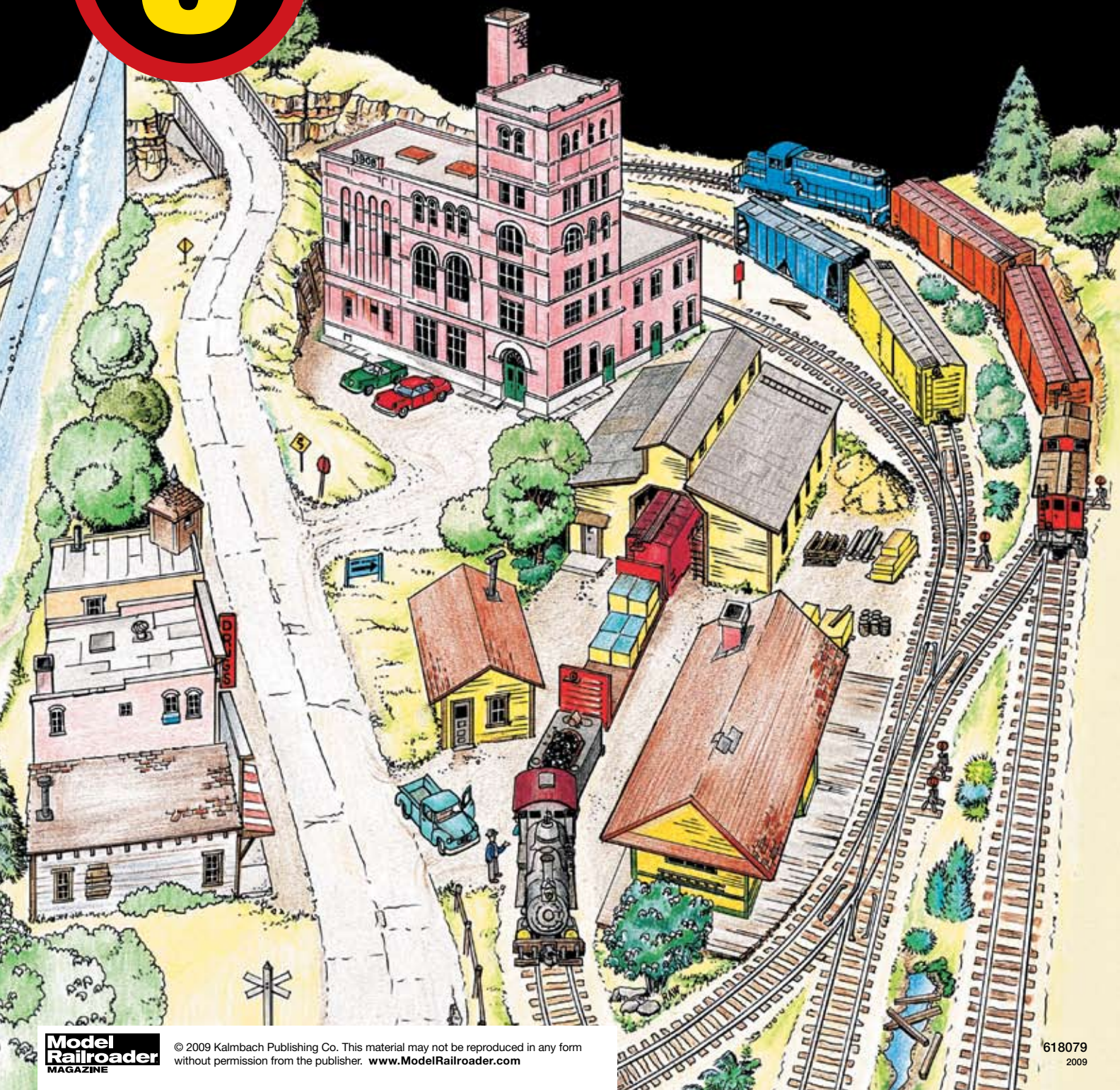


5 Easy Track Plans





5 Easy Track Plans

Welcome to *Five Easy Track Plans*, which contains plans for 4 x 8-foot HO model railroads. Building such layouts is a path many take to get started in model railroading, and HO (1:87 proportion to the prototype) is the most widely modeled scale with an abundance of affordable structures, locomotives, and rolling stock available.

The 4 x 8 dimensions are time-tested – that’s the size of a sheet of plywood, plenty of track and broad-enough curves can fit on it, and, most important, filling those 32 square feet is an achievable goal.

Laying the track listed with these plans, building a small group of structures, and adding scenery is something that even the first-time modeler can accomplish, while those with some experience can build a layout this size as a way of honing their skills before tackling a basement-size project.

National Train Show plans

To give the public a chance to see what model railroading is all about, each year since 1991 local modelers have built a complete layout during the course of the National Train Show, held in conjunction with the National Model Railroad Association’s annual national convention. *Model Railroader* magazine provides financial support and, usually, the track plan for this undertaking.

What appears in this booklet are five National Train Show 4 x 8 track plans, along with a bill of materials for constructing each one and some operational possibilities. Each plan was named for the city that hosted the National Train

Show that year, and the industries and scenery reflect the locale.

Do it your way

There’s no right or wrong way to build a model railroad. These plans are just a starting point – you don’t have to follow them to the letter. The trackwork specified with the layouts is the most helpful part of each plan because the curves and turnouts were designed for reliable running. Some of the materials lists suggest potential alternative sectional track brands.

Beyond that, era and location can vary depending upon your interests. Specific kits come and go out of production, so use the structure kits indicated only as suggestions. The possibilities are endless.

Your interpretation of the Madison Central, for instance, probably won’t look just like the artist’s interpretation on the cover. The scenery techniques you use, the rolling stock you select, and the colors you paint the buildings make your layout unique.

Take a good look at all five of the track plans that follow. Perhaps one of them will inspire you to start building a model railroad – or encourage you to return to the hobby. Have fun!

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San Jose Central

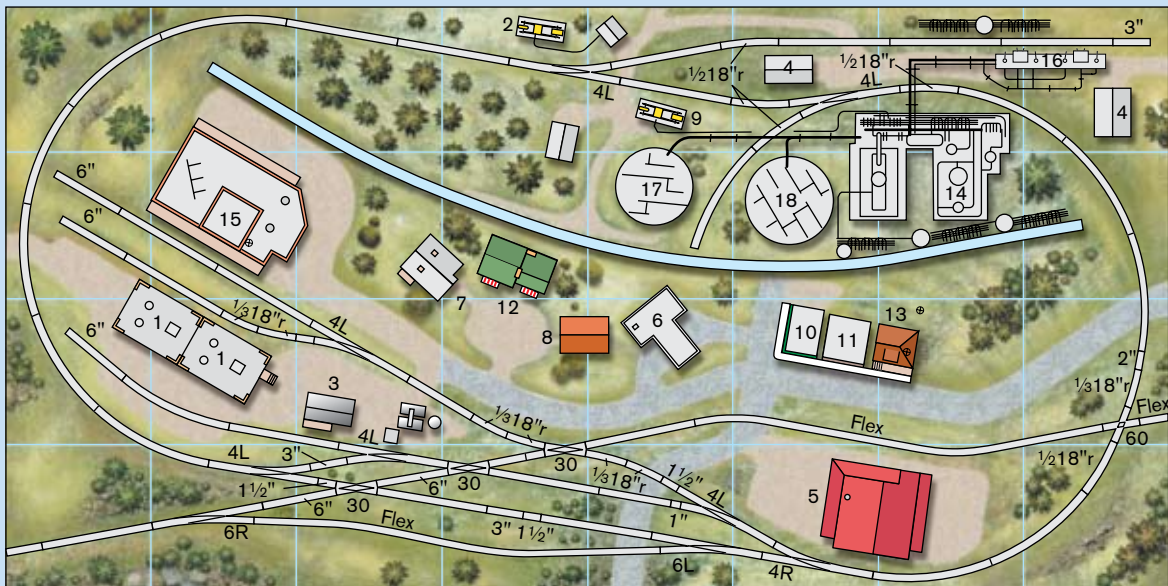


By George Sebastian-Coleman
 Illustrations by Robert Wegner
 and Roen Kelly

The San Jose Central transports us to California and the San Francisco Bay area. It's built around two of the South Bay's major

businesses: agriculture and oil. The Southern Pacific's main line slashes across the bottom half of the layout, crossing through suburban San Jose and featuring a Spanish-style passenger station and a small residential community. The SP has an interchange connection here with our fictional short line.

As with any 4 x 8 layout, a little imagination is required to add distance. I imagine the set-out track as separate from the nearby industries. A day on the SJC would begin with picking up cars the SP had dropped off overnight (accomplished by physically exchanging cars by hand).



Scale: 3/4" = 1'-0" 12" grid



▶▶ Bill of materials

(structures keyed to track plan)

Alpine Division

- 83 Sunkist Citrus Exchange (2)

Faller

- 272-994 walking-beam oil pump

Grandt Line

- 5905 standard section tool house
- 5907 Midwest Petroleum Distributors

Heljan

- 152 Spanish style station

J. L. Innovative Design

- 341 Brownies Northside Service

Kibri

- 405-8061 Parsenn house
- 405-8180 single-family house

Smalltown USA

- 6011 John's Place
- 6017 drug store

SS Ltd.

- 9124 Jensen oil pump

Vollmer

- 770-3712 ranch house
- 770-3674 butcher shop

Walthers

- 3705 United Petroleum Refining
- 3080 Miranda's Bananas
- 3104 oil loading platform
- 3120 horizontal oil tank
- 3155 vertical oil tank

Atlas track

- 36" flextrack
- 9" straight
- 6" straight
- 3" straight
- 1 1/2" straight
- 1" straight
- 18" radius full
- 1/2 18" radius
- 1/3 18" radius
- 30-degree Custom-Line crossing
- 60-degree Custom-Line crossing
- left-hand no. 4 Custom-Line turnout
- right-hand no. 4 Custom-Line turnout
- left-hand no. 6 Custom-Line turnout
- right-hand no. 6 Custom-Line turnout

The SJC train would then head out counterclockwise past the station. The first stop is the Steinbeck Oil Refinery. There empty tank cars would be set out and loads picked up.

The train would then continue around the layout to work the agricultural area south of San Jose, represented by the Gilroy Garlic Growers' Co-op, the East Eden Cannery, and a local oil dealer.

The final step would be one more loop around the layout, then set out the interchange cars for the SP.

The structures I've chosen are appropriate from the 1930s to the present, providing you pay careful attention to period details, such as vehicles, signs, and, of course, the rolling stock and locomotives.

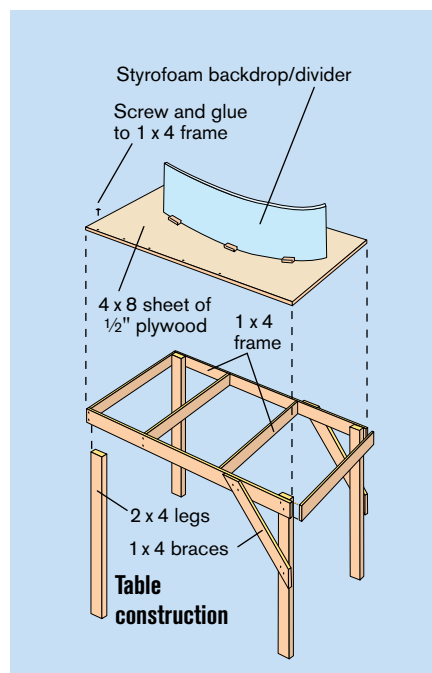
Construction

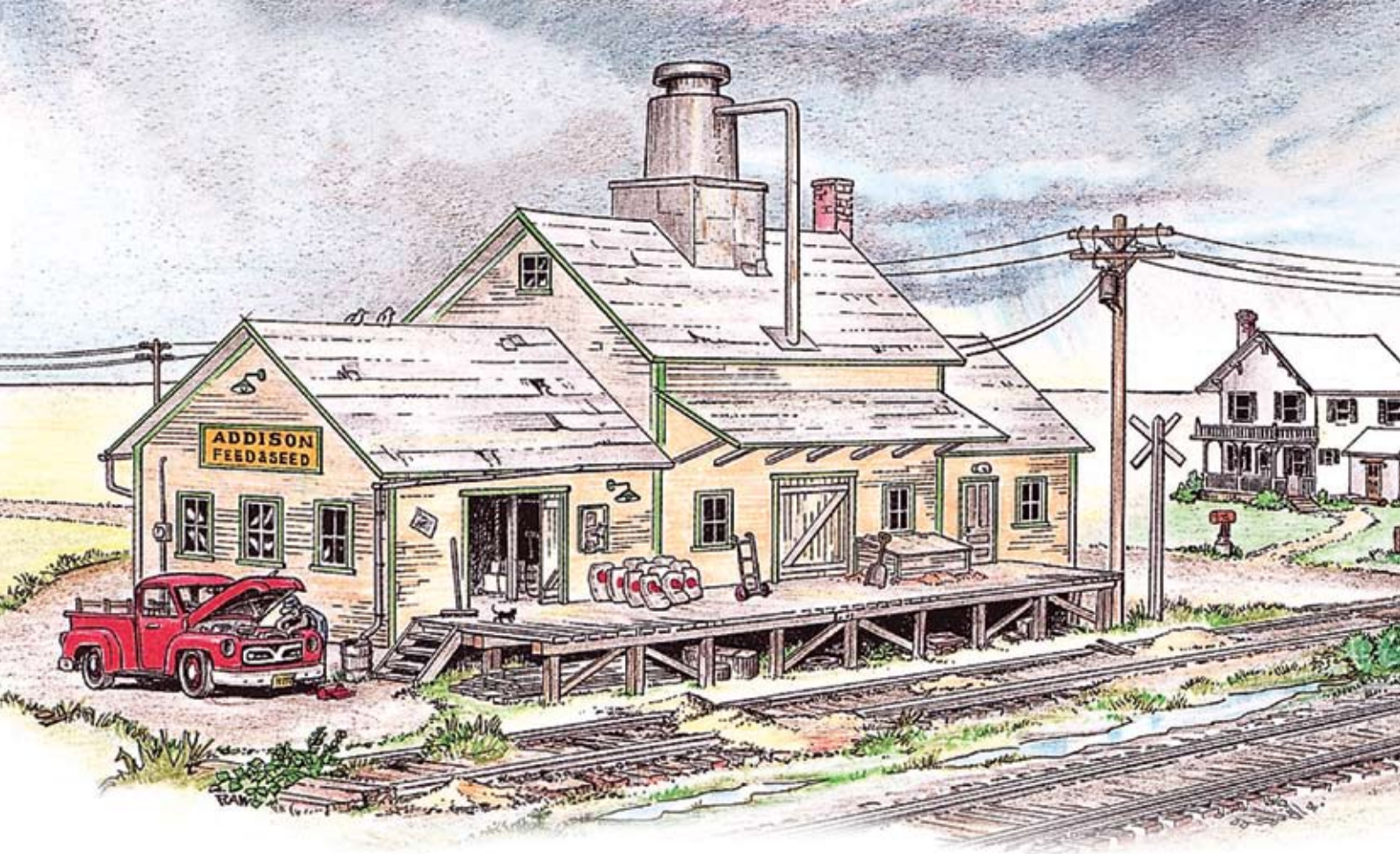
A simple frame of 1 x 4s supporting a sheet of 1/2" plywood would provide an adequate base.

More scenic variety could be attained by using the cookie-cutter method to raise the roadbed or by adding a layer of rigid foam to the plywood, permitting scenery that drops below track level.

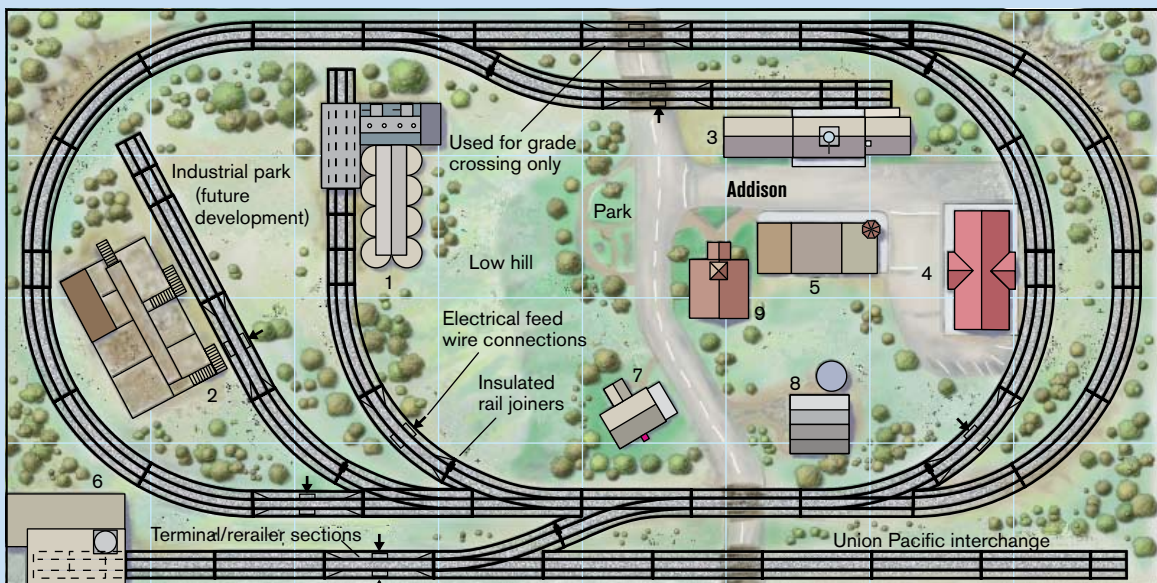
I've designed the layout based on Atlas track components. The track list

at right doesn't include part numbers since you could use code 100 in either black or brown ties or code 83 components. As it stands, the Southern Pacific main line is really just cosmetic; however, it could be connected to staging tracks (or more layout) and become a functional part of the layout. **MR**

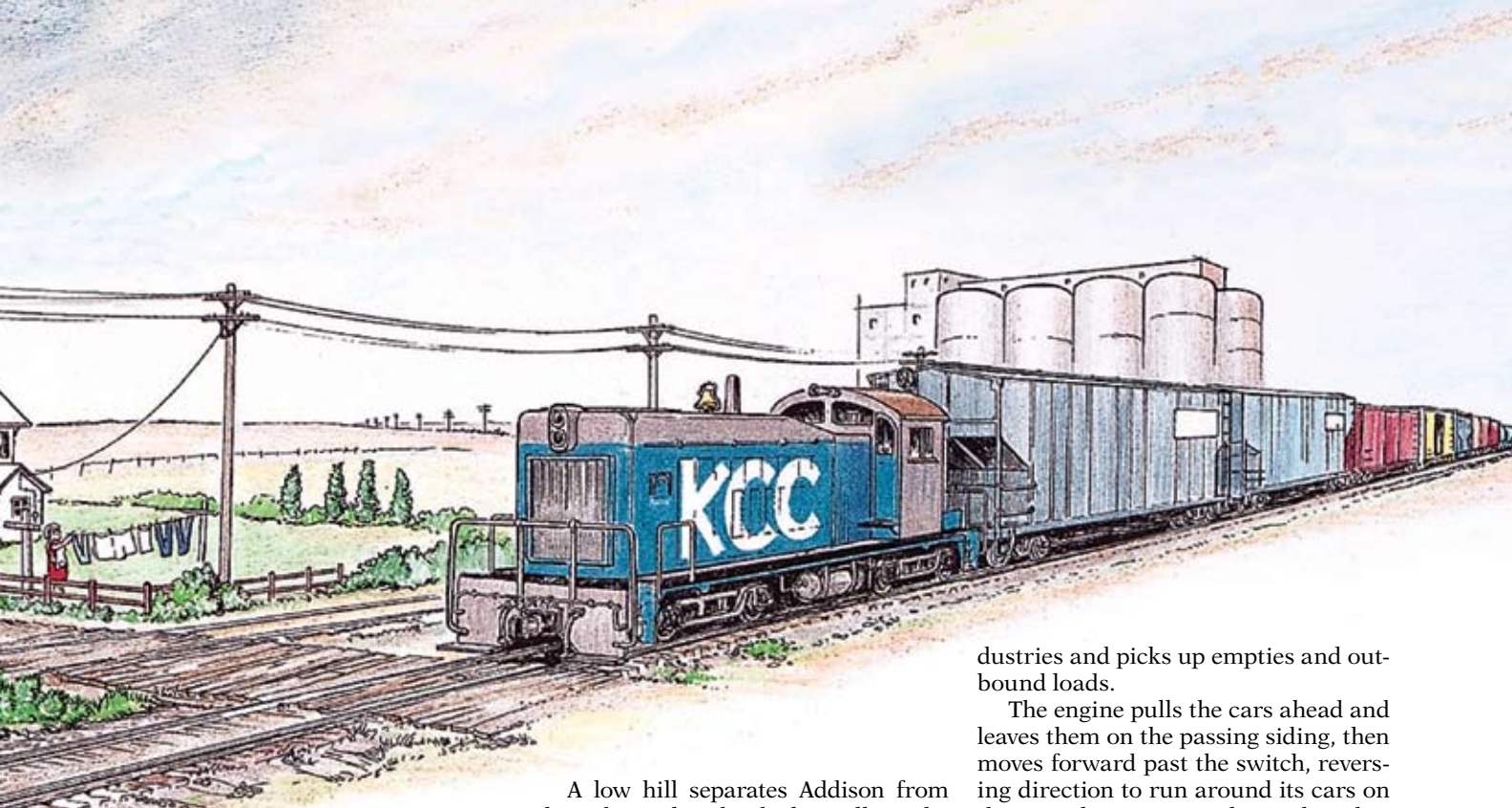




Kansas City Central



Track plan scale: $\frac{3}{4}$ " = 1'-0" Grid lines are 12" apart 18"-minimum radius curves True-Track manual Snap-Switches



By Jim Hediger

Illustrations by Robert Wegner

Our fictional HO Kansas City Central represents a modern regional railroad serving a variety of agricultural customers on the outskirts of its namesake city. In theory it was created from several marginal branch lines that the Union Pacific sold off in 1979. These rural branches aren't connected, but operating rights over portions of the UP allow Kansas City Central trains to travel from branch to branch.

Our Addison Branch, named for the major town it serves, is 20 rail miles away from the junction with the UP main line, but there's enough industry in town to justify continuing rail service.

Since our KCC is part of a regional mini-system, it's easy to eliminate any number of the space-eating features of an independent railroad. Refueling is done by a local fuel dealer's truck, but heavy maintenance is handled at the KCC's shop located on another branch. Using a yard switcher eliminates the need to turn the engine.

Design factors

The railroad's activity is focused on three areas: the UP interchange, town of Addison, and industrial park.

The straight track along the front edge plays a dual role, initially representing the UP interchange and later serving as part of the industrial park.

A low hill separates Addison from the industrial park. The loop allows the train to accumulate mileage by running laps as it travels between the UP interchange and the town. The industries along the way are representative of those found around Kansas City.

Quality operation requires quality benchwork. For this reason, the layout should have a 1/2" plywood top mounted on a grid frame supported with 2 x 4 legs and hardboard gussets. These legs can be unbolted and removed for portability but provide a very solid base.

Daily operation

A typical day begins when UP's local freight drops off cars at the interchange. The KCC engine picks up these cars, makes a brake test, then heads off on one or two counterclockwise trips around the loop to reach Addison.

Eventually, the train stops at the station to pick up a switch list before continuing on to work the industrial park. There it delivers cars to the various in-

dustries and picks up empties and outbound loads.

The engine pulls the cars ahead and leaves them on the passing siding, then moves forward past the switch, reversing direction to run around its cars on the main line. It recouples to the other end and begins its return trip, traveling clockwise for several laps before dropping off its cars at the interchange.

The KCC provides limited commuter service between Addison and Kansas City using a secondhand RDC-3 to handle freight, baggage, and passengers. **MR**

▶▶ Bill of materials

Bachmann E-Z Track*

- (2) 44502 18" radius terminal/railer
- (5) 44510 9" terminal/railer
- (13) 44512 3" straight
- (3) 44561 remote left-hand turnout
- (4) 44562 remote right-hand turnout
- (18) 44580 18" radius
- (14) 44581 9" straight

Walthers

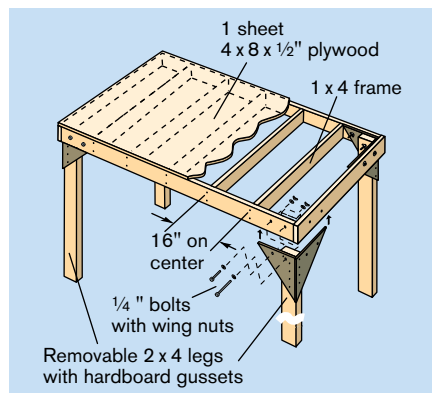
(structures keyed to track plan)

1. 3022 ADM grain elevator
2. 3047 stockyard
3. 3061 Sunrise Feed Mill
4. 3063 Clarkesville depot
5. 3028 Merchant's Row I
6. 3046 Geo. Roberts Printing Inc. (kitbashed)

International Hobby Corp.

7. 47776 Aunt Millie's house
8. 812 barn with silo
9. 4105 town church

*Could also be built using Atlas True-Track or Life-Like Power-Loc sectional track.



St. Paul Central



By Marty McGuirk • Illustrations by Robert Wegner

The St. Paul Central is a fictional short line serving two typical Minnesota communities in the late first-generation diesel era, approximately 1965. The oval track plan includes a city scene and an agricultural community.

The secret to cramming so much action into 32 square feet is the two-sided backdrop that runs down the center of the layout. On one side is a larger city with a big brewery as the centerpiece. The St. Paul Central serves the brewery and other customers and delivers cars to the interchange with the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy. A lumber dealer and warehouse for shipping the brewery's products round out the city scene.

The opposite side of this small layout is decidedly less crowded. Nestled among typical Midwestern countryside is a small Minnesota farming community with grain bins and a wooden grain elevator.

I designed the St. Paul Central to utilize easy and lightweight extruded

Styrofoam insulation board for the basic table. A simple frame of 1 x 4s like that shown in the benchwork diagram will give the structure more rigidity and prevent the foam from getting dinged. Optional legs can be 2 x 4s cut to length and held in place with carriage bolts.

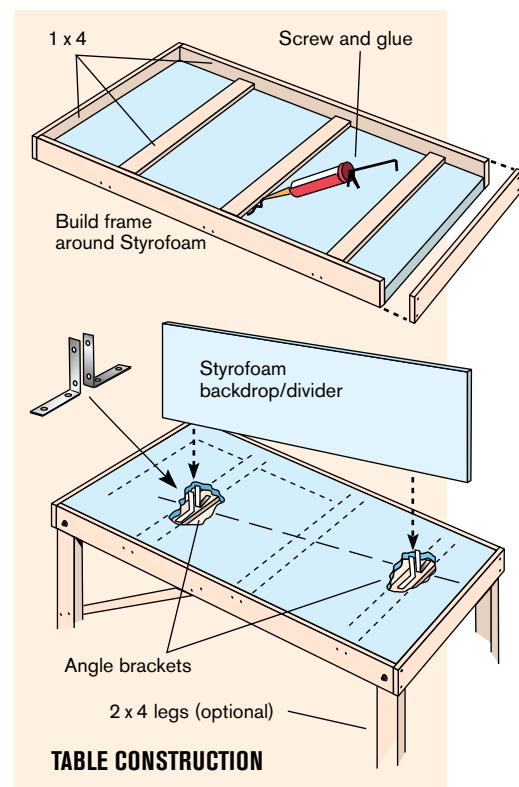
Track and roadbed all-in-one

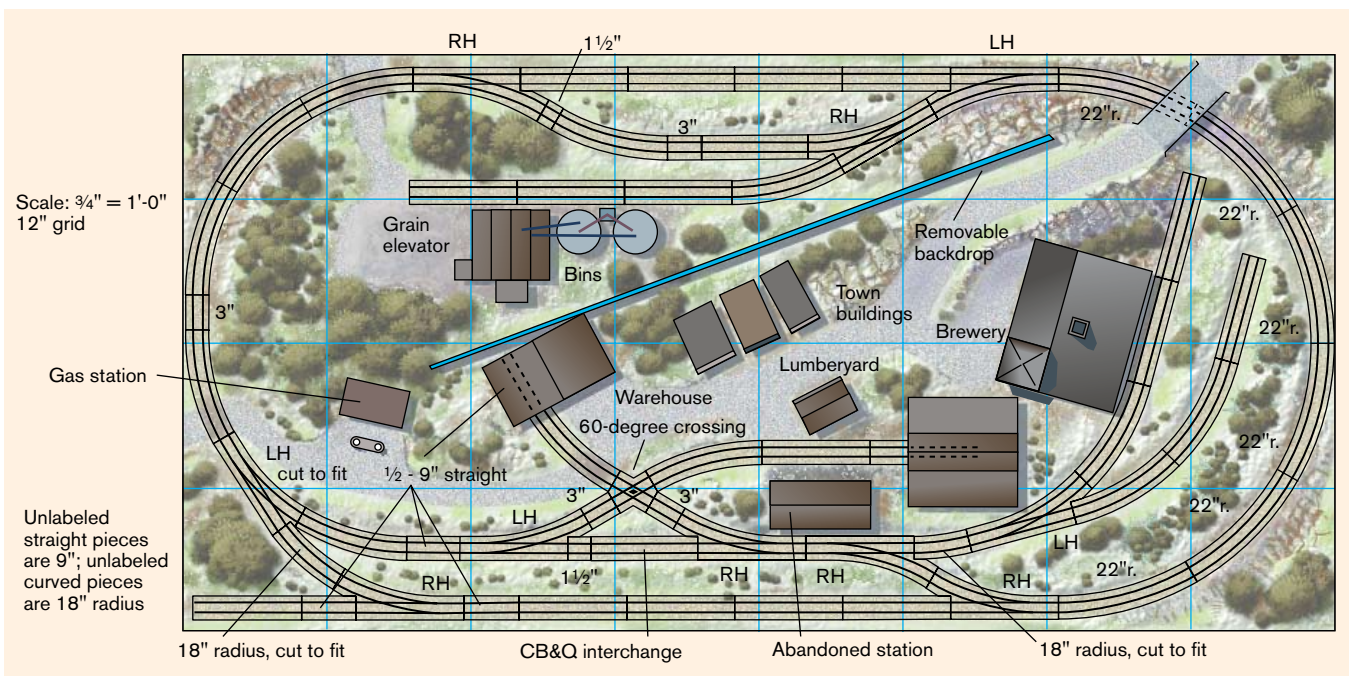
Since most beginners want to get trains running as soon as possible, I've designed the St. Paul Central to use the Atlas True-Track system. This consists of code 83 nickel-silver sectional track on pre-molded plastic roadbed.

The 60-degree crossing is an ordinary sectional track piece that will have to be installed on some cork roadbed and ballasted to match. Some of the track and roadbed sections will need to be trimmed, an easy task using a razor saw.

Backdrop and buildings

The backdrop is a piece of foam insulation board held in place with a pair of





Bill of materials

American Model Builders
133 Great Northern depot

Atlas True-Track*
(1) 175 60-degree crossing**
(24) 410 9" straight
(13) 411 18" radius
(4) 452 3" straight
(2) 453 1 1/2" straight
(6) 463 22"-radius curve
(5) 478 Snap-Switch, left
(5) 479 Snap-Switch, right

City Classics
108 gas station

Design Preservation Models
101 Kelly's Saloon
115 The Other Corner Cafe

Pikestuff
10 distribution center

Rix Products
101 vintage 50-foot overpass

Smalltown USA
6023 Hal's Hobbies

Walthers
3024 brewery
3057 Walton & Sons Lumber Co.
3036 grain elevator
3123 grain bins

*A similar version of this layout could be built using Bachmann E-Z Track.
**Atlas Custom-Line (crossing only)

metal brackets screwed into the cross members under the foam.

A highway overpass and a grove of trees mask the edge of the backdrop on one side of the layout. The other end of the backdrop is disguised with a small hill built from stacked layers of foam insulation board.

There's no need to paint an elaborate scene on the backdrop as sky blue paint and a couple of clouds will visually expand the layout.

The largest structure on the St. Paul Central is the Grain Belt brewery complex. Just down the road is a warehouse where the finished product is stored until ready for shipment.

A lumberyard is also a customer of the SPC, and a single siding serves as an interchange with the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy RR.

Although the structures on the layout are easy-to-build plastic kits, a coat of paint and some signs will make them look less like those pictured on the box. One optional structure is the station on the brewery side of the layout. It might be fun to model this station as it looked sometime after passenger service was canceled. Use some scrap wood or styrene to board up some windows and doors and let it represent the St. Paul Central's office building and operating headquarters.

A day on the St. Paul Central

There's no reason a small layout has to be boring to operate. While this layout features a basic loop in order to let the train run continuously, there's also some potential for a little switching.

Like many short lines, the SPC runs a single train a day. The locomotive, perhaps a GE 70-tonner or an SW9 bought used from the Northern Pacific and still wearing NP paint with "SPC" below the cab windows, is parked on the spur behind the old depot.

The crew starts its day by heading for the brewery to pick up any outbound empties – mostly covered hoppers and tank cars – and spotting them on the passing siding while they pull inbound cars from the CB&Q interchange track. Then they shove the outbound cars from the brewery onto the CB&Q track.

Once they spot a flatcar of lumber at the lumberyard and several empty insulated boxcars inside the warehouse, the crew delivers a few carloads of hops to the brewery's inbound track.

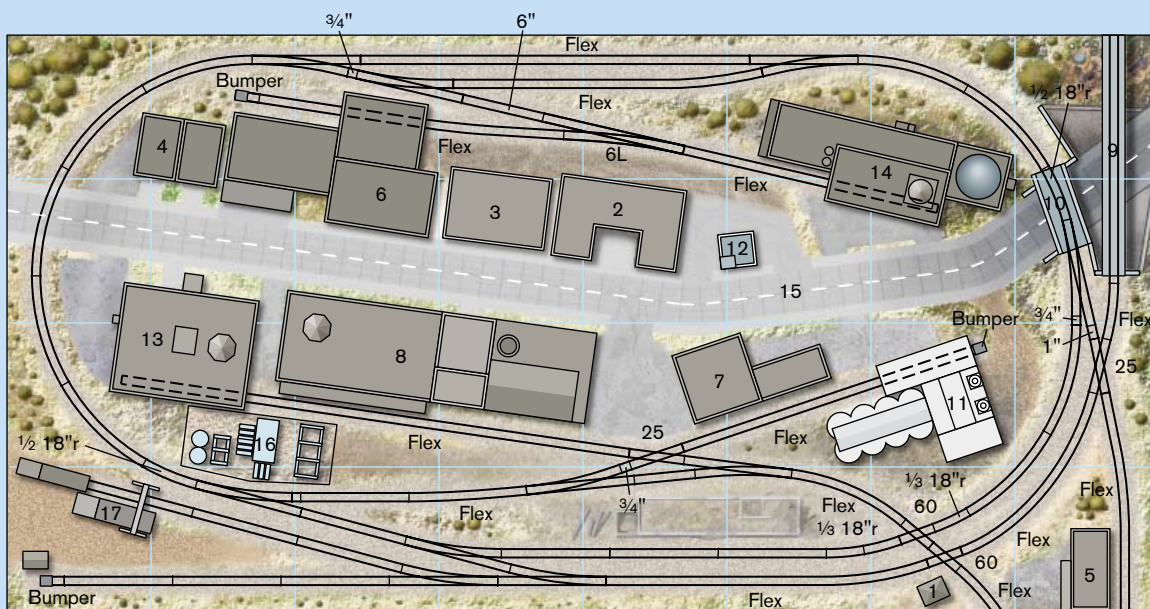
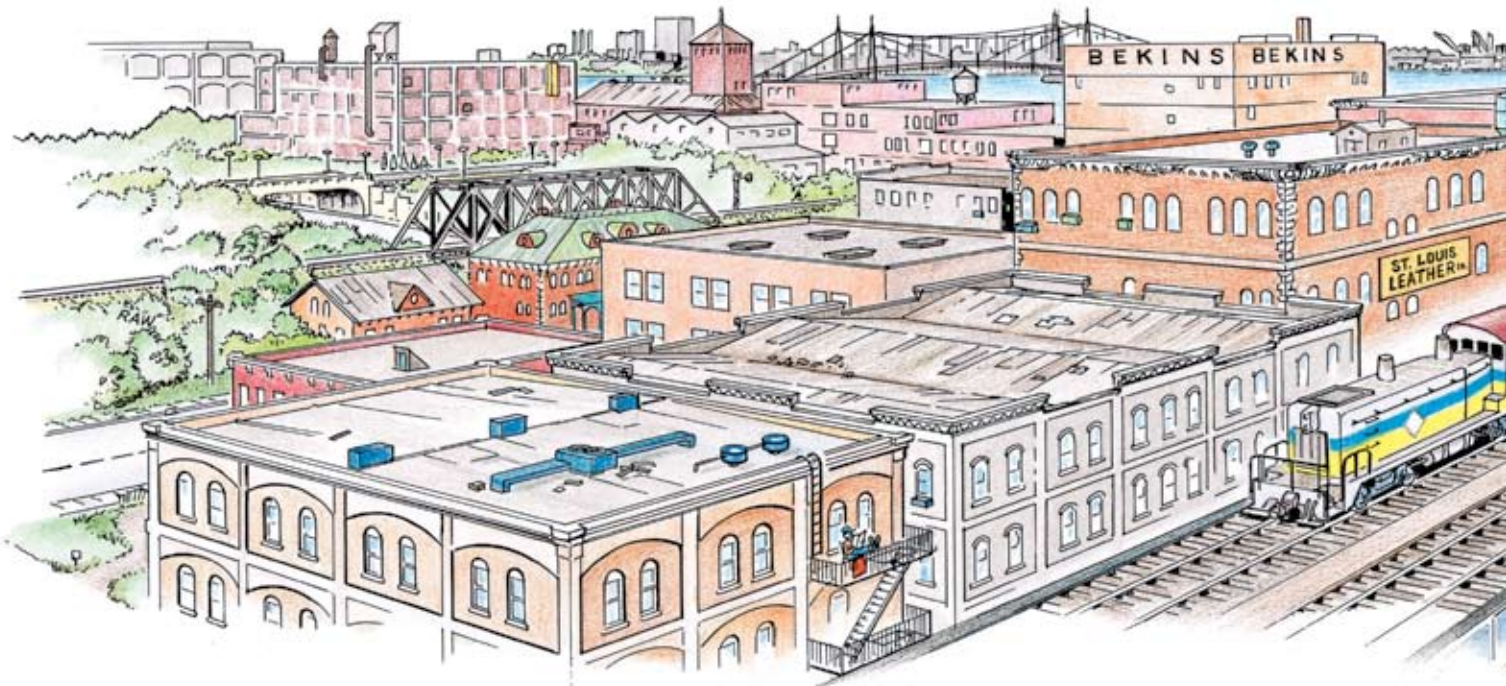
After a quick break to eat lunch, the crew tacks a few empty boxcars equipped with grain doors onto the drawbar of the little EMD and heads down the main line.

To lengthen the apparent run, they travel around the mainline loop four times, stopping the fifth time to exchange the empties for several loads from the grain elevator.

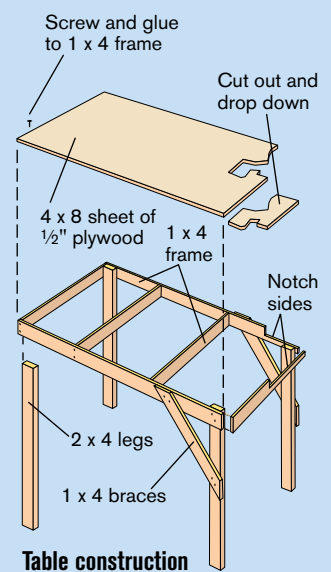
After completing a return trip (another five times around) they deliver those empty cars to the CB&Q interchange track. (The cars left there earlier have already been picked up by the "Q" crew – in other words, they've been removed from the layout and put onto the shelf.)

And that's it! Now it's time to tie up for the day. **MR**

St. Louis Central



Scale: 3/4" = 1'-0" 12" grid





By Venita Lake and Richard Schumacher

Illustrations by Rick Johnson and Robert Wegner

The St. Louis Central is a big-city railroad operation in a 4 x 8-foot space with a number of options for later expansion. It has been designed to pay tribute to the Midwestern city of St. Louis, Mo., but it can represent any large or medium-size city where a number of railroads come together and share trackage.

In St. Louis, the Terminal Railroad Association is a co-operative arrangement that allows many railroads to converge where the railroad bridges cross the mighty Mississippi River. At one time the TRRA also managed the exceptionally heavy passenger traffic that served St. Louis Union Station. Our fictional SLC follows that theme, and since St. Louis was served by many Class 1 railroads, almost any other road power would be right at home on this layout.

The track plan uses several tall structures as a view block down the middle. These buildings can be painted to resemble some of the prominent

railroad buildings that now serve or were originally built by the railroads that passed through the city.

Structure selection

St. Louis was well known for its handsome brick buildings, and so we selected models with this in mind. The multistory downtown structures along the street effectively divide the layout into multiple scenes and provide plenty of switching.

Micro Engineering, a St. Louis-area model manufacturer, based its viaduct on a downtown St. Louis prototype. As a classic example of St. Louis railroad architecture, it was used here, extending the industrial area switch lead in the layout's lower left corner while adding visual texture and another expansion option from the upper right corner.

While the track design allows a single train a continuous run, it also provides many operational opportunities and several options for adding to the basic layout. **MR**

▶▶ Bill of materials

(structures keyed to track plan)

American Model Builders

1. 702 interlocking tower

Bachmann Spectrum

2. 88002 Ambassador Hotel

City Classics

3. 103 Smallman Street warehouse and 104 warehouse add-on kit
4. 106 East Ohio Street building (2)

Design Preservation Models

5. 106 Laube's Linen Mill
6. 354 Fedups Freight Co.
7. 362 Industrial building

Heljan

8. 807 brewery

Micro Engineering

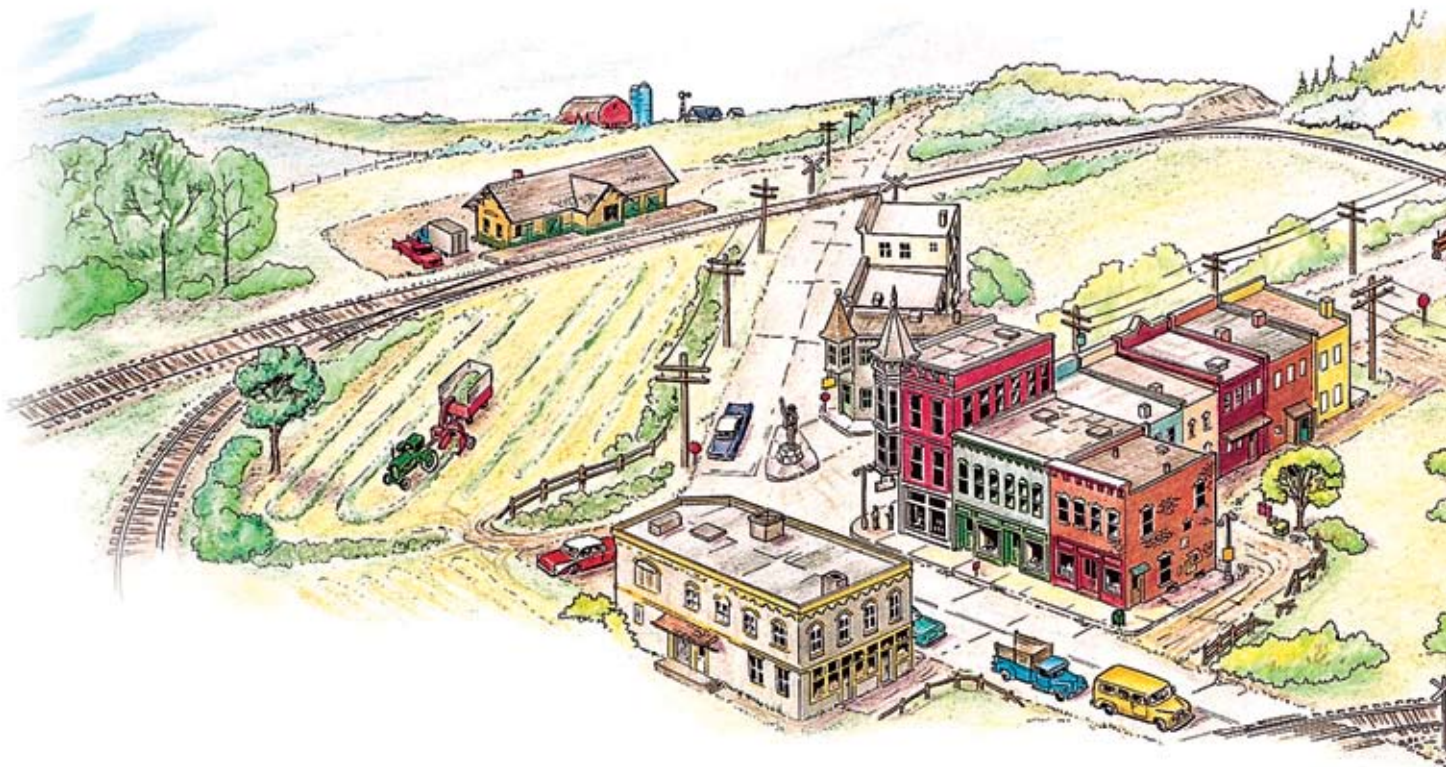
9. 75511 150-foot viaduct
10. 75520 50-foot through girder bridge

Walthers

11. 3022 grain elevator
12. 3030 White Tower restaurant
13. 3044 Hardwood Furniture Co.
14. 3078 tire plant
15. 3138 concrete streets (3)
16. 3506 substation
17. 3166 team track set

Atlas track

- (1) 9" straight
- (1) 6" straight
- (1) 1" straight
- (3) ¾" radius
- (9) 18" radius
- (2) ½ 18" radius
- (3) ⅓ 18" radius
- (7) 36" flextrack
- (6) left-hand no. 4 Custom-Line turnout
- (3) right-hand no. 4 Custom-Line turnout
- (1) left-hand no. 6 Custom-Line turnout
- (2) 25-degree crossing
- (3) bumper



Madison Central

By Jim Hediger
Illustrations by Robert Wegner

Southern Wisconsin has rolling wooded hills interspersed with gravel moraines that remained after the ice age glaciers receded. Numerous quarries were established to supply construction projects all over the Midwest. That's why I chose a gravel plant as the theme industry.

The Madison Central, which represents a mid-1960s short line operating on a former Chicago & North Western branch line, originates in Madison, runs along Lake Mendota, and then heads off into the Baraboo Hills to the north.

Benchwork and a plan

The railroad is designed to fit on flat-topped benchwork that's made from a 4 x 8-foot sheet of plywood framed with 1 x 4s. It's supported with a 2 x 2 leg at each corner and 1 x 2 diagonal braces to stabilize each leg.

The Madison Central track plan uses Atlas True-Track, included in the firm's train set. The track can be separated from the roadbed if you want to spray-paint it in more realistic colors.

The layout uses all of the track supplied in an Atlas train set plus some additional items. The bill of materials lists the pieces needed for the layout.

Because of its size, the layout is made with 18"-radius curves. The main line is angled in a kidney shape to break up the feeling of following the table edges. This produces a number of odd-shaped corners that can be filled in with low, wooded hills or a farm.

Cut a small section of Lake Mendota into one long edge of the layout to provide a reason for the curve in the track. Add a high hill to serve as a background for the quarry. Straight sections ahead of each turnout increase reliability of pushing movements during switching.

Scenery and structures

Even though the railroad is built on a flat surface, there are two areas where some interesting scenery is called for.

One shore of Lake Mendota is visible along the track just beyond the Lakeshore Road grade crossing. This can be represented by cutting out a piece of the plywood top, notching the framing underneath it, and then reattaching the cutout at a lower level. Use plaster and ground foam to simulate the shoreline, and protect the track with a line of rip-rap made

▶▶ Bill of materials

Atlas True-Track*

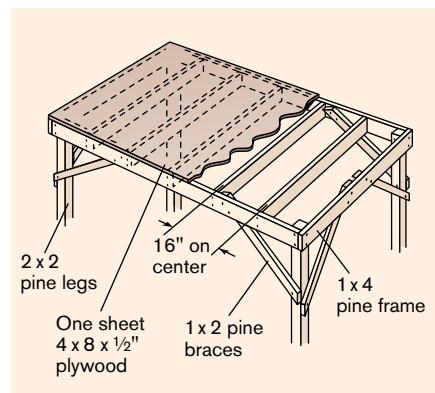
- (11) 410 9" straight
- (20) 411 18" radius
- (2) 452 3" straight
- (2) 478 Snap-Switch, left
- (2) 479 Snap-Switch, right

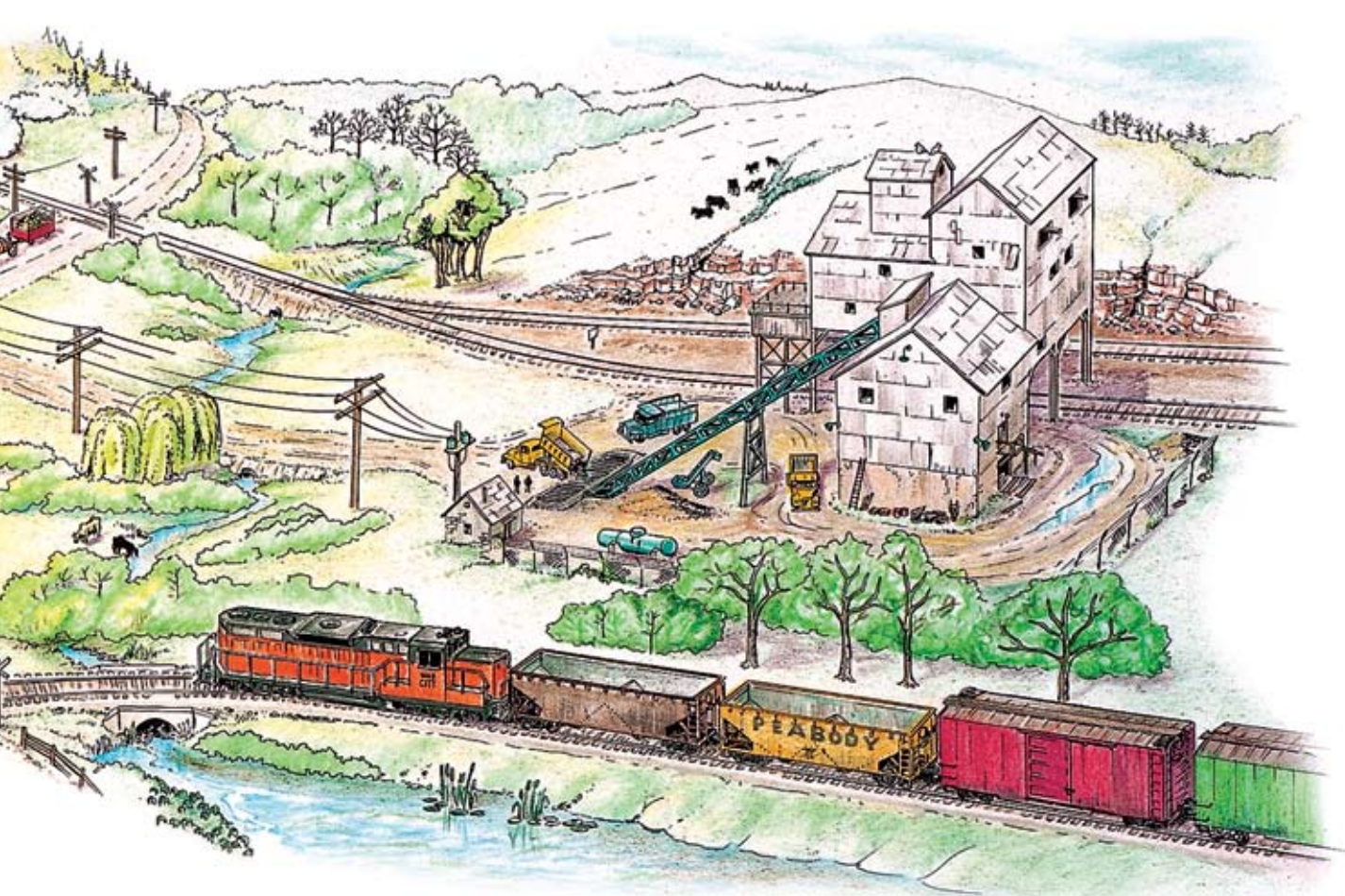
Walthers

(structures keyed to track plan)

1. 3063 Clarkesville Depot
2. 3002 Bill's Glass Shop
3. 3000 Don's Shoe Store
4. 3034 Adam's Ribs Restaurant
5. 3064 Merchant's Row III
6. 3029 Merchant's Row II
7. 3028 Merchant's Row I
8. 3062 Glacier Gravel Co.

*Could use Life-Like Power-Loc track or Atlas, Bachmann, or Kato WGH track packs.





from large rocks. Then use Woodland Scenics E-Z Water to simulate the lake.

A gravel plant is the railroad's major customer. It should be set against a high, rocky hillside, covered with trees.

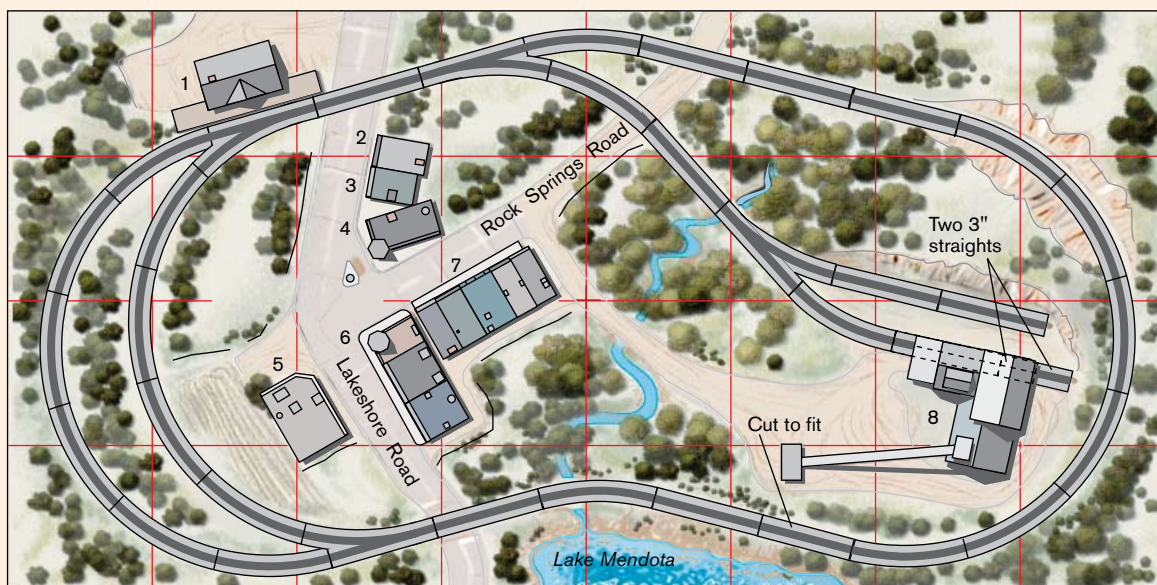
The quarry bunker's track spacing won't fit over both spur tracks; position it so one track runs under the end bunker and the other passes alongside.

Add a gravel driveway underneath the remaining bunker to load trucks.

There's plenty of room to add a nice small town in the middle of the layout. Here again, a couple of angled roads help to break up the rectangular feeling and provide a more realistic intersection.

There's some interesting switching if the passing siding is used as an inter-

change track. The MCCR's switcher could start from the quarry spur, make several laps around the railroad, then pick up a cut of empties. Next it returns to the quarry and switches the empty cars into loading positions as the out-bound loads are picked up. A return trip to the interchange track with the out-bound loads completes the cycle. **MR**



Scale: 3/4" = 1'-0" 12" grid