



The Local

Newsletter of the Mid-Eastern Region, NMRA
The Local, 77, Number 2, March-April, 2022

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Official publication of the Mid-Eastern region, NMRA – A tax-exempt organization

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More about the Carolina Special Look South 2022 MER Convention!

By Bob Halsey



LOOK SOUTH IN 2022

This is shaping up to be one of the best MER conventions ever!



Photo 1: Atlantic Coast Line GM E-6 at North Carolina Transportation Museum. They also have several Southern diesel locos, a complete passenger train, and a number of freight cars and cabooses, all operating!

Inside this Print Issue of The Local and the eLocal

Convention Update	Bob Halsey	1
MER Contacts	Staff	2
President's Column	Kurt Thompson, MMR	7
Editor's Column	Greg Warth	7
AP Update	Dave Chance	9
Elections 2022- Officers	Martin Brechbiel, MMR	10
Your Layout in <i>The Local</i>	Greg Warth	11
"Oh, they say that it's over..."	Martin Brechbiel, MMR	12

Inside this Issue of the eLocal

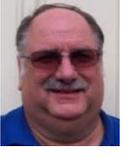
Ad Central Station	Staff	13
Master Builder - Scenery	Jack Dziadul	14
Drill Bits for Large Holes	Jim Fisher	23
Installation of DCC Panels	Jim Fisher	27
Why Build a Module?	Bob Halsey	31
Look Beyond the Hobby Shop	Nicholas Kalis	35
New Hope Valley Railway	Kevin O'Connor	38
Farnham's Store – O Scale	Martin Brechbiel, MMR	41
Modeler's Haven	G. Warth and N. Kalis	45
Labstone Modeling	Alex Belida, MMR	49
Ops at the Brewery	Greg Warth	52

The Carolina Southern Division has several tours lined up. On Thursday, October 20, starting at 12:30 PM we are offering a complete tour of the [North Carolina Transportation Museum](#) (NCTM) backshop, turntable, and roundhouse with its large collection of historic locomotives, railcars, and maintenance/restoration work in progress. There is a well-stocked gift shop, and the NCTM is directly across the street from the best (and largest) model railroad store in the state, with its wide variety of inventory which includes many small detail items for those of us into scratchbuilding and dioramas. Another is an all-day excursion tour on Friday, October 21 that will include visits to: the [KK&L](#) HO (con't page 3)

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(con't from page 1)
basement-sized layout of Neal Anderson, MMR; the restored freight/passenger depot and [Narrow Gauge Museum](#) in Newton, NC, (including their impressive collection of restored rail cars, diesel and steam locos, and the [Model Railroad Center](#) with its O, HO, and N gauge layouts), followed by lunch, and then a couple more unusual layouts in the afternoon! That same day, there will also be an optional guided tour of the [Lionel development facility](#) in Concord (a few miles north of Charlotte) where they always have something new coming up (both in O and HO).





Photos 2 and 3: Typical highly detailed dioramas you can expect to see at the convention.

I can't list all the many layouts available for visiting in this short article, but they are amazing, including the ones mentioned in the last issue of *The Local*. We are still arranging the clinics and presenters, and have over a dozen scheduled, again too many to list them all here. There is a "Make & Take" session on building a Section House or Crossing Shanty (including a list of tools to bring with you); Modeling the Dixie Flyer (ACL trains 5 & 6); Pullmans for Patients; Modeling Urban Scenes (based on NYC locations); and "Model Railroading in a Limited Space – Downsizing to a Shelf



Photo 4: Visitors at Train Town HO layout at Newton Model Railroad Center -- This layout was restored and is operated by members of Carolina Southern Division. This will be a stop on the Friday Oct. 21 tour.

Layout.” The complete list will appear in our web site at www.carolinasouthern.org, along with other important details such as registering/costs, etc. However, you can make your room reservations for October 20-23, 2022 now at the [Hilton Charlotte University Place](#) (Phone: 704-547-7444) and get our discounted rate.

And you will not starve to death or have to eat grits and gravy, because there are numerous feeding facilities close to the hotel, including: a barbecue restaurant, a Mediterranean restaurant, an Indian restaurant, a sandwich shop, a milkshake/ice cream bar (I will definitely try that!), and of course, a Chick-fil-A and a McDonald’s. When you go to Google Maps you can see the location of the hotel and all of these nearby fine dining places. Expand the map a little and you will see Bojangles and several pizza places. What more could anyone want? You will also notice that the hotel is right off I-85 and close to I-485.

It is also close to the light rail station, which quickly takes you to central Charlotte (“uptown”) where your non-modelers can see some of the attractions listed in the last issue. That was not a complete list, because I did not mention: the [Top Golf](#) driving range (use their clubs to hit near and far holes from a semi-indoor station), the [Belk Theater](#) shows, [Charlotte Hornets](#) NBA basketball, the [Carowinds](#)



Photo 5: HO turntable and roundhouse at area layout.

Amusement Park (roller coaster and other rides), the [Duke Mansion](#), the [Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens](#), the [Levine Museum of the New South](#), and the [NASCAR Hall of Fame Museum](#) (with its extremely realistic IMAX “rides”). I did mention the evening dinner cruises on [Lake Norman](#) (largest lake in NC) aboard the “Lady of the Lake” or the “Catawba Queen.” But younger folks would enjoy visiting the [Discovery Place Museum](#), the movies/arcades in [Concord Mills Mall](#) (not far from the hotel), and the whitewater rafting and zip lines at the [US National Whitewater Center](#) (it is still warm down here in October!).



Photo 6: 7.5” gauge tank car, engine, and boxcar at Neal Anderson's (home of KK&L railroad). This is also a stop on the Friday tour. You can see a lot more of this large layout by going to <http://kklrailroad.com/>.

Well, this is enough preview publicity for now. Next issue we will tell you about more specific details, our website, cool souvenir shirts, the contest room, “company store”, etc. But make your plans now to attend the Carolina Special Look South 2022!!



President's Column Spring Into New Areas

President Kurt Thompson, MMR

As March and April roll in, many old adages come to mind. In March, we will “spring forward” by turning our clocks ahead for Eastern Daylight Time. “April showers will bring May flowers.” “Put a spring in our steps.”

As this spring comes along, I would challenge each of us to “spring into” a new area of our hobby. For me, that began last fall with a clinic I attended on resin casting. And that continues now, as I work to tackle a simple CAD program ([Tinkercad](#)) to see if I can make use of 3D printing. I am currently working on using this unfamiliar technology in making side frames for two of my locomotives.

Though I have stumbled along the way with using Tinkercad and resin casting, I have also learned a lot. Doing this has also prompted me to be more open to asking for help and seeking knowledge from other modelers who have more experience in 3D printing and resin casting.

What am I challenging you to do? The answer is... *anything that you have been hesitant to try*. If you don't know something, there is probably someone in our organization who does have the expertise to answer your questions. You just have to ask. Start with your Division and move up from there if you need to. I am certain these modelers are not “hoarding” their knowledge. More than likely, your question will be something they are passionate about and they will be happy to share everything they know about it. And never be embarrassed about what you do not know. There is much to learn about this hobby. Very few of us know everything, but we all have our special interests. Just ask. Then do it. If you don't get it

right the first time, do it over. That is how we all learn.

Along that line, I will also ask you to consider “growing” in your service to the Mid-Eastern Region (MER). Volunteering in the MER is a tremendous learning experience in developing your teaching, social and leadership skills, which can always help with your real-life work and relationships. Plus, it is a way for you to give back to the hobby, to “pay it forward” in the name of all those who helped you get to where you are today. There are many opportunities to give back to the hobby and the MER. [Drop me a note](#) and find out how ***you*** can grow.

Now, back to the computer with renewed energy to work on the side frames for those two locomotive projects.

From the Editor's Desk...

Greg Warth, Editor



As we continue to plow through the Great Pandemic of 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and onward, one rail tie in front of another, news pundits say we are all getting bogged down with “COVID fatigue.” As a physician in real life, I have had a lot of patients talk to me about this. Believe it or not, my recommendation is to get a hobby that doesn't require a mask, or a vaccine, or political strife. And what better hobby is there than model railroading? Create your own empire where the people who “live” there don't have to worry about all that stuff. At least it's something ***you*** have *control* over.

One question that remains is can we feel safe in going to meetings and conventions? I think we each have to decide this based on our own personal level of immunity and/or vulnerability. Your personal healthcare provider might be able to help determine this for you. Even when we are in the best of health, we can protect ourselves as much as we can, but there is always a certain inherent personal risk in whatever we do in life. Plus, we must also consider whether we might be

a risk to others. Of course, the benefits are measured by the enjoyment of the hobby and of life in general, and the desire to participate now or wait till a better time. So, if you've realistically and carefully weighed those risks and benefits, and the benefits come out on top, go for it. Just use the appropriate precautions.

This Spring issue of *The Local* has a hopper-full of great stuff to cure your "fatigue." Learn how Jack Dziadul was able to accept constructive critique, improve his layout and earn points to get over the goal line to get his AP (Achievement Program) Certificate in Scenery. See how Bob Halsey created a module for a train show that never happened, but then found out he could get a Golden Spike Award for it. Learn how to mount those electrical panels on your fascia with Jim Fisher's two articles on drill bits for large openings. Kevin O'Connor shows us how to use the prototype New Hope Valley Railway as a basis for your own modeling experience. Check out the exciting news about the upcoming "Look South" Convention. And not to disappoint us, Martin Brechbiel, MMR offers up another great tutorial on how to build an HO store from leftovers. Of course, we have the usual fantastic modeling tips and tricks from Nicholas Kalis and others. That's probably two hoppers full.

This issue will also likely be the last one where we will enjoy the dedicated efforts of Martin Brechbiel, MMR as Publisher. He has been at this post for many years and has served well in stabilizing *The Local* and *eLocal* as a routine, regular, and respected publication while also making it easy to deliver. In addition, Martin helped me tremendously to get established and to develop a routine workflow as I started in my position as Editor. I will miss his discussions - always direct, honest, realistic, to the point, and often humorous. Thank goodness, he will still be around for ongoing support and guidance. In his place, we are very grateful that Rick Stoneking has stepped up to the challenge. He comes to us with lots of experience in publishing newsletters similar to ours for several other organizations and is quite familiar with several types of publishing

software. Rick is also currently a member of the Board of Directors for the New Jersey Division of the NMRA and the Maryland & Pennsylvania RR Historical Society. I am truly looking forward to working with him on future issues.

In the meantime, please continue to send in your modeling tips, tricks, articles, and whatever models or layout pictures you might have. If you have just been awarded with an AP (Achievement Program) Certificate, please tell us how you got it, so we can all benefit from your experience. We are always looking for layouts to feature. Check out page 11 to see "How to Get your Layout or Model in *The Local*."

If you have any new ideas or comments for *The Local*, or if you would like to request an article on a certain topic that you and others might want to know more about, please let us know. Send an email to [The Local Editor](#) right now while you're thinking about it.

**Send all articles, photos, tips,
comments, requests, and feedback to
[the LOCAL Editor](#).**

**Learn how to prepare an article
for *the Local* [here](#).**

Above all, thank you for your membership in the MER and NMRA. We truly appreciate your support and your faith in our organization as an informational resource and as a method of collaborating with other modelers.

Happy railroading!

Advertising:

If you have a business and find yourself wishing to place an ad on this page, please contact the Editor at local-editor@mer-nmra.com. The current advertising rates (one year) as follows:

Callboard ads (Division and Clubs Only)...Free	
Business Card size	\$60
Quarter Page ad	\$125
Half Page ad	\$225
Half Page ad per issue (Div. only)	\$25

Your ad may appear as text, photo, art or any combination thereof. Art must be of high quality and camera-ready. Formats must be in txt, doc/docx, pdf, jpeg, bmp or tiff only. The content must be related to model trains or railroads or provide a benefit specifically to model railroaders. If you need help with your ad, please don't hesitate to ask the Editor.

The Local welcomes articles, photographs, and model railroad related material as contributions to members' education and enjoyment of the hobby. Materials should have a wide appeal. The Editor will exercise all due care of submissions, but contributors should not send paper/photo originals without retaining back-up copies. Editors, by definition, reserve the right and have the responsibility to make corrections, deletions, and changes to accommodate space. If your item is time-sensitive in any way, please advise the Editor. Otherwise, stories and photos that are accepted for publication are used in approximately the order they are received.

Publication Schedule Submission Deadline

Jan/Feb	Dec 1st of previous year
Mar/Apr	Feb 1st
May/June	Apr 1st
Jul/Aug	Jun 1 st
Sept/Oct	Aug 1 st
Nov/Dec	Oct 1 st

Please observe the following steps to submit your contribution. **1.** Compose and submit your text in one of the following formats: TXT, DOC, or DOCX. **2.** Consider what photos, illustrations, or other graphics can go with the text. These are essential. But, **DO NOT** include/insert them into your text. **Do** put notations in the text such as "Insert Photo #1 here." Send the illustrations separately and numbered as you would want them in the text. JPG, GIF, TIFF, or PNG formats are best for photos. **3.** If you have captions for your photos, etc., create a separate text file for the captions, each of which will be numbered to match a numbered photo or figure. A special note on photos or other exhibits; please only send us your creative work or that for which you have written permission to use so we can give that

source proper credit. We need to avoid any copyright infringement situations.

Proofreaders:

Alex Belida, Martin Brechbiel, Bob Morningstar, and Jack Dziadul



Achievement Program Update

By Dave Chance, MER AP Manager

February 07, 2022

Since the last report in *The Local*, the following Achievement Program certificates were earned and awarded:

Division 2 – Potomac

Lee Stoermer – Association Volunteer
Jerry M. Stanley II – Model Railroad Author

Division 4 – Tidewater

Roger Bir – Model Railroad Author
Fredrick Humphrey – Association Official

Division 11 – Susquehanna

Pat Mulrooney – Association Volunteer

In a perfect world, this information will appear soon in the **NMRA** magazine. This should not deter you from giving recognition locally. Normally you will be able to recognize AP accomplishments long before the names appear in the **NMRA** magazine.

PROBLEM - The R&V form is for your personal use. Only use it with the Author Submission.

Please, NO R&V FORMS with other submissions.

Elections 2022

Yes, you! If you are a member in good standing and want to support your region with good ideas and real involvement, we need you to volunteer to serve as one of the four Officers for the Region. The MER Board of Directors generally meets 3 times per year; once at the MER convention. The deadline for nomination is May 30, 2022. The term of office is two years, with a limit of two terms.

Any MER member in good standing can be nominated, either by him or herself or by another member with the candidate's permission. The process is very simple:

Prepare:

A 200 word (max) statement outlining the nominee's interest and qualifications for the position, **and** a photo of the candidate.

Send the nominations package – by **May 30, 2022** – to all of the following nominations process officials:

Robert Charles, MMR Nominations Committee Chair	rcharles@aol.com
Jack Dziadul	jackdziadul@gmail.com
Kenneth Montero	va661midlo@comcast.net

or to

Kurt Thompson, MMR, President, MER
president@mer-nmra.com

Option – also by May 30, candidates may supply a 500 word statement suitable for placement on the MER Web site.

You can make a difference by giving something back to the hobby you thoroughly enjoy. This is your chance. Successful completion of three years in office fulfills most of the requirement for the Achievement Program “Association Official” certificate. Please respond in one email to all three committee members plus President Thompson to insure receipt of your nomination! That is all there is to it!

Deadlines and Schedules for 2022 Nominations and Balloting

Our Bylaws require the publication of deadlines and schedules for nominations and balloting in the first issue of The Local of each year. The dates and schedule for nominations, ballot and election results are in Executive Handbook, Section 5, Policies, Article VI.

The dates for 2022 are:

May 30, 2022 -- Deadline for receipt of self-nominations sent to the Nominations Committee. Date for Nominations Committee to notify Board of Directors of slate of nominees validated by the Business Manager.

July 4, 2022 -- You must be a member in good standing (paid up NMRA dues) based on the membership report supplied to the MER Business Manager from NMRA National as of 07/05 (the 5th of July) of every election year to be eligible to vote. If an individual is not a member or if membership has expired as indicated by the record supplied to the MER, and MER officials have not been informed by NMRA National of a valid renewal of membership by 07/05 (the 5th of July), that individual will not receive a ballot, nor be permitted to vote in that year's election.

August 1, 2022 -- Deadline for mailing paper ballots to members and for commencing electronic voting; could be mailed earlier depending on other deadline requirements.

September 6, 2022 -- Deadline for electronic voting, also last day as shown by postmark for mailing paper ballots.

September 10, 2022 -- Deadline for receipt by Balloting Committee of paper ballots sent by mail.

September 17, 2022 -- Deadline for Ballot Committee to transmit results to President, the Director overseeing this committee, and the Business Manager.

September 24, 2022 -- Deadline for The President to communicate the election results to candidates. The Business Manager also notifies the MER Web Master and the NMRA of the election results.

October 8, 2022 -- Deadline for publishing election results on MER's website..

MER Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

1. Board of Directors Meeting – 7 pm, April 21, Zoom
2. Board of Directors Meeting – 7 pm, Oct. 20, 2022, Hilton Charlotte University Place 8629 JM Keynes Dr., Charlotte, NC
3. MER Annual Meeting - ~8pm, Oct. 22 (10 am, Oct. 23) Hilton Charlotte University Place 8629 JM Keynes Dr., Charlotte, NC

UPCOMING MER CONVENTIONS

2022 Convention – Carolina Southern Division -- “Carolina Special Look South”, Oct. 20 - 23, 2022
Charlotte, NC

2023 Convention –Susquehanna Division – Dates and location tbd

2024 Convention – Carolina Piedmont Division, Dates and location tbd

2025 Convention –New Jersey Division, Dates and location tbd

How to Get your Layout or Model in The Local

In *The Local*, we are enthusiastic about showing your modeling work to other members, not for judging or criticism, but for the art of sharing, inspiration, and education. If you are interested in featuring your layout or models in The Local, please send an [email to the editor](#) with answers to the following questions:

1. Name of your layout or model?
2. What scale is it?
3. Does your layout or model depict any specific era and/or location?
4. What are the dimensions of your layout?
5. How do you control your layout?
6. When did you start making your layout?
7. What type of track and switches did you use?
8. What are your model's or layout's best features?
9. Do you host open houses, layout tours or operating sessions?
10. Please include a short bio and picture of yourself.
11. Include your best high-resolution photos (1-5) of your model or layout.

“Oh they say that it's over....”*

By Martin Brechbiel, MMR

And it just had to be, or so the song goes, but it is true, and with the next issue of *The Local* I will no longer be the Publisher and all that that entails will be passed on to Rick Stoneking. I took this position thinking to transiently step into and fill a gap, to make *The Local* present a standard appearance establishing and instituting a template of formatting that would not be excessively complex and yet achieve a level of reasonably adequate for the MER. I also wanted to be able to hand this entire package off to a successor with minimal difficulty. I think that has all been accomplished and that day is here.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames and Messieurs, Damen und Herren...So long, Farewell, Au Revoir, Auf Wiedersehn.....

I bid you.....Toodles!

Just one more thing... If you're going to be submitting articles to *The Local*, read and follow the instructions to authors (pp. 8-9). Doing this makes it a lot easier on the Publisher so stop using all the cutesy formatting, headers and footers, funky line spacing before and after paragraphs, etc., and also just send the photos (with captions if you've got them!) as separate files. Why? Because the Publisher just rips all that formatting out and then places the photos into *The Local* so don't make extra work for Rick. Just send your article as single spaced Times Roman. Leave what little formatting that is needed to the Publisher.

Thanks!

Okay, now I'm done.....

Ahhhhh..... one more thing...a few words about photography. Take lots of photos of everything you are building as you are building and review them regardless of using them for an article or not. The camera is the harshest critic you will ever encounter; merciless and without any restraint in pointing out your errors. Yes, those smart phones can and do take wonderful photos, but you need to make sure that you adjust the settings to get good sized 300 dpi or better photos, and not little thumbnail photos. Those latter ones may look great on a phone, but when you try to blow them up to put them into print, then you find out that they are not so good after all.

Invest in a backdrop. Get a white tri-fold foam presentation board from Michael's. These are \$10-15, but then your photos look better focused on the subject matter without distractions. I have several and you really can cut one of these down to half height and have two on hand. Even more important – get a tripod for whatever you use as a camera. You can find the basic one on Amazon for as little as \$15. No more shaky hands out of focus fuzzy tilted photos. Your Editor and Publisher will thank you for this small investment. This just might even improve your modeling efforts if you are brave enough to look at the photos of your model.

Okay, I'm done.....really. Seriously, there's no more.....

Are you still here? Go to the next page!

*Quote from “The Children of the Sea”, by Ronnie Dio and Tony Iommi, Black Sabbath, *Heaven and Hell*, 1980.

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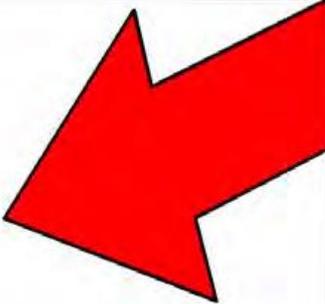
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Master Builder – Scenery

By Jack Dziadul

The Achievement Program, in my opinion, is one of the more important and popular benefits of NMRA membership. I had been plodding along in my own journey toward Master Model Railroader (MMR) for several years amid multiple iterations of a still in-progress layout. Given work and life events in general, I did not set a particular end goal to getting to MMR. My often-stated advice to others, that I mostly ignore myself, is that if you do not put an “accomplish by” date on a calendar you might just as well call your goal a dream.

MER President Kurt Thompson, MMR challenged those of us who had some certificates in hand to complete our quest by the time of the October 2021 convention. This would be President Kurt’s 75th anniversary of the MER celebration. Now challenged and inspired, I marked my calendar and changed my dream into a goal.

To briefly summarize what you no doubt already know, the Achievement Program is comprised of eleven certificates spread amongst four categories: Model Railroad Equipment, Settings, Engineering and Operation, and Service to the Hobby. To become a Master Model Railroader a member needs seven certificates with at least one from each of these four categories.

I had received three AP Certificates, Association Volunteer, Model Railroad Author, and Chief Dispatcher back in 2010-2012. My fourth AP Certificate, Association Official, was earned in 2020 after having served three years as a MER Director-At-Large. Three certificates were in the Service category, and Chief Dispatcher allowed me to check off the Engineering and Operations box. As my Division AP Chairman, Vic Bitleris, liked to tease, “Now you have to actually build something.”

So, I needed three more certificates that must cover the Settings and Equipment categories. In 2021, I earned Master Builder – Structures (AP Certificate #5) and Master Builder – Scenery (AP Certificate #6). Both are in the Settings category. I am short one certificate and short one category, Model Railroad Equipment. I settled on Master Builder – Cars as my seventh and final certificate for MMR. With no excuses offered, I ran out of calendar. My Cars effort is in progress, but I need to move my MMR goalpost to calendar 2022.

The Local Editor, Greg Warth, asked me to draft an article about my most recent certificate, Master Builder – Scenery. Numerous articles in NMRA Magazine, The Local, and various Division newsletters describe the requirements. This article will address these in general, and then speak to my specific application of these requirements and guidelines.

My approach probably differs from how most members tackled AP-Scenery. Many modelers build a layout, and then have it evaluated for the certificate. I started out with this intent. But I accelerated my effort so that I could complete this certificate by the late summer or early fall of 2021. I confess to making compromises to fit into my layout as many elements as I thought that evaluators would expect to see.

As with any certificate, I read the requirements available online at www.nmra.org. Follow the links to Education / Achievement program / Categories / Settings / [Master Builder – Scenery](#). Here you will find a thorough description of what it takes to earn your Scenery certificate along with required forms. The MER and most Division websites also have links to the required forms. In addition, I had saved examples of AP Scenery submissions from other successful modelers.

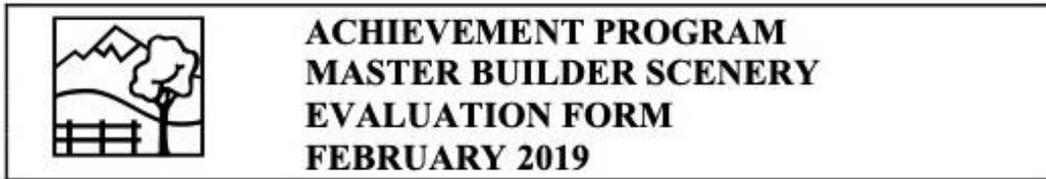
Six requirements are listed. Refer to the NMRA website for the full text, but here is a summary.

- 1) Construct a completed section of a model railroad. Size requirements differ for each scale. My scale is HO, which requires 32 square feet. (No doubt derived from the classic 4’x8’ sheet of plywood that most of us started with).
- 2) Prepare photographs and a description of the setting of your layout. One photo should be of the entire layout being evaluated.
- 3) Prepare a description of the materials and methods used in creating your terrain, background, and lighting.
- 4) Attach a copy of 2 and 3 above to the Statement of Qualifications Form (SOQ).

- 5) Earn a Merit Award of at least 87 ½ points.
- 6) Submit a copy of the SOQ and exhibits along with the Merit Award certificate to your AP Chairman.

Section 1 has five scoring categories, totaling 125 points, which relate to the [Master Builder Scenery Evaluation Form](#):

- a) Terrain – 35 points
- b) Structures – 20 points
- c) Background – 25 points
- d) Lighting – 20 points
- e) Realism / Conformity - 25 points



PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM TO A COMPLETED STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS (SOQ) FORM.

Member's Name: _____ NMRA #: _____ Expiration: _____
 Date Submitted: _____ Region: _____ Division: _____

The undersigned evaluators certify that the scenic area of model railroad, built by the above named NMRA member, has been personally examined by two or more evaluators appointed by the Region AP Chair, meets all applicable NMRA Standards, has earned a minimum score of 87.5 points, and has been awarded a Merit Award.

SCENERY MERIT AWARD SCORING SCHEDULE

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	POINTS	SCORE
TERRAIN	The ground and all natural features such as rocks, water, trees, hills and depressions, as well as manmade features such as the railroad roadbed, cuts, fills, drainage ditches, embankments, streets and roads.	0-35	
STRUCTURES	Structures are considered from the standpoint of prototypical suitability, placement and appearance as scenic elements. (The quality of construction is covered under the Master Builder Structures category). Structures include: bridges, trestles, culverts, buildings and all other types of structures (towers, power lines, signs, fences, etc.), track and right-of-way appurtenances (such as turnout controls, signaling structures, crossing gates and shanties etc.), turntables and other service structures.	0-20	
BACKGROUND	Treatment of wall, backdrop or ceiling to realistically depict depth and distance, horizon and sky.	0-25	
LIGHTING	Illumination effects from three aspects: railroad cars and signals, etc.; buildings, streets and roads, etc.; overall lighting effects - day and/or night. An entirely daylight scene is acceptable.	0-20	
REALISM/ CONFORMITY	General overall impression that the scene is a believable, miniature representation of prototype railroad.	0-25	
		Total	

EVALUATOR'S NAME	SIGNATURE	NMRA #

REGION AP CHAIR: _____ REGION: _____ DATE: _____

From the Evaluation Form, I created a list of bullet points to use as a checklist to see how many items my three scenicked modules captured.

Terrain

Natural		Manmade	
Rocks	✓	Railroad roadbed	✓
Water	✓	Cuts	✓
Trees	✓	Fills	✓
Hills	✓	Drainage ditches	✓
Depressions	✓	Embankments	✓
		Streets and roads	✓

Structures

Bridges	✓	Signs	✓
Trestles	X	Fences	✓
Culverts	✓	Track	✓
Buildings	✓	Crossing gates	✓
Signal towers	✓	Shanties	✓
Power lines	✓	Turntable	X

Background

Backdrop	✓
Trestles	X
Horizon	✓

Lighting

Railroad cars and signals	X
Buildings, streets and roads	✓
Overall lighting effects	✓

Realism / Conformity

- Overall impression that scene is a believable representation of prototype

As you can see from the above items marked, I was able to check off most of the bulleted points. However, it took two visits from the evaluation team for me to pass. I received a unanimous thumbs down on my first try. We will review each of these bullets discussing what was acceptable, and what was not acceptable. Most of what was initially not passable was, fortunately, fixable.

It is important to keep the AP program in perspective. It is a learning endeavor. If you do not score 125 points, or even 87½ points, it is not the fault of the evaluators. One must look in the mirror to see who the real culprit is. AP evaluators, like contest judges, are experienced modelers who volunteer many hours and offer invaluable guidance to help us over the finish line. My first scoring by the AP evaluators was just 79 points. Yikes, I flunked.

My ultimate scoring was 95 of the possible 125 points (76%), just eking out the 70% passing grade.

- Terrain 29 of 35 (83%)
- Structures 17 of 20 (85%)
- Background 20 of 25 (80%)
- Lighting 10 of 20 (50%)
- Realism 19 of 25 (76%)

Since 95 is greater than 87½, I was a happy camper. Follow along so that you too can be a happy camper.

TERRAIN

On the first evaluation I only scored 22 of a possible 35 points. I was able to move this score to 29 points.

STRUCTURES

On the first evaluation I only scored 14 of a possible 20 points. This score was moved to 17 points on the re-evaluation.

BACKGROUND

On the first evaluation I only scored 19 of a possible 25 points. This score got nudged up a bit to 20 points on the second visit. Although I had painted the backdrop, my wife had painted the clouds. Well, that would not do so I had to re-paint the whole thing to get credit. It had to be my work, of course.

LIGHTING

I only scored 10 of a possible 20 points. There was nothing that I could do to change this score. My structures all had non-operating lights over each door; however, I only had three operating street lights set up. My dwarf signals did not get installed, and my lighted structures and yard light towers remained with wiring dangling beneath my layout. Unfortunately, I had health issues that precluded my ability to crawl under my layout (fixed later with back surgery). But there is no crying in baseball or model railroading, so I had to improve my scores in the other categories to find at least 8 ½ more points.

REALISM / CONFORMITY

On the first evaluation I only scored 14 of a possible 25 points. This score improved to 19 points.

So, what were the evaluators comments?

- Pavement looked “toy-like” with no markings.
- No transition from road to terrain.
- There were very high transitions at driveways.
- Railroad crossing street markings only on one side of the tracks.
- Asphalt was a single color with no weathering.
- Nails at the base of the light towers needed to be painted.
- Additional sidewalks needed in two areas.
- Lighting was minimal; needed operating lighting for structures and the light towers.
- Rust color on the bridge rails was too orange.
- Most grass and dirt areas appeared too manufactured, could use different texture and color.

How did I address those comments?

There were minor issues that were easily corrected, such as adding road markings, parking lot striping, additional sidewalks, minor touch-up painting, and I weathered the streets. I also added textures to scenery areas in a variety of colors, including applying static grasses and additional bushes. Re-painting the rails on the glued-in-place bascule bridge required a long-handled brush and a very steady hand. Additional details were added including street signs, fire hydrants, vehicles, and 65 more little people. The intent here was to “flood the zone” with details to enhance the realism of what is an urban setting.

More significant improvements included:

- An entirely new city park was added to break up a large grassy area.
- All craftsman kit structures that were on Gator-Foam bases were recessed to eliminate the too obvious transition from street to driveways. I did this by marking the outline of the structure bases, then carving out the foam layout base to a sufficient depth. The edges were masked with landscaping. I also added more of my highly detailed craftsman kits that were previously used in my AP Master Builder Structures submission.
- A new automobile bridge was added to the signature Charles River scene. This created a better transition to the backdrop. This bridge mimics what crosses in front of Boston’s Museum of Science.

Now that AP Master Builder Scenery is in hand, what is next for my layout? On my long to-do list for these first three modules is a) install dwarf signals in the North Station area, b) string E-Z Line telephone wires throughout (I was all thumbs when I tried this earlier), c) wire the structure and yard light towers, d) install additional street lighting, e) remove most of the urban downtown area and install Boston Sand & Gravel for more industry switching, and f) remove the hillside and replace with rail-served industries for more switching. Then expand the layout to incorporate Terminal Division servicing facilities, such as commissary, sand house, coaling tower, roundhouse, engine house, potato freight house, etc. Hopefully, these can get done before another ten years pass.

Thank you to CPD AP Chairman Vic Bitleris, Gene Sing, MMR, Charlie Rausch, MMR and Bill Hanley for their patience, guidance, and volunteered time in pulling me over the finish line.



Photo 1. North Station as viewed from Charles River. The prototype’s 22 tracks have been compressed to seven passenger tracks plus REA and baggage facilities. Hotel Manger is a kit-bashed Cornerstone structure that hides the corner. The modeled area consists of three modules that are 16’ x 30” deep.



Photo 2. One signature layout design element is the Charles River scene. The prototype in the 1956 era modeled had four double-tracked bascule bridges. The photo backdrop is the Museum of Science that Rob Rousseau photographed from the river when he was on a Charles River Duck Boat tour. The two-lane road bridging the river masks the transition to the backdrop.

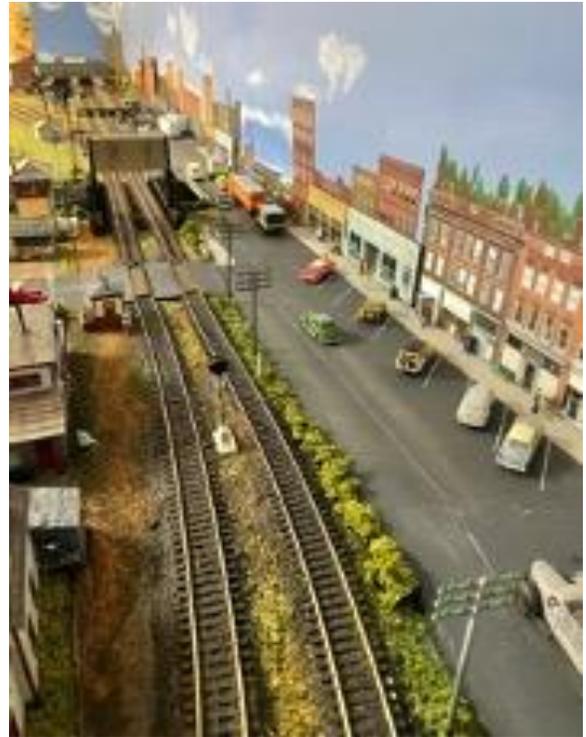
Photo 3 shows a longer view of the Charles River scene. The water effects were created with Woodland Scenics products. The stone retaining walls are New England Brownstone plaster products.



Photos 4-13. Depict the commercial district. Note the eleven detailed and weathered craftsman kits, plus several smaller ancillary buildings. There are 53 vehicles and 121 little people on the layout.







Photos 14-16. Show the park scene with a variety of figures and vehicles. Scratch-built structures include the picnic shelter, swing set, and perimeter fencing.





Photo 17. Note the variety of signs, vehicles, fencing, vegetation.

Photo 18. This photo provides numerous elements from the checklist, including elevation, retaining wall, culvert, stream, roadway, etc. Three joggers add interest to the scene.



Photo 19. Four inches separate track from backdrop. Printed structures and fencing three inches from the backdrop provide transition from flat to vertical.



Photo 20. Three street lights using Woodland Scenics "Just Plug" system were installed.

Drill Bits for Large Holes

By Jim Fisher

Model railroaders frequently find a need to drill large holes when they are constructing their layouts. I am defining large holes as holes over ½” in diameter. Smaller holes are usually drilled with standard twist drills. These large holes are usually drilled in wood or other fairly soft materials such as Homasote® or tempered hard board. Large diameter holes in metals are a very different problem and not the subject of this article. There are a number of different types of large bits available, each for a somewhat different application.

Standard Twist Drill Bits

Standard twist drill bits are readily available at reasonable prices for holes up to ½” (**Photo 1**). For holes larger than ½” they are not generally available at your local hardware store and the price goes up rapidly as the size increases. A 1 ½” bit will cost nearly \$100 and will require a drill motor larger than most of us have at home. Standard twist drill bits will drill a hole with a sloped bottom. Special varieties of twist drills can drill a hole with a completely flat bottom. Twist drill bits can be resharpened, but sharpening large sizes is a job for a professional with special equipment.



Photo 1: ½” twist drill bit; the largest size that model railroaders will commonly use.

Spade Bits

Spade bits are the common flat drill bits (**Photo 2**). Your home is probably full of holes drilled with one of these bits used by the electrician who wired it. Spade bits are economical to buy and can be driven with standard drill motors. Older style bits have square blades with a single central pilot point. Newer style bits have added points away from the center that improve the quality of the hole or the speed of drilling. Spade drill bits usually have hex shafts to help keep them from spinning in the chuck. A 1 ½” spade bit will cost about \$8.



Photo 2: Flat spade drill bit lower and a spade drill bit with extra points top.

Spade bits produce a hole which can be somewhat ragged especially where the bit exits the wood. Spade bits are not good for drilling overlapping holes. Splintering where the bit exits the wood can be reduced by backing the wood with another piece of wood while drilling. A backer can also be used with other types of drill bits to make a cleaner hole. You can also drill a cleaner hole by drilling until the center point of the bit just barely sticks through the far side of the wood then switching to drilling from the other side. Spade bits can be used to drill flat bottom holes with just a small center hole at the bottom. Many of the new varieties will leave circular grooves in the bottom of the hole left by the additional points. Older style spade bits can be easily sharpened on a grinder or with a file. Newer style bits with added points can be resharpened with a motor tool.

Forstner Bits

Forstner bits are used for drilling smooth, nearly flat-bottomed holes (**Photo 3**). They can also drill through holes. Forstner bits have numerous cutting edges. The exact design depends on the manufacturer and the size of the bit. They are difficult to sharpen due to the multiple cutting edges some of which are located in positions that are difficult to reach with a motor tool or a file. A 1 ½” Forstner bit costs about \$18.



Photo 3: Forstner drill bit. Notice the many cutting surfaces in the middle, the periphery, and in between.

Auger Bits

Auger bits are the type of bit used with a classic brace to hand cut holes (**Photo 4**). They can also be used with low-speed power tools. Auger bits for use with a brace have a special shank design with a four-sided tapered taper. Auger bits intended for use with a slow speed power drill have hexagonal shafts. They drill relatively smooth holes. Most auger bits are designed specifically for drilling in wood. You are unlikely to find an auger bit over 1” at your local hardware store. To obtain a 1 ½” auger bit you would probably have to



Photo 4: Auger bits with a four-sided tapered shaft end for use with a hand brace.

order it online or buy from an industrial supply house. A 1 ½” auger bit will cost \$30 to \$50. Auger bits can be used to drill flat bottom holes with a center pit, and they are useful for drilling very deep holes. They can drill overlapping holes but are not as well adapted for this as hole saws.

Hole Saws

Hole saws (**Photo 5**) are saw blades wrapped in a circle with a pilot drill in the middle. In some cases, the hole saw blade and the arbor that holds it are sold as separate items. The attachments between the saw blade and the arbor vary, so you must be careful that the blade and arbor you buy match. Hole saws are typically available in sizes from 1” - 6”. It usually makes more sense to buy a new hole saw blade than to sharpen a dull blade.



Photo 5: Hole saw blade and arbor with pilot drill.

Hole saws can only drill through holes due to the center plug that remains until the hole is drilled through the work piece. In some cases, the saw can be used to create round plugs for other uses. The thickness of material that can be drilled is limited by the depth of the saw cup, usually 1 – 2” although deeper cups are available. You can double the depth by drilling the pilot hole through and then cutting from both sides of the work. For drilling overlapping holes, hole saws are the best choice.

Core Drills

Think of a core drill as a hole saw on steroids. The core drill uses carbide teeth or diamond grit for cutting. Most core drills lack the center pilot drill of hole saws. Core drills are used most often to drill holes in concrete or masonry. Small carbide core drills bits are often used with hammer drills. Larger bits are best used with a portable drill press. It can be difficult to hold the core drill in position to start a hole due to the lack of a center pilot drill such a hole saw has. Sizes start at about 1” and can be as large as several feet. A 1 ½” bit costs about \$50. Core drills are usually intended for holes in thick material and are designed with cups much deeper than hole saws. Model railroaders are only likely to use a core drill if they need to make major changes to their basement plumbing or are extending the mainline through their basement foundation which seems unlikely.

Core drills cannot drill flat-bottom holes, but in some cases the hole may be drilled to depth and the concrete or masonry core then chipped out. This is particularly helpful when the core is very large. In many cases core drills are lubricated and cooled with water.

Adjustable Bits or Hole Cutters

An adjustable bit has a pilot drill in the center with a bar that holds one or two cutters (**Photo 6**). The location of the cutters can be adjusted to select the size of the hole. Generally, adjustable bits are used only on soft materials such as sheet rock or Homasote, or soft wood in some cases. On slightly harder materials a drill press may be needed to hold alignment. Usually if a model railroader needs a hole large enough to justify an adjustable bit, he or she will decide to use a sabre saw.

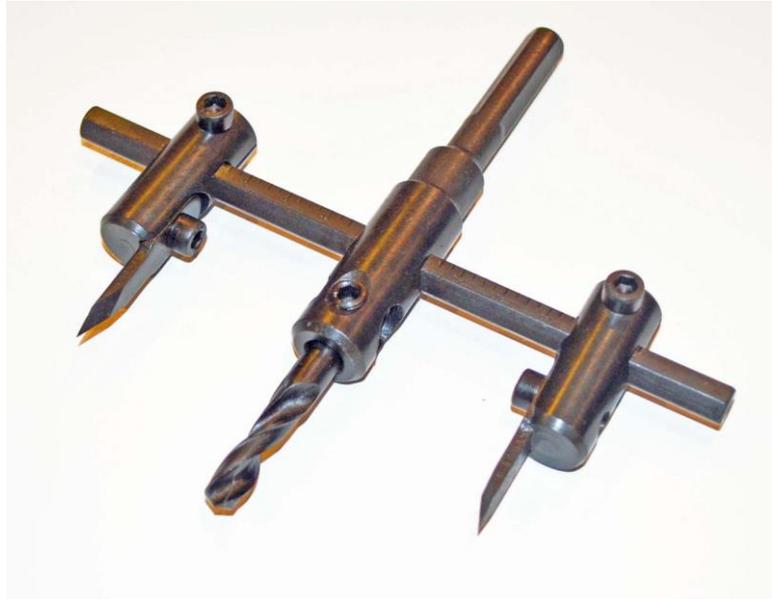


Photo 6: A hole cutter set for a minimum size hole (Hole Cutter).

Screws and Nails

Screws and nails are the enemies of all diameter drill bits. Hitting a hardened sheet rock screw when drilling can almost instantly destroy your bit or hole saw. Be certain that all screws and nails are out of the way before you begin to drill. I have learned this lesson the hard way on a couple of occasions.

Digital NMRA Magazine

As you may be aware, the NMRA will provide its first Digital NMRA Magazine to its members in April 2022. If you wish to access the digital version of the NMRA Magazine, you **must first be registered on the NMRA website**.

Why? The NMRA is a **member-benefits** organization. The magazine is a member-benefit paid for as part of **your** membership fee.

Registering is easy. Go to <https://www.nmra.org/user/register>, answer a few questions, then click Create a New Account. An email confirmation will be sent to your email inbox with instructions on setting your password. That's it!

Quick and Easy Installation of DCC Panels

By Jim Fisher

Small accessory panels are a common feature of DCC systems. They are used for connecting to the wired network, for radio systems, and for network expansion. All of these panels from Digitrax and NCE are similar in their layout. The panels are the same size, and each has a circuit board behind the panel that requires a hole for installation. When you read the instructions from the manufacturers, you will see or imagine a rectangular hole.

When I did my first DCC installations, I spent a lot of time cutting these small rectangular holes to fit the accessory panels. Cutting this type of hole is complex and time consuming. You have to drill small pilot holes then use a saw to connect the holes to form the final rectangular hole. Using a sabre saw is likely to result in damaging the finish on the fascia. If you are working on an already completed panel or fascia it is easy to damage wiring, switch machines, and other items behind the hole being cut.

I began to look for a quicker and easier method to mount these panels. I first thought of drilling two large holes and connecting them with straight cuts. It was an improvement but connecting them with straight cuts was still time consuming and using a sabre saw still damaged the fascia. The solution that I eventually developed was to drill two overlapping holes that resulted in a hole that fits the circuit board on the panels. These holes will fit NCE UTP panels, Digitrax UP, UR, and LNRP panels, and possibly others.

You simply need to drill two 1 ½” holes with 1” spacing center to center using a hole saw. This results in two overlapping holes creating a space that the circuit board of the panel can project through. Drilling the holes with a hole saw is quick and does no damage to the fascia.



The only tools that you need are a drill motor, a 1 ½” hole saw, and a ruler (**Photo 1**). Additionally, a small level will aid horizontal alignment. If you don't have a 1 ½” hole saw, it can be purchased for about \$10 at a local hardware store. A hole saw is much more controllable for drilling the overlapping holes than other types of bits and is less likely to damage the wooden fascia by splintering.

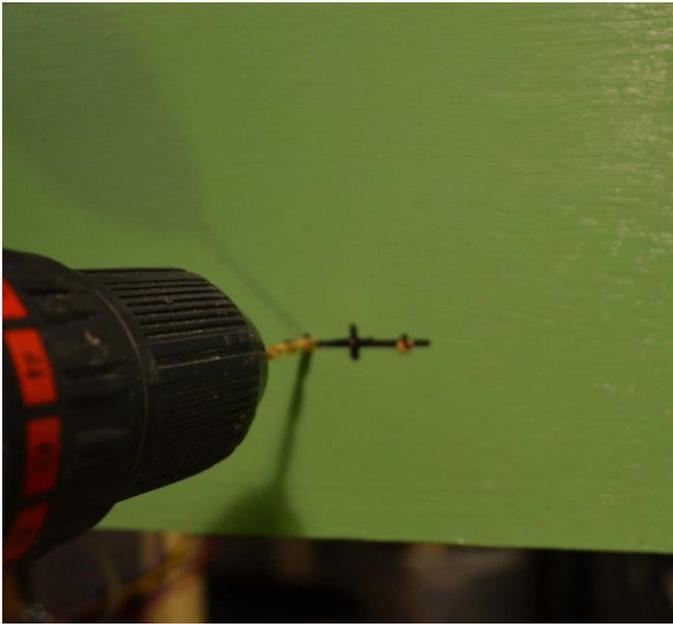
Photo 1: The 1 ½” hole saw can be purchased for about \$10.

Begin by locating the center of the panel that you want to install (**Photo 2**). Then draw a horizontal line through the center point. For NCE UP panels this line should be where you want to locate the vertical center of the panel. The circuit board on Digitrax panels is located below the center of the panel, so for Digitrax panels the line should be about 3/16” below the vertical center. Next mark two spots 1” apart on this horizontal line. These spots are the centers for the 1-½” holes.

A hole saw usually has a ¼” pilot drill. It can be difficult to precisely locate this size bit when starting the hole. The solution is



Photo 2: The center point of the panel has been marked. Then, a small level was used to mark a horizontal line. After that, the two centers for the pilot holes were marked one inch apart.



to drill smaller pilot holes for the ¼” bit. Begin by drilling pilot holes for the larger holes (**Photo 3**). A bit of about 3/32” or 1/8” diameter works well. Drill both pilot holes before you start using the

Photo 3: Drilling the pilot holes on the marked points using a 3/32” or 1/8” diameter drill bit.

hole saw (**Photo 4**). Then drill the two overlapping 1-½” holes using the hole saw (**Photo 5**). The hole saw will be more stable if you alternate between the two holes cutting a little bit at a time rather than completing one hole before you start the second hole.



Photo 4: Using the pilot holes as guides, the 1 ½” hole saw is used to drill the larger holes.



Photo 5: Both holes are partially drilled, switching back and forth between them

Apply gentle pressure on the hole saw. Pushing too hard can result in rough edges on the hole when the saw breaks through. Be careful to keep the hole saw square to the surface. Otherwise, you

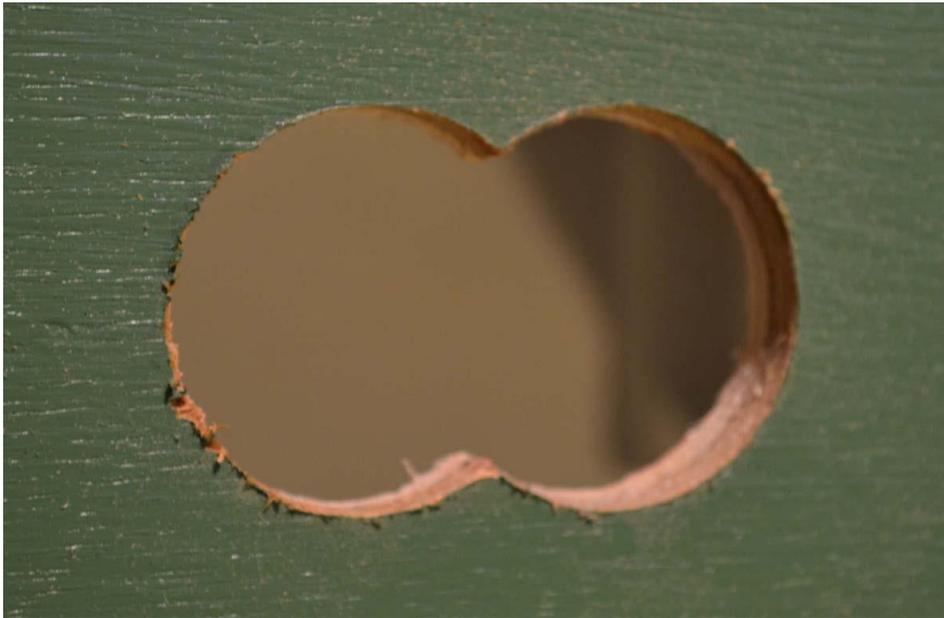


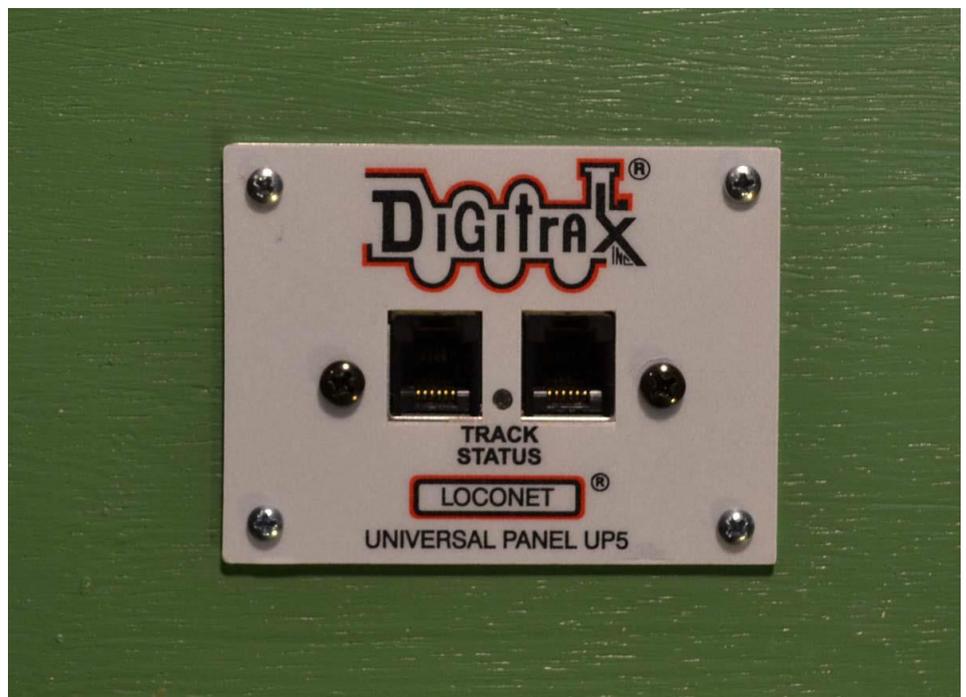
Photo 6: The completed hole.

may get a crooked hole which can be a particular problem when drilling thicker material. You may occasionally need to use a file or rasp (sandpaper??) to clean up the edges of the holes, especially where they overlap in the middle (**Photo 6**).

Test fit the panel to the hole, then mark the locations for the four attachment screws by inserting a pencil tip through the small holes in the panel to mark the locations of the holes to be drilled. Carefully drill the holes with a pilot drill sized to match the screws that you are using. Place the panel in the hole, insert the screws, and attach the wires to the panel. In just a few minutes you will have a completed installation in a small fraction of the time that would be required for cutting the hole by other methods. And your fascia will look as good as new (**Photo 7**).

Photo 7: A Digitrax UP5 panel installed in the hole. The UP3, UR90, UR91, UR92, NCE UTP and LNRP also can be installed this way.

This same technique can be used for installing radio panels in boxes (**Photo 8**) for installation above the layout and for control panels (**Photos 9, 10**).



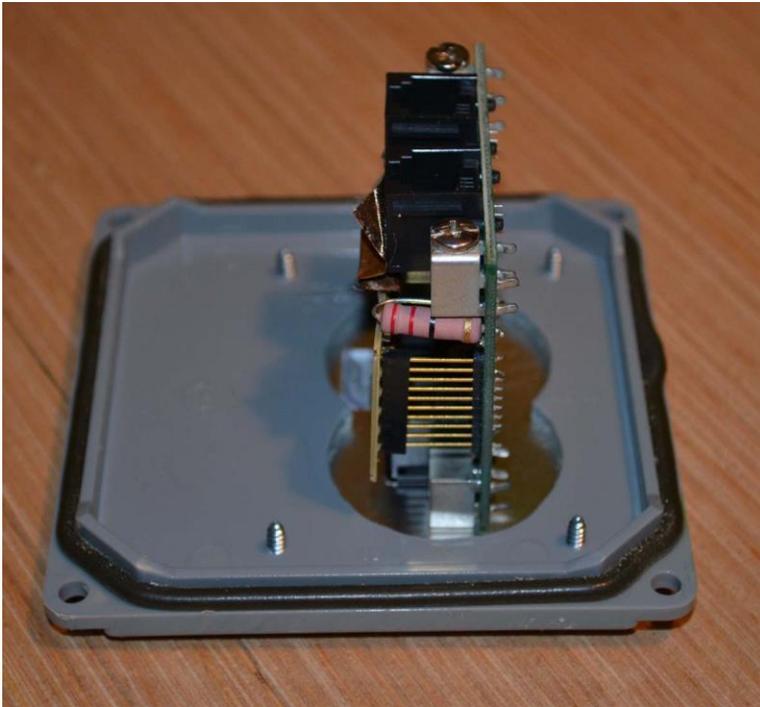


Photo 8: Backside view of a Digitrax UR92 installed in a hole cut in a plastic panel for mounting in an electrical box to be used on a radio pole.

Photo 9: Drilling the holes for a panel that will hold 4 Digitrax LNRPs for distribution of LocoNet on a large modular layout. (LNRP Panel)

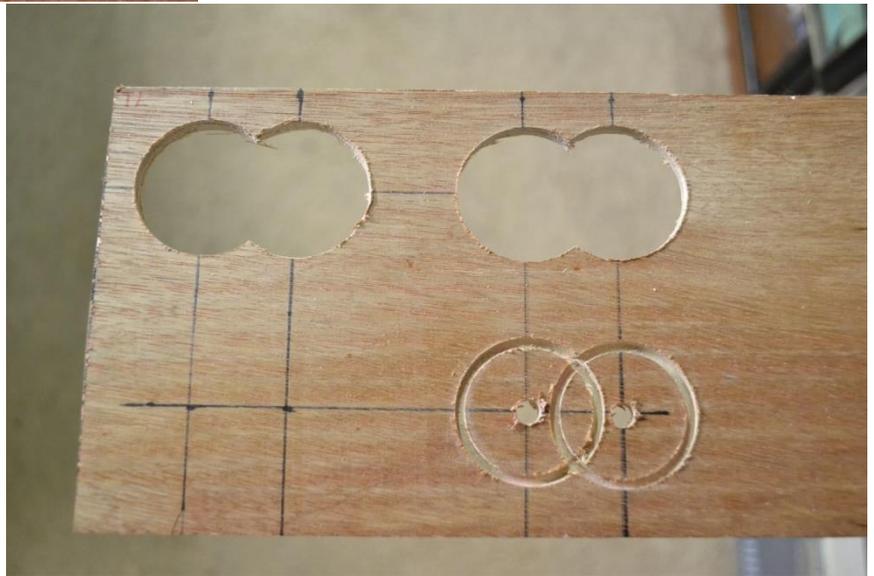


Photo 10: The LNRP panel installed as part of a DCC control system for a large modular railroad.

Why Build a Module, and How to Do It!

By Bob Halsey

Some model railroad club members, including those in the Concord Area Model Railroad Club, not only have their own personal layouts, they also have individually made modules. These can be connected to make a large operating layout larger than most home layouts. They do this to display the hobby to the public at various train shows, in the hope of getting more people (both young and old) interested in model railroading, and perhaps to join the group. This is the “Why” for building a module. Now for the “How!”

Although most modules are only 2' x 4' in area (corners are larger), they incorporate all the talents required to build a full-size layout or a diorama, including the necessary wiring and connectors to join with other modules. There are specifications that cover track parameters, sizes for backdrops, Plexiglas front shields, and even the colors for the front fascia panel and backdrop sky. Beyond that, what goes into the module depends on the imagination and skill of the builder. For an experienced layout constructor, this is not a great problem, but for someone (like me!) who has never built a layout or module before, it can be a challenge.

I volunteered last June to build a module, expecting to complete it in time for a train show at the North Carolina Transportation Museum (NCTM) the last weekend in September. Besides lack of experience, another difficulty I had was lack of indoor space to do the actual building – our garage is totally filled with lots of other stuff, and we have no basement. So, most of the actual woodwork was done on our back deck with the help of two sawhorses and a couple of deck chairs. Fortunately, I have more than enough hand tools. Another problem was having to move the project inside to the kitchen island whenever it looked like it might rain!

The first step is coming up with a plan for the track locations and major scenery features and structures. Since I prefer bridges and waterways rather than mountains and tunnels, I decided to have a river crossed by three bridges carrying the three main parallel straight tracks that are required on all the modules, and a turnout to an (apparent) spur line that would cross the river farther down, where the river narrows. This configuration was mainly determined by the fact that I only had three bridges of different lengths, one of which was a double-track truss (they don't make triple-tracks). The longer of the two girder types was shorter than the double-track, but these two bridges would have to carry the three main lines. The spur would use the short girder type.

The limited length of the module meant that the locations of the bridges would have to be very precisely placed, and the short mainline girder bridge would require slightly curved approaches on both sides. To help determine the exact spacing, I used a length of 2' wide graph paper marked with a 1" square grid, showing the routes of the three mains, the turnout and spur, and the riverbanks. After building the frame and crosspieces (angled to allow for the sunken river), I laid the ½" plywood surface on the frame without attaching it, and then traced the pattern outline onto it. A skilled woodworker friend used his bandsaw to cut out the piece where the river was planned (this cut out piece would become the river bottom). The plywood was attached (by screws) to the top surface of the frame, and the river bottom attached to blocks partway up from the lower edge of the frame. Remembering a lesson learned from a Mid-Eastern Region (MER) convention clinic a couple of years ago, I proceeded to complete the riverbanks (wire screen pieces and paper towels dipped in Hydrocal). I painted the river bottom and banks, added some small rocks, cattails and water (polyurethane), all before installing the bridges. The

lesson learned was to install the bridges only after the river was complete, because it is nearly impossible to work under them!

The rest falls under standard layout assembly procedures: laying cork roadbed, track, and ballast, and then wiring connectors underneath (these last steps with assistance from two fellow club members). This included checking the suitability of the shorter mainline bridge's curves by running an 85-foot passenger car over them. The most fun part was adding the scenery details: the horse pasture, barn (wood model), fence (hand built from individual pieces), dock and access stairway (wood kits), station depot (kit with added details and flagpole), cow pasture and wire fence (handmade), and vegetable stand (wood kit). The station parking lot and roadway are 600 grit emery paper marked with yellow and white colored pencils. Various trees and greenery were planted, some to cover minor holes and some to hide the track bumper that disguises the fact that the spur really doesn't go anywhere. The backdrop board is painted to look like distant hills, and the club supplies the Plexiglas front shield. The detachable 2" x 2" module legs have adjustable 1/4" bolts on the bottom to allow all modules to be the exact same height when all are connected.

Well, our participation in the NCTM show didn't happen, due to various members having virus problems, but I'm hoping we will set up at a show sometime soon. It was an interesting learning experience but am not sure I would do another one again, at least not for a while!

When I started this project, I hadn't even thought about the possibility of getting a Golden Spike Award. I was told by our Division AP (Achievement Program) chairman that it could be a candidate for this award if I did a good job and had all the required elements. It did qualify, but I also had to show six rail cars that had been modified or improved from stock condition. So, I took six of my used, train show HO cars and added freight loads to a flat car and a gondola, and on all of them installed new metal trucks and wheelsets, Kadee couplers and boxes (checked the heights), added weights (to NMRA standards), weathered the cars, and did my universal task of painting brake wheels the same color as the car bodies. They won't be NMRA award winners (no cut levers, not all couplers and underbody details rust colored, some missing stirrup steps, etc.), but – Mission Accomplished – a Golden Spike Award! And my wife is glad to not have to share the kitchen counter again!



Photo 1. Module frame, legs temporarily attached



Photo 2. Under construction

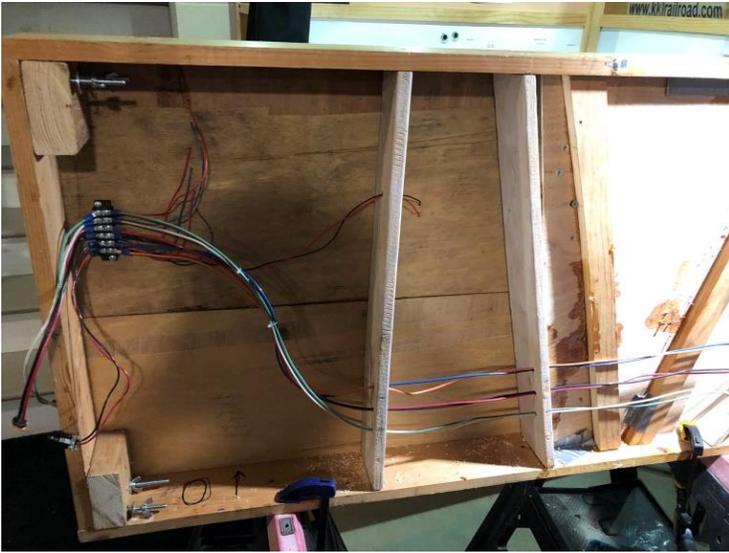


Photo 3. Adding wiring underneath

Photo 4. Under construction, before scenery and ballast

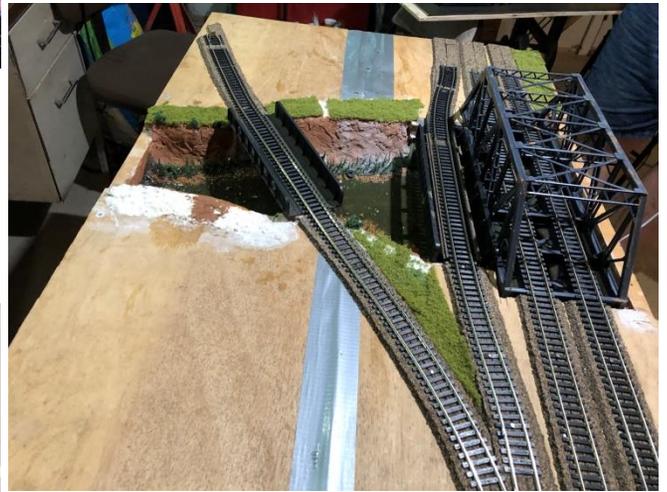


Photo 5. Bridges, horse pasture and barn



Photo 6. Depot parking lot, small monument, vegetable stand, and cow pasture





Photo 7. Main line, turnout and station



Photo 8. Turnout bridge, trees and hidden track bumper



Photo 9. Stairway and dock next to turnout bridge



Photo 10. Overview of entire module

Helpful Hint - Look Beyond Hobby Shop Shelves

By Nicholas Kalis

Two Rules of Model Railroading:

The first rule of model railroading, besides having fun, of course, is to have friends in our hobby, not just someone you exchange an occasional email with but real friends.

In my search for paint to model the corrugated roof of my 1:20.3 engine house, a friend lent me two rattle cans to just make a quick spray on my sample panel. The result from one of the two cans was fine. The problem was that when I went to purchase that brand of paint, Model Masters by Testors (**Photo 1**), I found that it had been discontinued. So, the second rule of model railroading came into play.

Photo 1: Model Master 1451, Aluminum Plate. This is the paint that worked but is out of production.

The second rule of model railroading is to improvise. And by improvise, I mean be willing to shop at places other than hobby shops. After much experimenting, I selected this paint, BTY1617 Classic Silver Mica to color the interior and exterior surfaces of the corrugated steel roof for my Waipahu Engine House for the Oahu Sugar Company.

First Step

My first step was to visit my local auto supply store - in my case, Advanced Auto in Virginia. Auto supply stores have a great selection of spray paint cans.

Second Step

Next step was to buy not one but two of the colors (**Photo 2**) I thought might come closest to the effect I was trying to achieve. Going back and forth to the retailer seems a waste of time and risks not finding the second paint color on a later trip.

Photo 2: The two rattle cans of paint purchased at Advance Auto.

Important hint - disregard the name the manufacturer gives to the color.

Another hint - take the color on the plastic cap with a grain of salt.



Third Step

Hot glue several panels to a small sheet of cardboard (Photo 3).

Photo 3: A cardboard holder with five sample corrugated steel panels to which various washes have been applied. It is always a good idea to mark the date on which the trial was conducted. Also in some cases, one can try more than one wash on a single panel. Note that all but one of the panels had a coat of Dull-Cote applied first. One panel had no coating whatsoever - the control sample.



Photo 4: The cardboard that was used to identify which paint was used where. While one might suppose that one would easily recall which paint was used on which sample panel, that is not the case. I used hot glue to affix the panels to the cardboard. I marked each cardboard holder with a black magic marker being careful to use the paint number and name for clarity (good where the paint names are similar to prevent any confusion)

Fourth Step

I then wrote down on the sheet of cardboard the paint I would use (Photo 4).

Fifth Step

Next step was to paint some corrugated metal panels. Boy, after a full night of drying of both samples, they still were giving off noxious vapors. Be careful! I needed to roll down the windows of my auto while riding with them in my front seat. What were they doing in the front seat of my auto? I was taking them to lunch with a model railroader friend. [Note: Better keep them in a well-ventilated area or in a paint booth until the odor is gone. -Ed.]

Sixth Step

Basically, if you are not sure about a color choice, do as I did, ask your spouse and perhaps a modeling friend. In this case, all three of us agreed that this color (Classic Silver Mica) was the flattest and the best representation of a 20-year-old galvanized corrugated steel roof. Interestingly, this rattle can says it is for touching up Toyotas.

Seventh Step

My next step was to use a variety of MIG weathering fluids (washes) I recently purchased in 75 mL bottles to determine which looks best on my test panels.

Eighth Step

I chose MIG Productions Neutral Wash MIG-P222 (75 mL) (**Photo 5**) and applied it with a brush (**Photo 6**). Be forewarned, these enamel type washes take quite a long time to dry; do not touch for at least a day or more. Clean up with Tub O' Towels (**Photo 7**).



Photo 8: Corrugated metal roof, a work-in-progress, showing painted, weathered panels.

[This article was reprinted with edits and with permission from the blog, "[Modeling Hints and Reviews for Large Scale Modelers and Others](#)" by Nicholas Kalis. All photos are by Nicholas Kalis and are copyright protected. - Ed.]

History of the New Hope Valley Railway

By Kevin O'Connor

I recently took two of my granddaughters on the New Hope Valley Railway Reindeer Roundup (triangletrain.com) and afterwards thought it would be neat to research the railroad's history. Maybe it will encourage others who read the article to review the history of abandoned railroads in their area. They provide great modeling opportunities.

The New Hope Valley Railway (NHVR), which was shown as a prototype tour during the 2016 MER "Tracks to the Triangle Convention", was created in 1904 with the goal of connecting Durham, NC with the Seaboard Air Line mainline at Bonsal, NC in Wake County. The original investors were led by William Bonsal, who was the Vice President with Seaboard Airline Railroad at the time. Although not yet chartered, the investors purchased seven strips of 100' right-of-way in Chatham County on which to build the railroad to West End, NC (now Carrboro) where a major producer of railroad ties was located.

In 1905, new investors chartered a railroad called the Durham & South Carolina Railroad with the objective of building a railroad from Durham, NC to an unnamed point in SC. The New Hope Valley Railway was sold to the newly chartered Durham & South Carolina Railroad group. Members of this new investor group included William Bonsal, the American Tobacco Company (located in Durham), and the original Norfolk and Southern Railroad (NS). The objective was to connect the line from the American Tobacco Company's facility in Durham to the Seaboard Airline main line in Bonsal and to the NS main line between Raleigh and Charlotte 10 miles further south at Duncan, NC. Later the line was to be extended into South Carolina, but got no further then Duncan, 80 miles short of its intended destination. Final length of the line was 40.5 miles. To the right is a map of the D&SC route.



In 1905 D&SC started laying track from Bonsal north to Durham generally following the New Hope Creek and River. The rail line was built quickly beginning in March of that year, completing the 30 mile segment between Durham and Bonsal in approximately one year. Short cuts were taken with minimal grading, drainage work, and minimal ballast. This resulted in the line having numerous derailments over the period it was operated. The first revenue train was operated on June 4th, 1906.

The first D&SC locomotive was a rebuilt 2-6-0 numbered 47. Rolling stock included three combination passenger cars, two boxcars, and five flatcars. Eventually the D&SC would acquire two 4-6-0 Baldwin locomotives.

The D&SC was moderately successful from the beginning serving the tobacco, textile, lumber, and agricultural industries. In 1920, the D&SC was leased for operation by Norfolk and Southern for 99 years. It was later purchased outright in 1957 and operated as the Durham and Duncan branch.

During its operation, D&SC's principal customers were the Piedmont Wood Yard in Bonsal, a major sawmill operation in Fearington, NC; the Solite Corporation, a manufacture of concrete blocks in Durham; and of course, the American Tobacco Company.

The line operated the Keene Yard, a three-track yard on the east side of Durham with a wye, and a small engine facility consisting of a sand box, water tank, and a fuel pump house. The yard was just beyond Solite and five miles south of American Tobacco. After passing the Keene Yard, the line ran the five miles directly into American Tobacco's plant. American Tobacco was a large enough customer to warrant its own switcher, called the "A.T. Switcher". Its main job was to spot loads of coal inside the plant, spot empty boxcars to load finished tobacco products, and to spot loads of unprocessed tobacco to be unloaded for processing.

Once purchased in 1957 by NS, the D&SC was operated as a freight line only in the 60s and mid-70s. In 1969, the US Army Corps of Engineers entered into a relocation agreement with N&S to relocate a portion of the Durham and Duncan branch from the New Hope River Basin to higher ground in preparation for building the New Hope Dam & Reservoir, later known as Jordon Lake. The new line branched off the old line approximately 1000 feet south of I-40 at a place called Penny, very near Southpoint Mall today, and reconnected near Bonsal.

In 1974, the NS was acquired by Southern Railway and the new 20-mile by-pass constructed by the Corps of Engineers was turned over to Southern in March 1974. Since the D&SC duplicated one of Southern's existing lines, it began the process of formally abandoning the D&SC line, though freight trains still delivered material to the Shearon Harris Nuclear Plant during its construction.

In 1983, members of the East Carolina Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society purchased a portion of the abandoned D&SC rail line from Southern to preserve and allow for future operation as a historic railroad. The purchased rail line became the New Hope Valley Railway, a standard-gauge railroad. Located in Bonsal, NC and operated by volunteers, the line operates excursions down the track during the year with special excursions at Halloween and Christmas. They also provide opportunities to engineer an engine through their Operate-a-Loce program. The group has completed the restoration of the Goldston Depot in Bonsal, continues restoring old engines, freight and passenger cars, and is currently raising funds for rebuilding Steam Engine 17 (**Photo 1**), which is going through its mandated Federal Railroad Administration inspection, and for saving the TEN. The TEN are ten cars located on an abandoned siding near the Shearon Nuclear Plant that the Society would like to relocate in Bonsal.



Engine No.17 (Photo by Tim Huemmer of Rail Archived)

As for the remaining portion of the abandoned D&SC rail line, a significant portion is now the American Tobacco Trail, a greenway that winds through Chatham, Wake and Durham Counties in NC.

A Treasure Trove for Modelers

For readers either in the area or visiting central North Carolina, the New Hope Valley Railway's Bonsal, NC location offers modelers a generous number of modeling opportunities both through kits and scratchbuilding. The Goldston Depot (**Photo 2**) is available in N and HO scales from Ipswich Hobbies (<https://ipswichhobbies.com>), and the Speeder & Oil Shed* (**Photo 3**) in N, HO, and O scale from Rail Scale Models (www.rail-scale-models.com). I have this kit and will be building it this winter or early spring 2022. For those modelers interested in scratchbuilding cars, there are static displays of different cabooses, locomotives, freight cars (boxcars, gondolas, reefers), MOW cars, as well as vehicles, and passenger cars, and even a couple of old REA baggage carts. **Photo 4** shows the excursion passenger car which I plan on scratchbuilding (going for the Achievement Program Certificate) in the near future. If all goes well, this might become the topic of a follow-up article later this year.



The Goldston Depot (photo by Jack Dziadul, with permission)



Speeder and Oil Shed (from Rail Scale Models)



Excursion Passenger Car

References

[NHVR website](#) and [fact sheets](#) on site in Bonsal
[North Carolina Railroads website](#)
[Ncpedia.org Durham and South Carolina Railroad website](#)
[Abandonedrails.com Durham to Duncan website](#)

*Sidenote from Jack Dziadul, owner of Ipswich Hobbies: Bill Davis measured the Oil Shed and recommended that RSM (Rail Scale Models) produce a kit. The Oil Shed is not actually a speeder shed. The museum used reclaimed boards from an old tobacco barn to create a fictitious “speeder shed” for the museum campus. They did lay some track down and built doors to create the illusion of an old speeder shed.

Featured Model...

Farnham's Store (in O Scale)

By Martin Brechbiel

I have continued wading through the veritable ocean of structure build projects just long enough to grab hold of this next venture. It's a relatively small commercial building, possibly selling groceries. I'm leaving it open to interpretation, or until I have built myself into a virtual corner without escape. This will also be a little demonstration of basic building techniques while also consuming more of the endless supply of leftovers from my shop. I may be creating as many, perhaps more, than I consume, and it may be a Sisyphean exercise. But it fills in the wee idle hours of the night. So, let's get started and see where this leads!

The doors and windows will again set the proportions and dimensions of the building. Yet another five-panel door and frame (Tichy; No. 2040) was dragged out of the parts bin. The bin seems to have no bottom to it. This time a one light door and frame came along to join in the fun (Tichy; No. 2030). A zip lock baggie of 6/6 windows mysteriously materialized into the mix of parts. And then another baggie of parts popped up to make its presence known containing resin brick supports. I remember painting them and never using them from some kit and putting them aside thinking, someday..... Also in that baggie was a nice resin chimney! No stove pipe out the side of the wall in this building! No, sir! We'll have a proper chimney up on the roof when this is completed. And then I found I had one last two-foot section of clapboard available (Midwest) ([Photo 1](#)). So, we have the parts, and we have no plans; perfect building conditions!



I laid out the walls as in [Photo 2](#) and cut the openings for the doors and windows. I decided to merge two of the 6/6 windows into a single unit window for the front of the shop. Just took a sharp scalpel to

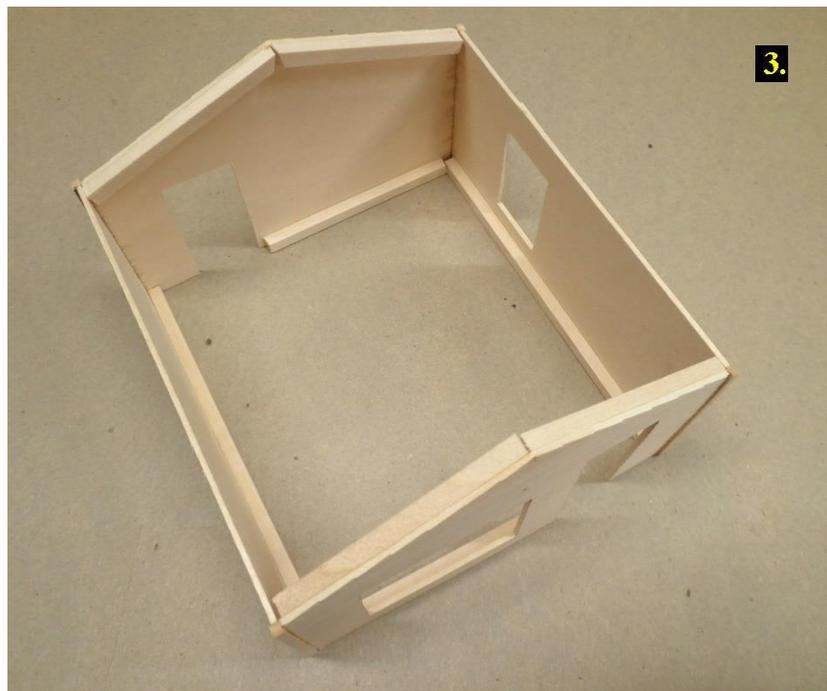
square off the one side of one window. Then working from the back on my glass work surface, making a few brush passes of Tenax “welds” the two parts together. I added some scrap styrene to the back of the joint with some more Tenax. You can use most any of the current plastic solvent glues for this purpose. That double window plus the entry way door with the transom light was used to set the width and height of the front wall so that the height of the two sides matches the ends of the front and back walls. I made the sides just long enough to place another of the 6/6 windows toward the front on one side. If you wanted to make this a deeper building, you could add more windows or even an attached side shed with another door. Once you have the basics in hand, adding variations to a structure becomes pretty easy.



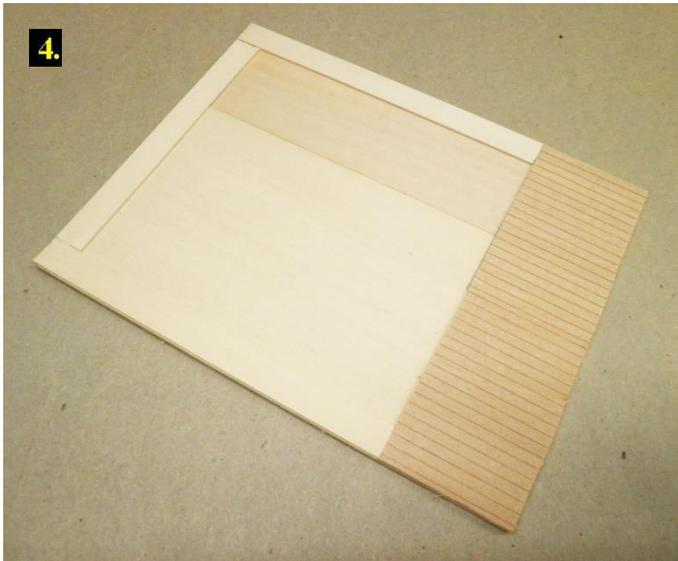
The ends of the front and back walls were appended with 3/32" x 3/32" square stock using Goo and CA to make the corner board trim. This step also sets into place the surface for gluing the sides to the front and back walls with more Goo and CA to close the rectangle. I will use a small square or measure cross corners to get the rectangle “correct”. The usual bracing or gluing surface boards (3/16" x 3/16" basswood) were added reinforcing the

floor mounting and for adding the roof sheathing (carpenter’s glue) ([Photo 3](#)).

With the walls assembled, the actual footprint of the building was defined. Yes, a ruler, slide rule, calculator, and ENIAC might project with some accuracy the dimensions. But it’s just as easy or easier to measure this off the structure itself, or just trace it onto some glued up scrap 1/16" stock that’s going to become the actual floor. Yes, the latter option was the top choice on this project. But to make this more interesting after marking off the floor, I extended the front by four scale feet. On top of those four feet and just a few thirty-seconds further, I glued down some 1/32" thick scribed siding and then added some 1/32" stock around the perimeter to



bring everything up to the same elevation. That extra few thirty-seconds takes this siding under the front wall. Now we have a floor base that we can add to the walls (**Photos 4, 5**).



The roof sheathing was installed board by board using a mix of HO 3" x 20", 16", and 14" to get everything to come out evenly. These were all glued down with carpenter's glue. After I had the peak boards installed, I cut a hole in the center for the chimney casting to fit through snugly. A bit of scrap 3" by stock was glued in place spanning the top two roof boards to give that casting something to rest on (**Photo 6**).



Everything from here on is finishing work. Some HO 2" x 8" and 3" x 12" were used for a bit of trim on the front and back where the clapboard met the roof sheathing and for the fascia boards, respectively. Some floor joists were added just to lift this up off the ground. The chimney was painted using several shades of red and black (Polly Scale) for the interior and then secured into its place in the roof opening. Some bits of scrap wood were used to make a small shelter over the back door space. The doors and windows were painted Dark Green (Polly Scale) and then glazed with some of my dwindling supply of leftover acetate.

The walls were painted Light Yellow (Polly Scale) up into the roof overhang and edges. The front deck, surrounding underbody frame, and floor joists received a coat of D&H Gray (Polly Scale). Then the castings were installed and secured with a trace of Goo. I still had a fair amount of leftover Rusty Stumps shingles from another project, so that's what ended up on this roof. These are peel & stick and with a little care really look sharp. I'll be keeping these in mind for future larger projects.

The final step on this project was to add signage for this business. I chose to do that by placing the name in an awning over that front paired window unit. The awning itself was created in PowerPoint, saved as a jpg file, and then resized in Photoshop to match the width of the paired window. The frame for the awning was formed from some scrap 0.030" copper wire that in turn was mounted into a length of O scale 4" x 4" and painted black. The printed awning was wrapped and glued to the frame. This assembly was glued over the top of the window. Assorted signs from my collected stock were applied to the sides of the building using carpenter's glue pushing the paper into the contour of the clapboard. Final details were to dab a bit of black paint on the door knobs and then to add a crank for the awning. That was formed from 0.019" wire, painted black, and added to the inside of the awning block ([Photos 7-10](#)).



And with that, this little build is at its conclusion. I'm not altogether sure what business Farnham was running, but I hope it's successful. I might consider adding some exterior details and some patrons to dress this up to create a scene that could be planted on the layout. But I think that's a story for another time and place.

Modelers' Haven...

Random Tips & Tricks

By Greg Warth

N Scale Coupler Conversions: One of the more difficult things to do in N scale is to replace horn hook couplers with knuckle couplers. You usually lose several pieces of the new coupler and go through two of them to get one coupler on after about an hour. Thankfully, [Trainworx](#) coupler conversion kits have come to the rescue. These are body-mounted one-piece frames each of which already contains a Micro-Trains coupler. They are very easy to install. The only problem is that they are currently only available for certain types of rail cars – the Red Caboose Ortner Rapid Discharge 5-bay hoppers, the Atlas 3 and 4-bay hoppers and the Model Power chemical tank cars. However, you can do some modifications to other types of railcars to make them fit. Be sure to check the coupler height after installation.

Paper Model Cardstock Buildings: If you are building a layout or diorama and want to put up some [background buildings](#) quickly and inexpensively, think about using cardstock covered with [self-adhesive printed and/or textured paper](#). Here is a [video](#) by [ScaleModelPlans.com](#) showing how to construct scale model buildings made with cardstock. You can also add realistic [asphalt road paper](#) for streets.

Looking for LEDs and fiberoptics? Check out the website at [Lighthouse LEDs](#). I don't think you will find a greater variety of LEDs, fiberoptic cables and other useful lighting components for a less expensive price anywhere else.

Plumbing: Save those plastic pieces (sprues) from used building kits. You can cut and paint them and use them to make water pipes or gas lines coming out of the ground going into buildings. They also make great railings, fences, downspouts, utility poles, log or pipe loads for gondolas or flat cars, and probably lots of other things if you think about it.

Windows: Save the clear plastic covers from items you purchase and use them to make windows for your buildings. Use a thin layer of silicone gel for a diffused appearance if you wish. Paint window shades on them. Then glue them to the inside of the window frames on your structure.

Sliding Panels: Use sheets of paneling (**Photo 1**) that you can purchase from your local home improvement store to make sliding panels to cover up all the supplies and other things you have hidden under your layout. Use double-grooved strips of wood at the top and bottom to hold them in place. Add knobs or handles to make them easy to move.

Photo 1: Panel used to hide the underside of the layout.

Skyscrapers: Take multiple standard hotel-type [DPM kits](#), glue the four walls of each kit together and then stack them on



top of each other for a tower effect.

Burning Building: Cut a jagged hole in the roof of your building. Add charcoal powder to the edges of the opening. Take a cotton ball and spray paint one side gray and the other side red-orange. Then pull apart the cotton and glue pieces of it to the underside of the hole. The more stretched out the cotton is, the better it looks. Do the same thing for some of the nearby open windows. Add a flickering amber or red LED light and you've got a fairly good simulation of a burning building. Of course, don't forget to add the fire truck, ladders, and firemen on the ground nearby to complete the scene. [See more about fire and smoke effects here.](#)

Realistic trees and branches: The most realistic trees, shrubs, branches, and underbrush are the dried ones you find in nature, sometimes right in your own back yard. Or you can purchase items like this from your local craft store. Sagebrush branches (**Photo 2**) make great tree armatures, as do branches from azalea bushes. Leave them bare for winter scenes or cover them with foliage sparingly to simulate whatever season you are modeling. Use pinecones covered with static grass for evergreens (**Photo 3**). Peppergrass, baby's breath (gypsophila), dried flax and candytuft make good trees as well when bunched together (**Photo 4**). Add small amounts of spray paint for a variety of colors, like different shades of green or different fall colors. Add a thick layer of Walther's Goo to the trunk of these bundles and use it to also create an array of roots at the bottom. Reindeer moss and lichen are also useful for bushes and undergrowth. Fill the open spaces at the edge of your forest with multiple branches spray painted brown or gray for added realism. Cut up some larger branches to use for fallen trees or stumps (**Photo 5**). [See more about modeling trees here.](#)



Photo 2: Sagebrush for realistic tree armature.



Photo 3: Pinecone tree with "petals" removed and covered with static grass.



Photo 4: Variations of dried plants purchased from a craft store to make trees.



Photo 5: Variety of lichen, foliage clumps and fallen logs (twigs from the backyard).

Document Your Progress with a Photo Booth

By Nicholas Kalis



Photo 6: Slow Dolphin 20cm LED Portable Photo Studio. ©2021 Nicholas Kalis

Photo 7: Resulting Photograph – Note no crease in backdrop, no shadow, and a well-lit subject. ©2021 Nicholas Kalis



I am not titling this essay as a product review as I really feel unqualified to opine on the quality of this device. What I can share is that I found this handy and began to use it within minutes of opening the accompanying reusable tote bag. Here is a photograph of the Slow Dolphin 20cm LED Portable Photo Studio and also identified as 20cm Photo Studio Box (**Photos 6 and 7**). You can find a size to fit your needs on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com). Modelers will find this small box, while perfect for N scale modelers, will not accommodate most HO and O scale engines. Though I model in 1:20.3 scale, I have found it handy for documenting parts and other products that I have used in my modeling. If you will be photographing large structures and other large models, you may need to buy a larger model or purchase both. One

benefit of this booth is that you might have a family member who can use it for their hobbies or home-based business. I bought it because of the low price and that it would not take up too much room in my office. At \$15, I consider this an important tool for anyone's workbench or office. Remember, you will need to plug this into your computer for power or use a transformer (not supplied).

It comes with two attached strips of white LED lights and a two-headed power cord. It does come with six color backdrops (Black, White, Orange, Blue, Red, and Green). The purchasers should be aware that the backdrops do have a textured surface. This studio box comes with a handy tote bag for storing the folded box and its backdrops. This photo booth comes shipped flat. I was able to put it together and plug it into my computer in a matter of a few minutes. I did not even need to consult any instructions. Is that not what we men are famous for?

This box, along with a smart phone, could also be helpful towards documenting what you did towards the NMRA Achievement Program or for preparing illustrated articles for publication.

(Reprinted with permission from “[Modeling Hints and Reviews for Large Scale Modelers and Others](#)”, by Nicholas Kalis).



HO scale Lower Montauk Branch by Nicholas Kalis now owned by Ben Hom

Product Review: Labstone Modeling

By Alex Belida, MMR

I recently purchased two kits from Dr. Ben's Scale Consortium (<https://www.debenllc.com>). One was for building two small logging camp bunk houses (**Photo 1**) and the second was for for an old rural schoolhouse (**Photo 2**).



1.

Aside from being HO scale models I could use in my projects, what intrigued me was that these were not kits with stripwood or styrene components. The main structural parts, the walls, were made from Labstone, a gypsum material commonly used in making dental molds. It is considered denser, harder and stronger than Hydrocal plaster. I had never worked with Labstone before, but it turned out to be quite an easy process.



2.

The wall pieces of the bunk houses were well detailed with a board and batten appearance. Some of the individual boards were cast as broken, split or missing, adding to the sense of realism. Doors were also cast into the wall sections with a well-beaten look. Holes were left open for the installation of the supplied plastic window frames and clear glazing.

The bunk houses kit came with cardboard pieces for the roofs. Also included was peel-and-stick simulated tarpaper to press onto the cardboard. I opted to replace this roofing material with some spare basswood which I thought would look better.

The other included parts were a black cocktail straw for use as chimney material, some thin laser-cut stripwood stair stringers and treads, and square stripwood for cutting and shaping to form skids on the bottom of the structures. These bunk houses were designed to be loaded onto flat cars and moved from one logging site to another.

Following the enclosed instructions, I carefully cleaned a few bits of flashing from the Labstone castings by lightly sanding the edges of the wall pieces as well as the window holes. (*Dr. Ben says you can save the powder from the sanding to later mix with white glue to make a paste for filling any cracks. I found no need to do this on the bunk houses but did use it for patching on the schoolhouse.*)

I opted to assemble the walls before staining and weathering them. I used Alene's Tacky Glue to attach one end section to one wall, ensuring they were 90 degrees to one another and perpendicular. After repeating the process with the other end piece and wall, I joined both sections together and allowed the glue on the four-walled shell to dry.

At this point I stained the walls with Dr. Ben's "Grimy, Dusty Buff." I added some of my own India ink stain and some brown stain from Mr. Weathering Color in various places. I also used the brown to stain the doors. The Labstone absorbed the stains very well.

When I was satisfied with the look, I turned to the roofs. Using the supplied cardboard roof base forms as a template, I cut pieces of some leftover Mt. Albert board and batten basswood siding to make my own roofs. I glued these to the wall shell with Alene's and stained them brown. I took some thin square stripwood and fitted it as a crown where the two roof panels met at the top of the structure.

I painted the window frames brown, attached the glazing with clear-drying canopy glue and set them into the wall holes. Some of the small windows were designed to be propped open and I decided to do this with three of them.

To finish up the bunk houses, I cut small roof holes and inserted the chimneys. I cut and shaped the skids, stained them brown and attached them to the base of the structures. Finally I assembled the stairs after staining them brown as well and attached them below the doorways.

The final weathering touches were to add some rust patches on the chimneys and around the window frames and door hinges with Dr. Ben's "Weathered Rust." I also used Pan Pastels of various hues on both bunk houses ([Photo 3](#)).

While these bunk houses are intended for a logging camp, I think they would also look good near a mine or an old-time oil rig or in a shanty town area. In my case, I am using them as outbuildings on a diorama I am building of the original 1859 Drake's oil well near Titusville, Pennsylvania.

As for the schoolhouse, the Labstone wall construction was similar albeit with an additional wrinkle. Per the instructions, I had to shave down the



edges of the side and end walls to create what was basically a 45 degree angle. This was to allow space to place a vertical square wooden beam at the four corners (**Photo 4**).



I made one huge error in adding the roof. The kit included a cardboard subroof to which you added peel-and-stick shingle strips. No problem. But I misread the instructions and used an alcohol-based stain to give the shingles a weathered wood look. This caused the shingles to come unglued and the cardboard subroof to buckle. So I once again cut two pieces of stripwood to make a

hardened subroof, attached other peel-and-stick shingles from my spare supplies bin and spray painted the new roof flat black. I painted the schoolhouse itself flat red and the windows and doors white before doing some light weathering with Doc O'Brien's weathering powders that I sealed with Testor's spray laquer.

Since my daughter Katie is a teacher in real life up in Rhode Island and an HO scale resident of Eureka in the history of my fictional Eureka and South Pass Railroad layout, I named the school after her (**Photo 5**). Let that serve as a reminder you may find it enjoyable to include family members in your layout and the history you write for it.



Back on Track...

Ops at the Brewery

By Greg Warth, Editor

During the Mount Clare Junction 75th Anniversary Mid-Eastern Region (MER) Convention last October, I had the distinct pleasure of joining up with Bill Wurtzell, Scott Unger, and John Gallagher for an operating session at the home of our MER President, Kurt Thompson, MMR. It turned out to be a very informative and challenging event on Kurt's switching, point-to-point layout, which services East Iota and the Miami River Brewery. This is a new, relatively small O scale DCC layout which operates impeccably on hand laid track and turnouts and packs a ton of action in a small space.

We were given schematics of the two end yards of the layout at the beginning of the first session and split up into two teams (**Photos 1, 2**), each with the task of moving several freight cars from one location to another. Being a relative novice to operating sessions except for running trains on my own layout, I found this to be more challenging than I thought it would be. But, thankfully, with the help of my teammate, Bill, we were able to get it done. Then we switched sides and faced a whole new set of intermingling tracks and turnouts!

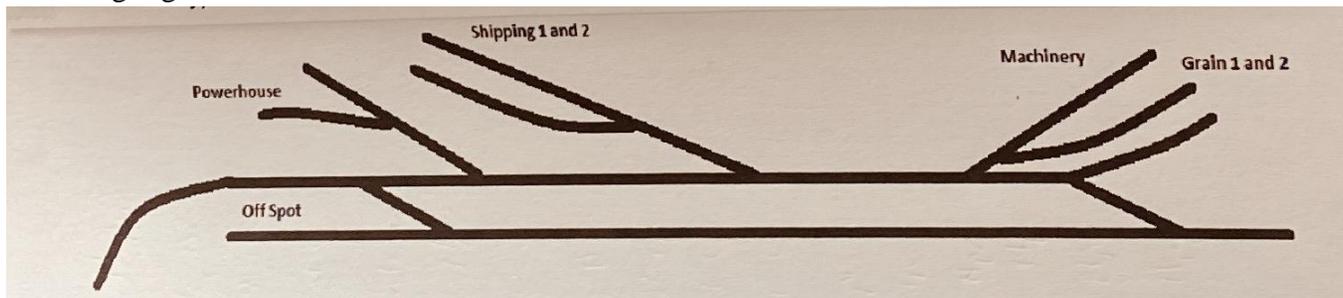


Photo 1: Miami River Brewery Yard Schematic

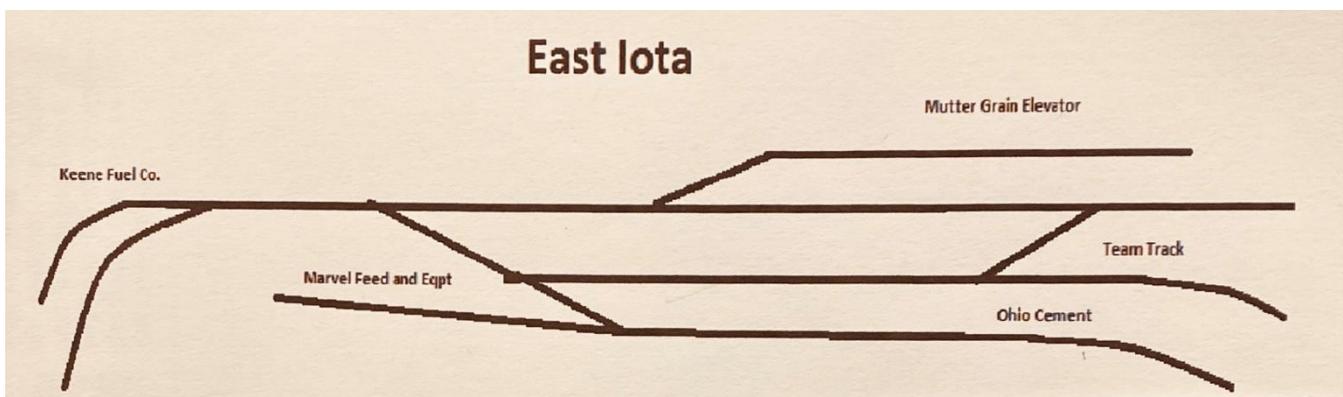


Photo 2: East Iota Yard Schematic



Notable in this event is that layouts do not have to be large to be interesting and fun to operate. Nor do they need to be totally completed or polished

Photo 3: Miami River Brewery Yard

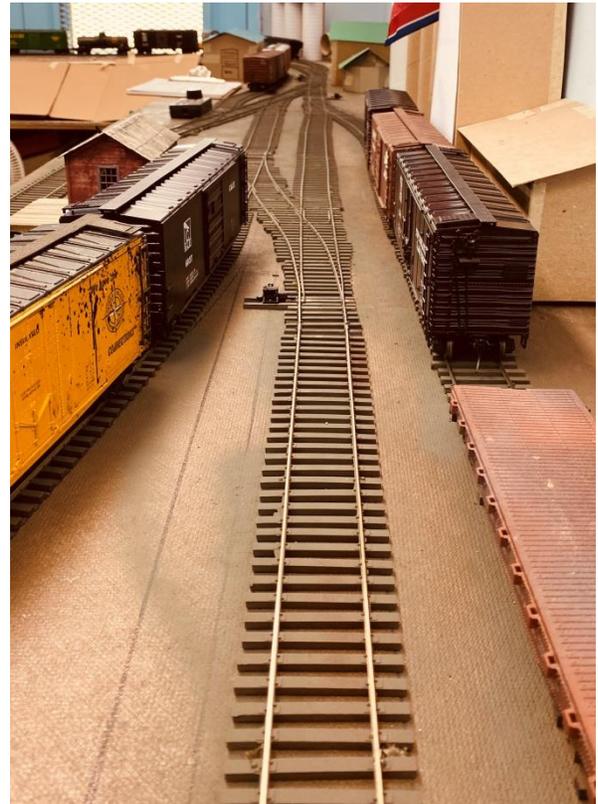


Photo 4: East Iota Yard

with buildings and scenery. Mockups work fine! The realism is in the operation. And if you do participate, which I greatly encourage you to do, remember to track your hours for your [Chief Dispatcher](#) Achievement Program Certificate.

This was a great learning experience for me, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to have been there. I discovered that being a yardmaster is no easy task and is a lot like playing chess. You have to think about five moves ahead for everything to end up in the right place.

This goes back to what Kurt was saying in his column near the beginning of this issue. Get involved in doing things that you have not done before. If you keep doing the same things and avoid trying anything new, you will not learn anything, and you won't grow. I felt like I humbly grew an inch or two after that day.



Photo 5: Starting and Finishing Point