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**NEWS, REVIEWS, INFORMATION TO USE**  
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**Volume 13 No. 2**  
**November/December 2025**



**We Take a Road Trip**  
**Indy & Strasburg Shows**  
**Passenger Car Building**  
**New Tracks and My Build**  
**A Fleet for Operations Part 6**  
**The Story of Pitts Cut and Environs**  
**Kit-bashing a Southern Pacific F-50 Flat Car**  
**Canadian Forest Product Converted Steam Part 1**  
**and so much more....**



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**November/December 2025**

**Volume 13 No. 2**

*Owner / Publisher*  
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Front Cover Photo

*The Pitts Cut and environs are ready for service on the Mountain Electric. The area is mostly finished and with a car headed to Jacobs Creek on the through truss on George Paxon's layout.*

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PRR K4 4-6-2 Postwar, Kohs, New, FP, 130p75 Tender, Road No. 3863, SJ Models, Korea .....	\$5495
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VGN AG 2-6-6-6, PSC No. 15809, EX+, UP, Can Motor, LEDs, D&D, Korea .....	\$2295
WM M2 4-6-6-4, C&LS, L/N, FP, DCC/Sound, Road No. 1203, Boo Rim, Korea .....	\$2895

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ATSF EMD E8 A-B-A Set, Key, L/N+, FP Warbonnet, LEDs, All Powered, No. 80, Samhonsa .....	\$2995
ATSF EMD F7 A-B Set, Phase II, Key, L/N+, FP Warbonnet, DCC/Sound, No. 311, Samhonsa .....	\$1850
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Questions? Visit **MARCHMEET.NET**, call 414-629-0030 or Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MarchOScaleMeet/>

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# From the Publisher's Desk

*Hello and welcome back to the Publisher's Desk, a/k/a rant, diatribe, harangue, tirade, and jeremiad page. I think I covered everything.*

Well, days are getting shorter and colder for us, so it's back to the layout we go. But before that, Amy and I took a 10 day trip ending up at the Strasburg 2 Rail Train Show on October 11<sup>th</sup>. With Amy doing the planning, you can bet there were quilt shops along the way, but also some other railroad and cool attractions.



Our first stop was a log cabin in Logan, OH. Nice, secluded and with a hot tub. Now the roads to get there, well let's just say one lane gravel at best. The next day we went to New Marshfield to visit Uncle Buck's Riding Stable & Dance Barn. We spent the next two and a half hours on horseback traveling up and down muddy trails that had to be over 50 degrees; all the time hoping the horses knew what they were doing! Our destination was the Moonville Tunnel, the most haunted place in Ohio. [You can read more here.](#) The CSX tracks, formerly Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad, were pulled up in 1988.





Next we went through Nelsonville, OH and saw some of the Hocking Valley Scenic Railway. They were not running this day, so I took a few pictures and we were on our way. Then we were off to find a local winery.



The next part of our trip was to a museum in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. It is the home of the one and only, Mothman Museum. This is quite a story, and if you have time, [check out one of the better videos about the museum here](#). This has everything, monsters, UFO, mystery men in black, military operations, ending in a major bridge collapse. It even inspired a book, *The Mothman Prophecies* by John Keel, and movie starring Richard Gere.







That night we stayed at the The Chessie Room which is part of the old Baltimore and Ohio train station, now called Heritage Station in Huntington, WV.

Next, it was time to strap in and hit the “*great roads*” on our way to Belington, WV to meet up with Bill Wade of B.T.S. First off, just getting to his place is a fun ride. This was one of the better roads as it was kind of paved. Most were just stone with no shoulders.

Bill is quite a guy and you can see his story [here](#). B.T.S., Which started as Bill’s Train Store moved on to producing an extremely large catalog of kits, Better Than Scratch-built. I believe he has the most products released for a single one man manufacturer spanning most all scales. Not only a kit manufacturer, but a great author. See his ad in this issue showing his books.

In a small unassuming building is housed hundreds of kits, castings and new prototypes he is







working on. We had a very informative visit and he graciously gave me a small kit I was looking at and I also bought a large building front that will be showcased in a later article.

After leaving and getting down to Belington proper we saw the yards for the Durbin & Greenbrier Valley Railroad. There was lots of equipment in various stages of operational to parts. Their BL2 number 82 was running, but not moving. They are working on it! Other units scattered around were not so fortunate.







The [New Tygart Flyer](#) was parked for the night and that was the next days adventure. Staying in Elkins, WV for two nights, we road the [New Tygart Flyer](#) on Thursday.

From their Website: “This wilderness excursion features mountain grades, an “S” curve tunnel, a high bridge and miles of unspoiled mountain views. Vintage diesel-powered locomotives climb along the cascading Shavers Fork of the Cheat River to the High Falls of Cheat. Enjoy the view relaxing aboard our comfortable climate controlled passenger coaches.

This vintage diesel-powered passenger train has gained a reputation as one of the most relaxing mountain wilderness excursions in our Mountain Rail Adventure portfolio. The 4-hour, 46 mile round trip departs at 11 a.m. from the restored Elkins Depot on Railroad Avenue.”

We opted for the Parlor Car Service upgrade and the trip was fantastic. The scenery following the Shavers Fork of the Cheat River was terrific as were the waterfalls at the end. I would highly recommend this ride if you are in the area.







The next day we rolled into Strasburg for Friday set up and the Saturday show featured in this issue. Amy had one more trick up her sleeve as Sunday, we stayed in a caboose in Sugarcreek, Ohio. Sugarcreek is also home of the Age of Steam Roundhouse Museum. Unfortunately that was closed this day, but we were able to drive around see some of what they had. Looking forward for a weekend trip back to see it.

Next, it was time to head back home and back to work. So the end result was a train show, but the trip was an adventure. That's what we try to do with our road trips. Sometimes you just have to "get out of Dodge" and enjoy what's out there.

Anyway, hope you liked our travel log without watching 200 boring slides like back in the day.

Happy Reading & Happy Modeling,

*Amy & Dan Dawdy*



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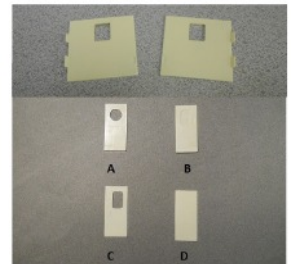
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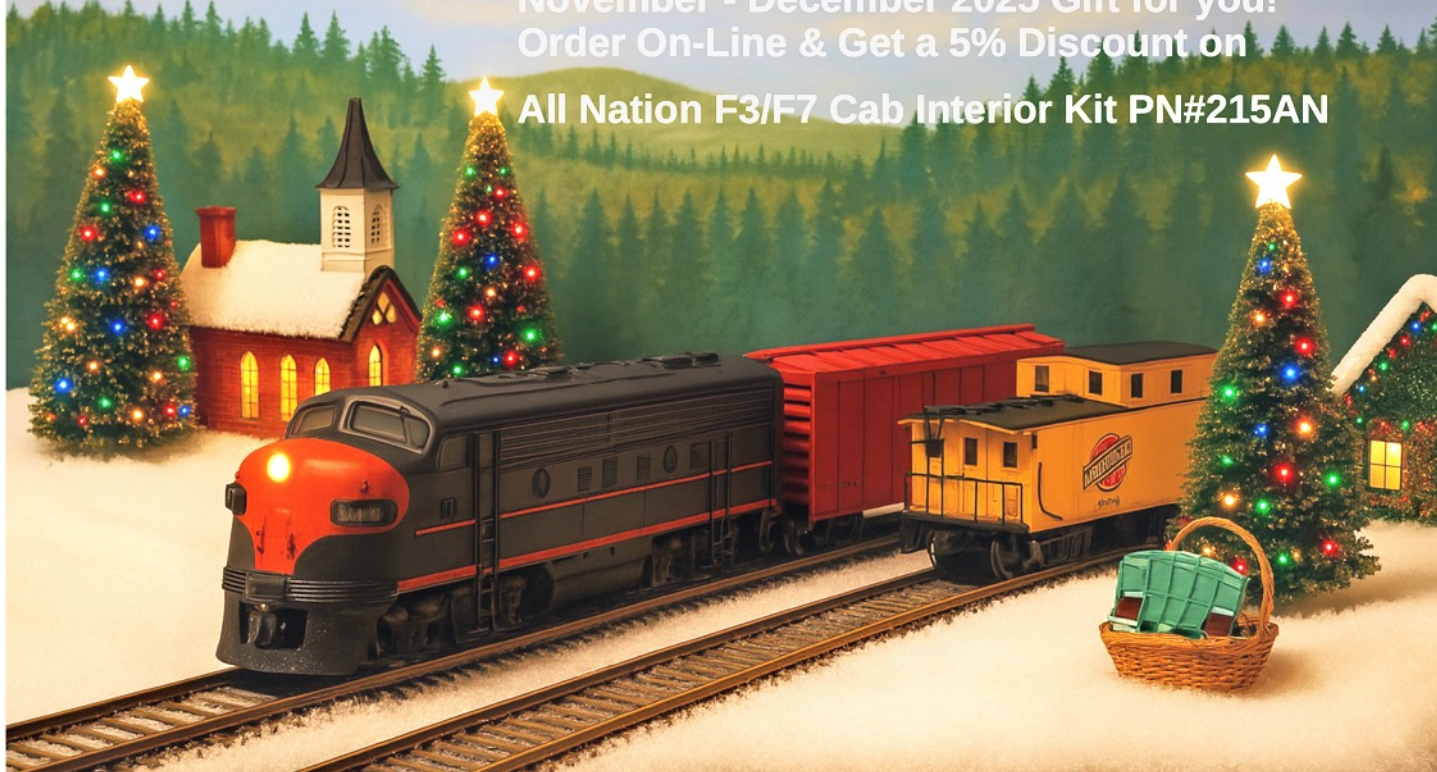
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# NEWS YOU CAN USE



New from Rails Unlimited. Rails Unlimited is pleased to announce that the Baltimore and Ohio 40 ft M27 boxcars are available both in single and in double door versions.

The steel box car was originally built in 1926 and 27 as a double door box car. In 1934 the mansard roof was applied to raise the inside clearance allowing Evan's Auto loaders. The 12-ft double doors allowed easy loading for the automobiles of that era.

Within a few years the automobiles were too big to be loaded into these cars, so they were converted into general use box cars with one of the double doors being sealed off and then in later years replaced with steel panel, with only a single door remaining.

There are also some end brake details included. Either model is \$140 for the build-up body as seen in the photos.

Here is a chance to own a very unique and eye-catching model to put in your trains.

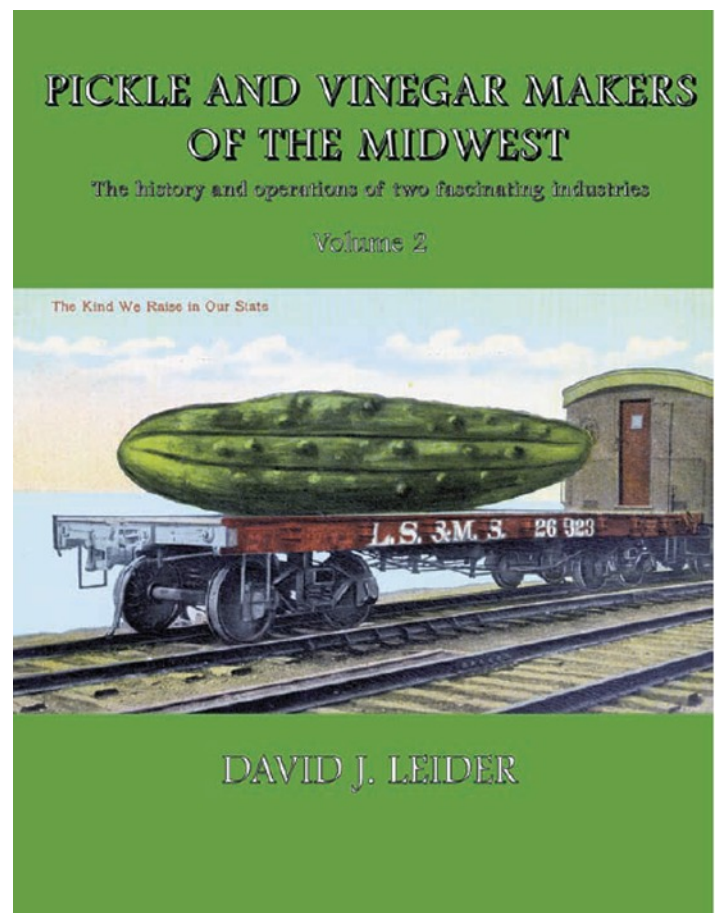
Email [Ted Schnepf](mailto:Ted.Schnepf@railsunlimited.com) at Rails Unlimited for ordering or more details.



A good friend of mine, David Leider, has just released volume 2 of his book *Pickle And Vinegar Makers Of The Midwest*.



The double door version is class class M27b and the single door version is class M27f. Both models are available in urethane from rails unlimited. The cars come with side and end ladders included with the model.



Both pickle and vinegar companies are featured – the major players, their history, operations and cars.



Special attention is given to Michigan and Wisconsin, with charts of where cucumbers were grown, cities with pickle and vinegar factories and their relationship to Chicago – at one time the leading maker of pickles and vinegar.

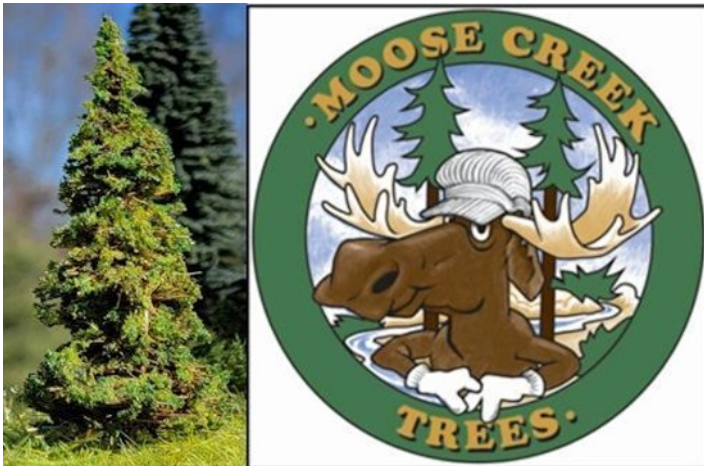
This updated Second Edition has 22 more pages plus new profiles of industries and lots more photos. Includes plans of vinegar and pickle cars.

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News from [Conowingo Models](#). We now have some 7 and 8-inch trees! in stock. This should be good for the O scale crowd. The 8-inchers are huge! Unfortunately, we only have them in ten-packs because of the size. [Drop us an e-mail](#) if you are looking for larger or smaller quantities of the 8-inch trees or any trees for that matter.



[See their Website for more items.](#)



[Atlas New Announcement Spotlight](#) - Atlas O Premier SD70M Locomotives. These are up for pre-order.

In 1992, GM's Electro-Motive Division (EMD) introduced the new SD70 Series of engines, which come in the standard direct-current (DC) and alternating current (AC) models. One glance at the design of this engine reveals the enormous technological gains in railroading. The SD70 boasts a 32-bit 16mHz control microprocessor named the EM2000. This computer works with the Integrated Cab Electronics (ICE) system to collect, analyze, and display a range of accurate-to-the-second information, such as speed, amps, throttle position, air brake operation, and cab signals. All of this information is displayed on full color liquid crystal displays that replace the gauges and indicators found on earlier diesels.



Atlas O Premier locomotives and rolling stock are highly detailed models that faithfully recreate the prototype down to the paint scheme and even railroad-specific details. They are usually offered in two styles: 3-Rail and 2-Rail and come equipped with Proto-Sound 3.0 With The Digital Command System Featuring Freight Yard Proto-Effects.

[See their Website for more details.](#)



Nick Bulgarino, one of the young guns in O scale, has opened a new business called [The Bulgarino Locomotive Works](#).



The Bulgarino Locomotive Works is the place to get your models restored, upgraded, or get parts for your projects! This website is made in two parts. First is my portfolio. BLW is primarily a repair and upgrade business, and you can see the work I do in my Project Blog. Each project is unique, so email/call and reach out to ask about your model.

The second is the BLW Store. Here, you can find models, detail parts, and electronics for sale! If you're looking for something specific, please feel free to Contact BLW to see if I can help you find what you're looking for. Bulgarino Locomotive Works is an Authorized Dealer of Soundtraxx and Precision Scale Company products.

If you're interested in having your locomotives or rolling stock worked on, please [Contact BLW to talk to me about your project!](#)



We have completed more Ray Buhrmaster scans. Here are his traction views, split into three galleries: Chicago Aurora & Elgin, including subsidiary Aurora Elgin & Fox River (55 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/Ray-W-Buhrmaster-35mm-Color-Collection/Traction-CAE>

North Shore (62 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/Ray-W-Buhrmaster-35mm-Color-Collection/Traction-CNSM-CSSSB>

Other traction, including Iowa and Canada (39 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/Ray-W-Buhrmaster-35mm-Color-Collection/Traction-Other>

More progress has been made on the William Monypeny Collection which was received from the Ray Buhrmaster estate this summer. Monypeny shot postcard format, mostly roster views, but occasionally a scene or structure. His work is unusually rare in that

he was able to travel and shoot during the height of the Great Depression in the 1930s. New galleries are as follows:

CB&Q/C&S/FW&D (152 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/CBQ-CS-FWD>

Trunk lines beginning with the letter "A" through "K" (100 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/A-K>

ACL/FEC (27 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/ACL-FEC>

Alton/Chicago & Alton (36 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/Alton-CA>

Boston & Albany (33 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/BA>

Central of Georgia/Georgia Railroad (43 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/CoG-GA>

CRI&P (44 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/CRIP>

Illinois Central (77 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/ICRR>

KCS/KCT/Louisiana & Arkansas (18 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/KCS-KCT-LA>

Louisville & Nashville (42 images): <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/William-Monypeny-Collection/LN>

More Jack Bailey scans have been completed by Mike Raia. This batch is entirely from the Chicago North Shore & Milwaukee. 205 images have been added to the existing gallery: <https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/Jack-Bailey-Collection/Traction/CNSM>



When Phil Weibler donated his Rock Island negs to us earlier this year, he also donated a batch of older negatives, mostly of Rock Island topics. We have scanned these and added them to the existing "Miscellaneous Negatives" gallery found in the Philip A. Weibler Collection.

The 54 images may be viewed at this link:  
<https://www.lakestatesarchive.org/Phillip-A-Weibler-Collection/Miscellaneous-Negatives>  
 We'll be back in about a month with more uploads from multiple collections and perhaps a new one or two.



From our friends at [The Public Delivery Track](#).  
 Atlas signal pre-orders are being taken.

Atlas Bi-directional Safetrans hooded "darth vader" signal, Atlas 238 or 239 single head Safetrans hooded "darth vader" signal, Atlas 240 or 241 double head (interlocking) Safetrans hooded "darth vader" signal, and more. [See their Webpage for pre-orders here.](#)

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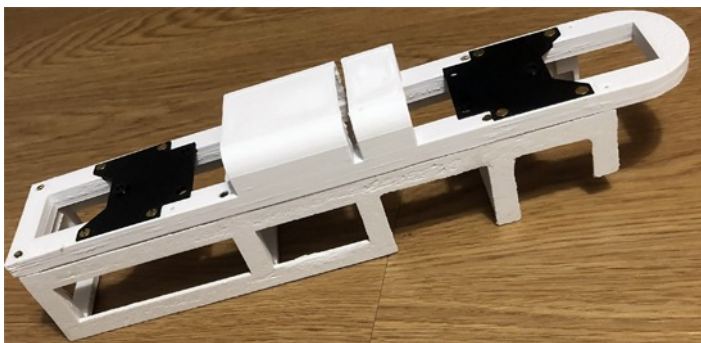
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New from [All Nation Line](#).

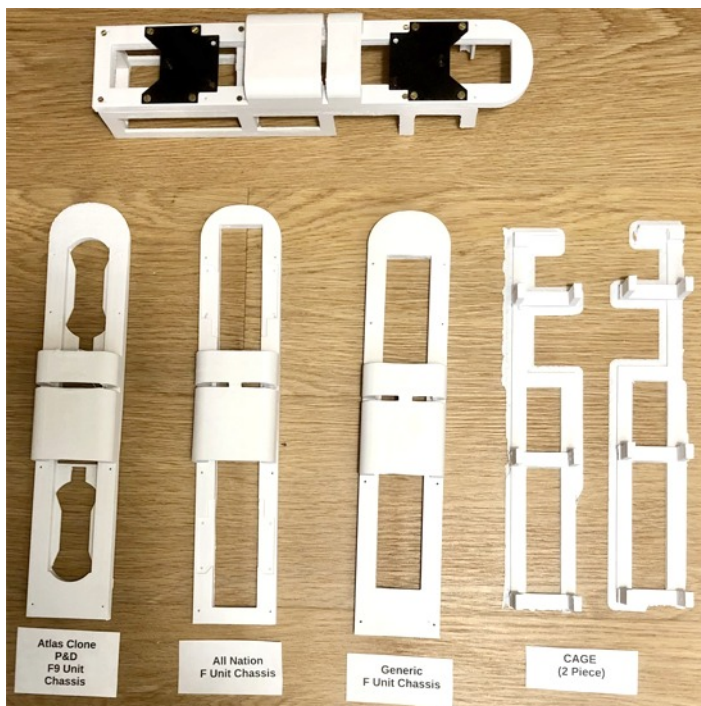
We have received many requests to develop a replacement chassis for these O Scale F units given the engine body or shells are so prevalent. What holds modelers up from upgrading these or to bring them back to an operational level is the lack of infrastructure to accommodate re-powering these locomotives. We hope these parts give modelers





optimal configuration opportunities to restore this equipment and get the models back on the layout.

Engine body infrastructure comes with the chassis that fits and mounts easily for servicing the engine. Can be used as an unpowered or multiple motor implementations. The chassis mounts to the cage structure. The framework mounts in the body and the



chassis mounts to the internal frame. Fuel tanks are either printed on the chassis or separate for later attaching to the chassis.

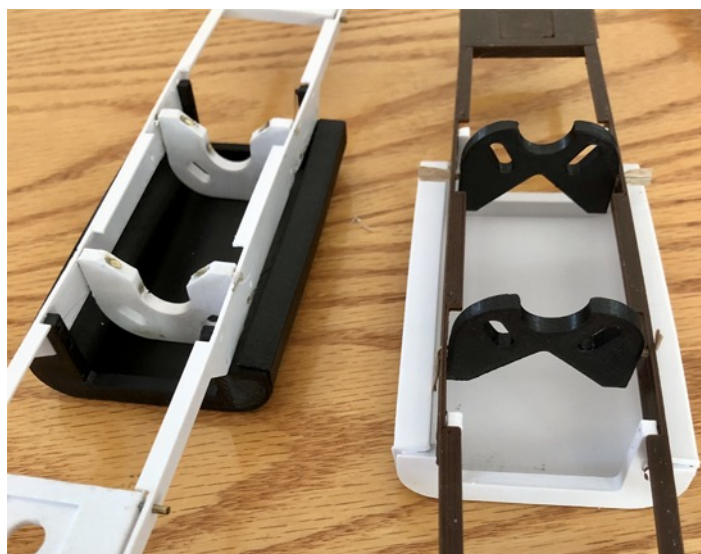
The form factor for both the Atlas F9 and P&D F units are identical and the chassis with the cut away is good for use with the All Nation Platforms Part Number 251AN for easy mounting the All Nation Blomberg trucks. [Click here for details.](#)

The 200 Ton Flat cars were built for the Chicago North Western and Pennsylvania Railroads by Commonwealth Steel Casting Corporation.



While flat car kits appear to be simple enough to build, this kit will present challenges none the less for the modeler to solve and finish out requiring a good amount of work. This unique car which has the greatest capacity of anything ever built for main line service at the time, would be a welcome addition to any layout. [Click here for details.](#)

Based on several of the solutions we have designed for conversions, upgrades and form factor chassis development for powering a variety of O Scale locomotives, we have utilized from our inventory of reference parts, that include those Bob Smith did for his company Central Locomotive Works GP and SD kits in brass.



The chassis and frame components developed to achieve a low cost 3D printed clone. The frame in this case as would have been soldered together by modelers years ago, replicates high mount and low mount motor configurations in ABS that can be integrated to the underside of the floor on the body of an engine. [Click here for details.](#)

We now offer 3 options for the EMD Flex-I-Coil Truck utilized on switchers such as the SW 1500.

[All Nation EMD Flex-I-Coil \(Single\) With 40" Wheels & JOURNAL BALL BEARINGS UNASSEMBLED Kit PN#627AN](#)



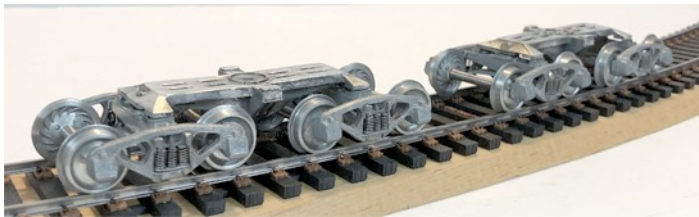
This is the 1st of 3 versions available utilizing our drives and transmissions whereby the journal ball bearings can be used with all our legacy drives with axle ends at 3/32".

[All Nation EMD Flex-I-Coil \(Single\) With 40" Wheels & PTFE BEARINGS UNASSEMBLED Kit PN#648AN](#)

This is the 2nd of 3 versions available utilizing our drives and transmissions whereby the PTFE bearing can be used with all our legacy drives with axle ends at 3/32".

[All Nation EMD Flex-I-Coil \(Single\) With 40" Wheels & BRONZE EYELETS](#)

This is the 3rd of 3 versions available utilizing our drives and transmissions whereby the Bronze Eyelet bearings can be used with all our legacy drives with axle ends at 3/32".



[200-Ton Dalman Sprung Freight Truck Set 33" Wheels \(1 Pair\) PN#646AN](#)

These type of truck configurations were found under heavy duty 200 Ton Flat cars manufactured by Commonwealth Steel Casting Corporation for many railroads such as the Chicago North Western and Pennsylvania Railroads. The dual trucks could have been Dalman or Andrews with the double body bolsters (aka common span bolster) to distribute the weight from the load on the roadbed.

[See their Website for all these and hundreds more products.](#)



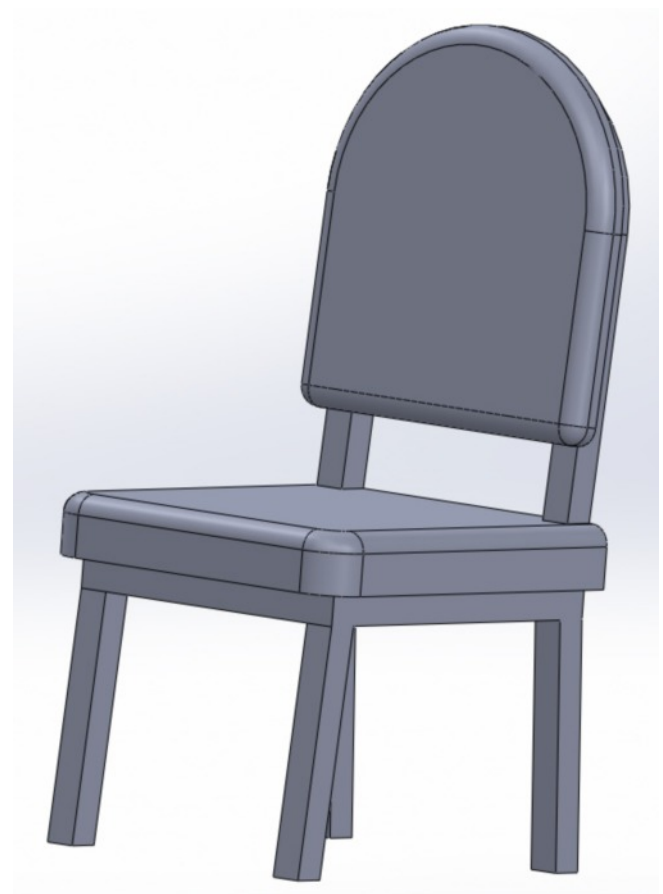
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[Dining Car Chair \(Version 2\)](#)





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Check their Website here for more Resin 3D printed items.



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See their ad in this issue and also check them out at [trainbid.com](http://trainbid.com).



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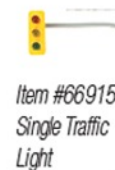
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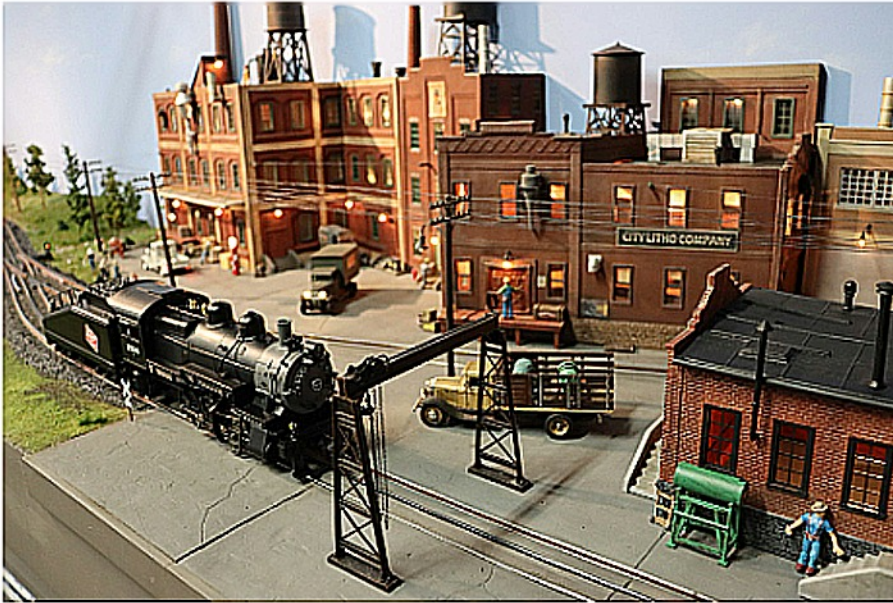
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October, 2025

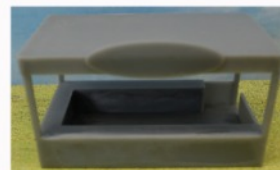
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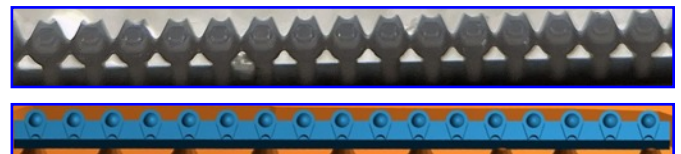


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# A Fleet for Operations 6: Steel, Tanks, and a Parting

By **Brian Scace**

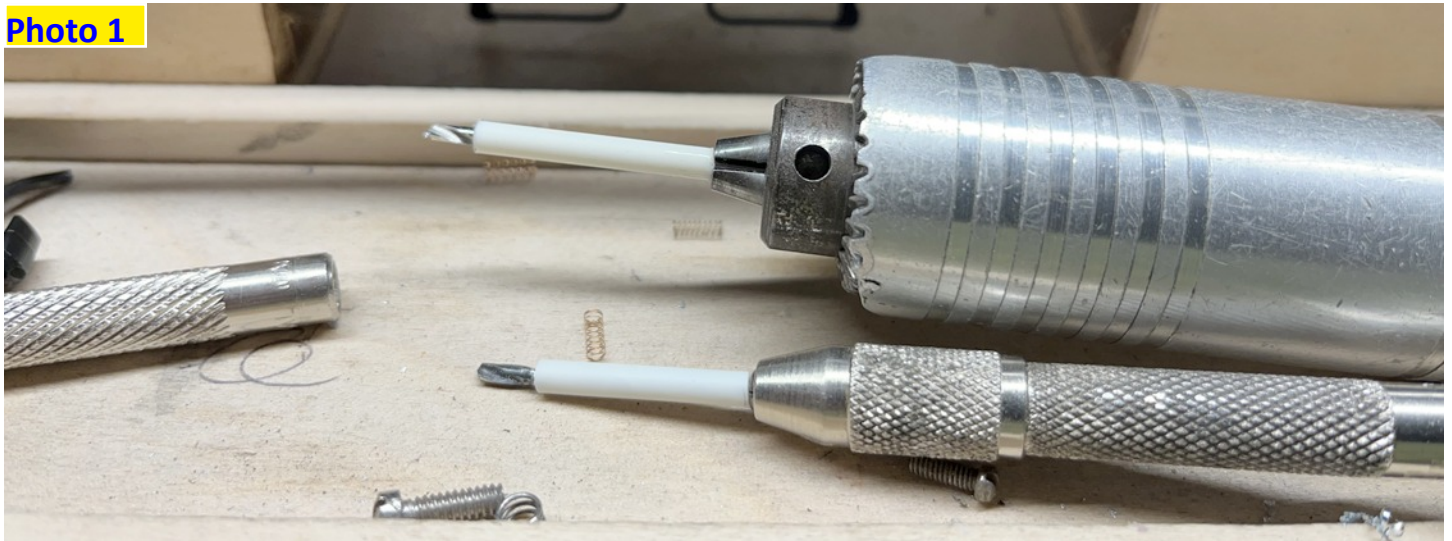
Questions, comments? Contact [Brian Scace here](#)

*Editors Note: This is a continuing series that Brian started in the [January/February 2025 issue](#).*

## Before We Begin

Let's learn about drill-stops, shall we? Stops quite simply are what they say on the tin; a collar on the bit to limit how deep you drill in your unbridled enthusiasm. If, for example, you are drilling a blind hole in a truck sideframe for blunt axles, stops keep you from inadvertently punching through the journal lid. Here, they'll keep us from scarring up the end of a tank or hopper while drilling free-hand for couplers. I use styrene tubing quite often for the purpose, long enough to be stopped by the drill chuck jaws, either a powered Jacobs or a pin vise (**Photo 1**). The depth is set by how deep you set the bit in the jaws. Half-inch Tamiya masking tape wound around the bit works, but I would only do that drilling plastic with a pinvise rather than under power. One trick to remember is to use a material softer than what you're drilling so the depth actually stops without scarring up the material or, worse, chewing through.

**Photo 1**



**Photo 2**



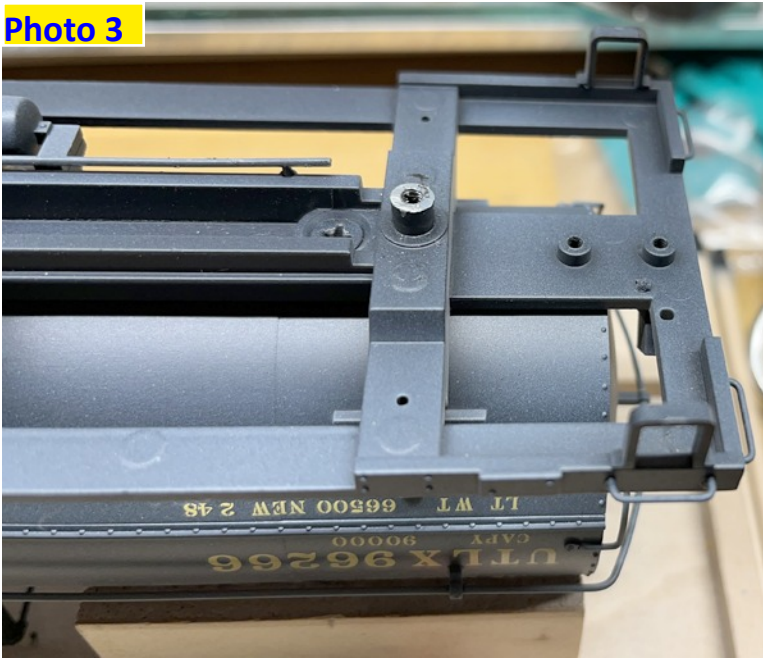
## Tanks and Hoppers

We haven't looked at too many tanks or hoppers in all this, and Atlas figures large in the available tanks offered as ostensibly ready-to-run. Let's look at one of them, the 11,000 gallon insulated car, as typical. I say typical as we have gone through sizes of Atlas tanks here up to their 33,000 gallon LP car and they really are very similar regarding what you start with and how you get where we want to go. About the only caution is to pay attention to those chafing blocks on Kadee's trucks; for some applications, we will need those to be cut down.

These cars are particularly significant offenders for some reason, and it would appear the lugs cast in the frames weren't quite long enough to bring their coupler down to gauge, so this 0.100" thick plate (**Photo 2**) was apparently added at the factory to bring them down even further than originally planned.



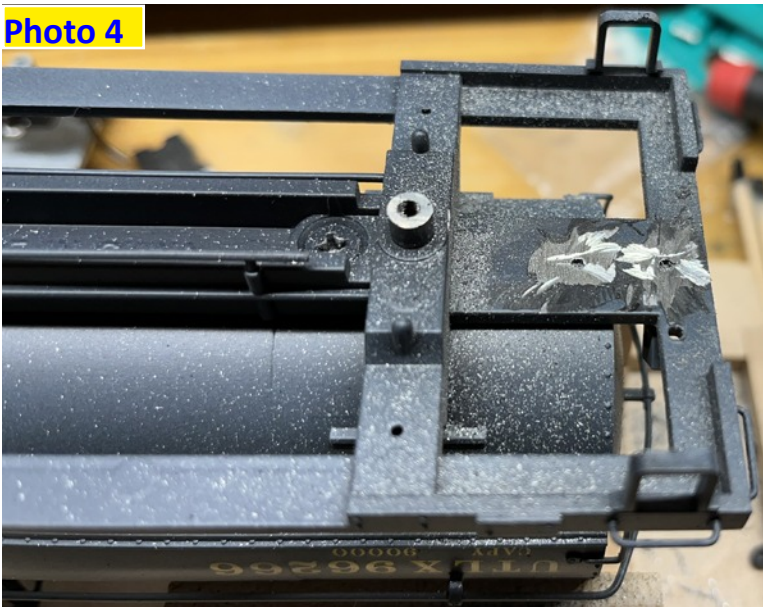
**Photo 3**



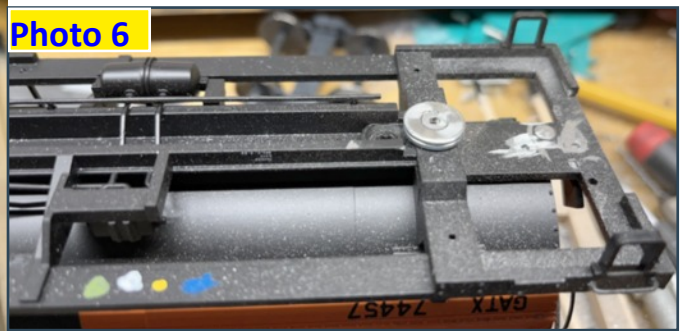
Otherwise, things are pretty much what you'd expect. The coupler boxes strip off as we have already discussed and, once you pull the trucks, you start on familiar ground (**Photo 3**). Knock the coupler mounting lugs off (**Photo 4**), put a pair of #8 washers over the truck mounting lug (**Photo 5**), knock it down flush (**Photo 6**), drill, tap 2-56, and mount the new coupler (**Photo 7**). On these, we used the Intermountain Bettendorf with the tops of the bolsters smoothed, then adjusted if needed as determined by our height gauge.

On that last one, there really is little option but to drill through the walkway/frame-end, cut the screw flush and dress it up as nice as you can, dot the end with some color, and blend the result when you weather up the car. You'll also run into this with hoppers and other open-end cars. Here is where you see the value in those drill-stops we discussed at the beginning of this installment, by the way.

**Photo 4**



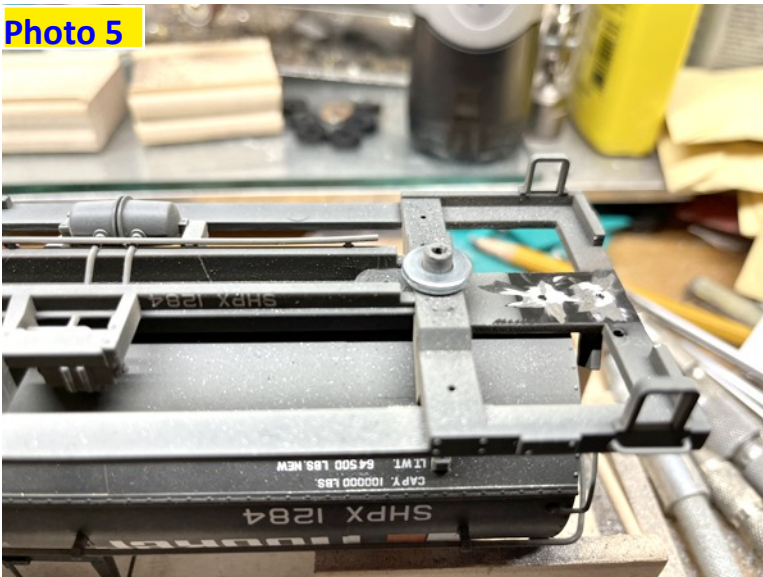
**Photo 6**



**Photo 7**

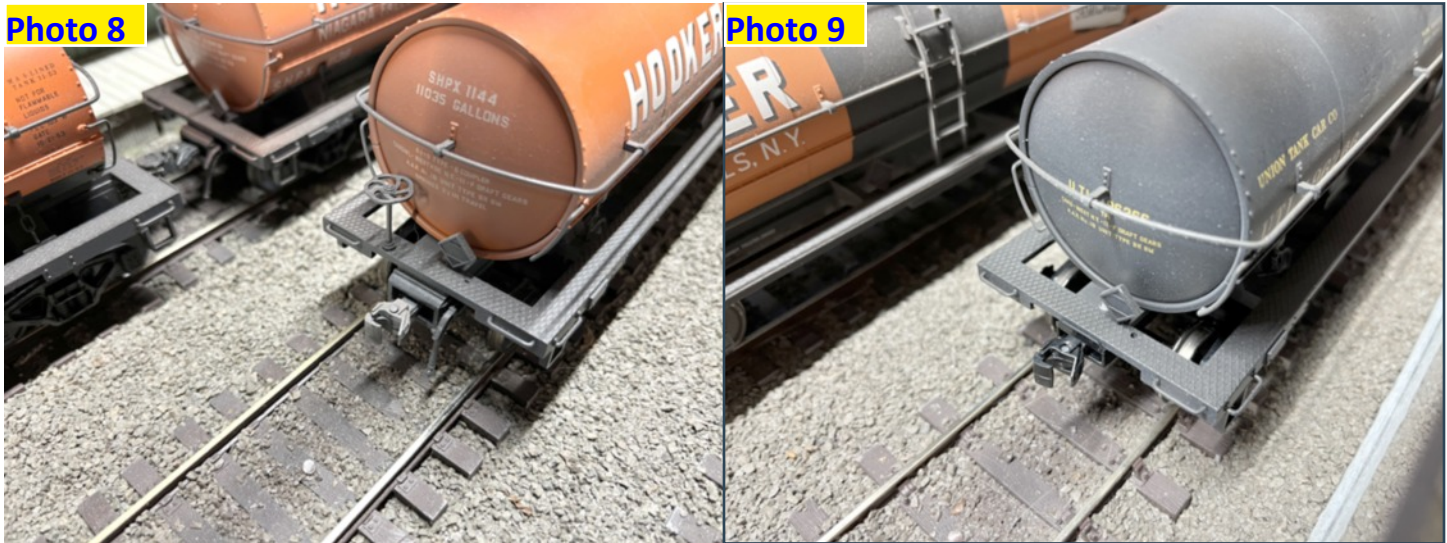


**Photo 5**





Again, to remind us all why this exercise is meaningful, compare **Photo 8** with **Photo 9**, the former the configuration out of the box and the latter as we dreamt it should be. **Photo 10** gives you an end-for-end comparison, and **Photo 11** is the finished product.



Hoppers and covered hoppers pretty much follow the same techniques with the same expectations. Occasionally you will find a really tough nut to crack, and it probably will be a hopper. Case in point, I have to admit not really finding a satisfactory way to deal with Atlas' diecast fishbelly twins, as they combine the



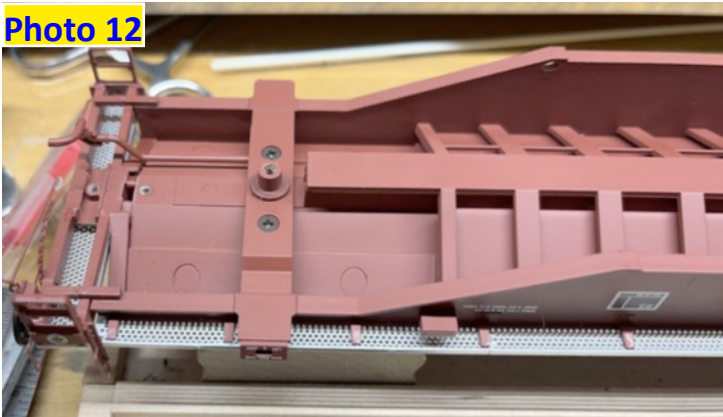
presence of a diecast coupler pad with a near-impossibility to fixture safely if I were to mill it off. I finally accepted what I could get by leaving the lid off the Kadee box, bolting up the remainder, and lowering the car to that somewhat unsatisfactory result. An improvement, but not a success, and I'm just not convinced the model is worth the effort. Accept it now, you are going run into these sorts of things on occasion. Never say "never" though, for one night at about 2am something will pop into the mind...

## Steel!

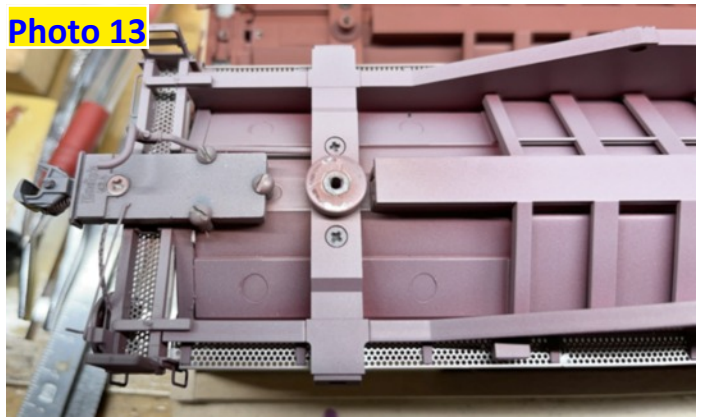
One operations scenario I'm writing at the moment goes a little contrary to the picking of a year within our usual limits of 1960 through 1980, and is a tribute to an old friend who was well known to several of us here, Tom Landrigan. Tom modeled what was in his lifetime the contemporary, and his subject was freelanced. He was a talented modeler. I have a couple of his locos here and several of his freightcars, a few I finished after his passing. Most are outside our usual era limits, so it occurred that it might be fun to build a fleet and write a turn-of-the-21st century scenario modeling Tom's Shawmut Terminal. It's been a very enjoyable foray outside my usual prototype interests.

One commodity that is a hallmark of the era is coil steel, so a group of coil cars became a project. The obvious candidate was the Atlas single-cowl car done in their Master range and several were bought from a friend who was thinning his herd at the time. These cars set up pretty predictably, first the usual operation of removing the Atlas couplers and trucks resulting in this as our starting point (**Photo 12**). Then, couplers in #819 boxes representing the cushioned underframes replace the originals, a stack of two or three #8 washers to set truck height and knock the rest of the body bolster off flush (**Photo 13**). These cars seem to vary between runs; some needed three washers and others only two using Kadee's 100-ton roller bearing truck, so don't get too cocky. You have to put the gauge to them. **Photo 14** compares the stock 2-rail version from Atlas to our work.

**Photo 12**



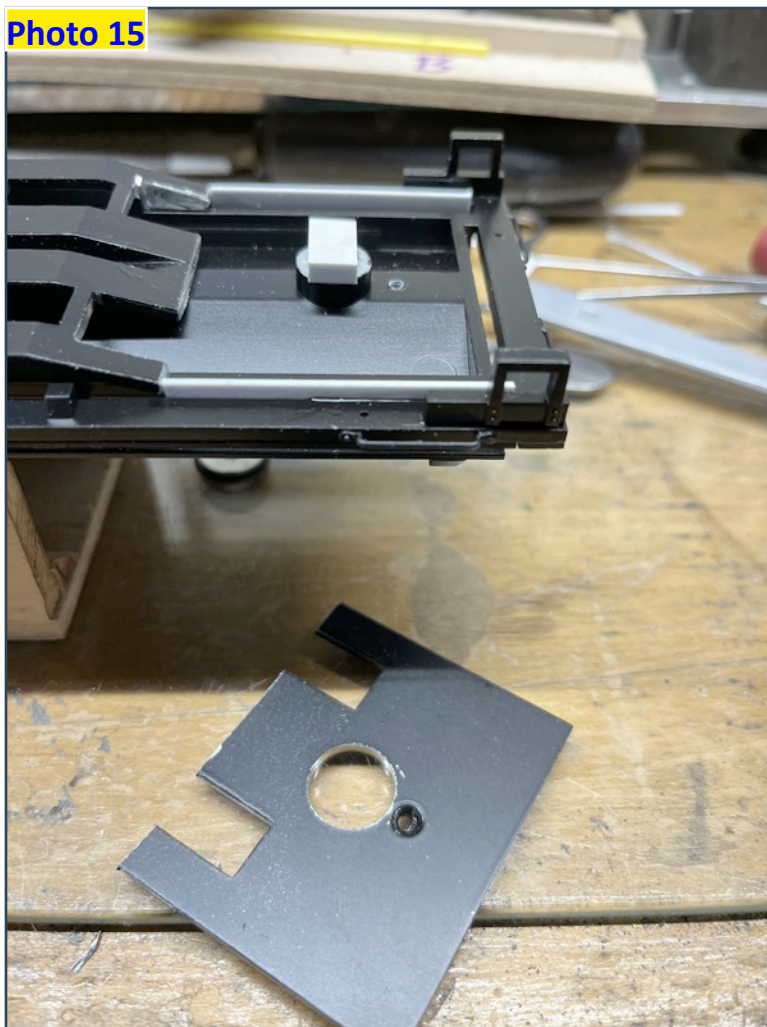
**Photo 13**



**Photo 14**





**Photo 15****Photo 16****Photo 17**

Now we come to a good example of an unlikely source we can explore. I wanted some variety in these cars, and went looking around for options. One that popped up was, oddly, from K-line. Although not the first to come to mind for useable material, they did do some scale-sized stuff late in their corporate life. One thing they did was an older twin-cowl coil steel car, by comparison a faithful copy of the Walther's HO offering from some years ago. It's a good example of what I mean by ferreting out the useful from the piles of, shall we say, the "impressionistic". Still, on inspection it is pretty obviously in need of serious attention, perched up on those trucks as it is.

After roping in a few "at bargain prices" it was obvious we had to dig out the ends underneath pretty enthusiastically before we could tuck a truck up where it actually goes. The first step after stripping the old trucks off is to cut the ends off the metal underframe back to where the gusseting starts (**Photo 15**), then open up the frame where the rear wheels of each truck will fit to get some swing.

**Photo 16** shows the reconstructed faux-frame ends that visually replace the bit we hacked off, along with a pad of 0.125" styrene that will be the truck mount. Because the Kadee truck mounts with and rotates around a bush rather than just a bolster screw, I felt a larger bearing surface for the bush was a requirement.

Now we stack everything up, and check the car height to see what might still need shimmed to hit the gauge properly, this time using the back of the gauge to determine the end-sill height (**Photo 17**). After a bit of paintwork, the 819 box gets mounted pretty tight against the truck mount after shaving the cast-in boss a little, drilling, then tapping 2-56 (**Photos 18 and 19 Next Page**). **Photos 20 and 21 (Next Page)** show the results after some paintwork and a little mixing of the covers.

I'll go a little further with the story to make a point we've only touched on, which is how far you might want to go in redetailing, kitbashing for appearance, matching photographs, etc.. In the case of the coil car project they all get weathered to knock the garishness down a bit. Everything here gets the treatment so the overall appearance of the rolling stock blends.



Photo 18



Photo 19

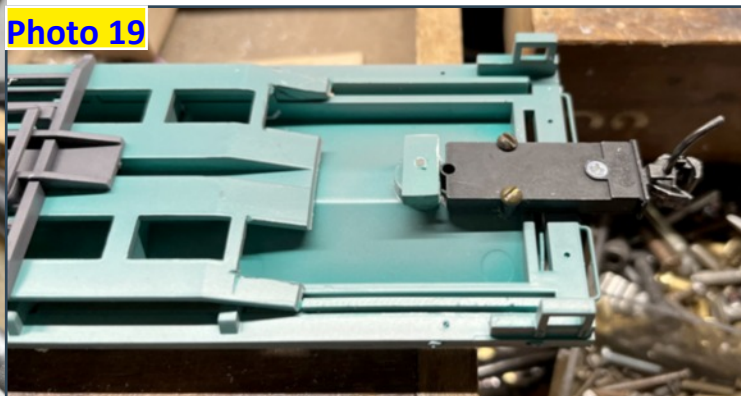


Photo 20



Photo 21



The layout being an ops platform first and foremost is intentionally lit so people can see to do their work rather than lit to replicate sunlight and shadows. Knocking down the color intensity by weathering the elements, such as rolling stock, goes a long way to blend everything into a visually cohesive "whole".

Back to these as an example, I wanted some to run uncovered as loads then drop the covers on as empties as an operations consideration. Uncovered, the coils are colored off some photos I had to hand, textured with a few swipes of fine wire-wool, the bands picked out in black, then loaded following some photos using the dividers Atlas provide for their single-cowl car painted in various colors. Hopefully, you can get a good idea of the potential (**Photos 22-26 Following pages**).



Photo 22



Photo 23



Photo 24

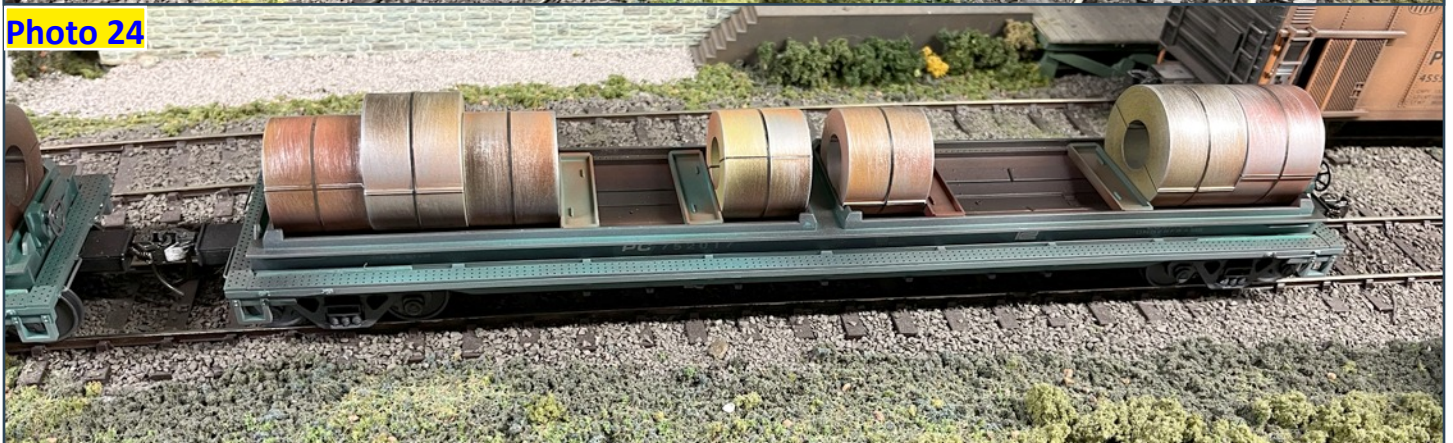




Photo 25



Photo 26





## We Part; You're on Your Own Now

Now I shall leave you on your own to wade through piles of shopworn hi-rail boxes for raw material and, yes, tweak quite a few older "scale" items (even brass cars) that don't pass the car-height test. We've established a philosophy for performance, reliability, and maintainability of a fleet by choosing a standard truck/wheelset and coupler, then sticking with it. We've explored the notion that our chosen coupler and box placed properly under the bottom of the car end, thus representing the draft gear integral at each end of the frame of the prototype, establishes a fixed dimension while it is the truck height we adjust in order to match couplers to the height-gauge. Indeed, rather than being called a "coupler-height gauge", it would be better called a car-height gauge.

The result is a matter of fidelity as we rid ourselves of the height compromises inherent in anything supposedly "screwdriver-compliant" from hi-rail to 2-rail in O. Indeed, you'll discover that at least one importer's penchant for charging extra for two-rail wheels and couplers might well be money wasted; the work and material required either way being about the same. You've picked up some new tools and skills to get there pretty easily, so now you should be able to tackle whatever you might come across that appeals.

From this point forward, you get to detail, paint, and weather to suit as an exercise left to the modeler.

Questions, comments? Contact [Brian Scace here](#)

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# The Indianapolis O Scale Show

By Dan Dawdy



Again this year, the La Quinta Inn & Suites Indianapolis South was the host hotel and it was a fine venue. Using two rooms just down the hall from each other, it appeared that most tables were sold.

The only large vender, Bill Davis of American Scale Models, was absent due to illness, but other than that, it was a full house.

Let's take a look around and see just what went on.

*Amy manning The O Scale Resource Magazine and the Model Railroad Resource 3D modeling table.*







*John Wubbel from All Nation Line on left talking with Leon Walker*



*All Nation Line products*



*Dan Mason on left with Marty Megregian and Joe Gamby*



*All Aboard Trains display*



*Andy Sunderland: East Gary Car Company talking with David Schultz.*



*Smiling Jim Canter with tables full of deals.*





*Part of Ted Schnepf's Rails Unlimited display*



*O Scale Turnouts' tables*



*O Scale Central display: signing up new members*



*Jim Hobbs' display of brass and steam.*



*More and more trains for sale*







*Jim Hobbs' display of brass and steam.*

The show is growing and needs your support. There was a good variety of equipment at decent prices. Plan on coming next year. It's a great way to head into the cooler months and kick off your modeling season!




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# The Strasburg O Scale Show

By Dan Dawdy



Taking a 10 day vacation and ending up at Rich Yoder's O scale show once more.

Held at the Strasburg fire station, three times a year, there is always something different than some of the larger shows. It's also great to see many of the East Coast guys again who don't always make it to the March Meet.

Let's take a look around here and see just what went on.



*And again, Amy mans our tables.*



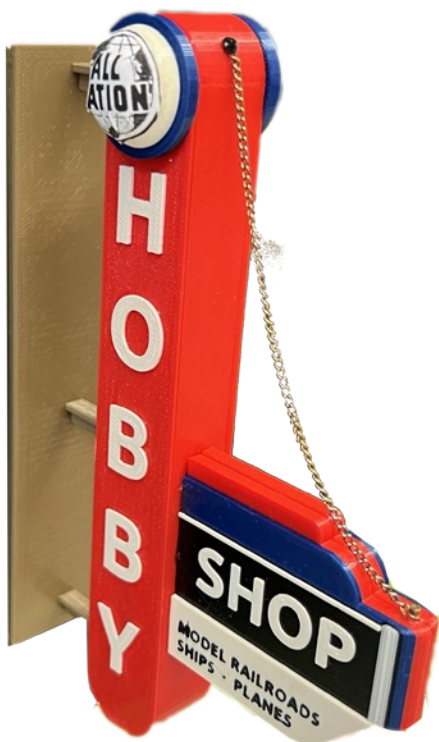
*At \$20 a car, these did not last long.*



*Lots of parts from the Weaver line and Bob Lavezzi along with many other models.*







*Always new and cool stuff from All Nation Line and John Wubbel.*



*Always good to see Bruce and Darcy Blackwood.*







*Nick Bulgarino and Ken Kime having a debate about something... All better now. Nick is now running a new business, [The Bulgarino Locomotive Works](#).*



*Kerry Kime watches the table while Ken wanders aimlessly getting into trouble.*



*\$15 or three for \$40 from Allegheny Scale Models.*



*Brass cars and drivers, decals, parts and pieces.*



*I found something hiding behind the decal boxes.*





*More people, more stuff and more fun!*



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# The Story of Pitts Cut and Environs

By George Paxton

Questions, comments? Contact [George Paxton here](#)

My domestic manager was in the layout room one day and told me we needed a scenic feature that was noticeable when just walking into the layout room. In 56 years of marriage, I have finally learned it is best to follow good wifely advice. We won't go into how long it took me to come to that conclusion. And for that matter, I have come to accept that it is equally peaceful to just follow bad wifely advice as well. Anyhow, in compliance with instructions, we planned a fairly large gully to be crossed by a few bridges with this all visible from the layout room door. The old girl told me it would be the layout's "wow factor" whatever that is.

To prepare for this task, we dusted off a few scratch-built bridges from our narrow-gauge past that were saved in hopes of recycling into the new layout. We find it difficult to part with things we have spent many hours making. We tend to hang onto things in hopes of finding a future use for them. This, of course, results in the layout and storage areas looking like a hoarder's paradise. On one bridge, the three-foot rails were removed and re-laid with standard gauge. On the other, the old rails were left in place and will be used as the guard rails and standard gauge rails were just, with considerable difficulty, laid outside them. **Photos 1 and 2** show the two bridges as they were used on the last narrow-gauge layout. The scene on the new layout was sort of planned and built around these two bridges.

Provision to support the overhead wires over the bridges was needed with our new layout traction. For the through truss, the cross-span wires were extended through holes drilled in the diagonal bridge members. The little cast trolley hangers were soldered to the span wires before they were installed.

Photo 1





**Photo 2**



Then the contact wire was run the length of the bridge and soldered to the hangers. This was a fiddly task: trying to maneuver the soldering iron between all the bridge timbers and get good solder joints without setting the bridge on fire. The contact wire was left long to reach points where it would attach to the wires approaching the bridge from both sides. For the pony truss, timber frames were built onto the bridge to hold the overhead wire. These frames look like hangman's gallows which were a common form of construction for traction lines crossing deck bridges and trestles.

**Photos 3 and 4** show the two bridges after reworking them for the new layout. Sorry about the chunk of benchwork timber showing through the

tunnel mouth in the pony truss photo. You don't really notice that when the front bridge is in place as well. Probably should cover it though; or at least paint it black. In Photo 4, the through truss is just sitting in position and not installed yet as we need to remove it to add more trees.

The above photos are getting us well ahead chronologically of the story here. Getting back in sequence, after selecting and reworking the bridges, we had to work out how to arrange the landfall to accommodate the two bridges. The necessary carpentry work was accomplished, track supporting plywood installed on risers, roadbed, ties and some rails were laid, and wiring roughed in for the scene.

**Photo 3**





Photo 4



Figure 1

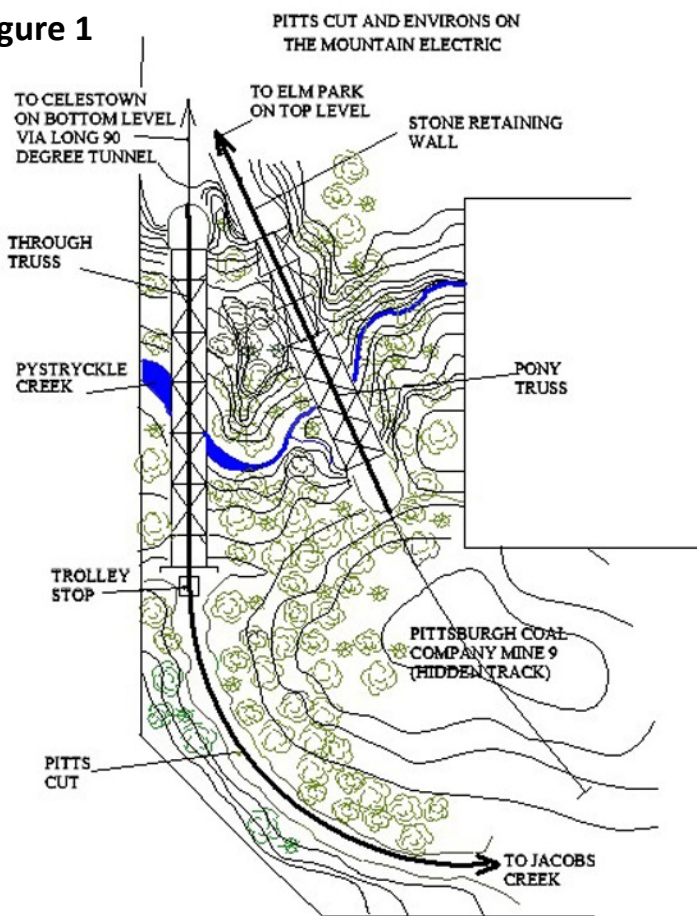


Figure 1 is a plan of the area of the layout. I confess that some of this was done during and some even after the area was built as we had a limited pre-conceived notion of how this area was going to actually look. It sorta just evolved!

But, before getting seriously into the details of the scenery for this new area, we had a bit of homework to do.

One problem was acquiring some knowledge and skills that would lead to the correct sort of vegetation. My old layouts, in pre-historic narrow-gauge times, have always been Colorado themed affairs. Sparsely growing pine trees on near barren rocky land, mostly 90-degree sloped hillsides, were sufficient. But with now modeling southwestern Pennsylvania, we needed lots of deciduous trees with extensive undergrowth on hillsides generally not as steep.

We had to go back to Scenery 101 and work out methods for making eastern scenery with deciduous trees, as the new layout would need a heap of them. So far so good. We are still testing techniques and have yet to work out the best method (read that as dead easy, but still looking

OK), but we have managed to make a few marginally usable trees along the way. Another thing we did was purchase quite a few ready to run trees through EvilBay. They are not works of art, but when arranged in a group or kept in the background, they are reasonable. They are on the small size for O scale, but do a good job of representing trees at a distance. Some of them glitter and sparkle like a new watch or an overworked nuclear reactor, but hitting them with a bit of flat or some dull shade of green helps them become more acceptable.



We just needed lots of trees, so buying these Chinese ones has helped increase the tree count. Hopefully, in the near future, we can come up with some great ideas for making lots of them on our own. This will keep me from needing to spend more money on ready-made trees.

To try and do a reasonable job of modeling Appalachian scenery, we spent some time on Google and copied many photos of southwestern Pennsylvania and West Virginia scenery to use as a guide. A file system in the computer with categories for “coal mines”, “deciduous trees”, “rocky cliffs and rockwork”, “road crossings”, “towns & buildings”, and “waterways” was set up. As we Googled away, we copied things of interest to the files. Eventually we had a lifetime’s worth of ideas to help our modeling look the part. After all, it has been a long time since living in the area.

A preparatory thing needed was to learn to paint a reasonable facsimile of a deciduous tree. After much pain and trying we had previously worked out a craft-type way to do a reasonable facsimile of a pine tree for use on previous layouts. Not being very artistic, some sort of a procedural, craft-type approach to artwork was needed. To get ready for this current task we printed some of the deciduous tree photos from the files just created, got out the paints and brushes, poured a glass of red, and went about learning a deciduous tree painting technique. This produced some very foggy mornings after. Although not works of art, our new deciduous trees are not too bad. We really don’t want anything in the background to the standard of the great masters anyhow. The background, in my way of thinking, should be, well, the background. It is there to add a perception of depth to the scene and support the foreground where the trains, structures and other details are. The background should not be detailed or good enough to draw attention away from the foreground. And, there is certainly no danger of our background doing that, so we are all good. Also, when we run across one of our painted trees that doesn’t look all that good, we pause for another glass of red, have another look, and our artwork seems to improve.

Another thing we did to transition from modeling Colorado to modeling southwestern Pennsylvania was to change our basic earth paint color. This is a basic first layer we put over all scenery: ground, rocks, roads, etc.

For Colorado we have always used a light grey tone. Now we have switched to a tan tone which better resembles the damper and richer dirt and sedimentary rock found in the east. The prevailing rocks in the eastern area depicted by our layout are sandstone and shale which a light tan does a better job of representing. Out west, the grey worked as the rock was mostly granite and other igneous types and the ground mostly bone dry. Since dirt in any area is mostly just decomposed local rock, the colors of each should not be radically different. They will vary in shade, and the perceived color will be affected by weathering and moisture content, but the underlying root color should be similar. We have seen layouts with chocolate brown ground and bright pink rocks. I personally don’t find contrast of color and radical shades prototypical. But, to each, his own.

With the essential preliminaries out of the way, we were ready to get up to our ears in scenery work – both figuratively and literally.

### **Building the Creek Area**

After going through quite a pile of cardboard strips, burning myself numerous times with hot glue, using a few bundles of hand towels and mixing over 20 pounds of plaster, this rather big gully finally evolved on the layout. It took me longer to clean up the plaster mess than to build the scenery shell.

Lots of rock molds were poured and placed on the walls of the gully. Many think of the eastern mountains as gentle sloping hills fully covered with trees and vegetation. But there are some very steep areas with vertical exposed cliffs as well. I recall crawling over many a boulder and struggling along rock ledges when tracking down deer when growing up. It was my luck several times to take a clean killing shot and have the deer use his last bit of strength to jump off a ledge which required quite a bit of climbing, grunting, sweating and swearing to recover the carcass. It had to be done as I could already taste it.

All the lily-white plaster resulting from the previous efforts was given a coat of dilute earth color paint – the new tan stuff. Rock faces were over-sprayed with black shoe dye well diluted with wet water.



The rock faces were given washes of other shades to create highlights and shadows then hit with more of the dilute black spray to blend it all together. Brown, tan, straw and various shades of green colored sawdust and ground foam were applied to the non-rock surfaces after they received another heavy coat of earth paint. Broken plaster, stained with thinned earth color paint, was arranged in piles under cliff faces to represent rock fallen from the cliff above. More ground cover and glue were added to get lots of texture on the flatter areas. Fallen limbs and a few stumps were added here and there. Some ferns were added made from plastic vegetation we found in a local pet shop that was intended for use in a fish tank. These came in long strings, but we cut them apart and planted them as individual ferns. Grass clumps and weeds were planted. Slowly the area began to look something better than the earlier lily-white plaster hillsides.

With our newly acquired, but dubious, deciduous tree painting skills, we braved it and painted some trees on the backdrop.

A creek was to tumble down our gully. Loose rocks, some fallen trees and other debris were glued to the creek bed. Some sand banks were added, too. When this was all dry and secure, the creek water was poured using two-part resin with a bit of green-blue dye added to the first pour. For the most part it was shallow tumbling water, but there is a nice pool at the bottom. A bit of titanium white was dry brushed on to represent the white water that forms in the rocky rapids here and there. **Photo 5** looks down on the creek in the gully.

We needed to build the abutments for the two bridges. In the interest of variety, they were made variously of stone, concrete and timber. A long retaining wall was built to the bridge abutment for the upper siding to a coal mine. This was laid with individual stones. Took a bit of time, but the individual stones look much better than



**Photo 5**

cast rock sections when modeling dry stonework. See **Photo 6** taken before the trees and vegetation had been added.

During, between and after all the above tasks, trees were planted in the gully and on the hillsides. After each step we would plant some more here and there. It became a case of trees, trees and then more trees. We avoided putting tall trees in areas where they could interfere with the later bridges.

The once substantial forests in most of southwestern Pennsylvania had been cut over quite a few times in the few hundred years since European settlement. Very large trees have all but disappeared. There always seemed to be a large proportion of small and dead trees.



**Photo 6**

### **Tree Problems and Solutions**

My wife takes me on nature walks sometimes. While she looks lovingly at the birds and wildflowers, I scrounge around in the adjacent bush, dodging our many poisonous snakes and man-eating spiders down here, looking for scenery materials. One good thing we do have is a tree, more of a big shrub actually, that I have called Tea Tree, probably erroneously. I think it is from the Myrtaceae family of plants which down here we know as Melaleuca.



It has very fine leaves that often fall off in dry weather and the result is a very lacy thickly packed branch structure that looks for all the world like a naked tree. They seem to grow in poor soil along railroads, roadsides and walking trails and other places where the poisonous snakes like to hide in wait. These I select for their appropriate shape and carefully harvest them using the diagonal cutters I tend to carry on such nature walks just for that purpose. I put the harvested twigs gently into the empty beer carton I also carry. When we meet people along the trail, they tend to look my way with the “why is that idiot carrying a beer carton out here“ look. But it comes in handy when finding more than a few tree armatures. The wife usually pretends she does not know me on these occasions.

The harvested tree armatures are quite delicate and fragile but very effective. We flock them for living trees and use them as is for dead ones. We first give the armatures a good spray of a solvent based clear paint to serve as the glue for making the flocking stick to the branches. The spray when dry also stiffens and strengthens the usually delicate armatures. These have a much more tree-like look than the historically used privet or sage brush tree armatures. The “trunk” of these cuttings can look a bit thin for a tree in O scale though. The thin trunks can be dolled up a bit by wrapping them with some masking tape and then covering with grey colored gap filler or even some building adhesive. Two or three of the harvested twigs can be taped together this way for a larger and very full tree. Sticking a nail with some glue on it in between the twigs before wrapping them with tape provides a handle to hold onto while working on the tree and a “tap root” for planting the tree in the scenery later. The nail also is used to stand the trees in a piece of 2x4, with holes drilled in it, while working on it. A bit of grey paint, and some black dry brushed over the grey for shadows, kills the shine of the dried gap filler or adhesive and produces a realistic rough bark look. Using a wet finger, you can smooth the gap filler or adhesive if you prefer to model a smooth bark tree such as a Sycamore. **Photo 7** shows one of these trees armatures in work by taping together 3 Melaleuca twigs and coating with grey acrylic gap filler to fatten up the trunk and some lower limbs and add rough bark. When the last coat of the sticky gap filler is troweled on, you could rake it with your hair comb to develop a vertical bark-like structure in the goo. Just don’t use it on your head for a while! You might not have our Melaleuca up your way, but a stroll in the bush will turn up some good candidates for your use. Sure beats buying trees.

**Photo 7**



Model trees often just have dowel- straight trunks that are stuffed into holes in the plaster scenery. Some real trees do appear that way in nature, but most taper to a larger diameter near the ground and often have the tops of roots splaying out in all directions. This is a feature well worth taking the time to model for close-up trees. When using the gap filler or adhesive to cover trunks, you can tease the stuff out into points at the tree base to model this root structure. **See Photo 7.**



**Photo 8**

Another tree armature material we have discovered is the heads of spent Sedum. Sedum is a kind of succulent-type plant, I think. It grows in the US as well. It is sold by many trade names such as Morning Glory. It has a nice-looking flower that pokes up well above the rather low-lying foliage. **Photo 8** shows the flower in bloom. And **Photo 9** shows a spent head as harvested. When the flower dies off the remaining head can be turned into a tree armature. Such tree armatures have a rather unique branch structure that looks all the world like a miniature gum tree - a Eucalyptus. Down here gum trees are everywhere. They also grow in the US. The story is that they were imported in great numbers to Southern California, where trees are few and far between, by the Southern Pacific Railroad in the 1800s in hopes that when they grew large enough they could be a source of ties for the railroad. They are all over Southern California as a result. But the species selected for its fast-growing characteristic was not a brilliant one as when cut the wood dried and twisted so badly it was useless for railroad ties. Gum trees were used extensively down here for ties, which we call “sleepers”, quite successfully. But we have about a hundred different species to pick from.

**Photo 9**

But the structure of the Sedum armature is good for other species of trees as well. Some species of Maple trees have the same branch structure. And if you harvest them just after the flower is spent, they still contain many tiny brown petals that can be sprayed with clear or green paint to preserve them and keep the petals from falling. We flock them and use them mostly for background trees, but some can be selected to provide nice looking foreground trees as well.

Since discovering Sedum as tree making material, we have been hunting for sources to collect from. We even found some dwarf varieties in our own yard. Some of our friends had them in their yard and we go around with our trusty beer carton to harvest them. Matter-of-fact one friend has even taken to bringing me baskets full of the spent heads to keep me from trampling his other flowers when I go there to raid his patch.

The Sedum armatures can also be grouped with tape and goo to produce other shapes and larger trees.



**Photo 10**



**Photo 11**



These approaches help me to up the tree count without much investment of cash. And, with the walk to fetch the twigs, we get a bit of exercise in the process. It would be a better day out collecting the tree armature material if the old girl would let me start out with a full box of beer.

Another way to make very nicely detailed tree armatures is to use short lengths of electrical cable. **Photos 10 through 14** show a process for making tree armatures this way. These trees require more time to make, and the process is best reserved for highly detailed foreground trees unless your time is unlimited which mine is not. In Photo 11, you can see how some of the wires at the bottom are grouped and twisted to provide for the roots as mentioned above.

**Getting appropriate looking foliage on a tree we find to be the hardest tree making task.**

We have tried stretching poly fiber over the armatures and flocking with ground foam, but the trees often look just like a bit like cotton candy at a carnival. In one photo of our creek without the front through truss bridge installed, you can see one tree that looks like green cotton candy on a stick. This one will be replaced as soon as we make a better one and the cotton candy tree can go somewhere in the background. It can look better if you use many small bits of stretched poly fiber instead of larger pieces.

And we have tried adding lichen to armatures. This produces a very heavy tree with very dense foliage that looks like, well, lichen on a stick. Trees made these ways are good as background items in mass planting, but they lack the delicate structure needed for detailed foreground trees.

Flocking with Woodland Scenic clump foliage is another alternative that seems to work. I have been experimenting with various materials to make realistic, quick and easy trees from my naked armatures. Our process needs some more experimentation if we are to ever arrive at our “final solution”, but even the worst of my experimental trees finds a home somewhere. By-products of really bad ideas just go where they are difficult to see.





Photo 12



Photo 13



Photo 14



For the Sedum tree armatures that retain a good bit of the preserved petals, after painting with a suitable green, only a light dusting of fine ground foam is needed to complete a reasonable background tree. Some Sedum heads only need a bit of green to look OK in groups. They can also have just a little poly fiber added when the petals have fallen off.

Finding good colors to spray the trees is important. In our layout rooms most shades of green can appear too dark. Only the lightest shades of green work well. We have arrived at this conclusion by trial and error – mostly error. Some of our trees remain too dark and need further work. Even a yellow green is better than most greens. One thing that helps us lighten a tree that ends up too dark is to spray again with a little clear or glue and sprinkle the very top of the tree with a very light green or even yellow fine ground foam. This emulates the sun hitting the tree top and making leaves there look lighter in color. We use the same approach when painting trees by stippling a little yellow on treetops. You can see this in some of the tree and background photos.

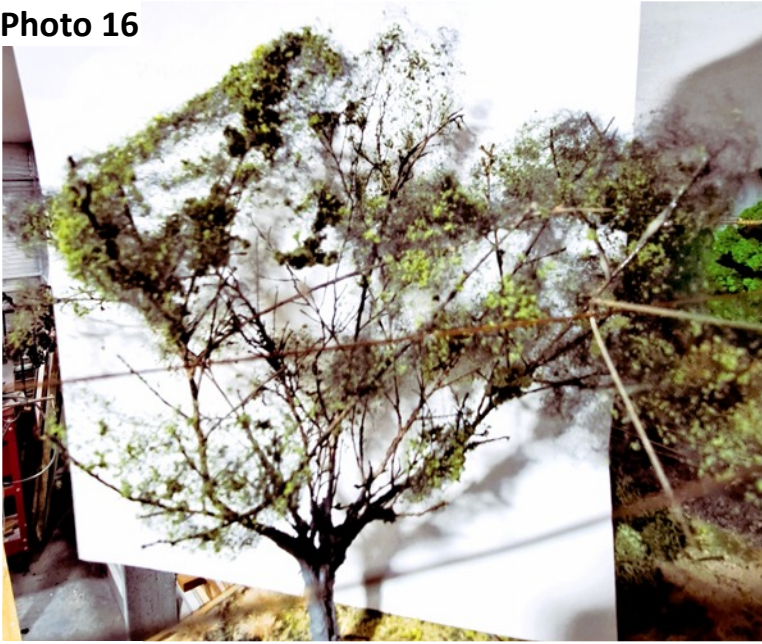
**See Photos 15 to 19** for some of our trees. In **Photo 15** the large tree on the left is made with an electrical wire armature, the tree in the middle has a armature made from Melaleuca twigs, and the tree at right uses Sedum. In between the left and middle tree is a dead tree modeled using a bare Melaleuca twig. The smaller brighter green trees in the background are some of our purchased ready-made ones. A few smaller home-made trees are also in the background. And the painted trees on the background merge with the modeled trees in this view. If care is taken the transition from the modeled to painted world can be quite effective even when artistic ability is lacking. In Photo 16 a Melaleuca armature is draped with stretched poly fiber and dusted with Woodlands Scenic clumped foliage and some ground foam. It has a white card behind it to illustrate the see-through laciness we are striving for. Stretched poly fiber and fine ground foam cover a Sedum head in Photo 17. Photo 18 is a Sedum head painted green only and without any flocking; this will eventually get moved to a background position. Photo 19 illustrates an old-school tree making approach here with an armature made from a Privet twig and many small balls of poly fiber lightly coated with ground foam then poked onto glue-covered branches. The smaller pieces of poly foam produce a better-looking tree than is the case when draping a large piece of stretched poly foam over the armature. And in Photos 3, 4 and 19, you can see faraway trees made just from clumps of lichen on the hilltops. They do not have armatures at all. It is best to plant some small trees with trucks in front of trunkless trees to create a more effective forest look.

**Photo 15**





**Photo 16**



**Photo 17**



**Photo 18**



If you look closely at **Photos 15, 18 and 19** you will notice that there is only a few inches of actual scenery between track and the painted backdrop. A bit of care with tree placement and shades of green can blend the scenery to the painted backdrop quite effectively even when artistic skills are sorely lacking. When trains are moving the viewer mostly watches them and the scenery, backdrop, and transition between the two, are not studied to a great extent, so the foolery works well.

There are too many things to do on a layout to spend all your time making trees. The detailed hand-made ones are best kept few in numbers and to the layout front with the poorer and less detailed ones used toward the background. Even the worst of trees when well dispersed in a bunch of trees will look OK. The trees can then transition to just masses of green stuff. Nice individual trees are good, but they can be a lot of work. You do need some of them. But replicating nature, mixing colors (shades of green), varying shapes, and types of trees, and including dead ones, are probably more important than making perfect trees anyhow. We don't think the less detailed trees or masses of green stuff in the background distract us from the scene. Do you?

### **On to Pitts Cut**

Coming off our through truss bridge over the creek, the main line enters a deep cut as it rounds a curve headed for the busy town of Jacobs Creek. Initially the idea was for just a bit of raised scenery along the curve at the layout edge to keep the trains from ending up on the layout room floor 5-1/2 feet below the track at this point. At first the idea was just to make a low ridge. But then the area was further worked into a more scenic feature with a deep cut.

At about the time the work on the cut was underway, the wife made one of her unscheduled dashes through the layout room and told me we need to give names to our scenic features. I had been conversing by email with a traction friend near Boston about this time concerning a Sacramento Northern car. My friend's name is Charlie Pitts. So, with Charlie's name fresh in my mind, the cut became Pitts Cut. Then I was told we needed to name the creek as well.



**Photo 19**



Another local friend, Peter, who had been having prostate problems then came to mind. So, we named the gully Pystryckle Creek after that friend.

And, heading into the cut we built a country trolley stop and named it Pystryckle Stop. See **Photo 20** of the trolley stop looking into Pitts Cut. **Photo 21** shows the cut from the other end, nearer to Jacobs Creek.

**Photo 20**

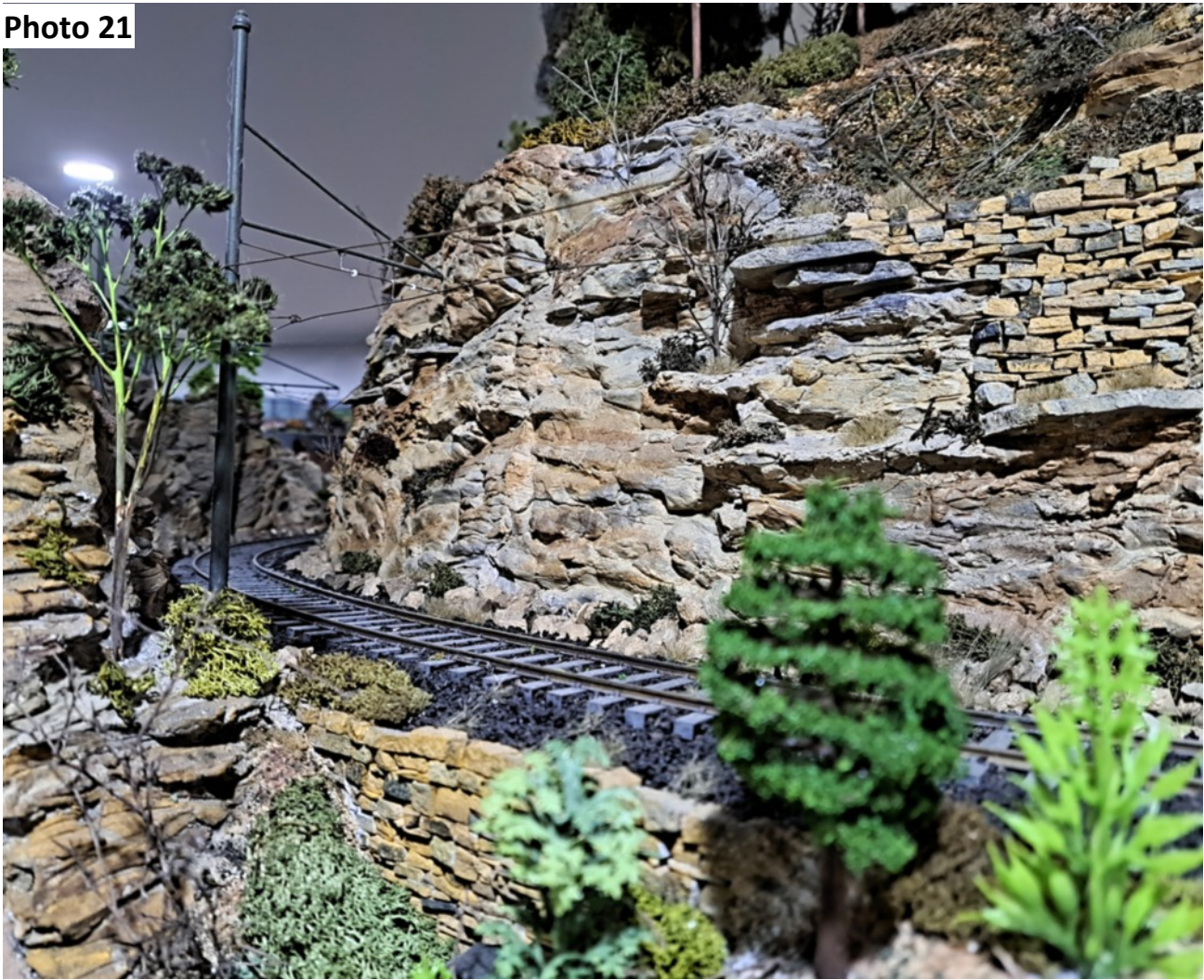


Overhead wire was provided for the track in the cut using bracket poles. These came from Brian Weisman at Jason's Brass Poles. With a coat of paint, they are ready for use.

Trolley contact wire can also now be strung on the top pony truss bridge when we are ready to finish that area. When doing the scenery, we had installed a screw eye just above the tunnel portal. A small tension spring was hooked on the screw eye and the other end of the spring



**Photo 21**



can be connected to the contact wire. It is my hope that this arrangement will help keep a bit of tension on the overhead wire as that should reduce the need to adjust tension in this hard-to-reach location. There was no wire inside the tunnel as we wanted to discourage locomotives from racing into the dead-end spur.

The lower through truss bridge was then fixed to the abutments and the trolley contact wire then could be attached at each end of the bridge. This bridge is on a substantial grade and that is quite obvious now.

More trees and undergrowth were planted as were grass and weeds. Getting the overall layout vegetation thick enough to look eastern takes much trial and error and a lot of trees and bushes. This will be an ongoing task for some time before it is declared complete as the area here along the creek still needs more green stuff to be convincing for eastern scenery.

Adding fascia was our next task. Our last layout had a fascia painted with the basic sky color to blend with the backdrop and color of the room walls. A group of us built a few portable layouts to take to train shows. The artistic director for these was a very artsy sort of fellow and he wanted a flat black fascia. I got used to this and liked it, so this layout is using flat black as well. It is a sharp contrast but looks like someone has taken a giant knife and cut the layout from the adjoining area. Not a bad effect. I use 1/8-inch thick MDF for my fascia and cut it to the contour of the scenery along the layout edge. We make it deep enough to cover any hidden tracks, or benchwork so just the legs show below. Holes are cut into the fascia for DCC plug-ins and switch machine operating rods. Waybill holders and other operating support aids are screwed to the face of the fascia. When all cut and fitted, the fascia was removed and painted with a few coats of the flat black and re-installed.

With all that done, Pitts Cut and the environs are ready for service on the Mountain Electric. [See Cover Photo](#) for the area when mostly finished and with a car headed to Jacobs Creek on the through truss.



# KIT-BASHING A SOUTHERN PACIFIC F-50 FLAT CAR

By: Santiago Pineda



Questions, comments? Contact [Santiago Pineda here](#)

With the lack of true prototype-based flat cars in our scale, one has to go through hoops and loops in order to put together a decent string of flats for WWII military trains. After assembling many of the reputable Red



*Kit-bashed SP F-50 flat car ready for service on the layout*



Caboose, Berkshire Valley and Chooch kits, I wanted something that would provide interest by breaking up the lines in the consist. So, for a while, I toyed with the idea of kit-bashing a version of the SP F-50 flat cars, a car that constantly shows up in photographs of WWII military trains. The following article depicts how I went about fleshing out such a project.

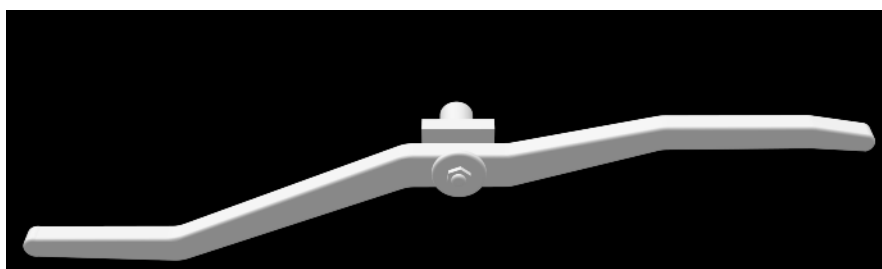
With a spare Chooch 41' fish belly flat car kit on hand, the car seemed like a tolerable fit for the experiment. While I was aware of the hard-to-find Gilmaur brass kit, I felt like I could pull off the project from the Chooch body. I began by fitting the distinctive T-section trucks. For this build, I used the exceptional Rich Yoder brass option. Later, I installed Protocraft couplers for a scale, prototypical look. The rest of the build was completed using the components included in the Chooch kit, plus PSC air hoses/grabs, and some 3D printed details.







*The Chooch 41' flat car with straight side sills was a starting point.*

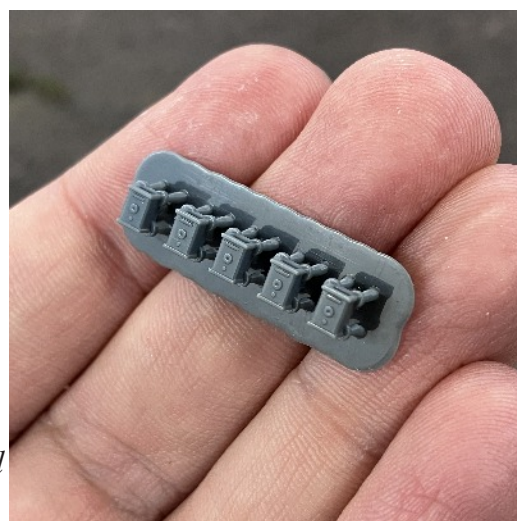


*3D renderings for the distinctive stake pockets and the coupler cut bar.*

With a base car ready, I took on the task of drawing and printing the coupler cut bar as well as the distinctive side components for the car. These included the stake pockets and the wood block supports. All parts were designed with a small peg to be fit into place. The parts were printed on my trusty MARS 9k at 20um for better quality results. Once the parts were ready, the car sides were drilled, and the 3D printed parts adhered to it with two part epoxy glue.

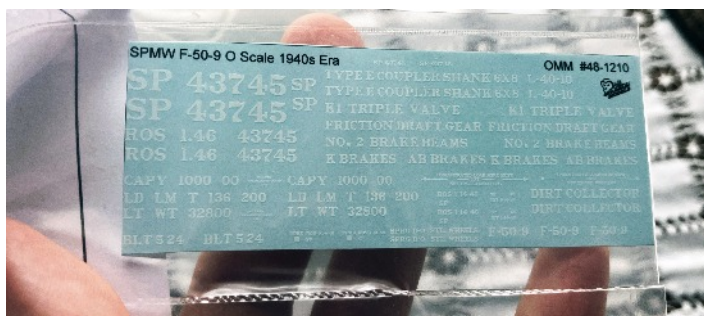


*3D printed parts included stake pockets, coupler cut bar and side wood block supports.*



At this point I started considering what decals to use for the project. I knew the people at Owl Mountain Models had offered a very well received kit of this car in HO some time ago. And, to my surprise, after an inquiry post about the decals on a modelers page on Facebook, Jason Hill from Owl Mountain was kind enough to contact me about my questions. Jason considered printing a set, and after some back and forth about the model's time frame and general dimensions, he agreed.





*Owl Mountain Models O scale SP F-50 flat car decals are available for sale on their website.*

It's worth mentioning that Owl Mountain has the decal set available for sale on their website currently. The decals were beautifully printed and worked just as well. Should you pursue this build, Owl Mountain has high-resolution lettering diagrams for this car in several different eras on their website also. Link to site: (<https://owlmtmodels.square.site/shop/48-series-decals-o-scale/7>)

Painting and finishing the car was done conventionally. The car was primed with Tamiya's gray fine surface primer, then painted with Tru-color paints and finished with Micro Scale Satin. The deck was modified to follow the side sill's top contours, and was later hand painted with acrylic paint in several washes to obtain a transited wood look. For a rugged surface, the deck was hand brushed with a coat of Micro Scale Micro Flat.



*The finished car poses for studio shots. The car has been busy, as you can see from the dirty wheels.*







*Rich Yoder's T-section trucks were also the perfect complement for this custom painted PSC autocar.*

Adding this particular Southern Pacific F-50 flat car to my military train consist adds interest and diversity to an otherwise repetitive row of flat cars. I'm glad to have pursued this Frankenstein-type project were components from different origins such as brass Yoder trucks meet cheap resin prints and old timers like the Chooch kit. I invite you to click on the link below to watch a video of a mixed AT&SF WWII military train, in it you can see the F-50 flat car perform its intended task alongside my previous build of the Pecos River brass AT&SF chair car from *The O Scale Resource* magazine's [volume 12 #4](#) and [volume 12 #5](#).



*Santa Fe WWII Mixed Military Train Video:*  
[https://youtu.be/o1AI1fEhdPc?si=hBgk0JYkRGYQEsX\\_](https://youtu.be/o1AI1fEhdPc?si=hBgk0JYkRGYQEsX_)





*The finished car fits nicely with other flat cars with military loads.*



Questions, comments? Contact [Santiago Pineda here](#)

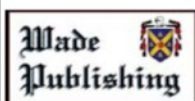
*Gaso.Line's rare M4 speed tractor acts as a finishing touch for this kit-bash project.*

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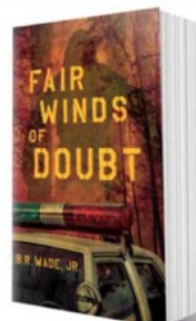
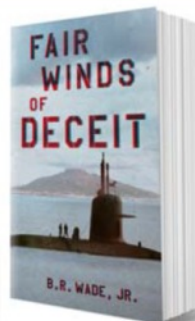
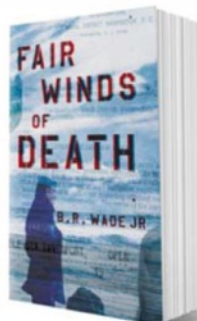
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# PASSENGER CAR BUILDING

By **David Schultz**

Questions, comments? Contact [David Schultz here](#)

My fascination with passenger trains began in the 1960s. I vividly recall riding with my mother aboard the Mainstreeter and, once, on the North Coast Limited out of St. Paul Union Depot to Jamestown, North Dakota, to visit my grandparents. My grandfather worked for the Northern Pacific, so Pullman cars, used extensively by the NP, have always held a special place in my modeling.

Many of my builds start with American Standard kits. While these provide a good foundation, the underbody directions are minimal. Because the NP removed side skirts from most of their passenger cars, the underframe is fully visible, meaning the “just enough” approach doesn’t work. In this article, I’ll walk through my process for creating both basic and advanced underframe detailing, share tips on interior construction, and touch on the equipment variety that gives each build its unique personality.

## Preparing the Floor

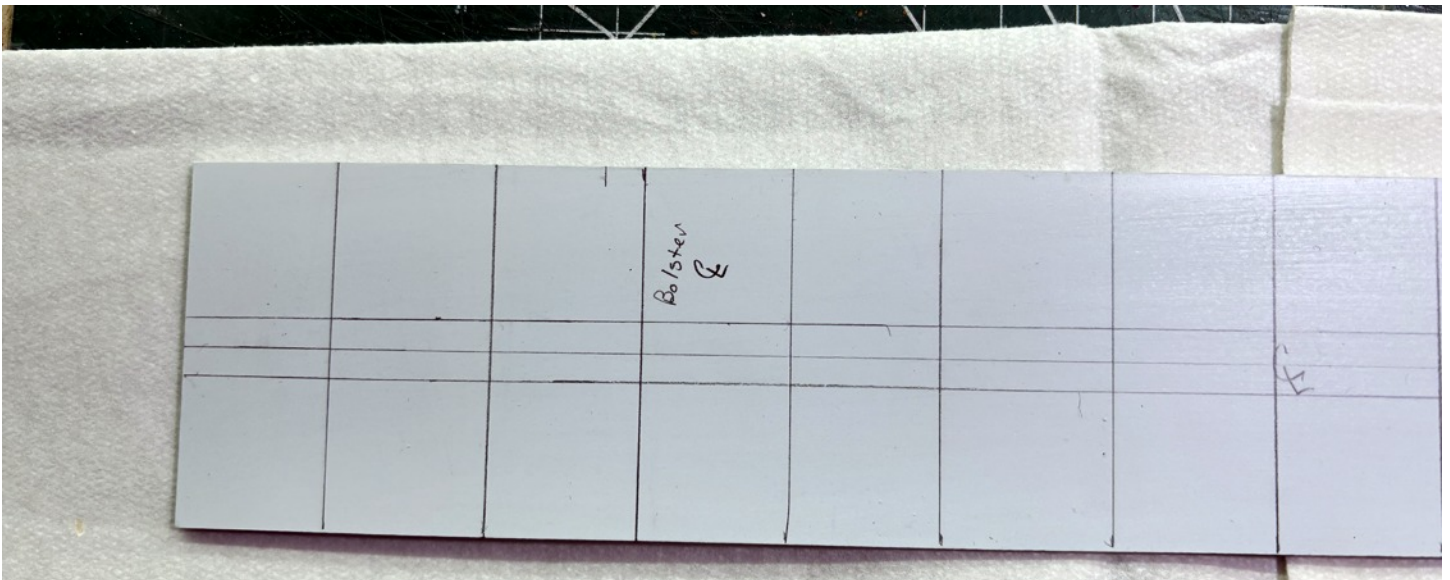


Figure 1: Here we see the pencil drawing of the floor layout with the center sill and bolster center lines.

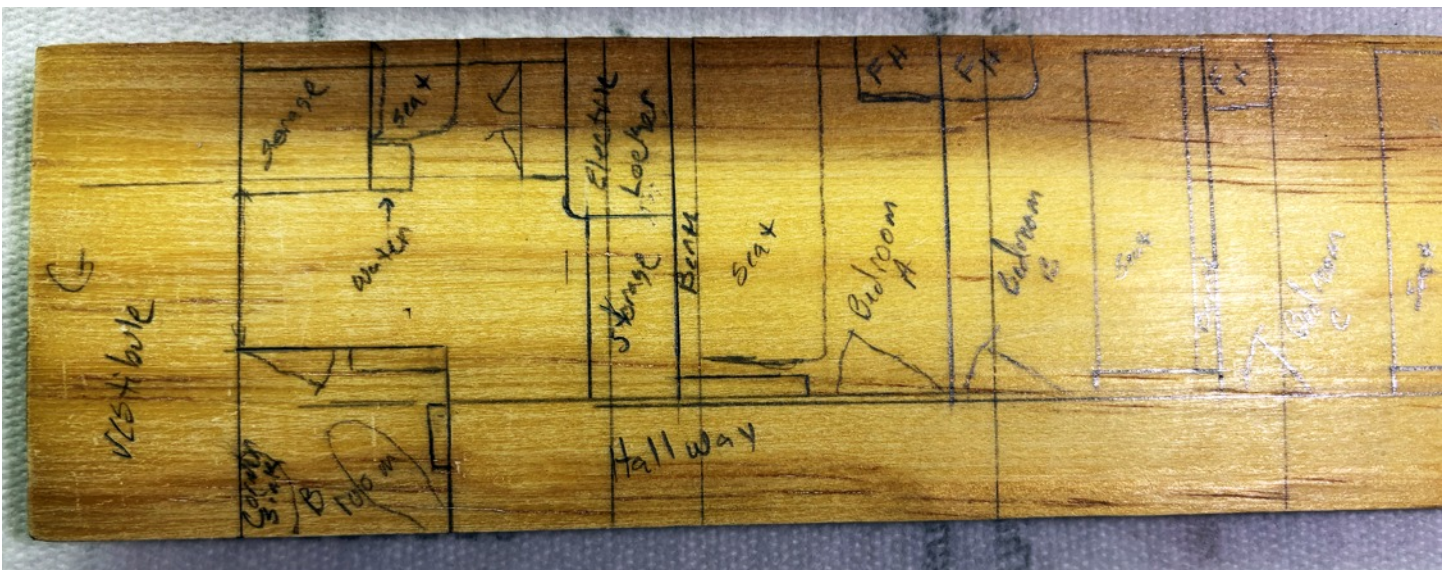


Figure 2: Turning the floor over we see the drawings of the walls and marking the rooms.



Every build starts with the floor piece from the kit. I take 320-grit sandpaper and remove the glossy surface from the styrene. This not only improves glue adhesion but makes pencil lines far easier to see. After marking the component placement, I turn the floor over and also mark all the interior wall locations, including walls and window positions. These guides will be critical later for interior construction.

If you're modeling a specific prototype, accurate plans are essential, especially for truck bolster locations. On most Pullman cars in my collection, the bolster center is about 11' 8" from each end, and most cars are 82' 10" long (with exceptions).

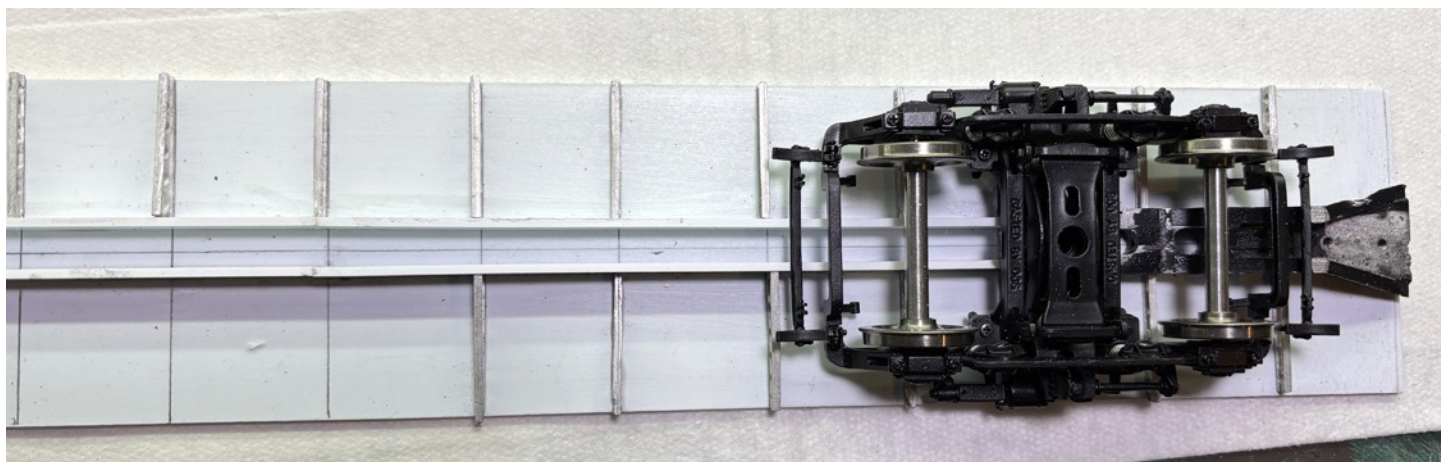
### **Bolsters, Draft Gear, and Threaded Inserts**



*Figure 3: Both floors with the Scale City floor braces and the Styrene Floor braces Notice the inserts in the bolsters.*

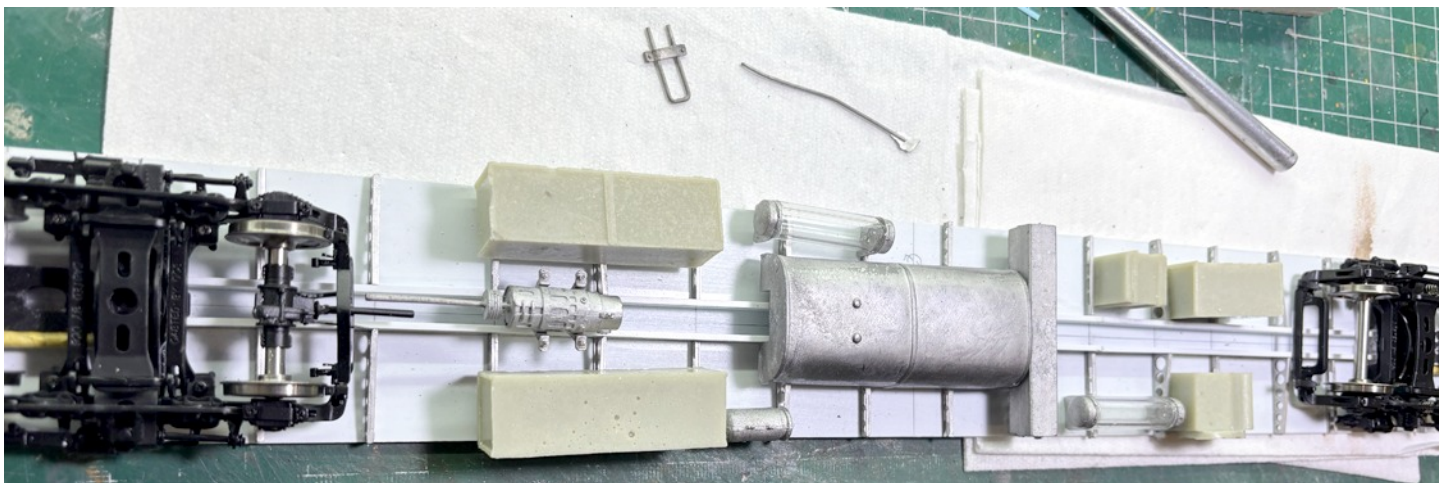
I use Scale City Designs (formerly Keil Line) bolsters, which add detail and weight. I source threaded steel inserts from McMaster-Carr, part #97191A110. Drill the bolster with a 3/16" bit and press-fit the insert, making them ready for 2-56 screws, if you prefer a larger screw, drill and tap accordingly. The draft gear can be modified, or you can adjust the coupler box instead. I use Kadee couplers, trimming the coupler box to fit within the casting, and then drilling and tapping the draft gear to secure the couplers in place with screws.

Once the bolster and draft gear are modified, attach them to the car, starting with the bolster. Make sure it's perfectly square to the floor. On some cars, the draft gear casting is slightly short; I fix this by adding a piece of styrene to the end of the casting.



*Figure 4: Making sure the trucks will clear any obstacles.*

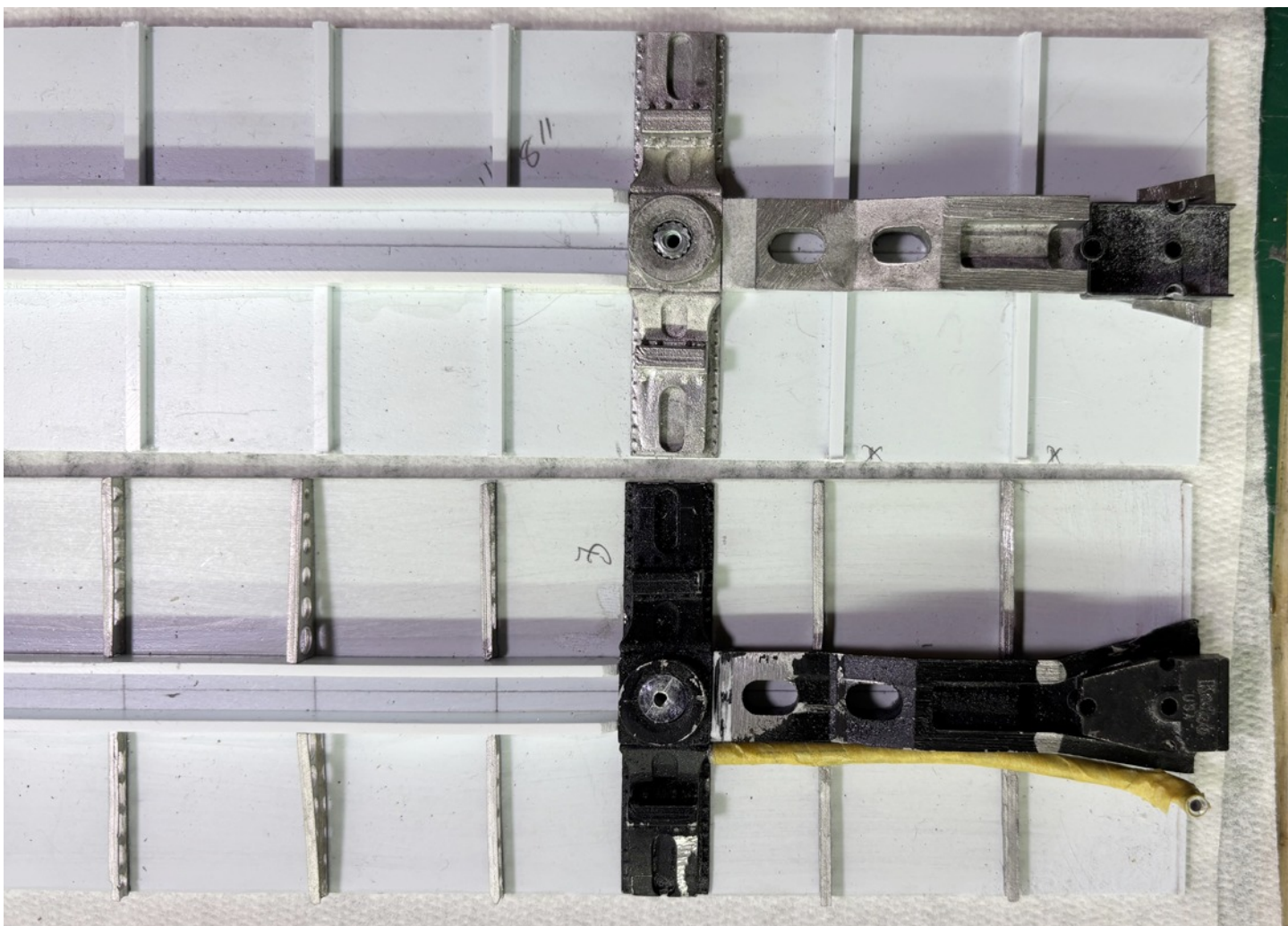




*Figure 5: Placing the equipment on the floor to get a general idea of how the fit is going to look.*

### **Water Tanks and Center Sill Construction**

Before building the center sill, decide on water tank placement. If your prototype has the small water tank, glue it directly to the floor along the center sill line, following your plans. The small tank's notch or shelf indicates the location of the water fill pipe—a long metal piece running across the floor included with the



*Figure 6: Showing how you can either modify the coupler box or the draft gear to accommodate the Kadec coupler.*



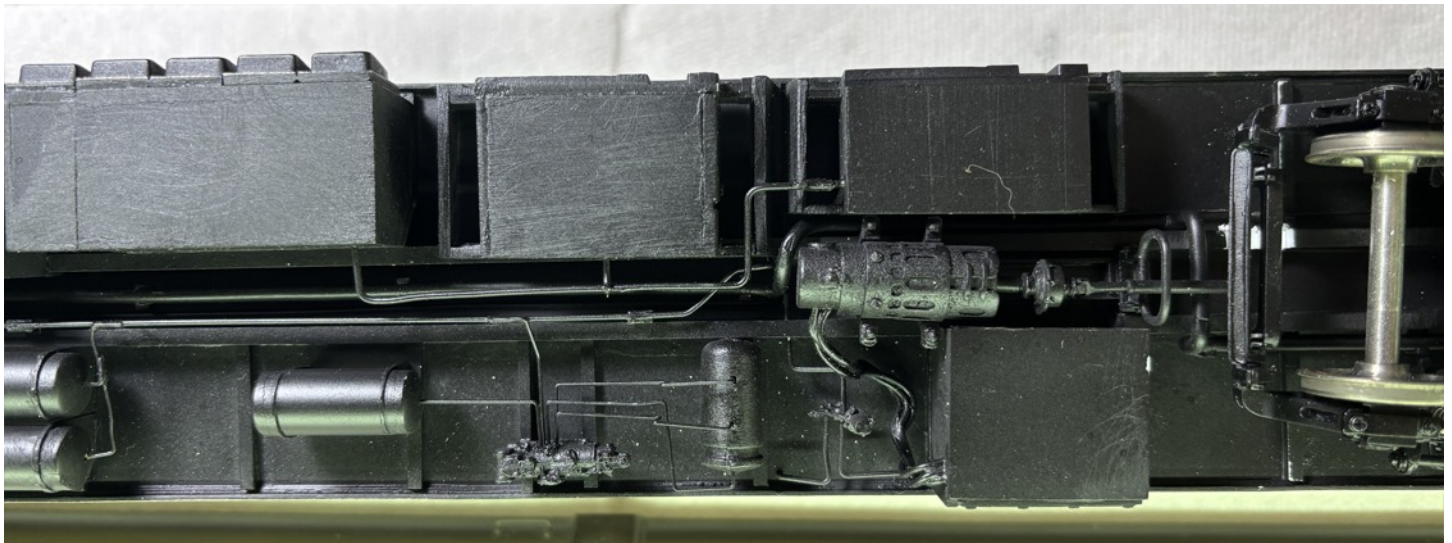
American Standard kit. The tank rests on this fill. Once the tank and water fill parts are secured to the floor, you can build the center sill extending from the water tank to the bolsters in both directions.

For the larger Weisman tank, which straddles the sill, you can build the entire sill bolster-to-bolster before attaching the tank. For the center sill, I use 0.060" × 0.250" styrene. It's a bit heavy for prototype cars, but I like the stiffness it adds. For a more prototypical look, choose the material you prefer. Hold off gluing the big tank until later to avoid interference during detailing. Once the water tank is glued in place, don't forget to add the water fill lines that run to both sides of the car.

### Floor Bracing

I use two types of floor bracing. For a simplified build, use 0.080" x 0.080" styrene strips glued at 0.850" intervals. For longer or shorter cars, adjust the floor brace spacing as needed, calculating it so the braces are evenly distributed. For more realism, I use Scale City braces, which come in rectangular and tapered shapes. On the draft gear side of the bolster, only use rectangular braces to avoid truck interference. Place a single rectangular brace on the opposite side of the bolster to allow for truck clearance. Beyond that first brace, alternate between triangular and rectangular pieces.

### Steam Lines, Brake Pipes, and Signal Lines



*Figure 7: The completed underframe with the plumbing installed and painted.*

The steam line on passenger cars was a 2" pipe (about 6" diameter with insulation). I model this using 1/8" solder, wrapped in masking tape to simulate asbestos insulation. For modeling purposes, use 0.125 solder for the steam line. The brake pipe, at 1.5" prototype diameter, can be represented with 0.032 wire, and the 1" signal line with 0.020 brass wire. The steam line cutout is on the right-hand side when facing the car, but the steam line connection is actually positioned near the center, just below the coupler. The cutouts for both the brake pipe and the signal line are located to the right of the draft gear, while the glad hands sit closer to the car's center. Keep in mind that all three lines will need to cross over the center sill at some point along their length, so careful planning is essential.

### Equipment Layout

Plan the rest of your underbody equipment:

- Air conditioning and condenser units
- Generator and battery boxes



- Propane storage (for ice engines or diner stoves)
- Air brake reservoirs
- Steam traps

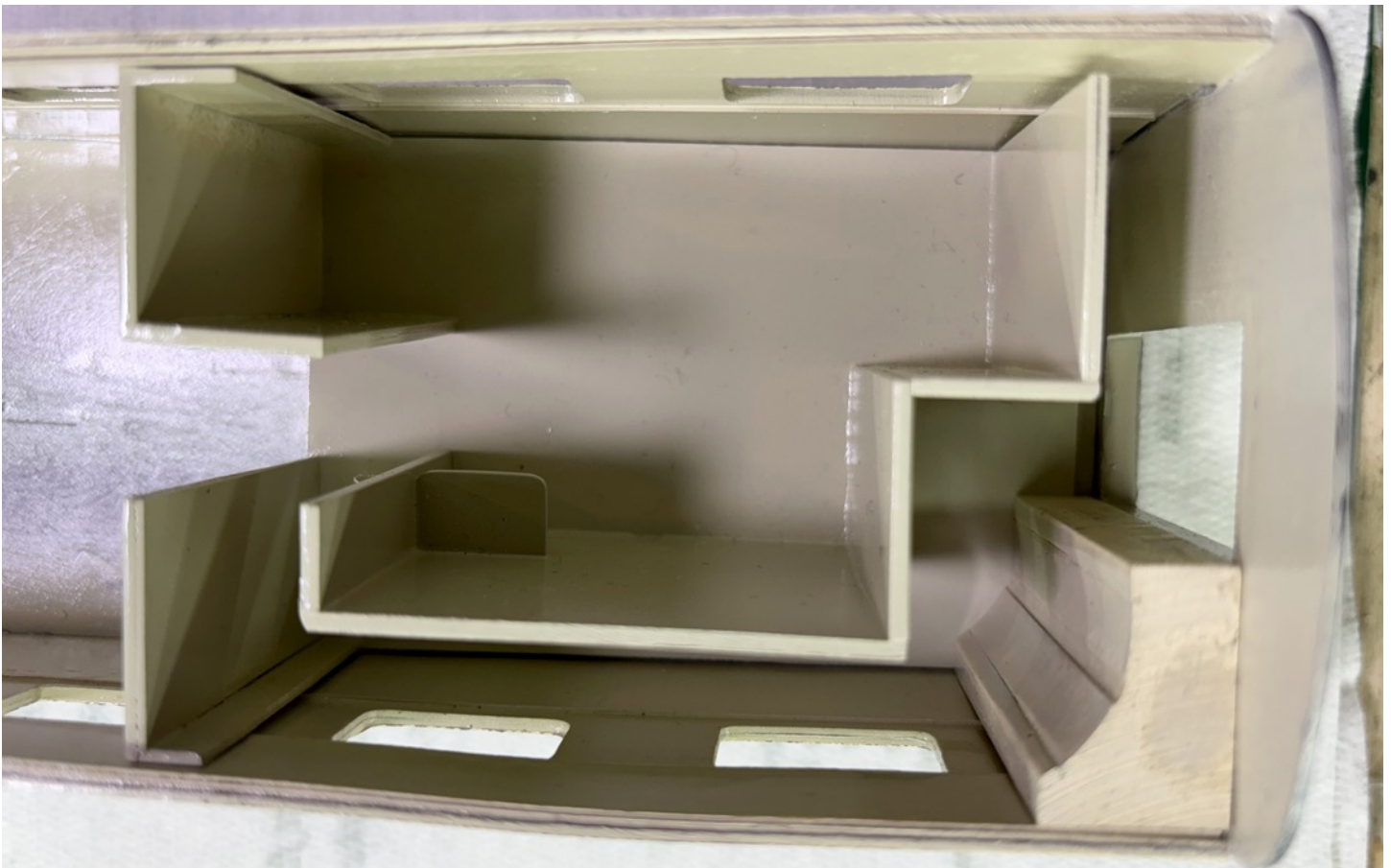
Equipment needs vary by car type. Coaches need minimal electrical power, a small belt driven generator and one battery box would have been sufficient. Cars with electric AC motors require larger shaft driven generators, multiple battery boxes, and a small cabinet to hold transformers and voltage regulators. Install electrical connections on both sides of the car so it can be plugged in during long station stops. This prevents your gas-fired generator, if equipped, or other electrical demands from draining the batteries. Waukesha ice engines require propane storage, up to four 100 lb. bottles for long round trips. Diners often carried the maximum propane load plus electric AC.

If you're modeling a freelance road, you have full freedom. Whether running short or long distances, choose the devices best suited to your operation. You might want to make your car completely independent, without relying on any external power source. A propane-powered generator could be the perfect solution. Prototype modelers will want to follow photos and plans closely.

### **Brake System Plumbing**

Passenger car brake systems are complex. For modeling purposes, I drill five holes in the control valve's pipe bracket, this would be the center section of the control valve, (like a domino 5 pattern) with a #76 drill and plumb them using 0.020" wire:

- Brake pipe to control valve
- Three pipes from control valve to combination reservoir



*Figure 8: The beginning of the interior build showing a lounge area and curved electrical cabinet.*





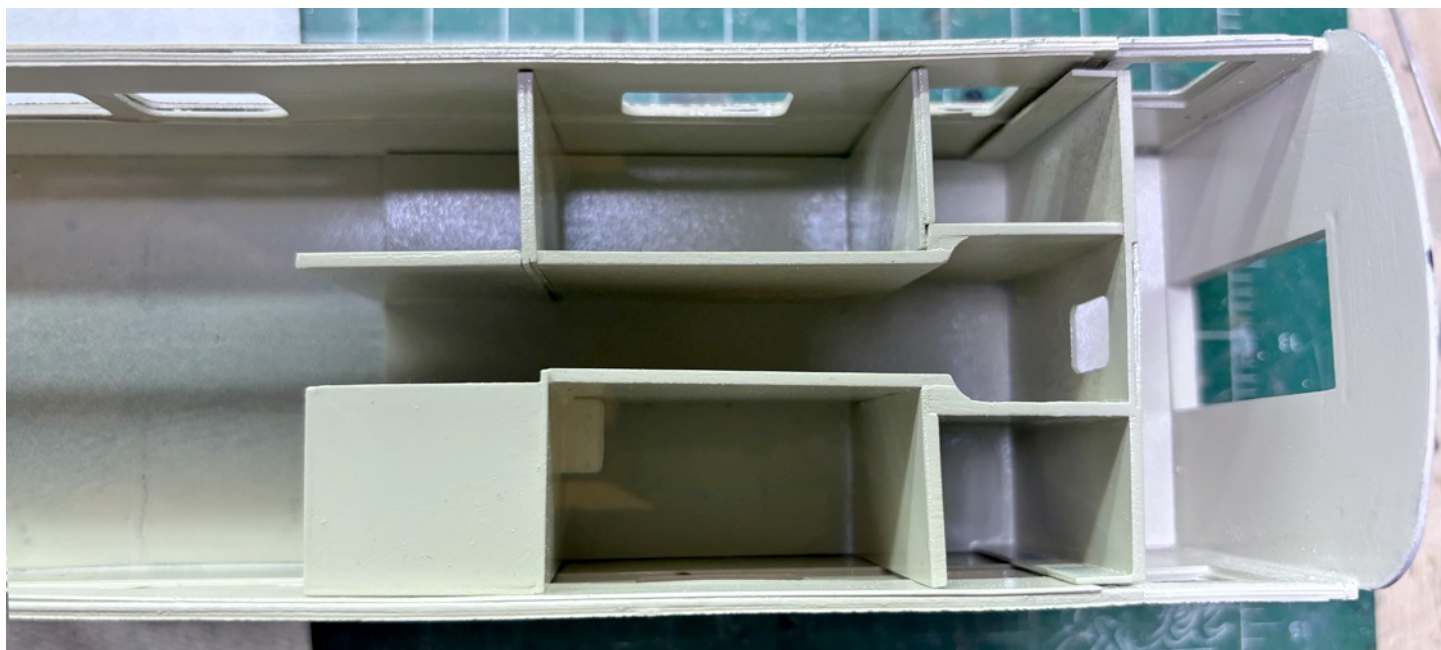
- Pipe from control valve to trucks for brake cylinders

Additional reservoirs feed the door operation, toilets, and water pressurization systems. The goal is to suggest complexity without functional accuracy.

### Interior Construction

With the wall outlines on the floor, I cut 0.020" styrene into 1 3/4" strips, marking top and bottom with arrows to maintain orientation. Using wood blocks as squares, I assemble walls for bedrooms, kitchens, and other spaces, cutting doors before gluing. I now prefer decals for doors, flat but visually convincing through windows.

*Figure 9: The different styles of flooring printed on regular paper. I will usually spray these with a satin or gloss finish to give the desired effect.*

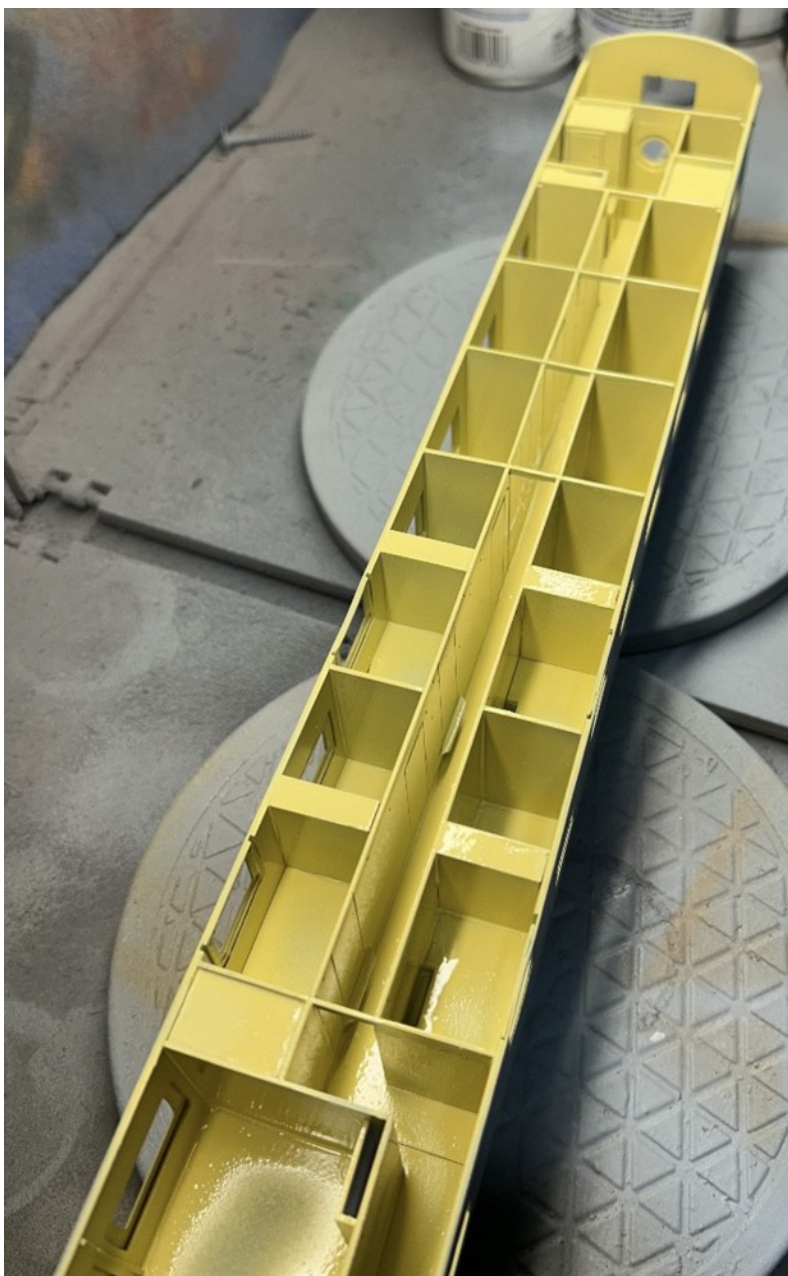


*Figure 10: This photo shows the vestibule end of the car with bathroom and assorted storage areas.*



*Figure 11: A car my son James is building showing the berths and chairs with the dividing walls.*





Fixtures like berths, sinks, and toilets can be glued to walls now; chairs, mirrors, and fabric-covered items go in later.

### Painting and Finishing

Railroads favored light-colored interiors, almond and pale green are common. Paint walls, interior surfaces of sides and ends, and tape off windows from the inside. Drill grab iron holes before attaching sides and ends.

For flooring, I use printed paper patterns (linoleum, carpet, tile) glued with high-quality scrapbook adhesive that won't warp or bleed. Once flooring is in place, glue walls to the floor and sides, then add seating and other details.

### Final Assembly

Paint the car exterior, remove window masking, and install glazing. Attach exterior details like grab irons, roof grabs, and antennas. I prefer piano wire for grab irons, as most railroads used stainless steel. It's a bit harder to bend, but the effect is perfect. Roof attachment remains a work in progress for me.

*Figure 12 Left: Another photo of James' car with the interior painting complete. He will cut and place the flooring room by room.*

*Figure 13 Below: A view of a duplex sleeper in its finished state.*





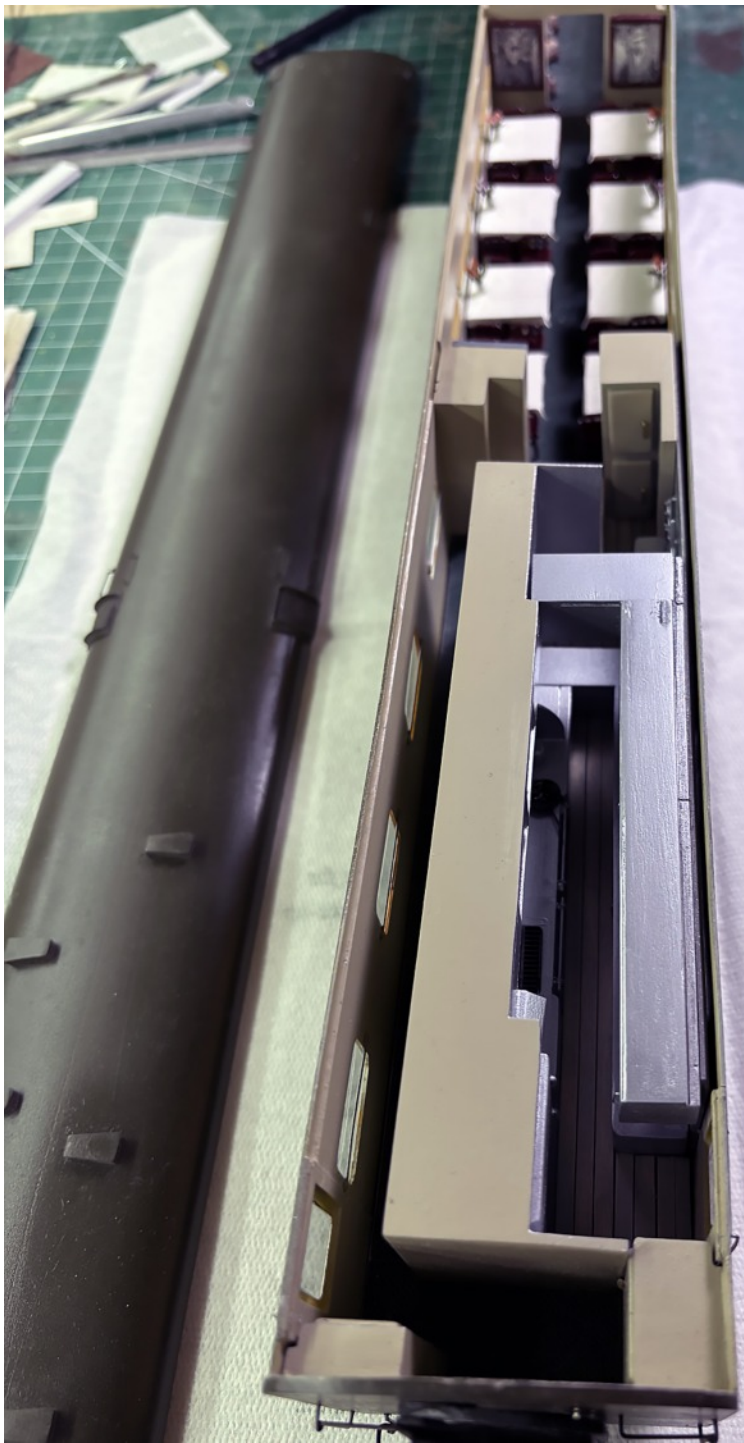


Figure 14 Left: This is the diner Columbia showing the kitchen.

Figure 15 Below: The dining tables, divider, and parlor of SP&S Columbia.

I aim for a secure yet removable fit for interior access and lighting. Add diaphragms, mount the trucks, and your car is ready for service.

## Conclusion

Each passenger car build teaches me, and my son James, something new. While we may never match the prolific work of Joe Fischer, the joy is in the process and the learning. Whether you're building old American Standard, Indianapolis Car Company, or Eddie Wichman's C&NW kits, or working with new Union Station Products sides, the work is satisfying.

Even without full interiors or underbody detailing, these cars make a statement. For newcomers, don't be intimidated. Follow the kit directions, apply some of my tips, and enjoy the process. And if you're proud of your results, share them with *The O Scale Resource* magazine. Maybe we will see your work at the O Scale Meet in Chicago. My sons and I will be there, eager to see what you've built.



Questions, comments? Contact [David Schultz here](#)







Figure 16: The completed car.

**"Don't settle for the copycats..."**

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# Canadian Forest Product Converted Steam Locomotive to Internal Combustion (part 1)

By William W. Davis

Questions, comments? Contact [William W. Davis here](#)

A couple years ago my friend, Dan Downing, sent me pictures of a Canadian Forest Product converted steam engine to internal combustion. The converted engine was numbered 253. Here is a color picture of the engine. Also a another picture with the caption that read: “Out back of the Canadian Forest Products shop area at Nimpkish, an early road trip on Saturday 1972-06-03 revealed the last evidence of little four-wheel shop switcher 253, an apparently locally-built unit”. Sadly it didn’t make it into preservation at a museum, and from what I understand, has since been scrapped.



At this point, I was able to find a couple more pictures. One which I was able to scale using a program called Scale Print. Sadly, it is no longer available and only worked with a PC computer and now I have a Mac. However, I am sure a search of the Internet or the App Store would result in finding a similar scaling program. What was nice about the Scale Print program was that if you had a straight on view like below and knew only one dimension you could scale a picture to any scale. I scaled this picture of a side view of this engine using Scale Print.

*CFP converted steam engine.*



*Out back of the Canadian Forest Products shop area at Nimpkish, an early road trip on Saturday 1972-06-03 revealed the last evidence of little four-wheel shop switcher 253, an apparently locally-built unit.*

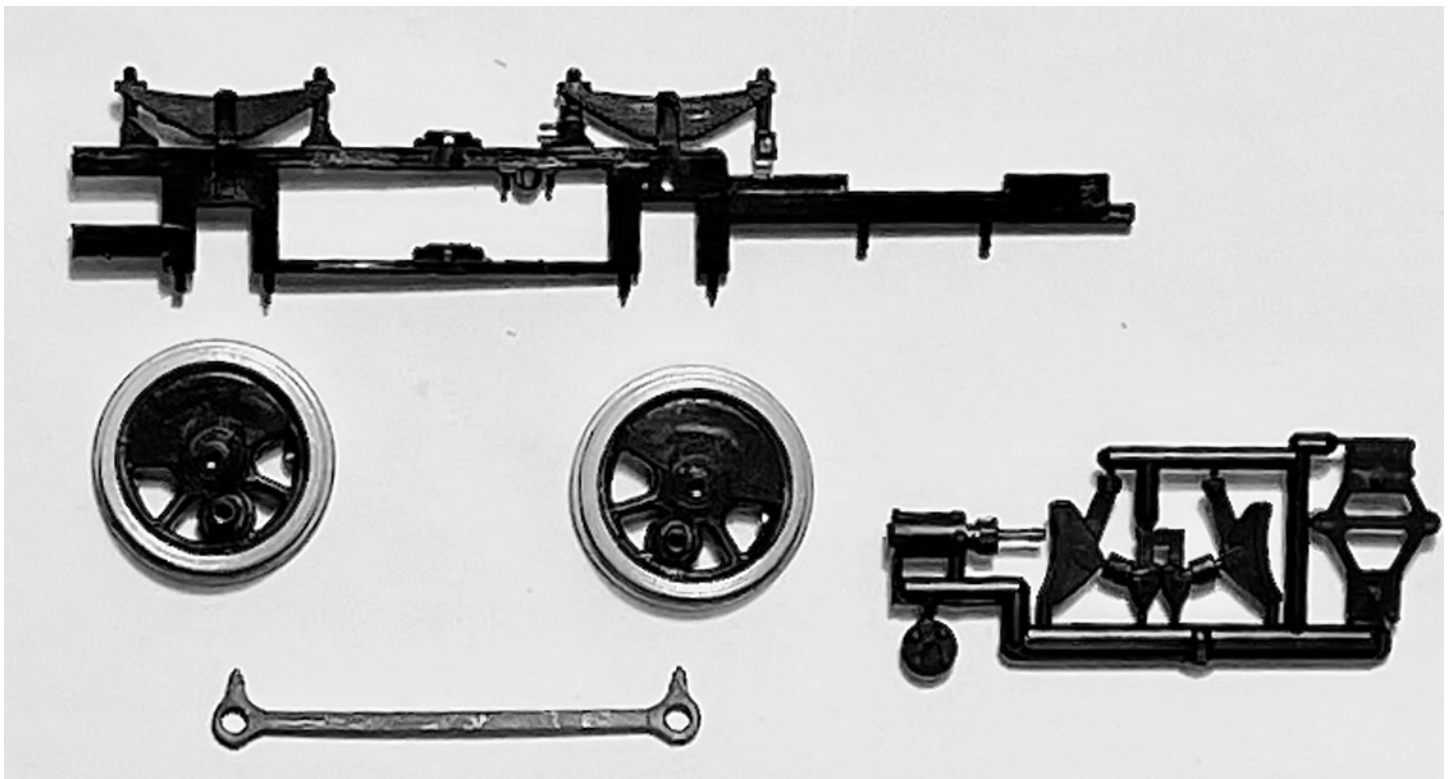




Later, I received another copy of the picture of the engine, but this time, it had added information scaled by Terry Van Winkle. He filled in many dimensions that made building this model possible.

The wheel base is 5 foot, same as the Grandt Line 18 ton Porter frame. The drivers are 30 inches; also the same as the Grandt Line Porter drivers.

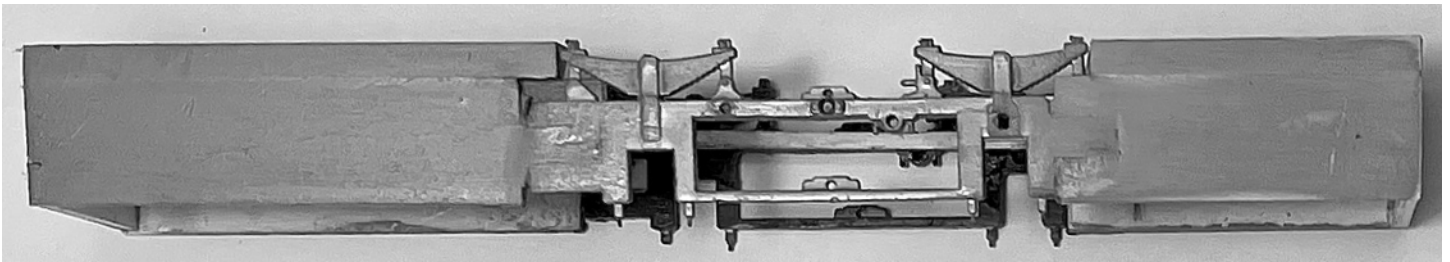
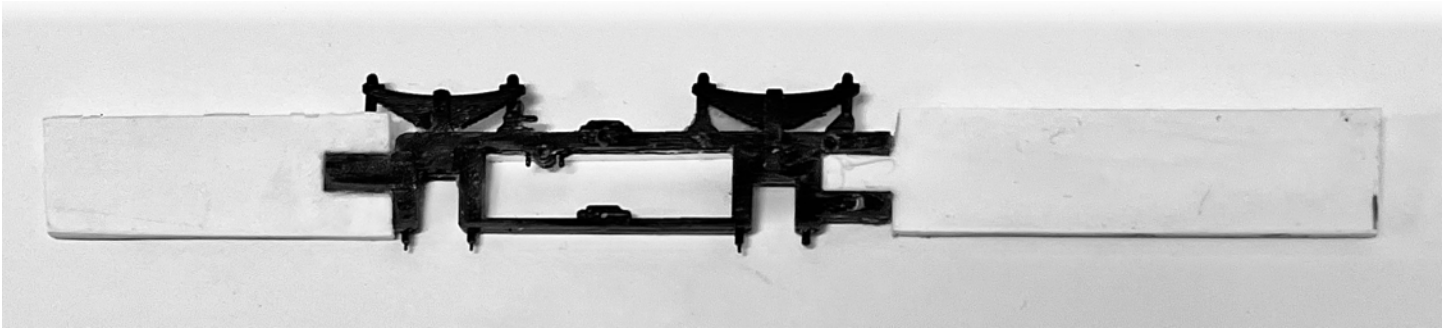
My friend, Gil, happened to have a Grandt Line Porter frame which he graciously gave me. I had the driver and brake cylinders. My friend, Dan Downing, gave me some Porter side rods. With that I had what I need to build the frame and driver. Now I know that some of these parts are no longer available directly from the manufacturers, but can be found on eBay, Facebook's Group IO groups or at train shows.



There were frame extensions on both ends of the locomotive side frame. In order to add these extensions, the front of the side frame needs to be cut off. I left a 1/4" tab on the front of the frame. The frame is .060 thick so I cut two pieces from a sheet of .060 styrene width of the frame, but not the springs. These were a scale 1' 9" wide. I then cut them to length. The rear one is a scale 8' long and the front one is 5'3" long.

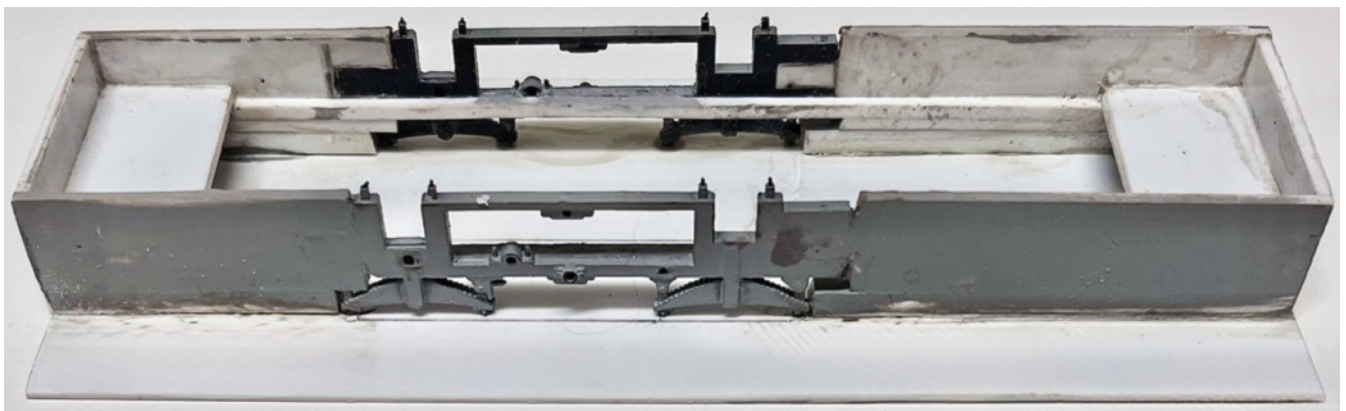
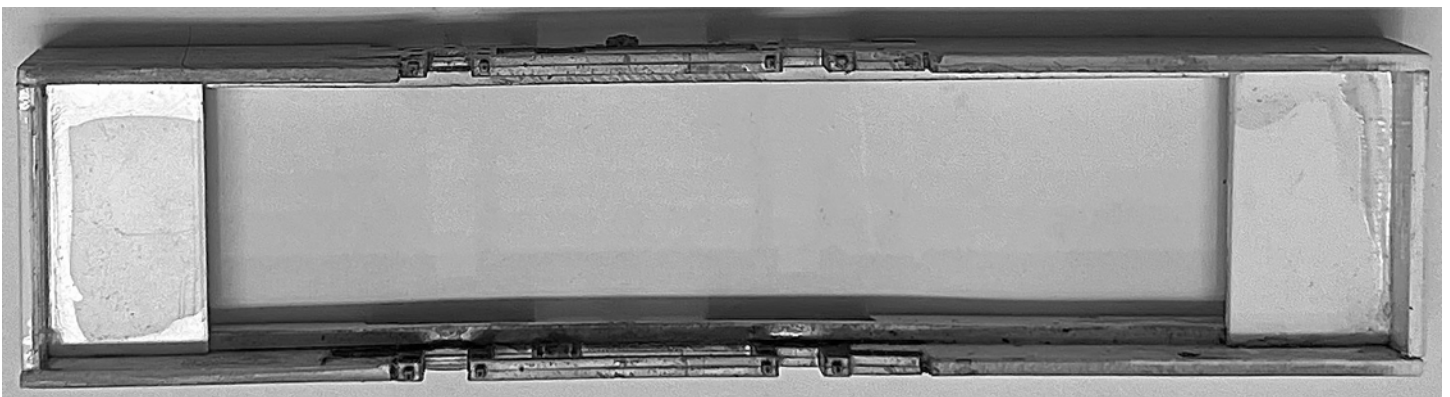


This made the frame a total length of 19' 6". For added structural strength I added a couple strips of .060 x .060 strips to the back of the frame. All of the styrene strips and sheet used is from Evergreen Styrene.



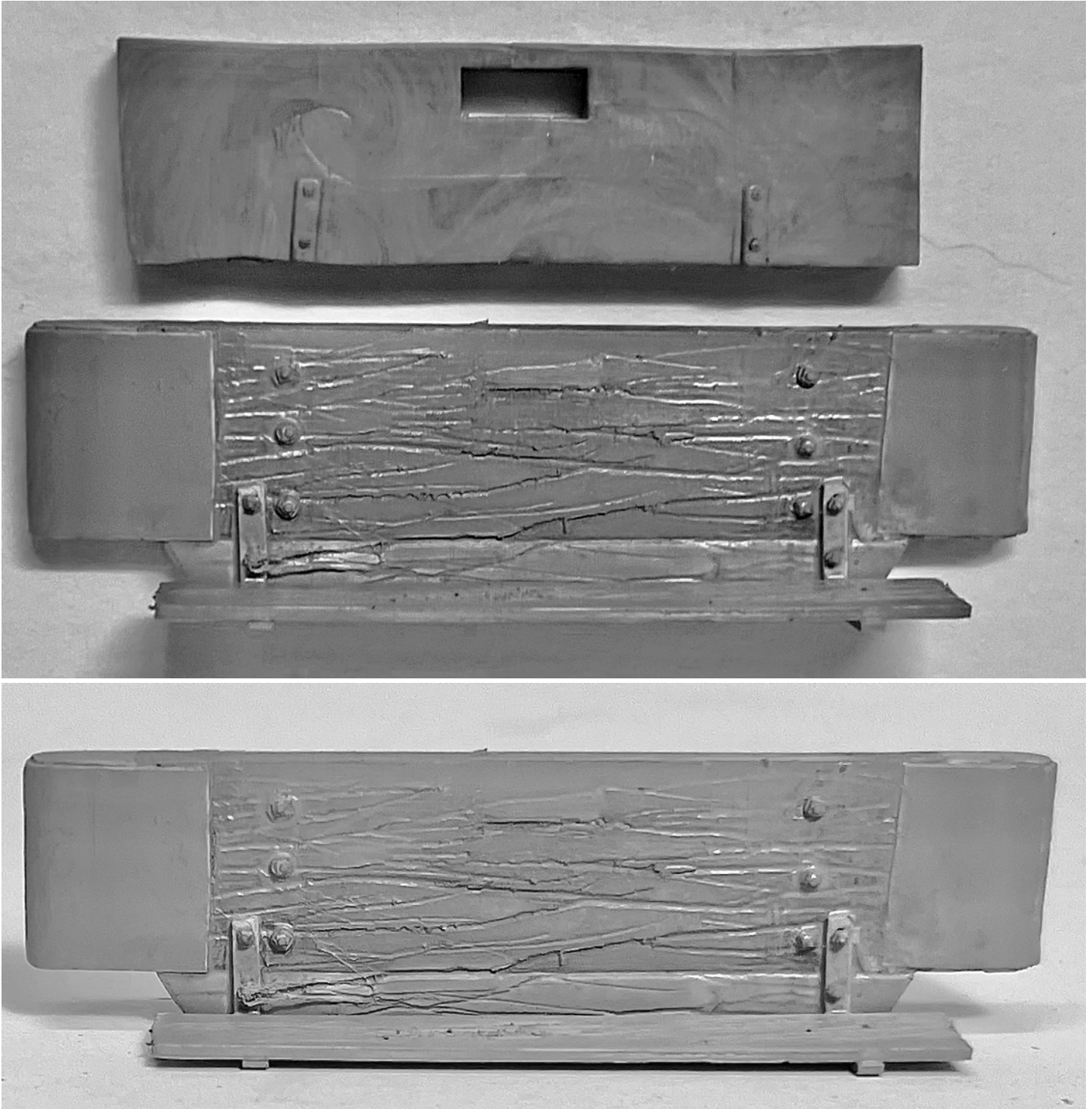
Finally I added .125 x .125 strip to the top so the frame addition was the height of the side frame springs. I filled the joints and gave it a spray of Tamiya Gray primer to make sure the joints were smooth. To be correct for the standard gauge wheels, I needed to space the frame pieces 4' apart. Standard O is 5' gauge (if being built to Proto48 standards the frame would be 3 scale inches narrower). I cut 4 pieces of .060 sheet a scale 1'9" x 4'. I mounted one vertical between the frames and one Horizontal forming a T at each end to keep the frames all square and solid.

For the deck I cut a pieces of .030 sheet styrene scale 8' wide x 19'6" long, and glued the frame centered so the deck overhangs equally on both sides.





Now that we have the frame assembled, it is time to build the end beams. In my parts bins I had a pair of Grandt Line rear end beams for their 18 ton Porter kit. Using these as a starting point, I sanded off all the details, filled the coupler mounting hole and added 2 pieces of .125 x .125 styrene strip to each end of the beam. I also added a pieces to the bottom to get the correct beam shape. After every thing dried I again sanded it smooth with 220 grit followed by .400 grit sand paper and carved in wood grain. Once done, I curved the beam ends and added the steel plate that is on the beam ends on the prototype. I used .005 styrene sheet to represent the steel sheet on the ends of the beam. I added .020 x .060 pieces to represent the step mount and added Grandt Line #1 NBW for the mounting bolts. To represent the mounting bolts to mount the end beams to the frame, I used Grandt Line #99 NBW. To complete the end beam, I made the step out of .030 sheet cut to represent a 12"wide step and carved wood grain.



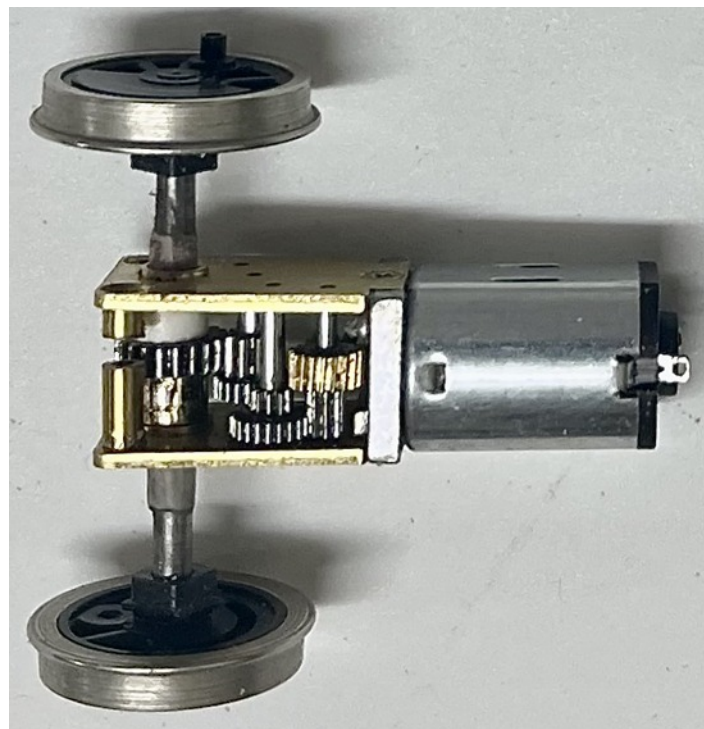


### Dual Axis

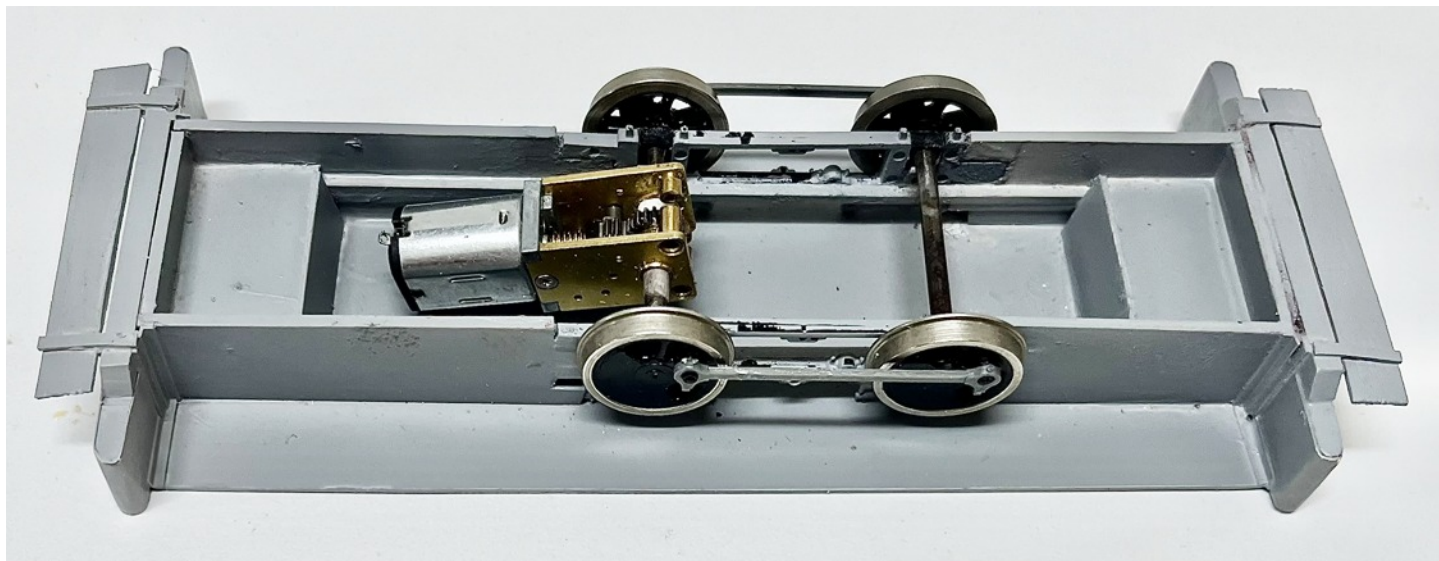


The Grandt Line Porter was designed for 3 foot gauge, but this engine was standard gauge. That meant I needed to make new axles long enough for standard gauge. Before doing that, I had to work out a drive system. I had used N20 motor and gear head to drive an HO Grandt Line GE 25 ton so I knew that motor and gear head could be used to drive this engine. This motor and gear head is quite small and will fit in the frame. Another plus is they are inexpensive. I purchased the motor from [aliexpress.us](http://aliexpress.us).

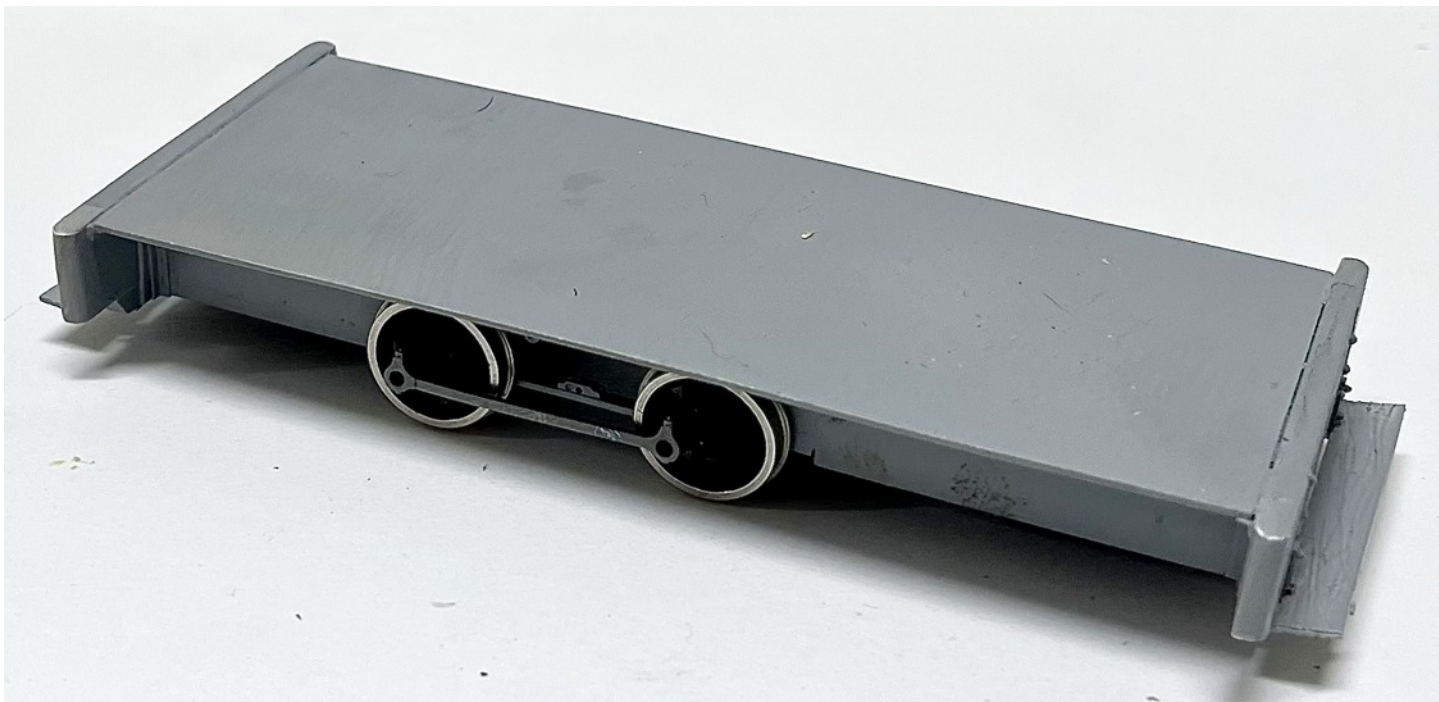
On the Facebook IO group “Proto-48 The future of 1/48 railroad modeling”, Jay Criswell has shown several drives on O scale diesel engines using these motors where the entire drive is in the trucks. So for this project, the only issue would be modifying the dual axis (these motors come with either single axis or dual axis) for standard gauge. This isn’t as hard as it sounds, but might require some machine work.



In my collection of parts were some old axle materials from Grandt Line 33” wheel sets. These were the same diameter axle material as the axles for Grandt Line Porter drivers except longer so they would work for standard gauge. The motor axle was 3mm, and the Grandt Line axle was 2mm. I thought I would try soaking paper in CA glue and wrapping the axle center where the motor would go. Then, after letting it set overnight, I turned it to the correct diameter.







I mounted the gear using Loctite® and reassembled the gear head. The drivers were quartered by having a slot cut at the end of the axles. I used a Dremel to cut that slot and assembled the wheel set.

I installed the end beans and added some .060 angle at the frame end and deck joints to represent bracing. Remember, I built a T at each end to hold the frame together. Once the deck and end beams were in place, I filled that area with lead shot and sealed the end with some .030 sheet cut to fit. I then sprayed the frame with Tamiya fine gray primer. The pictures showing frame with the motor, the wheels and side rods in place, but they are there temporary for now. I will install them once they and the frame are painted and weathered. Finally there are brakes that go between the drivers that will hide the pickups. We discuss that in part 2.

So far that is it... until next time Happy Modeling.

Questions, comments? Contact [William W. Davis here](#)

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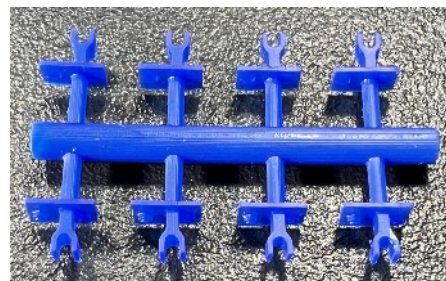
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# NEW TRACKS MODELING

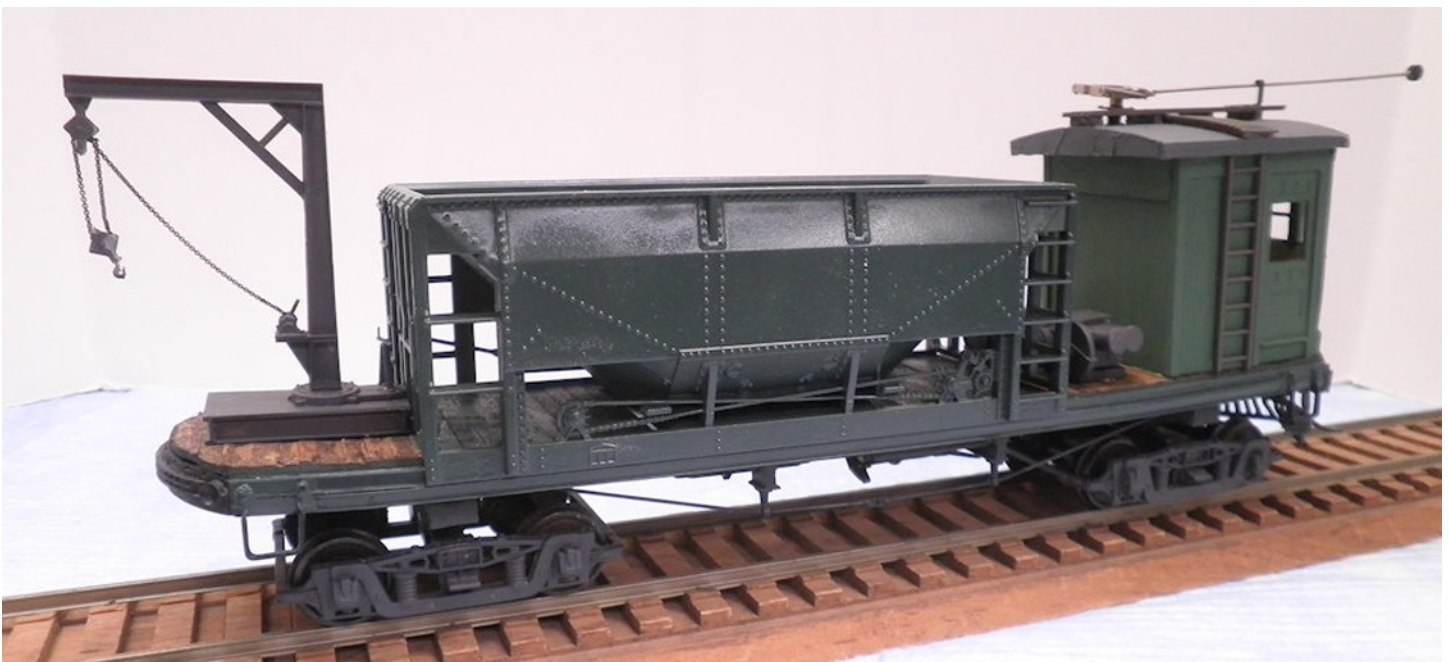
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**"My Build" Featuring Models From Our Viewers (8-27-25)**

**[You can see a video of the entire MY BUILD segment here.](#)**

Each of the participants has an email address included, and welcomes your contact.

**Martin Brechbiel MMR NTM [martinwb@verizon.net](mailto:martinwb@verizon.net) - O scale MOW Ballaster. Electric. Several items out of the parts bin were used.**

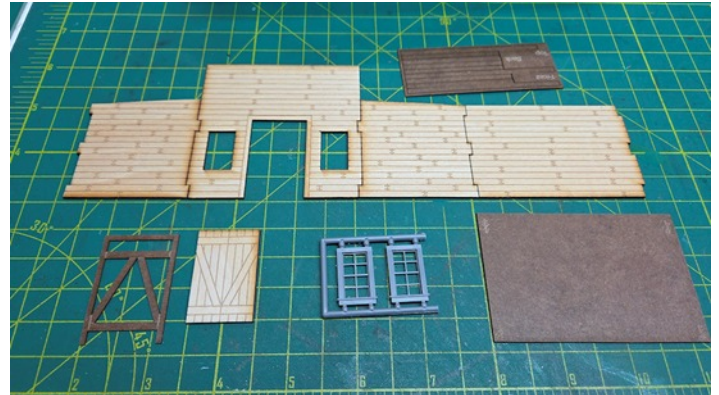




Greg Cassidy NTM [gassidy2@verizon.net](mailto:gassidy2@verizon.net) - O scale Blacksmith Shop by Calvin Witt. Can be found on Etsy.



*Blacksmith Shop in O scale by Calvin Witt. Can be found on Etsy.*



*This is what comes in the pack. Only \$16 with free shipping.*



*After staining and building it, I added a sign I made. I like to make dirty windows with very thin Raw Umber paint.*



*After making the roofing I started weathering with artist pigments.*



*Finished piece. This can be modified in so many ways.*



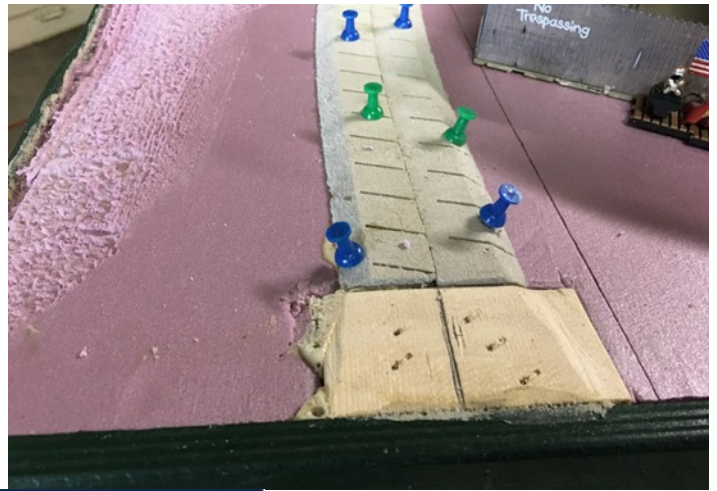
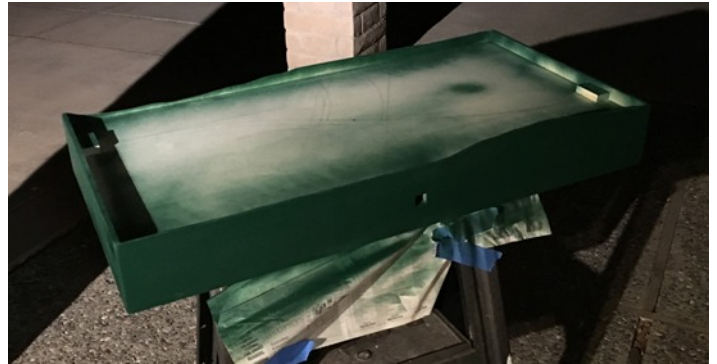
*Roughly in position on my On18 layout I'm building.*



*I enjoyed this one so much I ordered Calvin's Firewood Shed and Mine Entrance.*



Phil Edholm NTM [pedholm@pkeconsulting.com](mailto:pedholm@pkeconsulting.com) - O scale - Hill Valley, CA is where Marty lived in *Back To The Future*. 2x4 foot modules. Built by a cabinetmaker. Homosote base. Microscale track. Woodland Scenics prebuilt buildings.



**WELCOME**  
— TO —  
**HILL VALLEY**  
"A Nice Place To Live"  
**PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY**



We could not print  
all the images for these  
builds so be sure to  
check out the video  
here!







Bill Freeland NTM [williampenn8@yahoo.com](mailto:williampenn8@yahoo.com) - HO Updates to Bill's B&O railroad.

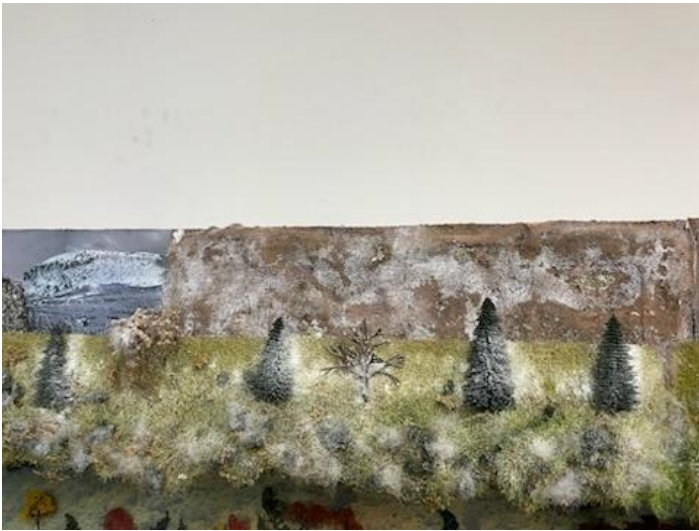


*New look for Pittsburgh*



*One of three new automated control panels*





*New scenery for level 4*



*Added track laid in Buffalo*



*New waterfall*

**Ron Klaiss NTM - [ronklaiss@minemountmodels.com](mailto:ronklaiss@minemountmodels.com) HO scale** - The new diner kit is "Glenn's Greasy Spoon Grill". The first kit in the Harbor Street Series. I'll also talk about the kits that finished the Echo Point Harbor series. Then a couple pictures of our Detail Parts and Accessory kits.

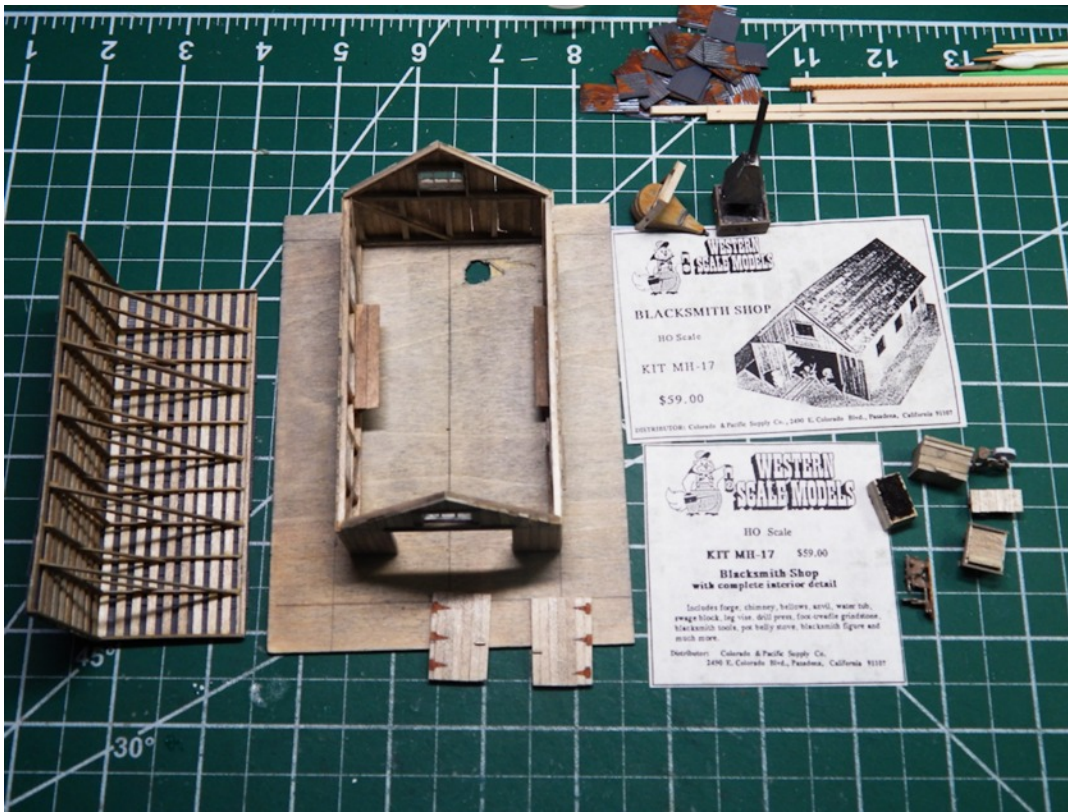








**Fr. Ron Walters NTM [rwalters@friars.us](mailto:rwalters@friars.us) HO scale** - This is a Western Scale Models Blacksmith Shop. I think the company is no longer in business. I checked out their website and there is the year 2017 displayed. I am not sure that they are in business today.



I purchased the kit in the mid 1990's (I paid more than \$59.00 for it, if I remember right) I'm sure the hobby store I ordered it from wanted to make a little money from the sale. I was on vacation at my parent's home helping to taking care of my dad when he was in and out of the hospital. I thought I might be able to build it while on vacation, but when I opened the box, I was quickly relieved of my expectations.

The kit comes complete with interior cast metal details, including windows. It also came with a grain of wheat bulb and

little pieces of stage gel used to color stage lights which was too brittle to use. Installing the light also destroys the leads to the bulb, which is now CA's in place and too hard to re-solder the leads. To the right of the building are just some of the castings. The rest are barely visible, and it takes my Optivisor to see them to paint them. Some of the tongs and other tools are barely a quarter of an inch long.

The kit was basically a box of sticks. The sticks are in separate bags with little pieces of paper inside to identify what size the wooden strips are. The instructions are the key. They include exact scale drawings of all the components. They were made in the days when typewriters were used to create instructions, rather than computer software, so this kit is pretty old in comparison to today's kits. As you can tell from the photo, it has taken me a very long time to put it together. Since I have a printer that also scans and copies, I scanned the pages, making multiple copies, so that I could preserve the originals and work from the copies. They are also on my computer so that I can blow up the scanned copies to see things more clearly and plainly. I am a novice at Adobe Photoshop, so I could not improve the black and white photos of the original building that were photocopied as part of the instructions. Photocopying photocopies worsens them rather than improving them, especially when the originals did not have great contrast to begin with.

Painting all the details has been almost as time consuming as building the building and roof. I did not use the Campbells rolled shingles. I used the "paper" corrugated siding material I had on hand, which you can see at the top of the photo. I figured that a real blacksmith would want something that would repel any kind of forest fire ash above his head while working on the metal work for the logging operation or the railroad where sparks from the loco's smoke jacks can start fires. I used Builder's in Scale's silverwood stain on the boards before construction. The instructions call for putting dirt on the floor, even though the floor is extra and supplied by the modeler. I used 1/8" plywood for the base, much like Tim uses plywood for the bases of his building. I have dirt for the floor all ready to shift into various grades. I have not weathered anything yet either. There is still a lot of work to be done before this little diorama is finished. I will include a finished photo when it's done in a future My Build.



# NEW TRACKS MODELING

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## "My Build" Featuring Models From Our Viewers (9-24-25)

**You can see a video of the entire MY BUILD segment [here](#).**

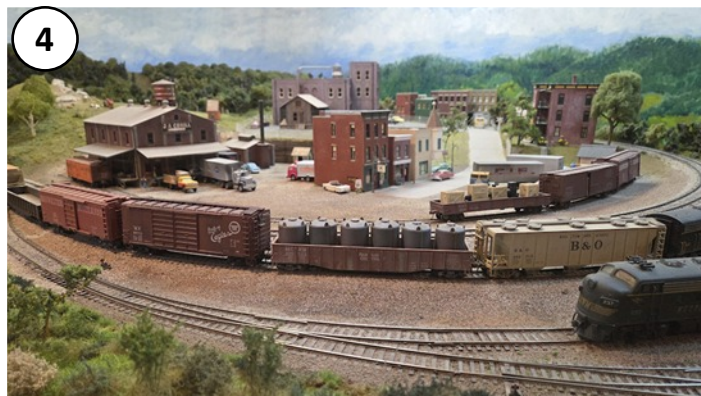
Each of the participants has an email address included, and welcomes your contact.

**Greg Cassidy NTM – [gcassidy2@verizon.net](mailto:gcassidy2@verizon.net) – HO scale**

- 1) When I was first building my layout back in the early 90s, I had attached a couple pieces of Masonite to the wall and painted a generic faded sky blue on them.
- 2) But by the time I had moved the layout up against the wall and attached it there, an artist friend of my wife's had volunteered to paint the backdrop with mountains and clouds. I didn't know until she was done that she was an impressionistic artist. I sometimes regret not going back over it with a faded sky blue, but that probably would have ended a friendship.
- 3) Now as it turns out, it really isn't that horrible. In some shots the sky kind of works.
- 4) And in some other shots, if you get the background a little blurry, that works as well.
- 5) But most of the time the backdrop doesn't really blend in with the foreground mountains, which is something that you should always strive for when you're adding a background to a layout.
- 6) Sometimes it could almost work but it just doesn't look right for the rest of the photo like in this one.
- 7) And in other cases, when I try and take a close up, the background just looks like some Salvador Dali painting and adds nothing to the photo.
- 8) So most of the time when I take photos I just try and make sure that the background is blurred some, and I find that I don't notice it as a distraction that much.
- 9) Now this is a different photo from underneath my bridge and you can obviously see that there's a complete lack of background, and that slightly degrades the believability of the photo.
- 10) This is essentially the same photo with a background in place. Now since there is no wall there how did I do that?
- 11) You'll notice here that I have a photo printout this on heavy card stock, and I have it clipped on to a yardstick that is then clamped on to my hand truck. And this is about as jury rigged as you can get, there are obviously better ways to set up a portable backdrop if you're going to be using it more often.
- 12) This is that same area with the photo backdrop in place. And it's certainly clear that photo backdrops can add to the overall look of a layout.









Chris Coarse NTM – [conowingomodels@yahoo.com](mailto:conowingomodels@yahoo.com) – HO scale

New Conowingo Models project. 12 background flats reduced to three packs of four buildings each. Old west themed. The project is called Gold Dust. Each pack will contain asphalt roofing, self-adhesive shingles and corrugated aluminum. Some packs will have 3D printed parts. Laser-cut wood makes construction easy. Plastic doors and windows. **Editors Note: Ask Greg and see if he will also do some of these on O scale!**



We could not print all the images for these builds so be sure to check out the video here!



# NEW TRACKS MODELING

## Where Mentors Help Modelers Build



**NEW TRACKS LIVE – Streaming Every Wednesday from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM Eastern on YouTube & ZOOM**

Subscribe for free on our website to receive program links: [www.newtracksmodeling.com](http://www.newtracksmodeling.com)

# NEW TRACKS MODELING

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to HELP PROMOTE “MY BUILD”



We’re looking for a few dedicated volunteers to help promote MY BUILD segments on our YouTube channel and other digital platforms. The goal is to reach more modelers and encourage them to showcase their work. If you have a little time to help spread the word, we will greatly appreciate your help! Contact me, Chris Coarse NTM at: [railrunner130@hotmail.com](mailto:railrunner130@hotmail.com) — your support and help will make a big difference.

MY BUILD offers modelers a platform to share projects, get advice, celebrate achievements, and help others learn. Monthly Challenges are designed to inspire creativity, but all types of models are always welcome.

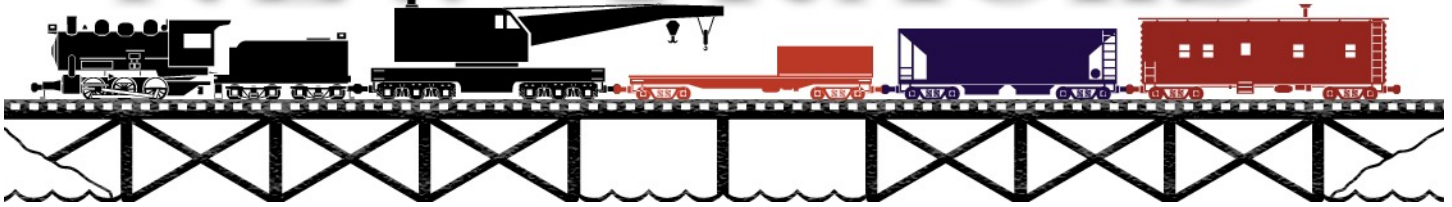
This is a friendly, non-judgmental space where modelers of all ages and experience levels can connect and grow. Join our Facebook Group, New Tracks Modeling, to discuss show content and connect with others.

To participate, send photos of your projects with captions to [railrunner130@hotmail.com](mailto:railrunner130@hotmail.com). We’ll compile them into a slideshow for the show. Participants can talk about their work, share techniques, ask questions, or get feedback — it’s a fun and educational experience!

We welcome your feedback and suggestions for MY BUILD. Feel free to reach out.



# NEW TRACKS



**Mentor Definition: A Trusted Counselor or Guide**

**By Contributing Editor Jim Kellow MMR**

I recently found Perplexity AI and decided to play with it for awhile. I asked various questions just to see what it could do for me. One of the questions I asked and the answer I got is shown below.

**Rate on a scale of 1 to 10 “*O Scale Resource*” magazine**

“*The O Scale Resource Magazine* earns a 9 out of 10 for its specialized focus, high-quality how-to articles, and strong appeal to the O scale modeling community.”

JK. I am so proud to have my articles published by such a highly rated magazine as *The O Scale Resource*. Thanks Amy and Dan for the opportunity.

## **Magazine Strengths**

The magazine is well-regarded for its detailed product reviews, layout spotlights, and hands-on content — especially kitbashing, scratchbuilding, and realistic scenery techniques tailored for O scale modelers. Its commitment to “putting the modeling back in Model Railroading” resonates with experienced hobbyists and supports skill development at all levels.

## **Audience Reception**

Readers praise the publication’s practical step-by-step content, creative project ideas, broad coverage of new O scale products, and approachable editorial voice. The magazine remains free and easily accessible online, expanding its community reach and engagement.

## **Areas for Improvement**

While praised for advanced content, the magazine could offer more beginner tutorials and expand coverage for modern digital modeling tools, but overall, its reputation is very strong among O scale enthusiasts.

## **Overall**

*The O Scale Resource Magazine* is awarded 9 out of 10 for its expert-driven modeling guidance, comprehensive reviews, and accessible format, making it a top choice for O scale railroaders”

JK. Congratulations Amy and Dan for all your hard work over the last 13 years for publishing this fantastic magazine for all of us in the O Scale community. I know I speak the thanks for many O scalers, but I know Amy and Dan would enjoy hearing directly from their readers. Send them an email to: [amy.dan@newtracksm modeling.com](mailto:amy.dan@newtracksm modeling.com).

**Editors Note:** *It’s nice to see AI not freaking out and telling it like it is for a change* 😊



## Just for a Laugh

I subscribe to Cool Hand, TCD Tech Division news. In a recent item, Cool Hand reported “High-speed rail could be the future of transportation for many reasons: It’s fast, clean, and more energy-efficient than taking a plane or driving.” Reminded me of the speed I used to run my Lionel trains as a kid. I used to see how fast I could get my train to go before it left the track. Do you remember those days? I wonder if the Engineers designing and building today’s high speed trains also ran Lionel Trains as a kid?

## Turning Tariff Challenges into Mentoring and Model Building Opportunities

I discussed the possible tariff increases with Gemini AI. Here is what I found out. Good news for New Tracks members who watch our weekly Zoom shows and read our monthly New Tracks Modeler magazine.

“Recent talk of rising tariffs on imports from China has caught the attention of many model railroaders. Since a large share of locomotives, rolling stock, and hobby supplies are manufactured overseas, higher costs could mean fewer new products and steeper prices at the hobby shop. On the surface, that sounds like a setback. But looked at another way, this challenge may be just the push our community needs to rediscover some of the most rewarding parts of the hobby.” JK. This is where New Tracks and *The O Scale Resource Magazine* can help.

## Mentoring

“One of the greatest strengths of model railroading has always been mentoring. Experienced hobbyists have a wealth of knowledge in scratchbuilding, kitbashing, electronics, and scenery-making. By sharing those skills with newcomers, we can show that enjoying the hobby doesn’t depend on the latest ready-to-run release. Clubs, shows, and online gatherings are the perfect places to pass along these techniques and keep the tradition of craftsmanship alive.” JK. Mentoring and building more and better models is what New Tracks is all about. *The O Scale Resource Magazine* has supported New Tracks for over 8 years.

## Cottage Industries

“At the same time, the cottage industry of small kit makers and artisans is well positioned to step forward. Craftsman kits, laser-cut structures, detail parts, and scenery supplies produced by individuals or small companies often provide far more variety and character than mass-produced imports. Supporting these makers not only helps the hobby adapt — it also strengthens the creative heart of model railroading.” JK. New Tracks offers small/medium sized manufacturers free 1/4 page ads in our New Tracks Modeler magazine, free Build Alongs on our Zoom show, and free Profiles in my articles in *The O Scale Resource Magazine*.

## Technology

“Technology is also opening new doors. Affordable 3D printers and laser cutters are now within reach of many hobbyists. Tariff-driven price increases may accelerate the use of digital design and homegrown production, giving modelers the freedom to create custom locomotives, rolling stock, and structures that no overseas catalog could ever supply.” JK. New Tracks and *The O Scale Resource* are both committed to development and promotion of the old and new technologies of model building. New Tracks also supports storytelling about our modeled scenes.

## Hand Building Models

“And, of course, scratchbuilding — working with wood, styrene, *The O Scale Resource Magazine*, and whatever materials we have at hand — remains the most personal and rewarding way to add character to a layout. A handmade model tells a story and becomes a unique treasure in a way no factory-made piece can match.” JK. New Tracks and *The O Scale Resource* support all types of model building including kits, kitbashing, and scratchbuilding.



## Summary

“Yes, tariffs may make the hobby more expensive in the short term. But they also give us a chance to lean into what makes model railroading special: craftsmanship, creativity, and community.

By mentoring, supporting small kit producers, and embracing new tools, we can ensure the hobby doesn't just endure — but thrives in ways richer and more imaginative than ever.”

## Help from New Tracks Modeling

According to the above comments, New Tracks Modeling's focus on mentoring and hand building models make it well positioned to provide help to the railroad modeling community. Please visit our website [newtracksmodeling.com](https://newtracksmodeling.com) for information about our Facebook Group, our weekly Wednesday evening 7 pm Eastern Time live Zoom shows, our YouTube live streamed Zoom shows, 1,600 videos of past Zoom shows, our free digital New Tracks Modeler monthly magazine, our New Tracks Mentors (NTM) assistance, and our Scholarship program for young model railroaders who are HS graduates pursuing a STEAM undergraduate degree. I hope you take a look at how our programs can help your railroad model creativity and craftsmanship. Comments or questions are welcomed. Please email me at: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com)

## Help from *The O Scale Resource Magazine*

The philosophy of the *The O Scale Resource Magazine* is “Putting the “modeling” back in Model Railroading”. Great articles, new product announcements, shows and events and a great editor, publisher and authors. Read every issue and it will help your modeling abilities and confidence in your creativity. Email Dan Dawdy at: [daniel@modelrailroadresource.com](mailto:daniel@modelrailroadresource.com).

## Remember these Ways you can Beat Tariff Troubles:

1. Mentor and Learn Together. Share kit building, scratchbuilding, kitbashing, weathering, and scenery skills with newcomers. The more we teach these skills the less we need expensive imports.

2. Support Cottage Industry Makers.

Buy kits, detail parts, and scenery supplies, etc, from small producers. You'll get to build unique models and help keep creative artisans thriving.

3. Try 3D Printing and Digital Design.

Download files or design your own models. Affordable printers and laser cutters put custom modeling within reach of every hobbyist.

4. Rediscover Scratchbuilding.

Wood, styrene, *The O Scale Resource Magazine*, and imagination are often all you need. Handcrafted models bring unmatched character to a layout.

5. Explore the Secondhand Market.

Train shows, swap meets, and online auctions offer bargains and treasures that can stretch your hobby dollar.

6. Build a Scene and then “Tell its story”. If you have never tried storytelling, give it a try. I did and it opened a new world for me, and got me learning some new AI and AR technology.

7. New Tracks Modeling help. Visit the website: [newtracksmodeling.com](https://newtracksmodeling.com) for detailed information about our activities. Any questions or comments please email me at: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com).



## 8. *The O Scale Resource Magazine*

Visit the website <https://oscaleresource.com/WP/> for more information. Any questions or comments please email Dan Dawdy: [daniel@modelrailroadresource.com](mailto:daniel@modelrailroadresource.com).

### Questions for you to Consider:

Been to any O Scale 1/48 train shows lately? Did you enjoy attending the shows? Did you develop any memories from the shows? Do you plan to go to more such shows in the future? Would you recommend any change to the shows you have attended? On a scale of 1 to 10 how good would you rate the show you attended?

### O Scale 1/48 Train Shows

I think we need to address the current situation and possible change in our O Scale 2 rail 1/48 Train Shows. Yes, I mean you and me, the customer, whose hobby will be affected by the shows continued future develop and survival.

I asked some O Scale 2 rail leaders the following question. After reading their comments please provide some comments you believe should be considered for future shows. Please email me at: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com) Thanks, everyone.

Question: Has O Scale 1/48 reached a point that it is no longer feasible to have a 100% O Scale 1/48 Train Show or Event?

It's up to us! O scale is our scale. We love it. But do we support it?

I am concerned about the level of support. In my last article I discussed the loss of Al Judy's Harrisburg, PA, O scale show, the O Scale West show which includes in addition to O scale 2 rail, S scale, O 3 rail (Hi-rail), all narrow gauges, and the Indianapolis, IN, show which includes Scale 2 Rail/P48, Narrow Gauge/On30, 3-Rail (Hi-Rail) Scale, and Traction. Can O Scale West and the Indianapolis IN shows survive if they are only O scale 2 rail 1/48 shows? There is also the O Narrow Gauge show in Harrisburg Pennsylvania that Al Judy started. I have heard there are plans for this show to continue under new leadership.

So we still only have 100% O Scale 2 rail shows in Chicago, IL, Cleveland OH, Strasburg, PA, Roswell, GA (O Scale South), and Yukon, OK (Southwest O Scale). Have I missed any? Will these five shows also include O 3-rail (Hi-Rail) or other scales in the future to survive? How will O Scale 1/48 be defined in these future shows?

I don't have the answer because frankly as a 86-year old who lives in Florida, scratchbuilds, *The O Scale Resource Magazine* trolleys, is blind in one eye, and uses a walker to get around, I don't attend train shows any more. Yes, I miss them, but at this point I have to rely on reading about them in the model press, digital posts, Zoom shows, and hearing about them from younger friends who attend. I would love to see all the shows provide some form of digital attendance capability at least for a part of the shows that I could use. Maybe someday that will happen and modelers like me will get back involved. But for now I have developed a group of long term suppliers who provide me the parts and supplies I need by mail order.

I believe the answer to my question is how many O scale 1/48 modelers in any gauge are currently attending O Scale Train Shows and want to see them continue? How many potential O Scale modelers of all ages is show advertising drawing to the O Scale shows? Are enough of you attending to make it worthwhile for the people or group putting on the show to keep doing it? How many of you care if there are O Scale 1/48 Scale shows?

I look forward to hearing from you. My email is: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com).



I sent my my above question and comments out to some O scale and train show leaders around the country. I hope their responses kick off a full public discussion of this subject that I believe has been needed for some time.

David Vaughn, NTM, is the Immediate past President of O Scale Central (OSC). David has been concerned about this issue for some time and has been involved in discussions about our Train Shows with other O scale leaders Here are his comments.

“Jim, I share your concerns. I attend O Scale shows and take tables to sell stuff for my side business and from my personal collection. I usually buy more than I sell. Much of the satisfaction I receive from a show’s experience is seeing my friends, meeting new modelers and talking and displaying trains. So I will keep attending as long as health and money permit. Many O scalers feel and act the same way. It is good to see younger modelers at O Scale shows. There are some, but we definitely need more. And I think generally that there is more life in the scale than 5-10 years ago. That notwithstanding, the demise of almost all *The O Scale Resource Magazine* importing and progressively higher prices for commercial models is upon us. But my way of enjoying the scale is different than newer modelers, and those differences may bode ill for traditional train shows. Our scale and the way people experience it reflects what is happening elsewhere: every Amazon purchase is a shopping center trip that didn’t happen. Every email is a possible letter that did not get mailed. Every train video is a potential in person layout visit that didn’t happen and every email conversation could be an in person, face to face, conversation.

Younger/newer modelers - how they get exposed and respond to trains is a different though related topic. They develop their knowledge, skills and hobby relationships and acquire models differently than prior generations of modelers. It’s mostly on line, including developing friends they have never met in person, let alone at a train show. Part of this is the desire of people to associate with folks of the same generation. A tech-savvy 25-year old who models contemporary trains may not think of themselves as having a lot in common with a grumpy old man modeling transition era. And even if they do, making the connections is difficult. Not to mention that us grumpy old men are not always as welcoming as they might be. We need to do better at welcoming younger modelers.

That is not to say that newer, younger modelers are not active, as their time and budgets permit. But the incentive to participate in traditional train shows isn’t there. They establish friendships on Discord and other platforms, shop on eBay and do their research online. They also tend to focus on different eras and model in different ways than the older generations. The emergence of 3D printing suggests that even the basics of modeling, how they acquire and build models, is changing. Traditional train shows are not high on the list of interests for new modelers. Indeed, even the use of clinics to impart knowledge to newer modelers has limitations: the knowledge and skills being taught may not be skills newer modelers want or need: e.g., if I am 3D printing my models, I may think I don’t need soldering skills. So where does this leave train shows? What can we do to keep them relevant and appealing? First, offer incentives to new modelers. Let first time train show attendees or anyone under 30 in free or at a reduced rate. Second. Include younger/newer modelers in leadership positions for the shows (as well as places like magazines, clubs and organizations; OSC takes this seriously: our President and Vice-President are both under 30.

Ask newer/younger modelers what they want and need. Assuming that these proposals are consistent with what they tell us, we should establish gatherings and activities at shows, meets and conventions primarily or exclusively for younger/newer modelers. How about a "30 under 30" meeting? Although not directly tied to train shows (except as discussed, below), we need to meet new modelers online, which is mostly where their part of the hobby dwells. The monthly OSC Online programs are intended in part to draw in modelers who are more comfortable online. We have, in fact, drawn some younger/newer modelers. Even with all of these possible changes, shows that require long travel and overnight stays are swimming upstream. Gas and hotels are expensive, driving is painful. Other ways of traveling long distances, like flying, are not practical to generate train show attendance.



So where do we go? First, local shows have more potential than big extravaganzas. Drive to and set up in the morning, hold the show during the day and pack up before the sun goes down. Think the Strasburg model. These shows are cheaper to run, generally cheaper to attend and have less downside risk for the show sponsors; e.g., no hotel room night guarantees. The March Chicago Show is something of an outlier, with good management and publicity and a loyal base, but even Chicago is having a tough go. Hotel based shows are having difficulties: the economics just do not work in this economy. If we have a major recession hotel prices may come down, but other problems - maybe bigger - will emerge.

Online broadcasts of train shows need to be explored. I have not seen an appealing model yet. But perhaps something like an "Antiques Road Show," where the show broadcasts lists of items for sale to virtual attendees and the vendor gets a short time to describe and show his items for sale. They then give out a phone number and/or email to follow up with transactions. To make it worthwhile for show sponsors - who will otherwise see this as a disincentive to in person attendance - a way to provide revenue must be found, either by charging "admission" to online attendees or through commissions or charges on online sales to be made by vendors. That is worth exploring, but developing and executing such a presentation will take time and attention: it will take work to make it feel easy and comfortable. It will also take time management: if you give each vendor 3 minutes, that is maybe a dozen vendors in an hour. And an hour is about as long as most online viewers will tolerate. For even a small show like Strasburg, it will not be practical to present all 50 (or however many) vendors online.

There are, of course, other ways in which show viability might be improved. Combining shows with narrow gauge should be explored. None of us in "standard gauge O" have done a very good job of working with the narrow gauges. Adding three rail - or at least 3 rail scale - should be explored. Not sure how to keep a balance if you open the door to 3 railers (and assuming that they would take us up on such invitation). OS2R modelers will not mix well with tables of giraffe cars.

*O Scale Resource* and Ken Burney's Facebook page are home to lots of O Scale 2 Rail energy. They have an important outreach function to attract modelers new to the scale. They deserve everyone's support. Are there ways that we can work with them to better reach out to recruit new members of the OS2R community?

This is an important topic, and one that is important to the future of our scale, which is worth passing along to new generations of modelers. Thanks for raising it. David Vaughn"

**JK.** Thank you, David. I look forward to hearing replies to your ideas. New Tracks has had some experience with hosting Live Zoom train shows. We did them when the pandemic was closing down most in person activities. We were the first to offer them we had no guidelines to go by so we just made up rules as we went. We were very pleased with our response by attendees. I have included a few more details about our shows in another answer below. As we went along, we also obtained significant sponsorship from several companies for our shows, a way future shows could consider obtaining revenue. Our shows are still available today for anyone to view for free on our You Tube channel: New Tracks Modeling. For many folks like me they can provide a vehicle for small manufacturers to reach us older modelers. If anyone is interested in discussing our digital train show experience, please let me know. My email is [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com).

#### **Comments from John Scott Geare, The owner and Producer of the GSMTS at Timonium.**

"Scott asks: Is there a wide enough audience of O Scale hobbyists to support a train show or event?

Probably not a large show, such as Springfield, or Timonium. However, a show within a show is feasible, if the promoter is willing to provide the space for it. We certainly would do that, as we have for craftsman quality builders, who operate as the "Craftsman's Courtyard" in their own special area of the show. The deal is that the section organizer is responsible for putting together all the exhibitors and arranging their tables within the allotted space. The organizer pays the show one payment for everything they occupy. In exchange, their table cost is at "wholesale."



Traditional train shows are not high on the list of interests for new modelers. Indeed, even the use of clinics to impart knowledge to newer modelers has limitations: the knowledge and skills being taught may not be skills newer modelers want or need: e.g., if I am 3D printing my models, I don't need soldering skills.

The increasing number of vendors and attendees at our show suggests otherwise. Likewise, the growing attendance at our clinics. 3D printing may well produce some parts or scenic elements, but it can't wire connections for a DCC conversion. For that, you need robotics at a surgical level of precision. Free admission for anyone under 30 is likely to increase admissions of people under 30. But not necessarily those with an interest in rail modeling. On the other hand, at the Great Scale Model Train show we give away tables for youth train clubs to sell their goods and promote their clubs, in exchange for their muscle in helping vendors move in and out. We even have Girl Scouts operating our door prize table. Outreach is key, and so is defining the characteristics of those we hope to reach.

First, local shows have more potential than big extravaganzas. Drive and set up in the morning, hold the show during the day and pack up before the sun goes down. Cheaper to run, cheaper to attend. The Strasburg model.

Yes on cheaper, maybe not so much on outreach and recruitment, given the smaller attendance, comprised mostly of those who are already involved in the hobby. HOWEVER, I wonder about the feasibility of holiday layouts in public spaces as a recruitment opportunity.

Online broadcasts of train shows need to be explored. I have not seen an appealing model yet.

Nor have I, but we're looking at it. The problem is that online sales compete with gate admissions. The alternative is a live stream which is in effect an advertisement to attend the show. Otherwise, encouraging local TV to feature the show as a spot on their "local events" program would be helpful.

BOTTOM LINE: O is a niche, being at most 10% of the rail modeling hobby, according to "reliable" sources. The guidance, perhaps, for train show presence, is to get that 10% exposure all in one place, to the extent possible at shows that will accommodate it. I know our show would do so. But for those who know only that "trains are cool," its open field in terms of public display. No visitor will ignore a creative display because of scale. Finally, there must be some sensitivity about what we are really trying to promote, here. Is it rail modeling, the hobby? Or is it O scale? That's my take. Scott."

**JK.** Scott I like your idea of having a special area for O Scale at big shows, local TV spots and the advertising and promotion to the kids you are doing. Naturally I encourage your investigation of digital vehicles for modelers who for whatever reason cannot attend your live in person shows. Scott was a major supporter of my New Tracks digital train shows and understands why I decided to stop having them. Scott thank you for the show recap you provide to all vendors at your show. It is very helpful information about how you view the show, and your future plans and ideas. Best of Luck with your future shows.

**These next comments are from Rod Miller, the Chairman of the O Scale West Committee.**

"Thank you for including me on this Jim. I'm glad to know I'm not the only one who is worried about the viability of O scale train shows.

I think the one day shows work because the geographical area being "served" is relatively small compared to OSW's "service" area of all the country west of the Rocky Mountains. OSW needs to be located in a hotel so that convenient overnight accommodations are available for the long distance attendee. Our plan for future OSWs is to make them a two day show, with set up and selling both on the first day, selling on the second day, and clinics on both days.

Regarding our decision to include 3 rail scale, this was because 10% of the people who responded to our survey indicated they didn't come to OSW because there was no 3 rail scale. The reality is that almost all



contemporary rolling stock on 2 rail layouts exists because a 3 rail scale model provided the basis for it. Further, contemporary models are where the younger modelers are.

In our promotion for OSW we will attempt to define 3 rail scale as NO toy trains. This has worked for our S attendees as the amount of American Flyer I've seen has been small to none."

**JK.** Thanks, Rod for your comments. I have believed for a long time that 3 rail scale and 2 rail scale, and narrow gauge O scale modelers buy many of the same things from the same manufacturers; and therefore, are logical customers to attend an O Scale show. I have also heard that the reason some modelers prefer 3 rail hi-rail modeling is they have less operational problems running their railroads, but still have the rest of their layouts built in O scale. Having O 2 rail scale, 3 rail hi-rail, and all different O narrow gauge has always made sense to me and offers more sales opportunity for dealers and manufacturers. It also opens the O scale market to a larger group of potential modelers, young and old. I congratulate you on conducting a survey of your 2025 attendees. I learned a lot from reading the results. Anyone interested can see the results at: <https://oscalewest.com/>

Good luck with the 2026 O Scale West show.

Just before I sent this article to be published Rod Miller made a very significant post on Facebook about the 2026 O Scale West show. Obviously, Rod is listening to the O Scale Community and providing a show that better meets their needs. Best of luck Rod. [Click here to see his post](#). NOTE: if you cannot read this, please look at the Show section in this issue.

### **Comments from Eric Peterson member of the OSC Board of Directors**

"I have a few thoughts:

1. O Scale 2 Rail was the primary scale 90 years ago and led the formation of the NMRA. O Scale Central is the NMRA Special Interest Group for O Scale 2 Rail modeling and can include Scale 3 Rail interests.
2. Each regional and local convention or train show is competing with all the others for the attendance of individuals. A national O scale show with primary trading floor activity competes directly with Chicago O Scale March meet. Modelers have limited travel funds as well as time on the calendar that matches the show schedules. The March Meet in the Chicago area is the lead event for O scale 2 rail, and the location and the month of March are a good foundation.
3. Most O Scale events feature trading floor space unlike other train shows for the public and NMRA conventions that include layout tours and clinics with some vendor space. Many NMRA events in the past had dealers using their hotel rooms as their sales location during the afternoon and evenings.
4. The recent TCA convention in Jacksonville included an O Scale 2 Rail modular layout and some equipment and material display. The 3 rail part of the hobby has changed and now is dominated by scale equipment that can be converted or is sold with a 2 rail option. As 2 rail and 3 rail modeling continues to have more in common this deserves a fresh look at common interests.
5. There is nothing like going to an O Scale trading floor and being able to see and look at a possible purchase up close, turn it over, test run it and learn more about it from the owner. Pricing always seems better and open to adjustment during these events. As a young modeler, I went to several early national and Chicago O Scale events. I learned so much from looking at what was displayed even though I could not afford to buy it. I asked a lot of stupid questions. I still enjoy the in person events as the best way to learn about what is available, pricing and also what is new. I no longer have anything I am looking for on a list. But when I see something attractive, I still buy it.
6. The reality is few clubs are willing to take on sponsoring and running a major trading floor event. One day events work. There are actually quite a few each year in different parts of the country, and we try to have a



complete list on the O Scale Central website calendar. Hotels have changed and they are usually not the best place for an event. Let the modeler choose the hotel they will use near a different venue space, e.g., Lion's Club, VFW, Church Hall, etc.

7. An in person trading floor event is the best place to show a person considering or new to O Scale what is out there. Maybe we should invite new attendees to meet at a place and time during a trading floor event and have a few experienced modelers walk the floor with them. Maybe common railroad interests can be used for connections.

8. As O Scale imports decline, plastic and 3D printed shells and models continue to offer an alternative the future for O Scale is good. We have the second hand market for O Scale and other models. Atlas now regularly offers equipment for both 3 and 2 rail."

**JK.** The term O scale Hi-Rail was coined those many years ago by the NMRA to define 3 rail. I think the OSC is wise to include O scale Hi-Rail and all the O scale narrow gauges in their organization. The hotel room sales you mention are not just at NMRA events. I used to go a day early at the TCA York meet to visit the hotel rooms. I am sure other conventions had similar hotel room experiences. If Chicago is considered the O Scale National, then why not have the OSC designate it as such. I haven't been to the Chicago show for over 30 years, but it was back then one of the several cities that were designated as the O Scale National convention. I think I also went to one in Cleveland, OH that was so designated. Chicago will also have a soft spot in my heart as it was where I entered my first contest; and surprise, surprise, won first place in my category. If I am right about Cleveland, or wherever, my Traction model won the first V. Jones award ever offered by his family, in honor of the man who started the first publication for Traction modelers called Model Traction News on May 1, 1949.

#### **Comments from Brad Kowal Owner and Producer of the March Chicago Illinois O Scale Train Show**

"#1 It is not dying. We have just started to get the younger half of the hobby to attend the meets. We need to continue to encourage EVERYONE's attendance. The best way to do that, right now, is through Facebook. There are a lot of big names (and I mean that literally) in O Scale that don't post anything or very little on Ken Burney's group. We're all fond of our O Scale Meets, yet very little is posted other than a flyer. Those of us that like to attend these things, should be starting and participating in numerous conversations throughout the year, so those who have yet to attend can see that there is a lot of interest. If people know what the meets are about, they will want to attend. I do my best to push the Chicago and Indy Meets; however, the message would be better received if multiple names popped up with information vs. my name only time after time. ☺

#2 We have to be extremely careful how we include 3 rail at the meets. Yes, no, left, right, top, down, it is still highly rejected by the 2 railers. That's just the way it is. If we force it down people's throats, we'll be done before I finish this email. I think we need to do what we can to encourage those in 3 rail to convert to 2 rail, rather than give up, give in and 100% accept. We can do so respectfully without running over anyone's foot. There are plenty of 3 rail events, but not really that many 2 rail events. If there is one less 3 rail event, nobody is harmed. If we lose a 2 rail event, many of us will be harmed.

#3 In order to expand O scale 2 Rail, there are a number of things we need to do. We have already talked about them ad nauseam, so there is no need to type the list. The problem we face is that none of us are willing to do the work, myself included. We are all well intentioned and each of us has a valid set of reasons why we can't or won't do it. How we change this should be the topic of discussion.

#4 Cully and I will be at the Indy Meet. Shaydin is threatening to come along as well. We're looking forward to it!!!"

**JK.** Thanks, Brad, for your comments. I was a 3 railer for many many years. I changed to scratchbuilding O scale 2 rail trolleys in *The O Scale Resource Magazine* and use my overhead for power. So I guess I am still a 3-rail modeler.



## **Doug Forsman, Co-Chairman Oklahoma Model Railroad Association and Museum's Southwest O Scale Train Show**

"We have been fortunate in being able to continue a traditional "O" Scale meet, usually in the Fall of each year. The meet was sustained for a number of years by the late George Wallace, an avid model railroader and good friend who passed away in 2023. The annual gathering is titled the Southwest "O" Scale and Narrow Gauge Meet and is being held for the second year in a row in the Oklahoma City suburb of Yukon. We share the hosting responsibilities with some fellow hobbyists in Texas. We have about 8,000 square feet to offer tables for vendors or fellow modelers who want to do some selling or trading. In addition, we schedule a couple of special interest clinics and a show and tell time, encouraging attendees to bring a project. We typically have some layouts that are set up as well. The Meet runs from Noon on a Friday to about 3PM on Saturday. We invite attendees to come up to our Museum on Saturday, after the Meet closes.

Some of the things that we do to make attending our Meet easy and attractive include holding the registration at \$25 and table rentals at \$15. In order to keep folks at the venue, we offer a nice catered dinner on Friday and a catered lunch on Saturday. Registrants pay for meals at the time that they register. We have also selected a venue that is reasonably priced and has very good, free parking. A room block at the local Marriott Fairfield Inn with a Meet discount is also available for our attendees.

Our challenge, like many other Meets, is to make sure that we contact as many modelers as possible and strongly encourage them to alert others regarding the Meet, and to bring a friend. Maintaining a good mailing list and using every avenue that we can find to spread the word is our hope for the future.

Our Meet is not intended to make money for the Museum and it typically just breaks even. What we want to do is encourage existing and potential modelers to see the fun and challenge of "O" Scale model railroading."

### **Joe Norman the other Co-Chairman of the Southwest Show added:**

"We welcome modelers of all scales and gauges who are interested in learning about O scale and what's available. Also, we will have two modular layouts operating at the show; one is a conventional two rail layout featuring both steam and diesel equipment, the other is a trolley layout with equipment operating off overhead wire!"

**JK.** Thanks, Doug and Joe, for your comments. Please let us know how your October 17-18, 2025, show goes.

**Martin Brechbiel, MMR, NTM** was kind enough to edit my original draft of this segment of my article and also add some additional comments.

"There are a couple of points that I might like to make.

On show advertising...this simply has not been well done by any show. In the past 20+ years it's been at the absolute minimal with little exception and generally directly to past attendees and then to "the choir" both of which fail to grow anything. My experience in extracting show information to publish (for free!) had been routinely met with a range from complete and total unresponsiveness up to "Why would we want to do that..." sort of responses. That applies to every O scale show listed above. And, this observation is not limited to O scale but crosses over almost the entire pantheon of the model railroading. Where is the aversion to advertising based, in the wallets or in the minds, or both? All advertising media avenues really need to be pursued and a reliance on just the cheap/free, i.e. social media, Facebook, etc. is self-limiting.

I don't think it's broadly true that new (younger?) modelers are not interested in attending train shows. I doubt that they are aware of them at all in most cases due to that lack of advertising other than to "the choir" which then also addresses, in part, outreach. Yes, they get their information not at shows and clinics; they're using You Tube. I have a son that sends me modeling technique You Tube links. And, at the last



Strasburg show I was cornered into a conversation by a modeler that I had never met that told me all about my New Tracks segments that are on You Tube as being his inspiration for his model building.

So, on advertising and outreach, and communications to beyond “the choir” we’re largely still in the last century.

The Strasburg model...I have long advocated that more local/regional 50-100 table shows would be preferable for many of the reasons espoused above scattered about the country. I had wild hopes that OSC might organize/sponsor such an effort.

Chicago is as stated something of an outlier, but it’s also self-limited to being a Mecca for the “the choir” and not really an outreach or growth event. I used to attend but just as noted above, costs terminated my willingness to make the trip (along with very little need/want for anything). The harsh reality is large shows in the hotel model probably have a limited future. Few people can afford to spend \$800+ to attend a show to purchase a \$500 bargain.

I have brief thoughts on conventions that we have really been lacking in for several years. The costs are probably approaching extravagant to hold them and the costs to attend them are probably equally extravagant. I have in the past advocated partnering with an NMRA region (NOT National!!!!) to get these done. The 2018 convention was a significant success that demonstrated that this model can work and work well to the benefit of all participants.

Virtual train shows: New Tracks did run some of these several years ago. They were 2-3 hours long online events where presenters got their 5-15 min of fame for a nominal fee. As such, the bones of how virtual train shows could be developed already exist. The NMRA has run virtual conventions. So, this comes down to will and desire to perform given that existing platforms and models are available.

Combine with S scale: Best person to ask about how that works or worked might be Dan Dawdy after the Indianapolis show opened up the venue to S scale. Getting his input on real numbers should prove valuable.

Discuss on the next OSC online program: Okay, but again, that’s limited to just reaching “the choir” pretty exclusively.

“...their own special area of the show...” I would think this offer is something that OSC and a host of other organizations should be pursuing aggressively at every opportunity! This is particularly true at the larger, general, all-scales shows to do their outreach exercise. I cannot fathom why this offer is not enthusiastically accepted if there is a real desire to reach new potential O scale modelers.

The increasing number of vendors and attendees at our show suggests otherwise.... I agree. My last time to Timonium showed a considerably younger crowd (Yes, I know I’m older now...), so I think this show is being successful at reaching a larger general audience.

Outreach is key: Yes!”

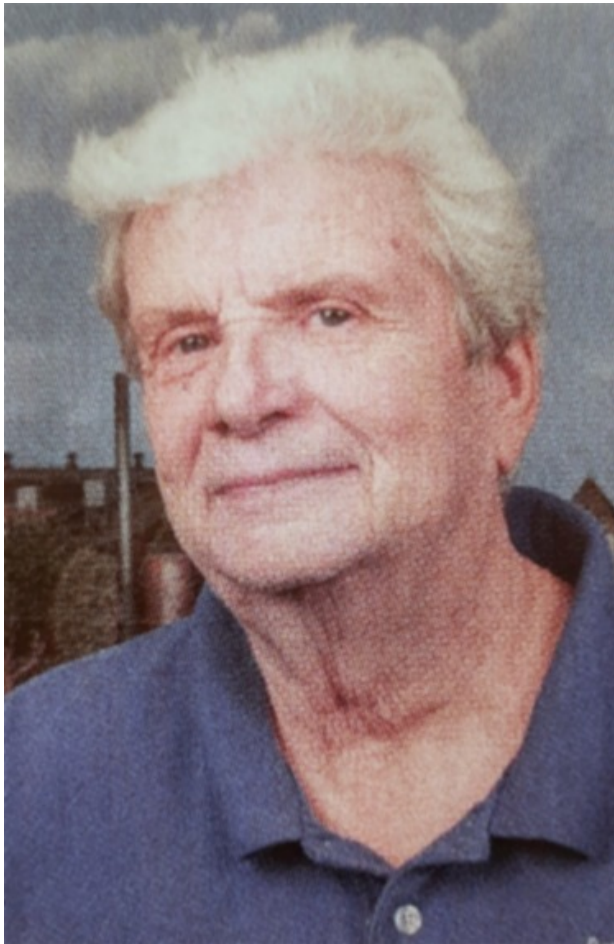
**JK.** Thank you Martin. Advertising; yes, it is critical. That’s why New Tracks Modeler magazine offers a free 1/4 page free advertisement to organizations, manufacturers and dealers to give the small guy who can’t afford regular advertising rates a way to get known. It’s also why we only charged \$10.00 for a 5 minute spot on our virtual train shows. We started with 20 spots and ran a show for 2-3 hours, and yes there was some discussion after some, not all of the manufacturer’s presentations. Many of the replies we got back from viewers were thanks because they said: “We never heard of that manufacturer, thank you.”. Since getting that communication going that was our purpose, we considered that mission accomplished. Our main problem doing the shows was lack of wide spread Zoom technological knowledge. I am sure that has changed over the last 4 or so years.



I truly hope my questions and the information from various O scale and train show leaders, opens this subject for discussion by all O scale modelers. I look forward to getting readers comments and ideas to help O Scale have a viable place in many future Train Shows.

Your memories from O scale shows you have attended are also welcome. After all keeping O scale shows viable and exciting is what my questions here are all about. We want everyone to continue to have great memories from attending the shows. If you have never commented on a subject before please comment on this one. It is very important to our O scale hobby. We sure don't want our O Scale train shows to go the way of many of the local hobby shops. My email is [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com).

This next piece contains some memories of a dear friend I just lost. I could not include all the photos of Dave's modeling I would have liked in Part One of this article as I did not have the photos; and frankly, I needed some time alone to reflect on Dave's passing. So here goes something that I am proud to write but also hate to have to write it.



## David Sellers NTM My Friend and Mentor

Photo by Lou Sassi from his *Model Railroader* magazine article

### Part 2

[Part 1 which I wrote for my last New Tracks article](#) was a difficult article for me to write as Dave had just very recently passed away. Part 2, I hope will be a little easier. I have heard from several of you that you enjoyed seeing some of Dave Sellers' NTM dioramas in Part 1. Dave was not well enough to take the photos of his dioramas and needed the help of his long time health surrogate, Dale Folsom, to get the dioramas off his walls and photograph them. Dale did not finish before Dave passed away, and that is why I could not show them all in Part 1. Here are Dale's photographs of Dave's remaining dioramas. You can personally see these beautiful dioramas at the Gulf Coast and Central Florida Railroad Museum Inc. at the "Bushnell Station" in Bushnell, Florida Please visit the Museum's website at: <http://www.bushnellstation.com/> for details about the exhibit.

I am incredibly pleased that some of Dave's dioramas will be available at the Museum to inspire future railroad modelers. Dave was honored that the Museum wanted to exhibit his dioramas. Please note that two companies, Bar Mills, and Woodland Scenics play a major role in Dave's diorama modeling. All of the structures on the dioramas are Bar Mills kit models and almost all the scenic material is from Woodland Scenics. Dave purchased many small details from various manufacturers he found at train shows he attended.

Some of Dale Folsom's photos of Dave Sellers dioramas follow.

### Dave and Jerry's Scrap and Salvage

This diorama would have been very special to Dave because of its name. His dog, Jerry, was 17 years old and Dave had him since he was a puppy. Jerry was Dave's constant companion and went everywhere with him. Dave always referred to Jerry as his Service Dog. I believe he definitely was.



## Dave and Jerry's Scrap and Salvage









## B&D Seafood Shack

After model railroading, Dave's second love was fishing. He belonged to a local fishing club for many years and served as its President. That is probably why Dave loved modeling water and fish scenes.





## Manz Lumber

Sorry, but I cannot share any details about this model's name. My guess is it was a friend of Dave's.





Well that is all the photos I have of Dave's dioramas. I hope you enjoyed seeing them and encourage you to visit the Museum to see the actual models. The amount of details and artistic creativity is very special. It will be worth your trip.

Thank you Dave Sellers NTM for your friendship and for passing along your modeling techniques and artistic creativity to so many other modelers. You were a true mentor for our railroad modeling hobby.

My friend you will be missed. By the way, say hello for me to Ronnie Rise MMR, Rick Shoup MMR, HLM, and all our other mutual friends who passed some time ago. I still miss them very much.

If anyone has any modeling stories about Dave they care to share, I would love to hear them. My email is: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com).

## **The Art of Model Railroading Storytelling**

I am a lifelong model railroader and, at 86 years old, I just heard about a part of model railroading I had never heard of or thought about before. That subject is "Model Railroading Storytelling". To find out about it, I turned to Gemini AI to help explain the concept to me, and help me understand its probable future in our hobby. After several different questions to Gemini AI, the following is a summary of what I learned about Storytelling.

### **Part 1: The Soul of a Miniature World**

Model railroading is often seen as a hobby of meticulous detail — a pursuit of recreating a miniature world with realistic locomotives, finely crafted buildings, and sprawling landscapes. While the technical aspects are undeniably important, the true heart of the hobby lies in something more profound: storytelling. A great model railroad isn't just a collection of miniature objects; it's a living, breathing narrative, a frozen moment in time that invites the viewer to imagine the lives and events unfolding within its borders.

Imagine two layouts. The first is a pristine, brand-new train set. It's technically impressive, but it feels sterile, like a museum exhibit. Now, imagine a second layout: a weathered boxcar on a rusting siding, a forgotten bicycle leaning against a corner store, and a flickering light in an upstairs window. A farmer's truck, caked in mud, is parked beside a barn. This second layout tells a story. It's a world that has been lived in, full of history and character.

Storytelling in model railroading is the deliberate practice of imbuing your layout with this narrative depth. It's about creating a sense of place, a specific time, and a community of people who exist within your miniature world. This narrative framework is what elevates a collection of models into a work of art. The foundation of any good story is a strong theme. What is the central idea of your layout? Is it a bustling urban terminal in the steam era? A quiet, rural branch line struggling to survive? A modern intermodal yard serving a major port? Once you have a theme, you can begin to flesh out the details. The theme dictates the era, the geographic location, the type of rail operations you will model, and informs your choice of buildings, vehicles, and even the weather.

This approach is already a significant part of the hobby, with an estimated 20-30% of model railroaders currently engaging in it. However, the future looks even more narrative-driven. According to industry trends and projections, this number could jump to 50-70% by 2045. As technology evolves and more modelers see the incredible potential of weaving stories into their work, storytelling is poised to become a defining characteristic of modern model railroading. The hobbyist builds a beautiful layout, but the storyteller brings that layout to life.

Ultimately, storytelling is what makes your layout uniquely yours. It's an expression of your imagination and your passion for the history and romance of the railroad. It's a way to connect with others who view your layout, inviting them to step into the world you've created and become a part of the narrative themselves.



## Part 2: Building the Narrative: From Concept to Composition

With a central theme established, the next step is to transform that concept into a physical space. This is where the composition of your layout becomes a powerful tool for storytelling. Every element you place, from the largest building to the smallest figure, should serve the narrative you are trying to build.

### The Big Picture: Layout Design and Flow

Your layout's design is the canvas for your story. Consider the "why" behind the track plan. Is the main line a major freight artery, or a passenger express route? Are there branch lines serving specific industries? The track plan should logically support the narrative. For example, a branch line that ends at a coal mine and a logging operation tells a clear story about the types of freight your railroad handles. The layout's flow, how the trains move through the scenes, can also tell a story. A train slowing down to switch cars at a busy freight yard, or a passenger express roaring past a sleepy rural station, creates a sense of motion and purpose.



### The Cast of Characters: Figures and Vehicles

Miniature figures and vehicles are the actors in your play. They bring your world to life and are one of the most direct ways to tell a story. Don't just place figures randomly; create small vignettes. A group of railroad workers gathered around a handcar, a family having a picnic by a small pond, or a police officer directing traffic at a busy intersection all tell small, self-contained stories. The type of clothing they wear and the actions they are performing should be consistent with your chosen era and theme.





### The Setting: Scenery and Structures

The scenery and structures are the backdrop for your narrative. Weathering is a key technique here. Pristine models look like toys; weathered models tell a story of use and time. A rust-streaked roof on a factory, a peeling billboard, or a patched-up trackside shack all suggest a history. The placement of structures is also crucial. The industries you model should be integrated with the railroad, with sidings and loading docks that make operational sense.

### The Power of Detail: The Art of the Subtle Story

The most compelling stories are often told through small, seemingly insignificant details. These tiny elements can transform a static scene into a living, breathing moment. They give the scene a sense of immediacy, as if the viewer has stumbled upon a moment that is





happening right now. For example, a painter on a scaffold with a can of paint and a brush in hand creates a sense of action.

Some of the most powerful storytelling details are those that hint at an unseen narrative. They suggest a history and a life that extends beyond the borders of your layout. A heavily weathered freight car with an old logo on it, sitting on a private siding in a modern-day layout, suggests a history of interchange and long-forgotten routes. A single, flickering light in an abandoned factory at night hints at trespassers or a past fire. These details invite the viewer to use their imagination and fill in the blanks, making them a participant in the storytelling process.

### **Part 3: The Future of Storytelling: A Glimpse into 2045**

The storytelling principles we use today are powerful, but the future of the hobby promises to make them even more dynamic and immersive through technological innovation. In 2045, model railroading storytelling won't just be about building a static scene; it will be about creating an interactive, living drama.

#### **Hyper-Immersive Environments**

Looking ahead, technology like Augmented Reality (AR) will be a game-changer. Imagine wearing AR glasses while looking at your physical layout. You could see digital overlays of dynamic weather effects, animated characters walking the streets, or historical data pop-ups that tell you the story of a specific building. High-resolution digital backdrops will seamlessly blend with your physical scenery, showing a flock of birds flying by or a thunderstorm brewing on the horizon, all in real time.

#### **AI as a Narrative Partner**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will go beyond simply controlling trains. It will become a narrative partner, helping modelers develop intricate storylines. AI could suggest historical events to incorporate, generate plausible "what-if" scenarios, or even manage a dynamic storyline that evolves based on operational events. For instance, a simulated equipment failure on the main line could trigger a series of narrative changes across the entire layout, with AI-controlled locomotives and figures responding to the new situation.

#### **Robotics for Dynamic Storytelling**

Miniaturized, programmable robotics will bring unprecedented levels of dynamic activity. Tiny, self-propelled figures and vehicles could move autonomously, creating incredibly lifelike scenes. You might see miniature citizens walking down a sidewalk, a fire truck responding to a digitally projected fire, or workers operating miniature machinery. This will allow modelers to depict complex, evolving events rather than just static snapshots, making the storytelling a living experience.

#### **Interactive Narratives**

The layouts of 2045 will be highly interactive. Modelers and viewers could influence the storyline through voice commands or gesture control. Saying "simulate a blizzard" could trigger changes in lighting, sound, and operation. A viewer could point to a building and ask an AI assistant for its fictional history, getting an instant narrative response. This will blur the lines between a physical layout and a digital experience, creating a personalized and responsive story for every viewer.

Ultimately, while the fundamentals of craftsmanship and the joy of running trains will always be at the heart of model railroading, storytelling will become the driving force behind how we create and share our miniature worlds. It will merge the artistic and the technical, the physical and the digital, to create an experience that is not just seen, but felt. This evolution ensures that model railroading will continue to captivate and inspire new generations, not just as a hobby, but as a sophisticated form of immersive art.



I learned something new about modeling and our hobby's future working on this article. I would appreciate your feedback, and particularly hearing about your "Storytelling Modeling". Next issue I will tell you how to use AI to develop your Story of a scene. Then the issue after that I will show you my first story using the AI techniques I told you about. My email is [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com)

### **It's Time to Work on 2026 Scholarship Donations**

Now it's time to start working on our Scholarship program for 2026. Please visit our website: [newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship](http://newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship) for details about donating to, or making an application for, our 2026 Scholarship program.

Clubs, model railroad manufacturers, train shows and other events can help us get the word out about the scholarship by distributing flyers or displaying one of our banners at their train shows, conferences, meetings or at their local school or college. Contact our Scholarship Chairman Henry Primas for more information on helping out in this way. His email is [Henry.Primas@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:Henry.Primas@newtracksmodeling.com) Thanks to everyone in the model railroad community for all your help.

### **Why donate to New Tracks 2026 scholarship fund**

We hope all members of the model railroad community consider donating to the New Tracks Scholarship fund because it represents a direct investment in the future leaders of the hobby. This unique scholarship is specifically designed for model railroaders who are pursuing a college degree or technical school credential in a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) related field. By supporting these young individuals, the community is not only helping them achieve their educational goals but also nurturing the next generation of creative and technically skilled modelers.

The scholarship committee reviews applications based on academic achievement, involvement in railroad modeling activities, and an essay detailing how the railroad modeling hobby has impacted their lives. Donating to this fund is a tangible way to give back, ensuring that the passion, knowledge, and innovative spirit of railroad modeling continues to thrive for years to come.

Every donation, of any amount, is extremely welcomed and needed. We believe our scholarships helps to show students that the railroad modeling hobby is a worthwhile endeavor which will help them in their STEAM higher educational pursuits.

Businesses can provide support to the scholarship in several ways: First, by making a cash contribution of any amount. We also have Scholarship Sponsorship categories available at the \$250.00, \$500.00, \$1,000.00 and \$2,000.00 levels. We encourage manufacturers and distributors to include information about the scholarship in their product packaging to help get the word out about our scholarships. We currently have 8 companies doing this and it makes a big impact by reaching out to the total modeling community.

### **Early Donors for our 2026 Scholarship Program**

I am pleased to report these repeat donors have already made contributions for our 2026 Scholarships. Please join them with a donation thru Zeffy : <https://share.google/9GQhavF0PbWqxnSUq>

Or send a check for any amount to our Treasurer Bob Davidson at:

New Tracks Modeling Mentoring Scholarship  
c/o Bob Davidson  
6273 Gulf Stream Path  
Cicero NY 13039



## **Closing comments from New Tracks Founder: Jim Kellow MMR, NTM**

I am extremely proud of all our current New Tracks volunteers, and activities. I believe, however, there may be other activity areas we should investigate. Even retired I am still around and working.

### **#1. More New Tracks Newspaper articles**

My monthly column in my local *Citrus County Chronicle* newspaper is having readers approach me with ideas I have never previously thought about. In my last article I told you we are doing everything we can think of to promote railroad modeling, mentoring and our Scholarship Program, and my articles reflect this.

August 8, 2025, article:” My Column this month discusses “Young People Make our Hobbies Survive.”

September 12, 2025, article: “Mentoring Keeps Model Building Alive and Thriving”

One significant benefit I get from my newspaper articles is meeting some exciting people in other hobbies who may be able to help my modeling. For example, here is what ChatGPT says when asked about the kind of help I hope for.

My Newspaper articles are helping me learn modeling skills and ideas from other modeling hobbies. ChatGPT illustrates my point:

“Model railroaders can pick up quite a lot from other modeling hobbies—whether that’s military dioramas, RC aircraft, ship building, or even tabletop gaming—because many of the skills, materials, and creative approaches overlap. Here are some key takeaways:

#### **1. Advanced scenery and weathering techniques**

- From military and fantasy miniature painters: Layered dry brushing, glazing, and pigment powders can add realism and depth to railroad structures, rolling stock, and landscapes.
- From wargamers and diorama builders: Blending static grass colors, using resin for water effects, and adding micro-details like litter, rust streaks, and oil spills.

#### **2. Innovative materials and tools**

- RC airplane builders experiment with lightweight yet strong materials like foam board, carbon fiber, and specialized adhesives—many of which can be adapted for scratchbuilding model railroad structures or portable layouts.
- Ship modelers use fine rigging cord, precision tweezers, and tiny brass fittings that can add realism to railroad scenes.

#### **3. Creative storytelling and scene design**

- Tabletop RPG terrain makers excel at story-driven scenery, where every detail hints at a backstory. This can inspire railroaders to give each scene a narrative—why a building is abandoned, why a trackside yard looks overgrown, etc.
- Scale car modelers often focus on hero subjects—one vehicle or figure displayed in its best light—which can teach railroaders how to make a central locomotive or structure the focal point of a scene.

#### **4. Efficiency and workflow**

- Gundam and plastic model kit builders often use sub-assemblies, masking techniques, and painting jigs to speed up work and keep detail crisp.



- RC hobbyists are skilled in modular construction for easy maintenance and transport—a mindset useful for modular or portable train layouts.

## 5. Cross-pollination of technology

- 3D printing, CNC cutting, and laser engraving—popular in cosplay prop building and custom RC parts—are becoming increasingly accessible, letting railroaders design unique rolling stock, buildings, or scenic details.

- LED lighting tricks from scale car customizers and slot car builders can be applied to railroad streetlights, interiors, and signals.

Bottom line: If model railroaders borrow freely from other modeling worlds, they can get more realistic results, work more efficiently, and bring fresh creative energy to their layouts.”

I have believed for a long time we model railroaders can learn from other hobbies many things that can improve our modeling. The problem is we tend to stay insulated as we basically only talk to ourselves and don’t reach out to a broader audience as I am doing with my newspaper articles. If we write anything, it is published in our model railroad press, and in many cases, only in the scale we model. To grow our hobby, and learn new modeling skills, we need to reach out and communicate with a broader audience. Well, what do you think?

I think it would be great to have articles about model railroading in newspapers all over the country. No telling who we would meet or what we could learn. Is it really true I am the only model railroader who has a monthly newspaper column? Please let me know if any of you are writing for a newspapers or what you think about the idea. Email me: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com).

## #2. New Tracks Mentor Recognition Program

I am working on getting the New Tracks Mentor (NTM) recognition award program widely accepted in the modeling community. I am pleased to have Kurt Thompson MMR, NTM become the Chairman for this program. While Kurt will be responsible for developing and promoting this award project, he can use some help. We want to make this a widely recognized, accepted and helpful program to reward modelers who are willing to mentor others, and a way for members of the model railroad community to find and contact talented modelers who they would like to be one of their mentors. If you are interested in helping Kurt develop this program, please email him at: [kurt.thompson@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:kurt.thompson@newtracksmodeling.com).

As I mentioned above I am thinking about developing a Patch for the “NewTracks Mentor (NTM) award. Please let me know if you have any design ideas. I have already received one idea but want to get others. My email is: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com)

## #3. New Tracks Modeler Magazine

What I created New Tracks, including our magazine, to be.

My view for New Tracks is based on my experiences over 70 plus years in the model railroading hobby. I hope you participate and enjoy my dream.

New Tracks provides a welcoming, educational, and collaborative digital platform where model railroaders globally of all skill levels and interests, whether beginner or veteran, builder, or collector, can exchange knowledge, receive mentoring, and share creative projects.

We emphasize improving modeling skills, fostering community engagement, and encouraging technological innovation within the hobby. We include free live Zoom events, magazine issues, a Facebook group, and



website, all provided by volunteers. Our focus is on hands-on learning, step-by-step builds, and problem-solving tips for modelers at any stage of model railroad knowledge.

Inclusivity, is a key component which enables participants to both teach and learn regardless of their experience level, and where everyone can inspire, contribute, and grow in our model railroading hobby.

Overall, New Tracks is designed for anyone passionate about model railroading and eager to be part of a vibrant, skill-sharing community, which combines our historic past with our technological future.

Please help keep the dream alive and tell me how we are doing.

Our new magazine is being widely accepted. It covers all scales and gauges and includes a variety of articles dealing with current and future modeling technology. Its goal is to help readers become better modelers, keep up with new technology and provide mentors they can work with. Oh, by the way, also promote a storytelling!

Please make sure you sign up for our “New Tracks Modeler” magazine by subscribing to our website: [newtracksmodeling.com](http://newtracksmodeling.com) We are really excited about our magazine and think you like it if you try it. One way to judge a magazine’s success is its articles quality. Based on this measure, I believe our magazine is already highly successful and if you read one issue I think you will agree.

Tom Farrell NTM is doing such an excellent job as the temporary editor, he has requested, and I agreed, he become our permanent Editor. I believe our magazine has reached a size where it needs a full-time dedicated editor and also several other volunteers to help Tom take it into the future. If you are interested in helping with our magazine please let Tom know at [Thomas.Farrell@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:Thomas.Farrell@newtracksmodeling.com).

As I mentioned in previous articles, I am also working on developing a patch for the magazine authors and subscribers. Do you have any ideas for a patch design? I would love to see your design. My email is: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com).

#### #4. New Tracks Modeling Weekly Live Zoom shows

I would like to see more modelers join our weekly live Zoom shows so they can get the benefits of live communication from the presentations on the show. Signing in to our live Zoom shows gives a modeler the opportunity to ask questions and enter into discussions with each modeler doing a presentation. I believe you will definitely benefit. To get an unbiased opinion, I naturally asked Gemini AI

Why you should watch New Tracks live Zoom shows?

“For the serious model railroader seeking to elevate their craft, watching the "Weekly Wednesday" live Zoom show on New Tracks Modeling at 7pm EST is a must. The show provides an invaluable opportunity to engage directly with experts and fellow enthusiasts, fostering a community of learning and shared passion. Each week, hosts delve into a wide array of topics, from advanced weathering techniques and realistic scenery construction to the latest digital command control (DCC) technology. The live format allows viewers to ask questions in real-time, getting personalized advice and insights that are often difficult to find elsewhere. This direct interaction and the high-quality, practical demonstrations make "Weekly Wednesday" a unique and highly beneficial resource for anyone looking to build a more authentic and impressive model railroad.”

I hope you will give our live Zoom show a try. I am interested in knowing what we can do to encourage you to consider joining our live Zoom shows. Please let me know by email or if you prefer I can provide my cell number and we can talk directly.

We have to pay to use Zoom for their service. We have about 40 spots per week left in the level of service we purchase, so make sure you join in early to make sure you get one. You can also watch our shows live on YouTube, but you are only able to communicate with presenters by using the chat function.



You can also see videos of our over 1,400 past Zoom shows on our YouTube Channel: New Tracks Modeling. To get a weekly email with the Zoom and You Tube login links and a list of program presentations for that week's live show, subscribe for free at our website: [newtracksmodeling.com](http://newtracksmodeling.com).

#### #5. Join O Scale Central and Subscribe to *The O Scale Resource* magazine.

As readers know by now, after all I have been writing these articles in this magazine for the last 8 years, I am a long time O scale Traction modeler. Therefore, after reading my following Question, and Perplexity AI's answer, I hope all O Scale and O Hi-Rail model builders will strongly consider joining the O Scale Central organization and subscribing to *The O Scale Resource* magazine. I believe you will find both very beneficial to your O Scale and O Hi-Rail model building. I have.

JK Question: What online communities offer shareable O scale modeling resources?

Perplexity AI answer: "Several online communities offer shareable O scale modeling resources, including plans, tutorials, discussions, and galleries:

O Scale Central is a premier non-profit organization promoting 1:48 scale modeling. It offers extensive resources including a product guide, modeling ideas, reference materials, and forums focused on 2-rail O scale. Membership provides access to more detailed content and community interaction for scratchbuilders and kit builders.

J&C Studios O Gauge Forum & Archive hosts a library of articles, photo essays, how-to tutorials, and project showcases contributed by O scale modelers. It is a valuable repository for anyone wanting to share or learn detailed modeling techniques and inspiration.

Online Forums and Facebook Groups linked through O Scale Central include specialized groups for O scale modeling such as "O Scale Central," "2-Rail O Scale & Proto:48 Model Railroading," and more. These groups are active and provide a platform for sharing photos, plans, buying/selling, and advice exchange.

Other broader model railroading forums such as Model Railroad Forums also have sections dedicated to O scale where members share their projects and resources.

*The O Scale Resource Magazine* provides ongoing modeling articles and current information for O scale enthusiasts, often with downloadable resources and links to community projects.

These communities are excellent for finding shareable materials, gaining feedback, and connecting with fellow O scale modelers for collaboration and inspiration."

#### #6. Your ideas

Please write to me about your ideas for any of our New Tracks projects. I love getting your comments, suggestions, modeling ideas or just having a modeling conversation. My email is: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com)

Well, It's time for me to do some modeling.

Time for me to return to my workbench and start working on something that I fell in love with and just must model. Happens all the time.

But before I start modeling, making/correcting mistakes, and learning, I want to ask you to please help us promote modeling and mentoring in our great hobby by helping support our various New Tracks Modeling programs I founded by doing the following:

1. Volunteer to join our Team and help produce and develop our New Tracks Modeling Zoom and You Tube shows and our website. Email me: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com)



2. Contribute to our Patreon account New Tracks Modeling to help pay our out-of-pocket cost to run our shows. [Click here to donate on Patreon.](#)

3. Subscribe for free to our You Tube Channel, New Tracks Modeling, and ring the bell to get advance notices of our You Tube shows. Please watch the You Tube advertisements placed on our videos so we can earn a little revenue from You Tube to produce our shows. There are over 1,400 videos of our past shows available on our Channel for you to view.

4. Subscribe for free to our website: [newtracksmodeling.com](http://newtracksmodeling.com) which provides login links to our Wednesday Zoom events, provides information about upcoming agendas for New Tracks Modeling, and gets you our free monthly New Tracks Modeler magazine, edited by Tom Farrell NTM.

5. Donate to our New Tracks Modeling Mentoring Scholarship program. Details for Individual and Corporate donations are on our website: [newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship](http://newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship)

To donate use our Zeffy account, just click on this link: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/donation-form/038439bf-a552-44e2-9b46-ef54aaa0e274?mibextid=Zxz2cZ%20%C2%A0%20newtracksmodeling.com>

6. Spread the word to high school graduates and college students about applying between January 1-June 1, 2026 for our \$2,000.00, New Tracks Modeling Mentoring Scholarships to be awarded July 1, 2026. Represent us at shows, conventions, and events with our Banners and handouts, and prizes. Details and an Application are on our website: [newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship](http://newtracksmodeling.com/scholarship)

7. Subscribe for free to *The O Scale Resource* online magazine so you don't miss any of my New Tracks articles, and also see some great modeling by various modelers who may become one of your mentors.

8. Write something and send photos that our New Tracks Modeler online monthly magazine editor Tom Farrell NTM, can use in our magazine.

9. Let Kurt Thompson MMR NTM know if you want to become a New Tracks Mentor (NTM) by being on one of our Zoom shows, or being profiled in one of my articles, or featured in our "New Tracks Modeler" magazine. Kurt can be reached at [Kurt.Thompson@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:Kurt.Thompson@newtracksmodeling.com).

10. Write to me! I love getting your comments, suggestions, modeling ideas and just having a conversation with modelers. My email is: [jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com](mailto:jimkellow@newtracksmodeling.com)

Thank you again for all your interest and for reading this far. Till next time with more New Tracks, I wish you Happy Successful Modeling in 2025 with whatever you are building! Please don't forget to be a Mentor!

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# O SCALE SHOWS & MEETS

Have an upcoming O Scale event? We would like to help publicize it. Send us the information up to one year in advance, and we'll place it here along with a direct link to your Website and/or Email.

## **Cleveland O Scale Train Show**

**November 1st 11am – 4pm**

Admission: \$5.00

(Spouses and Children under 12 Free)

## **Cleveland O Scale Modular Meet**

**November 2nd 9am - 5pm**

(Module drop off allowed during the Train Show)

Find more information on our website!

Supporting everything 1:48 Scale!

O Scale 2 Rail, Proto48, O Scale Traction, O Scale Narrow Gauge

Location: UAW Local 1005 Large Hall

5615 Chevrolet Blvd.

Parma, Ohio 44130

Free Parking

Website: [clevelandoscaleshows.com](http://clevelandoscaleshows.com)

Dealer setup Saturday morning

For all table information, contact Skyler Shippy

([skylersh767@gmail.com](mailto:skylersh767@gmail.com))

## **O Scale West 2026**

**New location on a New date**

**March 6-7, 2026 (Friday - Saturday)**

We've moved to a new location on a new date and have reduced costs for most attendees!!!

OSW 2026 will be held March 6-7, 2026 (Friday - Saturday) at the Portugese IFES Society Hall in Mountain View, CA.

Admission for both days is \$35, admission for Saturday only is \$25, vendor registration is \$50 and 6 foot tables are \$50 each.

Friday, March 6 activities will start with vendor and visiting layout move in and set up starting in the morning. In the afternoon the swap meet, clinics, possibly outside tours, and layout visits will be open for general admission folks.

Saturday, March 7 activities open to all will be the swap meet, clinics, contests, and layout visits.

This half day Friday, all day Saturday format, is new for us so please bear with us as we figure out how to make it work best for everybody. We are still recruiting clinics and layouts to visit, and we haven't figured out how to overlap opening the swap meet while vendors are still setting up.

The web site is being updated and should be available soon with full information and on-line registration. I will announce when it's available.

We expect to make an arrangement with a nearby hotel for reduced prices for OSW attendees, stay tuned.

These changes to the meet are the direct result of your survey inputs. Thank you.

Lastly, several of you responded to my plea for help with the meet. The committee will be having another walk through of the

hall this coming Sunday at 10AM, so if you are in the area you are invited to join the group. Please email me

([chairman@oscalewest.com](mailto:chairman@oscalewest.com)) or message me for the address.

Website: <https://oscalewest.com/>

## **O Scale March Meet**

**March 20-23, 2025**

## **O Scale March Meet**

**March 19-22, 2026**

Westin Lombard Yorktown Center

Lombard, IL

The March O Scale Meet is a 3 day gathering of vendors, customers, clinics, and fun held annually in March in the Chicagoland area. This is the Chicago O Scale train show you've heard of.

Website: <http://marchmeet.net/>

Email: [ChicagoMeet@yahoo.com](mailto:ChicagoMeet@yahoo.com)

## **Strasburg 2 Rail Train Show**

**April 11, 2026**

Strasburg Train Show: Two-rail swap meet at the Strasburg Fire Co, 203 W. Franklin St, Strasburg, Pennsylvania. 9 am-1 pm.

Admission \$7, wives/children/military w. ID free, tables \$35 for first table, additional \$30 per. Great food, modular layout, clinics. Contact Richard Yoder EST evenings 484-256-4068 [Click here for info.](#)

## **Harrisburg Narrow O Summer Meet**

**June 12-13, 2026**

Friday June 12, 11am to 6pm

Saturday June 13, 9am to 3pm

Sponsored by: [Narrow Gauge Modeling Company](#)

New Hope Church

584 Colonial Club Drive, Harrisburg, Pa. 17112

[See the Facebook page for more information.](#)

## **Strasburg 2 Rail Train Show**

**August 8, 2026**

Strasburg Train Show: Two-rail swap meet at the Strasburg Fire Co, 203 W. Franklin St, Strasburg, Pennsylvania. 9 am-1 pm.

Admission \$7, wives/children/military w. ID free, tables \$35 for first table, additional \$30 per. Great food, modular layout, clinics. Contact Richard Yoder EST evenings 484-256-4068 [Click here for info.](#)

## **Indianapolis O Scale Show 2026**

**September 18-19, 2026**

LaQuinta Inn Indianapolis South

5120 Victory Dr,

Indianapolis, IN 46203

Fri. Sept. 18, 3:00 – 7:00 PM

Sat Sept. 19, 9 :00AM – 3:00PM

Website: [indyoscaleshows.com](http://indyoscaleshows.com)

Email: [indyoscaleshows@gmail.com](mailto:indyoscaleshows@gmail.com)



# Buy US A COFFEE



Know the old joke "How do you make a million dollars in the model railroad business? Start with two million."? Well, same here. We are not going anywhere and will still continue to bring you the best in O scale information every other month but...

As with any ad supported endeavor, there are ups and downs. We have not raised our ad rates (and will not) since we started 11 years ago. We feel the rates are more than favorable for the thousands readers our magazine reaches. Of course, not everyone wants to advertise instead using Facebook and other social media. In a normal paper magazine you have the subscription fee that more than covers mailing and normal operations. Not having that is fine here, but our costs have also climbed.

Traveling to layouts, web services, storage, and hosting fees have all gone up. So we thought we would try "buy us a coffee" in hopes of helping with these extra expenses.

Therefore, if you are getting a good read and enjoying the information, please "buy us a coffee" and help us continue to bring you the best in O scale information. **Hey, even a buck an issue every few issues will help.**



So, if you like what you see and can go with out a Starbucks for a day, click here and give it try.

Thanks for your support!



## Here is how to contact us:

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## SHOWS & MEETS

**March O Scale Meet**  
**March 19-22, 2026**  
<https://marchmeet.net/WP/>  
**Ph. 414-322-8043**

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# Announcing New Products In O Scale Model Railroad Resource 3D Division - Resin Parts



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<https://modelrailroadresource.com/WP>