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INDIANA, PERU, April 18, 2026. Circus City Train Show (fmly The Miami County Train Show). Peru Jr/Sr High School, 401 N. Broadway.
Info: www.facebook.com/groups/1946702859448332

MASSACHUSETTS, SPRINGFIELD, May 29-30, 2026. New England/Northeast RPM. The Sheraton Monarch Hotel, One Monarch Place.
Info: www.nerpm.org

MICHIGAN, KALAMAZOO, May 15-17, 2026. The New York Central System Historical Society Convention and Annual Meeting. Delta House by Marriott, 2747 South 11th St.
Info: www.nycshs.org/nycshs-2026-annual

MICHIGAN, MUSKEGON, April 25, 2026. Annual Hobby Expo and Train Show, sponsored by the Muskegon Railroad Historical Society. Cardinal Elementary School, 2310 Marquette Avenue.
Info: mrhsonline.wordpress.com

NEBRASKA, DESHLER, April 25-26, 2026. Spring Creek Model Trains – N Scale Free-mo Weekend. Thayer County Activity Center, Race St. and 4th St.
Info: www.springcreekmodeltrains.com

NEW JERSEY, BURLINGTON TWP, May 9, 2026. Burlington Train Show. Burlington Lodge #32, 2308 Mt. Holly Road (Rt. 541).
Info: www.facebook.com/StrasburgModelRailroadNJ

NORTH CAROLINA, CHARLOTTE, May 2-3, 2026. RPM Carolinas: School of Railway Prototype Modeling. 9140 Arrowpoint Blvd, Suite 140.
Info: www.facebook.com/groups/1895473627515807

OHIO, SYLVANIA (Toledo Area), April 18, 2026. 2026 Spring Railroad Modeler Meet. Sylvania Senior Center, 7140 W Sylvania Ave.
Info: smm.ncrnmra.org

OREGON, TIGARD, May 13-16, 2026. Oregon Rails 2026, the 2026 Pacific Northwest Region NMRRA annual convention. Embassy Suites by Hilton Tigard-Portland, 9000 SW Washington Square Road.
Info: oregonrails2026.com

SOUTH DAKOTA, RAPID CITY, May 13-16, 2026. 2026 Rocky Mountain Region Convention. Best Western Ramkota Hotel, 2111 N LaCrosse Street.

Info: www.rmr-nmra.org/2026%20Convention/Home2026.html

TENNESSEE, JOHNSON CITY, May 29-30, 2026. Johnson City Railroad Experience Big Train Show. ETSU Mini-Dome, East Tennessee State University Campus.

Info: johnsoncityrailroadexperience.org/big-train-show

TEXAS, NEW BRAUNFELS, April 25-26, 2026. New Braunfels Train Show, 375 S Castell Ave.

Info: newbraunfelsrailroadmuseum.org/nbrr/train-shows

TEXAS, DALLAS, March 28-29, 2026. World's Greatest Hobby on Tour. Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy.

Info: greattrainshow.com

TEXAS, GALVESTON, April 25-26, 2026. RailFest: Model Train Rally. 1932 Union Station Train Depot, 2602 Santa Fe Place.

Info: galvestonrrmuseum.org/railfest

VIRGINIA, FISHERVILLE, May 3, 2026. 2026 Annual Shenandoah Valley Model Train & Railroading Show. Augusta Expo, 277 Expo Road.

Info: www.acrrm.org/events/2026trainshow

Future 2026 by location

CANADA, ONTARIO, WATERLOO, August 29-30, 2026. Waterloo Railway Exposition, Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton Waterloo St. Jacobs, 55 Benjamin Rd.

Info: waterloorailexpo.ca

ARIZONA, MESA, June 3-7, 2026. Santa Fe Railway Historical & Modeling Society Annual Convention. Includes RPM on June 5-6. Delta Hotel By Marriott Phoenix Mesa, 200 North Centennial Way.

Info: sfrhms.org



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CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO, September 9-13, 2026. Pacific Southwest Region "All Aboard for 2026" Model Train Convention. Doubletree by Hilton Hotel San Diego-Mission Valley, 7450 Hazard Center Dr.

Info: www.sandiegodivision.org/index.php/convention-2026

COLORADO, GREELEY, October 16-18, 2026. Colorado Rail Proto Meet. Island Grove Event Center, 421 N 15th Ave.

Info: corpm.org

FLORIDA, OCALA, October 15-18, 2026. Iron Horse, the 2026 Sunshine Region Convention. Ocala Hilton, 3600 SW 36th Ave.

Info: www.nmrasunshineregion.org

ILLINOIS, COLLINSVILLE, July 23-25, 2026. MCoR 2026 Regional Convention and St. Louis RPM. Gateway Convention Center, 1 Gateway Dr.

Info: www.mcor-nmra.org/Conventions

Info: stlrpm.com

MARYLAND, LINTHICUM, September 11-14, 2026. Mid-Atlantic RPM. Doubletree by Hilton at BWI.

Info: www.marpm.org

MASSACHUSETTS, SOUTHBRIDGE, October 15-18, 2026. Eyes on the NER, Northeastern Regional Convention. Wellsworth Hotel, 14 Mechanic St.

Info: conventions.nernmra.org/home/home-2026

MICHIGAN, TAYLOR, October 11, 2026. Taylor Town Train Show and Sale. 22525 Ecorse Rd.

Info: www.instagram.com/taylor_town_train_show

MICHIGAN, ZEELAND, October 8-10, 2026. Grand Rails 2026. North Central Regional Convention. Howard Miller Community Center, 14 South Church St.

Info: grandrailsdiv4.com

MISSOURI, INDEPENDENCE, September 17-19, 2026. 2026 Brass Train Show. Missouri Model Railroad Museum, 312 W. Pacific Avenue.

Info: showmerails.org/2026-train-shows/2026-brass-train-show

MISSOURI, SPRINGFIELD, September 11-12, 2026. Ozarks Model Railroad Association Train Show, Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, E-Plex West Hall, 3001 North Grant Ave.

Info: omraspringfield.org/train-show

OHIO, CAMBRIDGE, October 25, 2026. Eighth Annual NMRA Buckeye Division Train Show. Pritchard Laughlin Center, 7033 Glenn Hwy.

Info: www.nmrabuckeyedivision.org/train-show

OHIO, DAYTON, June 4-7, 2026. Whistle-Stop Dayton, Mid-Central Regional Convention. Marriott Hotel at University of Dayton, 1414 S. Patterson Blvd.

Info: www.modelraildayton.com/Documents/2026%20Convention/2026MCRConHome.html

OREGON, PORTLAND METRO, June 20, 2026. Railroads in the Garden Summer Tour, presented by the Rose City Garden Railway Society. Booklets are available online, at local hobby shops, and some garden centers beginning May 1st, 2026.

Info: rcgrs.com

PENNSYLVANIA, HAMBURG, September 18-20, 2026. Anthracite Railroad Modelers and Model Railroad Meet XIV. Reading Railroad Heritage Museum, 500 South 3rd St.

Info: www.facebook.com/groups/624611144335704

TENNESSEE, CHATTANOOGA, July 27-August 2, 2026. 2026 Scenic City Express, NMRA National Convention and National Train Show. Chattanooga Convention Center, 1 Carter St.

Info: www.nmra2026.org

TEXAS, AUSTIN, June 18-21, 2026. 2026 Connections, Lone Star Regional Convention. Wyndham Garden Austin, 3401 South IH-35.

Info: 2026-convention.lsrnmra.org

VIRGINIA, VIRGINIA BEACH, October 15-18, 2026. Tracks to Tidewater, 2026 Mid-Eastern Regional Convention. Holiday Inn, Virginia Beach, 5655 Greenwich Rd.

Info: mer-nmra.com/savethedate/index.html ■



Floquil/PollyScale stash running out?



MRH has mapped the old familiar colors to new readily-available acrylic paints.



MRH's Floquil / PollyScale Paint Equivalents Conversion Chart - 1

Floquil / PollyScale	Color Name(s)	Model Number	Volume / Weight	MOORE's	Notes
Primer Gray		MRH 4783	VWA 71.055	16-12	
Engine Black		MRH 4884	ML 20008 VWA 71.251	16-01	
Steam Power Black		MRH 4912	VWA 71.057	16-44B	
Gray Black		MRH 4792	VWA 71.051	16-04*	
Wagonhead (Climax) Black		MRH 4793	ML 20022 VWA 71.054	16-05	
Railroad Gray		MRH 4887 MRH 4903	VWA 71.045	16-04	
Railroad White		MRH 4853	ML 20004 VWA 71.053	16-02	
Gring Black		MRH 4889	ML 20002 VWA 71.055	16-03	
Caboose Red		MRH 4887 MRH 4831*	ML... VWA 71.042	16-08	MRH 4831 with 20% black pigment. See instructions to get 16-08.

*Indicates a color but not exact match. All MOORE's paint is a 30ml/1oz. bottle.
 *Note: Model Air colors are 100% acrylic and MRH's Floquil colors are 100% acrylic. *Class: Fresh. 2 samples shown.
 1) Model Air colors are: Rail Road Gray is a shade darker than the old PollyScale Rail Road Gray.
 2) Model Air's new Caboose Red is a shade lighter than the old PollyScale Caboose Red.
 Color 4831 floquil that gives black is a color match to the floquil color. Add 2% black medium to get some black.

MRH's Floquil / PollyScale Paint Equivalents Conversion Chart - 2

Floquil / PollyScale	Color Name(s)	Model Number	Volume / Weight	MOORE's	Notes
Tussock		MRH 4882*	VWA 71.026	16-15	
Railroad Orange		MRH 4884*	VWA 71.043	16-09	
Railroad Yellow		MRH 4879	VWA 71.028	16-10	
Road Brown		MRH 4884	ML 20009 VWA 71.249	16-16	
Railroad Teal Brown		MRH 4885	ML 20002 VWA 71.029	16-40*	
Rail Brown		MRH 4904*	ML 20001 VWA 71.029	16-15	
Pail		MRH 4875	ML 20005 VWA 71.027	16-12	
Concrete		MRH 4876	VWA 71.047* Clear match... VWA 71.032	16-11*	
Algal Concrete		MRH 4875	ML 20005 VWA 71.043	16-40*	

*Indicates a color but not exact match. All MOORE's paint is a 30ml/1oz. bottle.
 *Note: Model Air colors are 100% acrylic and MRH's Floquil colors are 100% acrylic. *Class: Fresh. 2 samples shown.
 *VWA: Model Air colors are 100% acrylic and MRH's Floquil colors are 100% acrylic. *Class: Fresh. 2 samples shown.

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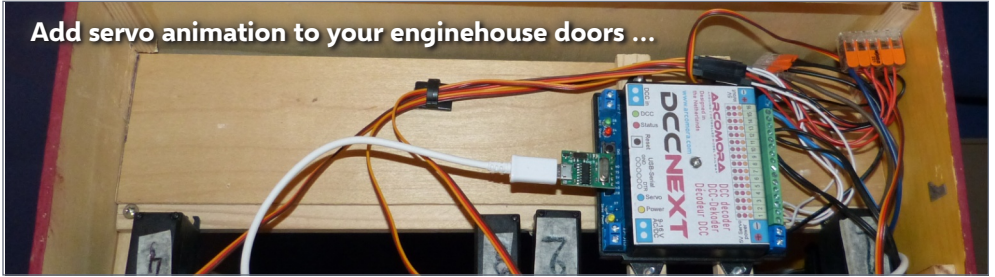
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Coming next month in MRH ...

MRH revisits Pelle Søeberg's Danebury Sub for an update ...



Add servo animation to your enginehouse doors ...



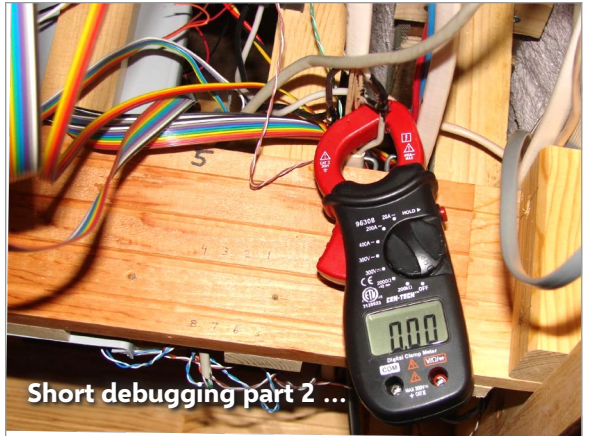
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Short debugging part 2 ...

... coming May 15th in the
May 2026 MRH



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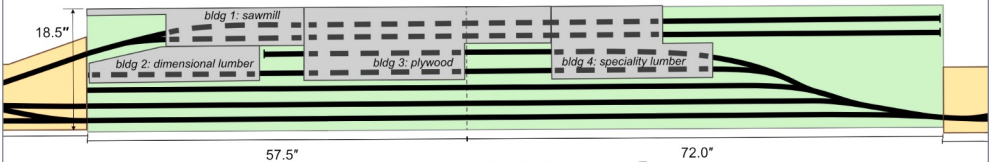
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We visit Ed Tougaw's Intermont & Western layout ...



Siskiyou Line 2: Adapting TOMA to the new layout ...



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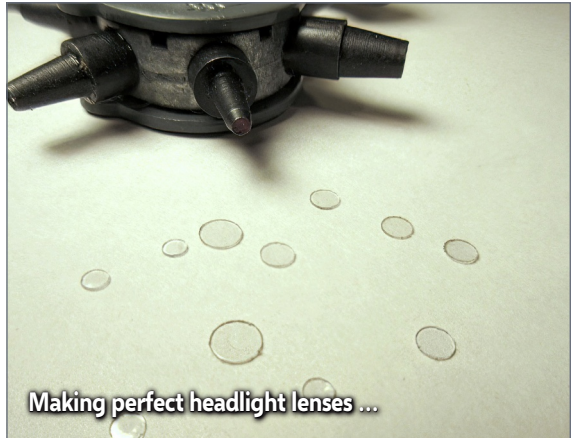
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- Nullam porta ut arcu at lobortis

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