

A LAST LOOK AT THE MR&T

Model Railroader[®]

December 2024

Rod Stewart's layout reborn

The rock star moved his L.A. layout to his English estate

PLUS

- Inaugural Hall of Fame class announced
- Upgrade a brass steam locomotive
- Make scrap loads for flatcars



Give him the



HO SCALE RTL TURBOLINER

In the 1970s, Amtrak made serious efforts to improve passenger services along key corridors.

Following the success of the French-built RTG Turboliners, Amtrak turned to Rohr Industries to build their modernized Turboliners. For the first time in plastic, you can get your complete five-car set with working lights to make your tree shine!



gift he wants!



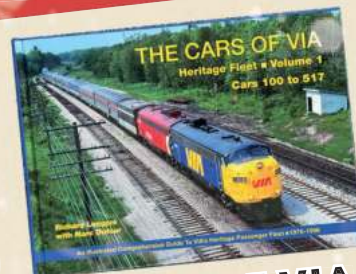
HO SCALE RS-18U

Don't miss out on the HO Scale RS-18u locomotive. This venerable engine served Canadian Pacific for over 30 plus years in all types of services. Many would see assignments in the United States like Vermont, Maine and New York. This striking RS-18u is in stock and ready to order! Quantities are limited!



HO SCALE RS-11

Looking for a classic Christmas model to put under the tree? The HO Scale RS-11s are packed with road-specific details such as fuel tanks, trucks, bells and much more. They encompass many roads from east to west and all are ready to be ordered today! Hurry, quantities are limited so don't miss out on this awesome ALCO.



THE CARS OF VIA HERITAGE FLEET • VOLUME 1 CARS 100 TO 517 BY RICHARD LONGPRÉ

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Find the *What's Neat* HO Scale Boxcars from Value Trains USA at this link:



whatsneat.com

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On the cover: Grand Street Station anchors the city scene on Rod Stewart's Grand Street & Three Rivers City RR. Andrew Burnham/Continental Modeller photo



Next issue

In January, we learn how Rod Stewart moved his layout, Bryson Sleppy introduces our N scale T-Trak project, Gerry Leone creates a river scene, and more!

Model Railroader (ISSN 0026-7341, USPS 529-810) is published monthly by Firecrown Media Inc., 605 Chestnut Street, Suite 800, Chattanooga, TN 37450. Periodicals postage paid at Chattanooga, TN and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Model Railroader*, PO Box 850, Lincolnshire, IL 60069.

Level Up Your Layout



WITH NEW HO VIADUCT KITS FROM ATLAS

**NOW
AVAILABLE!**



Throughout the history of railroad structural engineering, the viaduct has long been a favored way to cross steep valleys or wide rivers. Consisting of a series of elevated arches or piers supporting a long flat roadbed between two points of roughly the same elevation, classic viaducts were impressive structures made of stone or reinforced concrete construction. Although taking more time to build than a wooden, iron, or steel open frame bridge, masonry viaducts could safely span greater distances and handle greater loading with less maintenance over their lifetimes.

The Atlas Viaduct is currently available in Concrete and Cut Stone variations – and in single and double-track widths.

Features:

- Kit contains single arch and two half-arch ends – combine kits for longer applications
- Can be used without pier units for lower heights such as in urban settings
- Double track viaduct is also suitable for O scale single track applications
- Length 18"; Width – overall (Single) 3 1/4", (Double) 5 1/4"; Width – btw. walkways (Single) 2 1/8", (Double) 4 1/8"
- Height (w/ piers) – to deck 9 5/8", to top of railings 10 3/8"; Height (w/o piers) – to deck 3 1/2", to top of railings 4 1/4"

Pre-production Concrete Single Track Kit shown assembled.



*For more information on these and other high quality Atlas products,
visit your local hobby shop or www.atlasrr.com!*



ATLAS MODEL RAILROAD CO, INC. • 378 Florence Ave., Hillside, NJ 07205 • www.atlasrr.com



Model railroad cellphone photography tips

While reminiscing and revisiting his archive of photos of our dearly departed Milwaukee, Racine & Troy HO scale layout, Assistant Digital Editor Mitch Horner found himself admiring his own work. This work being his photos, all of which were captured with his smartphone.

Like any tool, the camera on your smartphone is most useful in experienced hands. In this Trains.com article, Mitch shares tips that are intended to help you better utilize your smartphone camera, and in turn improve your layout photography.



HO Scale
Rapido Trains
Alco FA1 and FB1 diesel locomotives

Rapido Trains HO Alco FA1 and FB1 diesels

The Rapido Trains HO Alco FA1 and FB1 diesels are the subject of our latest Product Review video. Senior Editor Cody Grivno points out the various factory-applied details on the units and demonstrates some of the unit's sound and light functions. Then watch them lead a short freight on our HO scale Beer Line layout. Watch this video and other reviews on Trains.com by scanning the QR code with your smartphone's camera.



Hornby study finds health benefits of model railroading

Model railroaders have often espoused the health benefits of the hobby. Now, they have numbers to back up their claims thanks to a new study by Hornby.

The U.K.-based model manufacturer and retailer announced the results of a study it commissioned through a London-based marketing company. The study sought to better understand the profile of the contemporary scale model enthusiast. Many of those who responded to the survey stated that they experienced mental health benefits from their hobby.

To read about the results of the study, visit the article on Trains.com



Take Amtrak to see a model railroad

Associate Editor Bryson Sleppy loves riding Amtrak. Because he's a modeler, he has always wondered if there were any train layouts residing in Amtrak stations. Well, he has found his answer.

Four model railroads currently exist calling Amtrak stations home. In this article, Bryson examines each layout and includes details like hours, price, and even which trains to take to see them. If you love riding Amtrak and modeling, you have to take a trip to one of these stations! It may just be a day trip away.

Note some of these layouts have been featured in previous issues of *Model Railroader*.

TWO REASONS

TO CHOOSE ...

MRC'S TECH 6 HYBRID:



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NO OTHER TRAIN CONTROL CAN MAKE THIS STATEMENT...

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90 years on and we're not done yet

It's been a wild 90th anniversary year, and I never thought *Model Railroader* would be looking at the beginning of its tenth decade from our current vantage point.

Here's a bit of a recap for those of you who are new: We learned at the end of last year Kalmbach had reached a deal to sell its headquarters building in Waukesha. We were preparing for a move into a new space for most of the spring.

On May 1, we learned Kalmbach had sold its railroad-related titles, plus *FineScale Modeler* and *Astronomy* magazine, to Firecrown Media. That set moving preparations into high gear, as the former Kalmbach building would be going to new owners in July.

In the midst of all this change, famous model railroader Rod Stewart (yes, the rock star) reached out to

invite us to visit his rebuilt layout he had moved from California to England.

Of course, you don't say no to a Hall of Fame rock star, or a trip to England, so off I went! You can read all about it starting on page 34.

By the time I returned, we had secured new office space and renovations were underway. By the end of July, we had all of our stuff in our new offices, and we started unpacking. As I write this in mid-September, we're getting into a routine in our new space, not far from our old home.

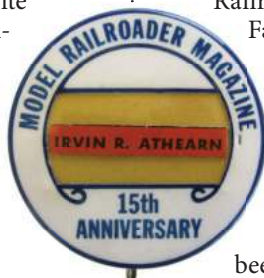
We still have our David P. Morgan Memorial Library, workshop spaces for *Model Railroader* and *FineScale Modeler*, several project layouts, and all of the support spaces any office has.

While we don't have the Milwaukee, Racine & Troy HO scale layout anymore, we did have time to document it before we carefully collected the structures and rolling stock for future projects. You can read about the MR&T at its peak beginning on page 46, and we've posted some video of the layout on Trains.com, with more to come.

We're also presenting the inaugural class of the Model Railroader Hall of

Fame in this issue. Read about that on page 53, and stay tuned for opportunities to keep this effort going.

Readers have been participating in the voting from the beginning of the year, and even sharing photos of treasures they've discovered, such as the Model Railroader 15th



anniversary pin, at left, from Allen Drucker. If you know anything about it, please share!

While 90 years is a long time, we're not done yet. With the backing of Firecrown Media and its dynamic leader Craig Fuller, we're sure we can keep this going for decades to come. We hope you'll hop on for the ride!

Model Railroader

Model railroading is fun!

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NEW!

LIAM'S FROZEN CUSTARD

HO SCALE (275-9285) | O SCALE (275-9284)

Fully lit and decorated interior with clerk,
ice cream, and slushy machines

Brilliantly lit exterior with two adults
and two children figures, giant ice cream
cone, garbage cans, evergreen tree,
and Jack the German Shepherd

NEW!

CRIPPLE CREEK SEED & FEED

HO SCALE (275-9379) | O SCALE (275-9378)

Preassembled and ready to go!

Includes figure on loading dock, oil drums,
pallet, seed bags, various greenery and
rocks, and Jack the German Shepherd

Decorated with vintage signs on all sides



SUNOCO® STATION

HO SCALE (275-9289) | O SCALE (275-9288)

Prelit interior and exterior with lights
under the canopy

Beautifully decorated station with
authentic Sunoco® signs and branding



HO scale



General Electric Dash 8-40C diesel locomotive. New paint schemes on this six-axle road unit from Atlas Model Railroad Co. include Rock Island Rail (red and yellow), Cimarron Valley (blue and yellow), CSX (YN2 with white roof), and Providence & Worcester (orange and yellow). The HO scale model, offered in one to three road numbers per scheme, features plastic and die-cast metal construction, a five-pole skew-

wound motor with dual flywheels, and factory-installed and painted crew figures. The GE Dash 8-40C is equipped with front or front and rear ditch lights as appropriate. Direct current models are priced between **\$199.95** and **\$209.95**. Versions with a dual-mode ESU LokSound decoder are **\$309.95** to **\$319.95**. Atlas Model Railroad Co., 908-687-0880, shop.atlasrr.com

HO scale locomotives



- **Alco 4-8-8-4 "Big Boy" steam locomotive with Snowbus caboose.** Union Pacific. One road number available. Big Boy features: 2024 style "Big Boy" lettering printed on smokebox door. Current tender markings. Additional "plaques" applied to boiler and tender. Positive Train Control details. Snowbus features: Unique body style with enclosed end porches. Additional center-mounted porch light. Direct-current model, \$799.99; with DCC and sound, \$899.99. Genesis line. Athearn Trains, 800-338-4639, athearn.com



- **Electro-Motive Division E8 and E9 diesel locomotives.** Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific; Amtrak; Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe; Boston & Maine; Delaware, Lackawanna & Western; Louisville & Nashville; Missouri Pacific; Penn Central; Seaboard Coast Line; Southern Pacific; and Texas & Pacific. Multiple road numbers per scheme. Seven different nose, three different back ends, two different sides, and three different steam generator variations.

Road-specific plastic and metal detail parts. Direct-current single unit, \$249.95; with DCC and sound, \$369.95; direct-current two-pack, \$469.95; with DCC and sound, \$689.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com



- **Electro-Motive Division SD60 diesel locomotive with Spartan cab.** Soo Line; Canadian Pacific; CITX; Kansas City Southern; New York, Susquehanna & Western; and Oakway. Four road numbers per scheme. Factory-installed 28mm round speaker in DC and DCC versions. All-wheel drive and electrical pickup. Die-cast metal chassis. Constant, directional light-emitting diode headlights. Direct-current model, \$159.98; with DCC and sound, \$214.98. Walther's Mainline. Wm. K. Walther's Inc., 414-527-0770, walther's.com



- **United States Railroad Administration 0-6-0 steam locomotive.** Baltimore & Ohio, Central Railroad of New Jersey, New York Central, Pennsylvania RR, and Union Pacific. One

road number per scheme. New and existing tooling. Road-name-specific features, including tender style and headlight placement. Separate, factory-applied parts; operating headlight and backup light; metal side rods; and E-Z Mate Mark II couplers on front and back. SoundTraxx Econami steam sound package with air pump, blowdown, brake squeal, cylinder cock, and dynamo sounds; choice of whistles and bells; and "all aboard" station departure effects. \$355. Bachmann Trains, 215-533-1600, bachmanntrains.com

HO scale rolling stock



- **Pullman-Standard 4,427-cubic-foot capacity low-side covered hopper.** Indiana Farm Bureau, Agway, Archer Daniels Midland, Cargill, Cooperative Marketing Association, Continental Grain Co., Denver & Rio Grande Western, and Western Maryland. Four road numbers per scheme; also available undecorated. 4-3-4 exterior post pattern. Bottom outlet gate details. Placard name plates as appropriate. See-through running board. 36" metal wheelsets and Proto-Max metal couplers. \$34.98. Walther's Mainline. Wm. K. Walther's Inc., 414-527-0770, walther's.com



- **Southern Ry. radio car kit.** Two road numbers. Painted and decorated 3-D resin kit. Includes trucks with 33" metal wheels and Kadee No. 158 metal couplers with draft-gear boxes. Modeler-installed antennas, brake wheel, ladders, metal weight, and screws. \$100. State Tool & Die, statetoolanddie.com

N scale locomotives



- **Electro-Motive Division F59PH diesel locomotive.** Tri-Rail, Altamont Corridor Express, AMT, CalTrain, Coaster, GO Transit, Metra, Metrolink, Trinity Rail Express, and West Coast Express. Multiple road numbers per scheme. Factory-installed and painted wire grab irons. Underbody detail including separate piping. Light-emitting-diode headlights, ditch lights, marker lights, and American-style red marker lights as applicable. Direct-current model, \$151.95; with DCC and sound, \$256.45. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com

N scale passenger equipment

- **Bombardier bi-level commuter car.** Altamont Corridor Express, AMT, CalTrain, Coaster, GO Transit, GO/Metrolinx, Metrolink, Sounder, Trinity Rail Express, Tri-Rail, and West Coast Express. One single coach, one coach three-pack, and one assorted three-pack (two coaches and one cab car) per scheme. 3-D designed body shell. Single- or double-cab front windows as appropriate. Tinted window glazing. Inside bearing trucks. Full pilot detailing with body-mounted couplers. Constant interior lighting and controllable cab car lighting in direct current and Digital Command Control. Single coach, \$85.45; coach three-pack, \$256.45; assorted three-pack, \$265.95. Rapido Trains Inc., 905-474-3314, rapidotrains.com

HO scale



Cripple Creek Seed & Feed.

This compact building is the newest in the Menards HO scale product range. Cripple Creek Seed & Feed, which has a footprint of 3¼" x 4⅜", features a base that's scenicked with static grass, shrubs, and rocks. Additional details include a figure, Jack the German shepherd, a pallet, two oil barrels, a pair of fertilizer bags, and advertising signs on the wall. Unlike other Menards' structures, Cripple Creek Seed & Feed (\$24.99) doesn't feature lighting. Menards, menards.com/trains

Hobby Trax enters U.S. market

Hobby Trax recently entered the North American model railroad market with the launch of its new website, which "...introduces) its range of truly unique products to model railroaders across the United States and Canada."

The United Kingdom-based model designer and manufacturer began as a model train shop in rural Scotland before dedicating itself to the creation and sales of products of its own design in 2023.

Hobby Trax USA operates out of California. From there, it now fulfills all orders and also provides customer support. Hobby Trax USA is helmed by Irwin D. Nathanson, a longtime model railroader who served as president of the Hudson Berkshire Division (National Model Railroad Association Northeastern Region) and as an NMRA region board member.

As for what customers can expect from Hobby Trax USA? "My current strategy, at least starting out, is to focus on the proprietary products that would be of interest to my potential customers" says Nathanson. This includes the Eye Choo Camera, a four-wheel car with a built-in camera designed to couple to the front of a locomotive to record video and audio of a layout from the engineer's perspective, as well as throttle holders and replacement throttle cables for NCE and Model Rectifier Corp. offerings and an NCE PowerCab programming track switch.

For the latest hobby industry news, visit Trains.com.



One offering from Hobby Trax USA is the Eye Choo Camera. It's a four-wheel car with a built-in camera to record video and audio of a layout.

Atlas HO MPI MP36PH-3C diesel locomotive



The Motive Power Industries (MPI) MP36PH-3C, a modern four-axle commuter diesel locomotive, is now available from Atlas Model Railroad Co. The HO scale Master Line model, based on True Line Trains tooling, features injection-molded plastic and die-cast metal construction, light-emitting-diode lighting, and metal knuckle couplers.

Our sample is decorated as Metra 403, part of the Chicago commuter agency's 401 through 427 series. The full-size units, built between October 2002 and March 2004, were given the model designation MP36PH-3S (the "S" for static inverter for the head-end power [HEP]).

In the mid-2010s the static inverters were removed from the units. They were replaced with a Caterpillar engine to power the HEP. A sixth fan was added at this time (the one at the rear of the hood). The commuter units were also given a new designation: MP36PH-3C. Metra's fleet of MP36PH-3C units are used today on its BNSF, Milwaukee District, and Rock Island lines.

The Atlas model has a one-piece body with a variety of separate, factory-applied parts. The front and rear pilots are fitted with plastic three-hose m.u. clusters and uncoupling levers. A weed-cutter plow is attached to the front pilot. The m.u. receptacle covers are picked in yellow paint and stenciled Loco MU. The head-end power covers are red and lettered CAR CONT.

The model features a detailed operator's compartment. Inside are two seats,

a desktop control stand, and a conductor's work station. The model lacks crew figures, but they'd be easy to install. The side cab doors are sprung.

Details on the body include wire grab irons, freestanding windshield wipers and rear view mirrors, and a five-chime air horn. The handrails and stanchions on the rear of the engine are plastic.

Since the Atlas model is based on a stock MP36PH-3C and the Metra units are modified MP36PH-3S diesels, there are some detail discrepancies. There are six rear handrail stanchions instead of four. In addition, the back of the unit should have stepwells, not ladders. The rear vertical grab irons also don't match the full-size 403. The area below the sill between the front truck and pilot has a different profile than the prototype.

The locomotive is neatly painted in Metra's as-delivered MP36 scheme. The color separation lines are crisp, and the fade effect where the silver transitions to blue behind the cab doors (below the orange stripe) is well done.

I compared the model to prototype drawings in the March 2008 *Railroad Model Craftsman*. The truck centers are 42'-8" instead of 43'-3", the wheelbase is 9'-4" instead of 9'-0", and the distance between the end plates is 63'-3" instead of 65'-10". The fuel tank, air reservoirs, and toolbox are also too far forward.

The MP36PH-3C we received has a dual-mode ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder. I tested the unit with an NCE PowerCab. At step 1, the commuter engine crawled along at less than 1 scale

mph. At step 28, the contemporary unit achieved a top speed of 67 scale mph. The full-size locomotives can achieve a top speed of 108 mph.

The four-axle road locomotive registered a drawbar pull of 2.4 ounces. That's equivalent to 11 free-rolling passenger cars on straight and level track. The locomotive has a recommended radius of 22" when operated with Atlas passenger cars.

If you model modern commuter operations, you'll want to check out the Atlas MP36PH-3C. The full-size units can be found throughout the United States and Canada. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: Direct-current model with factory-installed speaker, \$229.95; with dual-mode ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder, \$349.95

Manufacturer
Atlas Model Railroad Co.
378 Florence Ave.
Hillside, NJ 07205
shop.atlasrr.com

Era: 2003 to present (as decorated)

Road names: Metra, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Metrolink, and West Coast Express.

Features

- Metal knuckle couplers. Front at correct height, rear .010" too low
- Metal wheel stubs mounted on plastic drive axle gears, correctly gauged
- Weight: 14.8 ounces

Rapido HO General Electric Dash 8-40CM



The General Electric Dash 8-40CM

diesel locomotive is back in the Rapido Trains product lineup. The redesigned six-axle road locomotive features a newly tooled fuel tank, cab interior, and trucks; railroad-specific details; and full underbody details.

General Electric (GE) produced the Dash 8-40CM from February 1990 through March 1994. During the course of the production run, 84 units were built. Canadian National had the largest fleet with 55 units, followed by BC Rail with 26 and Quebec, North Shore & Labrador with three.

The sample we received is decorated as BC Rail No. 4626, part of the railroad's 4601 through 4626 series. BC Rail placed two orders for the Dash 8-40CM. Units 4601 through 4622 were built in 1990. Three years later, engines 4623 through 4626 rolled off the assembly line at GE's plant in Erie, Pa.

The Rapido model uses plastic and die-cast metal construction. As with other diesels from the manufacturer, the BC Rail unit is loaded with details. The front of the engine has a factory-applied snow plow, an anti-climber pilot, and wire grab irons. Both pilots have three-cluster m.u. hoses and uncoupling levers; the rear pilot also has spare coupler knuckles.

The North American cab has separate sand filler hatches, windshield wipers, grab irons, and a cast-metal

bell. Behind the flush-fitting window glazing is a detailed cab interior. The cab roof features two antennas.

Like to the prototype, the BC Rail model has lots of lights. The headlights are on the nose. Above the number boards are tri-color class lights. The rock (or corner) lights are on the front pilot; the ditch lights are atop the m.u. stands.

The Dash 8-40CM is the first model we've received equipped with Mo-Power, a capacitor-based system that stores energy and allows the model to operate over dirty or dead rail. The capacitors are located over the rear truck.

Our sample is painted in BC Rail's red, white, and blue scheme. The separation lines between colors are mostly crisp. The placement of the graphics follows prototype images. The 4626 had its steel bell replaced with an electronic bell prior to CN leasing the railroad's freight operations in 2004. Yellow was added to the sills and steps by CN.

The sample we received has an ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder. I tested the model at the workbench with an NCE Power Cab. At step 1, the six-axle road unit crawled at less than 1 scale mph. Quite impressive! At step 28, the model achieved a top speed of 75 scale mph. The full-size BC Rail Dash 8-40CM diesels had a maximum speed of 65 mph. The model has a drawbar pull of 3.7 ounces, equivalent to 52 free-rolling freight cars on straight and level track.

Prototype drawings of the GE Dash 8-40CM were published in the September 1995 issue of *Model Railroader* magazine. The majority of the dimensions match or closely follow published data. The locomotive's ride height is 3 scale inches too high.

Though many GE Dash 8-40CM diesels started their career north of the border, they migrated south as CN's rail network expanded into the United States. The Rapido Trains cowl-bodied model would add some visual interest to any HO diesel fleet set between 1990 and today. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: direct-current models, \$239.95; with dual-mode ESU LokSound V5 sound decoder, \$349.95

Manufacturer

Rapido Trains Inc.
500 Alden Rd., Unit 21
Markham, Ontario, Canada
L3R 5H5

rapidotrains.com

Era: 1990 to present (varies depending on paint scheme)

Road names: BC Rail; Canadian National; and Quebec, North Shore & Labrador. Two to six road numbers per paint scheme.

Features

- Metal knuckle couplers, at correct height
- Metal wheel stubs on geared plastic axles, correctly gauged
- Weight: 1 pound, 2.9 ounces



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Athearn N ACF Center Flow covered hopper



The American Car & Foundry

2,970-cubic-foot capacity two-bay Center Flow covered hopper is now part of Athearn's Genesis series. The N scale model, which we last reviewed in the June 2010 issue, still features injection-molded plastic construction, body-mounted couplers, and metal wheelsets. Among the product upgrades are rubber train line hoses; separate, factory-applied uncoupling levers; and lower-shelf couplers on cars decorated for Burlington Northern and CSX.

American Car & Foundry unveiled its first Center Flow covered hopper in June 1961. Over the following decades, the car was offered in cubic foot capacities ranging from 2,700 to 6,600 with two, three, and four bays; continuous, elongated, and round hatch covers; and various outlet gates. The Greenbrier Companies uses the Center Flow design today.

The full-size 2970 covered hoppers were designed to transport bentonite clay, cement, salt, silica sand, and other dense, dry commodities. The cars debuted in the mid-1960s and could still be found in service into the 2010s.

The sample we received is decorated as Missouri Pacific No. 706027, part of the railroad's 706000 through 706099 series. The full-size car was built in March 1967 under Lot 11-02498 as Texas & Pacific 706027. The car became part of MP's fleet following the October 1976 merger between the two railroads.

The Athearn model has a one-piece plastic body with a separate roof. The end cages are freestanding plastic

castings with molded ladder rungs and crossover handrails. The handbrake and brake wheel are factory-applied parts. Etched-metal crossover platforms are attached to the bottom of the end cages above the draft-gear boxes. The B end of the car has a freestanding air reservoir, brake cylinder, control valve, and associated piping.

A one-piece, etched-metal running board is attached to the top of the car. The support brackets accurately have an alternating thick/thin pattern. Wire grab irons are located on the longitudinal part of the boards by the full-height end ladders. Four 30" round hatch covers are located along the top of the roof.

The underbody has a mix of molded and factory-applied parts. Among the molded details are the bolsters, shaker brackets, draft-gear boxes, and screw bosses for the trucks. The draft-gear box covers are screw-attached parts.

Our sample is neatly painted gray with black and white graphics. The placement of the "screaming eagle" herald, road number, reporting marks, and other data follows prototype photos of other cars from the series.

I found prototype drawings of the ACF 2970 Center Flow in the 1970 edition of the Simmons-Boardman Publishing Corp. *Car and Locomotive Cyclopedia of American Practice*. The dimensions on the Athearn N scale model match or are within scale inches of published data.

It's fun to watch companies revisit existing tooling and make improvements. Uncoupling levers and rubber train line hoses may seem like small upgrades. But I see improvements, whatever the size, as an indication that legacy companies like Athearn aren't content resting on their name alone. — *Cody Grivno, senior editor*

Facts & features

Price: single car, \$39.99; three-pack, \$99.99

Manufacturer

Athearn Trains
2904 Research Rd.
Champaign, IL 61822
athearn.com

Era: mid-1960s to 2010s (varies depending on paint scheme)

Road names: Missouri Pacific; ACF Leasing; Burlington Northern; Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; CSX; and Corning Glass Works. Two single cars and one three-pack per scheme.

Features

- 36" metal wheelsets, correctly gauged
- Body-mounted McHenry scale couplers, at correct height
- Minimum radius: 11"
- Weight: 1 ounce, .1 ounce too light per National Model Railroad Association Recommended Practice 20.1

QUICKLOOK

KR Models HO scale skeleton log car

Price: \$60 (without logs), \$75 (with logs)

Manufacturer

KR Models Ltd.

No. 100 — 17865 106A Ave.

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5S 1V8

krmodels.net

Era: Early 1900s to 1950s

Comments: Loaded and empty skeleton log cars are now available in HO scale from KR Models Ltd. The ready-to-run model features injection-molded plastic construction, metal wheelsets, and body-mounted metal couplers.

The 40-foot log car has a two-piece plastic body that's painted brown but unlettered. The upper half features a separate, factory-applied vertical brake staff and freestanding uncoupling levers. Molded details, such as the bolts and straps, are picked in black. The log bunk and truck screw boss are cast as a single part.

The underbody consists of a one-piece casting that includes the draft-gear box covers. The K-type brake appliances, levers, and hangers are freestanding parts. Though the brake pipes are molded, they're painted black to blend in with the rest of the underbody details. Train line hoses (attached to the sides of the draft-gear box covers) and the body bolsters are separate, factory-applied parts.

Sandwiched between the two halves of the body is a metal weight. The weight of the cars varies. The empty car weighs 1.2 ounces. Loaded cars weigh 3 ounces (six logs) and 3.4 ounces (three logs). Per National Model Railroad Association Recommended Practice 20.1, a car of this length should weigh 3.8 ounces.



The screw-mounted, solid-bearing trucks are molded in black engineering plastic. The car rides on 38" insulated metal wheelsets. When I checked them against a National Model Railroad Association standards gauge, they were all a touch tight. A quick twist of the wheels brought them into gauge.

The loaded cars include cast-resin logs with bark texture. Log diameter is $\frac{5}{16}$ " to $\frac{3}{8}$ " on the car with six logs. On the car with three logs the diameter is between $\frac{9}{16}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Metal tie-down chains are included with all cars.

Fans of logging railroads will want to give these new cars from KR Models a look. A string of them would look great with a geared locomotive running through a forested scene. — Cody Grivno, senior editor

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A mechanical passenger car washer cleans a streamliner as a coach yard switcher (out of frame) slowly pulls the train through the machine. The location isn't specified, but is probably in Texas, as the *Sunbeam* operated between Dallas and Houston on the Southern Pacific's Texas & New Orleans subsidiary.

David P. Morgan Library collection

Keeping passenger cars clean

Q How do mechanical passenger car washers work?

Steve Moore

A Keeping passenger cars clean is a never-ending battle as they're subjected to the same dirt, dust, and grime as locomotives and freight cars. While some minor cleaning, such as washing windows, can be handled en route, extensive cleaning is handled at coach yards and larger terminals. Andy Sperandio, former *Model Railroader* editor, explained how car washers worked in his book *The Model Railroader's Guide to Passenger Equipment & Operation* (Kalmbach Books, 2006). Here's what he had to say on the topic:

"Coach yards also included cleaning tracks where trains could be cleaned both inside and out. These were typically arranged on platforms on either side of the track to give car cleaners access to the sides and windows of both sides of each car.

"Mechanical car washers were installed at some large terminals for cleaning the exteriors of whole trains. A switcher would couple to the consist to be cleaned and draw it slowly through the car washer's detergent sprays and rotating brushes. In general these machines cleaned only the sides of passenger cars while the roofs, less visible to the public, were left to accumulate locomotive soot, road grime, and other 'weathering.'

"Car washers didn't have a lot of effect on trucks and underbody equipment, either. At least one major railroad, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, made it a practice to spray fresh silver paint on the trucks and unskirted underbody equipment of cars turned in its coach yard."

Wm. K. Walthers Inc. offered an HO scale passenger car washer in its Cornerstone line as item No. 933-3186. It's listed on the manufacturer's website as discontinued, but the kit can still be found on the secondary market. Stewart Products, part of Alexander Scale Models, offers car washer kits in two-, four-, and six-brush versions in N and HO scales.

Q Why are the flanges on model steam engine drive wheels so much larger than on the prototypes? Is it because the models don't weigh very much? Or is it because they have to navigate tight curves? And do larger scales (like G scale and live-steam models) have flanges that are closer to the prototypes?

Nathan Penn

A Most model steam and diesel locomotives have RP-25 flanges, a depth recommended by the National Model Railroad Association. This dimension has stood the test of time for decades as a good compromise between realistic appearance and reliable operation over a variety of track conditions. A few modelers have machined the flanges down to the prototype's 1-inch depth, known as Proto:87, but this requires extreme attention to track alignment and gauge. There is an intermediate code 88 semi-scale wheel profile that some of us use on freight car wheels. I've found that cars so equipped work fine on my otherwise standard HO track, but no locomotives are available with semi-scale wheels.

Large scale models tend to have over-size flanges, probably because many of them are used outdoors where track is subjected to harsh weather conditions. Live-steam practices vary, but many adhere to prototype dimensions. — Tony Koester, contributing editor

Q In all my 74 years of looking at train tracks this is the first time I noticed a NO TRESPASSING stencil on the web of the rail of the Union Pacific tracks that run by my home in Fort Dodge, Iowa. I'm curious if this is standard procedure for the UP or if other railroads also use this as a warning.

Mike Pavik

A Trespassing on railroad property isn't only illegal, it's dangerous. Virtually every major railroad posts no trespassing signs along the right-of-way to discourage people from using the tracks as a shortcut. However, signs are expensive and subject to vandalism and theft.

The solution to these issues is applying stencils to the web of the rail like what you spotted in Fort Dodge. I'm not sure if this is a standard procedure for

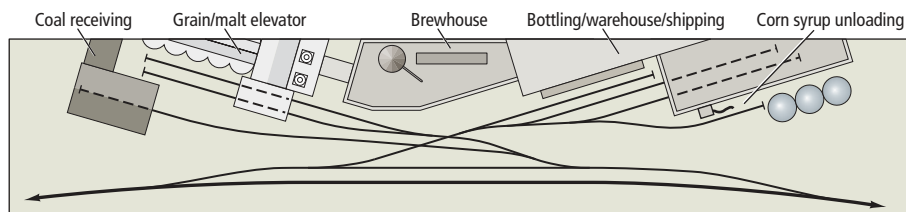
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Stencils such as UPRR MAIN TRK and NO TRESPASSING can be found on the web of the rail on some Union Pacific lines. The example shown here is at Clyman Junction, Wis. Cody Grivno photo

the UP or a way to supplement posted signs. When I was railfanning along the UP at Clyman Junction, Wis., about 50 minutes northwest of our Brookfield, Wis., offices, I spotted UPRR MAIN TRK stencils on the web of the rail.

On the Canadian National line near my house, I've seen stencils in the web of the rail indicating rail weight, such as 115 NEW. The CN also uses stencils to indicate main tracks and sidings. These stencils can be found in the gauge at grade crossings.



This plan, from Jeff Wilson's book *The Model Railroader's Guide to Industries Along the Tracks 2* (Kalmbach Books, 2006), shows how to make a brewery complex fit on a layout. *Model Railroader* illustration

Q I'm planning a rail-served brewery for my N scale layout. What did these kind of industries look like, and what kind of products would trains deliver to the brewery or haul away from it?

Eli Quarless

A Breweries had different looks depending on the era and location. Chapter 3 of Jeff Wilson's book *The Model Railroader's Guide to Industries Along the Tracks 2*, contains images of different breweries from throughout the United States. The title is out of print, but you can find it at used book dealers.

Incoming traffic for a brewery would include barley malt, corn, hops, corn syrup, bottles/cases, empty cans, kegs, and cardboard/packaging. Outbound traffic would include draft beer, bottled beer, and canned beer. In the 1940s the outbound beer would have been shipped in 40-foot ice reefers. Today it's transported in RBL (insulated) boxcars.

I also wrote about adding a compact brewery to our former Milwaukee, Racine & Troy HO scale staff layout. You can read about Keller Beverage Co. in the August and September 2014 issues of *Model Railroader*.

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Q Please explain how to tell the difference between horizontal and vertical cut rail nippers.

Dave Smith

A To answer your question, I turned to a blog on the Xuron Corp. website. The well-known manufacturer of hobby tools, based in Saco, Maine, recommends using its 2175B track cutters on new installations. The tool is designed to cut code 100 and smaller nickel silver and brass rail in a top-to-bottom motion. It is semi-flush cutting, which means one side of the cut (to the back of the blade) will be smooth. The other side of the cut will be rough.

Xuron's 2175M vertical cutter is designed to cut track that's already been installed on a model railroad. It features a rounded nose, which protects the ties and roadbed below while the rail is being cut. Some touch-up with a file may be required where the cut was made. The 2175M vertical cutter is also compatible with code 100 and smaller nickel silver and brass rail.



The Xuron 2175B track cutter is a popular hand tool used by many model railroaders. It's designed for cutting code 100 and smaller rail from top to bottom. Jeff Wilson photo

Q On the Winston-Salem Southbound Tar Branch project layout there were three small industries in the middle. Do you have the brands and descriptions of the structures used?

Andy Sestak

A The Winston-Salem Southbound was *Model Railroader's* 2018 project layout, featured in the January through April issues. In addition, the 2'-9" x 8'-2" model

railroad was featured in numerous videos, which you can watch on Trains.com.

The three buildings you're asking about are H.G. Wright Distributing Co., a beer distributor; Clyde L. Foy Co., a food broker; and George A. Hormel & Co., as you probably guessed, a meat distributor. All three of these buildings were modeled by Trains.com Director David Popp.

He used the DPM Landmark Structures freight depot, item No. 10700, as the starting point for kitbashing the H.G. Wright building. David turned to a pair of City Classics' Carnegie Street Manufacturing kits (No. 109) to model the Foy and Hormel buildings.

Unfortunately, City Classics is no longer in business. However, you may still be able to find the Carnegie Street Manufacturing kits at brick-and-mortar and online retailers, model railroad swap meets, and online auction websites.

You can learn more about how David modeled this group of buildings in the Winston-Salem Southbound series on Trains.com Video. [MR](#)

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Pictured: a scene on Don Annison's *Steamboat Springs*. Photo by Steve Flint.



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Railway Post Office

Conducted by Eric White

It's all about the journey

I recently received the September 2024 issue of *Model Railroader* and read with fascination your From the Editor "Build the stuff of fantasies" with great interest and appreciation.

The points of interest you discuss in the editorial are all areas that I personally have pondered over my years of being a model railroader, some 49 years.

My modeling buddy here in Melbourne, Australia, Dennis Hare, and I both have small N scale layouts. His is Union Pacific American and mine an Iron Ore Australian layout.

We have concluded that both of us have a sufficiently large enough layout to keep our modeling endeavors going for many more years, even though our layouts are small (his is 7 x 14 feet and mine is 8 x 16 feet) and of a similar age i.e. 34 years. Large model railways seem to come and then go, as time, money, and resources, which are generally limited for individuals, sets the railway on a "short lived" path.

Clubs like La Mesa's are unique. However, there is a large N scale club in Sydney, Australia, which is created by the 'Sydney N Scale Model Railway Club,' see its Facebook page, which follows, I believe, a similar format to La Mesa.

My friend Dennis and I earnestly believe it is about the journey of building your empire that is the most satisfying aspect of the hobby, and this is something that needs to be conveyed to the other modelers out there, especially the new up and coming modelers.

Noel S. Purdey, Melbourne, Australia

Turnaround operations

I have another solution to the turnaround question on page 18 of the September 2024 issue of *Model Railroader*. Put a cabin on both ends of the train like the Detroit, Toledo & Ironton (DT&I) did many years ago. On my Pine Creek Ry., the Kirby Creek turn leaves the Johnstown yard and travels to Kirby Creek. It switches

the trailing point sidings, then heads to the next town, which is Marysville, where there is a passing siding. The engines run around the train. No need to switch the caboose because there is one on each end of the train. The engines couple on the other end to head back to Kirby Creek to switch the industries on the other side of the main, which are now trailing point sidings. Then it returns the Johnstown yard.

Bill Reese, Dayton, Ohio

A better cleaning solution

In the Ask MR column of the October 2024 issue, you explained how to use alcohol to clean your locomotive wheels and track.

Please everyone; I can't shout this loudly enough — do not use isopropyl alcohol to clean your wheels or track!!! While I'm shouting — do not use acetone either!!!

You state in your response that opinions differ as to what the hated "black gunk" is. Perhaps that is true for some, but science confirmed years ago, the gunk is mostly metal oxides caused by micro-arcing between our locomotive wheels and track. This is not opinion, this is confirmed scientific fact. So, the goal for all of us is to reduce as much as possible the micro-arcing.

How?

Science tells us to use what are known as non-polar solvents for cleaning all electrical contact points. Fortunately for us, there are several readily available chemicals that are excellent for this purpose, kerosene and mineral spirits for example. There are also a few formulas made specifically for us model railroaders that are very good as well.

After finding this information a few years ago, I made the switch from alcohol to a non-polar product made for model railroading and the difference has been amazing. I used to have to clean my track monthly. Now I go about nine months between serious cleaning of track and wheels. I sincerely hope everyone will do themselves this favor.

Edward Angel, Lompoc, Calif. **MR**

Comments, suggestions, and additional information on *Model Railroader* articles and departments are welcome in this column. Every comment will be read, but not all can be printed or answered. Make your statement in 300 words or less, and send it to **Railway Post Office, Model Railroader magazine, 18650 W. Corporate Dr. STE 103, Brookfield, WI 53045**, or email editor@modelrailroader.com. Please include your name, city, and state.

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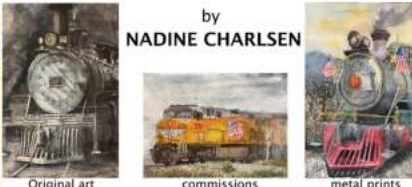
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Ed West, on the scrap train from Bigelow, checks ahead as Dana Aldrich eases No. 18 into Kingfield. The miscellaneous scrap, truss rods, discarded trucks, and rail will be shipped out on Maine Central flatcars. Photos by the author

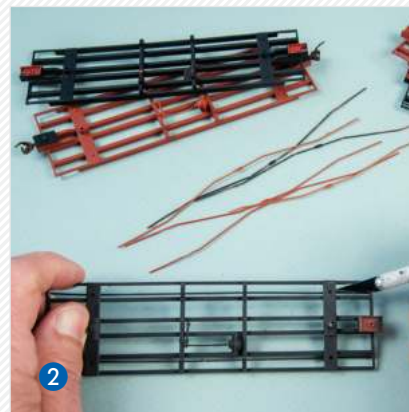
Scrap loads for your flatcars

One afternoon while paging through Volume No. 4 of Jerry DeVos' hardcover series *The Sandy River and Rangeley Lakes Railroad and Predecessors* I came upon a couple photos of an SR&RL flatcar loaded with the metal salvaged from cars that had been burned for scrap. Included in the load were four truck assemblies, truss rods, brake wheels, and other indistinguishable lengths of rusted metal rods and pipes along with at least one discarded coupler.

Since I had replaced all of the original trucks and underframes on my Bachmann freight cars with low-profile trucks and underframes, I had a whole box of raw materials sitting on a shelf in my train room. So I decided to create a couple "one evening project" flatcar loads for my On30 SR&RL.

Let's keep our hopes up, now that the SR&RL has abandoned the track to Bigelow and is hauling scrap metal away via the Maine Central, it can drum up enough cash to keep the railroad operating for a few more years!

STEP 1 PREPARING THE SCRAP



I first went to my scrap box and dug out an assortment of different diameter solid wire, floral wire, stranded wire that I had removed from a couple old picture frames; some discarded brake wheels; trucks and underframes; and Bachmann couplers **1**.

I cut away the truss rods from the underframe assemblies with a No. 11 hobby knife **2**. Then I cut a bunch of wire to approximately the same length as the plastic truss rods, occasionally bending some of them.

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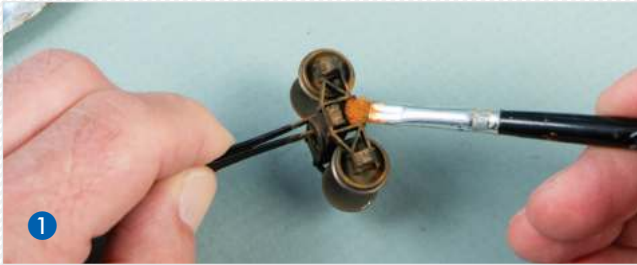
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STEP 2 WEATHERING THE SCRAP



All of the scrap materials that I used were either bare metal or painted various colors so I didn't bother to repaint anything.

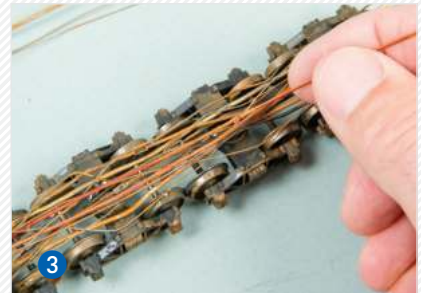


I simply weathered the trucks with a brushed on wash of Raw Umber tube acrylics, diluting with tap water ①. I used a Raw Sienna wash to age the wires ②.

STEP 3 FORMING THE LOADS



I wanted the loads to be removable so I kept this in mind during construction. After the acrylics dried, I glued the four trucks together end to end with 5-minute Epoxy ①. At the same time I glued the axle tips into the journal boxes of each truck. This helped stabilize the trucks and allowed me to glue Kappler scale 4 x 4-inch wood blocking against both end sets of wheels.



Using Weldbond, a multi-purpose adhesive, I glued a couple lengths of the heavier wire to the tops of the trucks to help hold them in position ②. Then I piled a half dozen lengths of assorted wire and truss rods on top, gluing each in place with Weldbond as I went along. Once dry, I laid a couple of pliers on top to press everything down then added more glue ③.

STEP 4 FINISHING TOUCHES



I modified four Bachmann couplers to better resemble those in the prototype photos. After cutting off the end that mounts in the draft-gear box (since Bachmann couplers are plastic simply use a pair of cutting pliers to accomplish this) I made up a styrene frame out of Evergreen .010" x .040" strip. I painted them Grimy Black ① and placed them alongside the trucks. I used dollhouse



wax (the stuff they use to temporarily hold details in place in doll houses) to hold the couplers in place on the deck of the car. The wax holds the couplers securely while making them easy to remove.

Finally I added a couple of cut down O scale brake wheels I had laying around to each pile then aerosol sprayed everything with Testor's Dullcote ②. **MR**



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Peter Hall shares how he improved the running quality and details on an HO scale NorthWest Short Line 2-6-2 steam locomotive. He detailed the model to match Milwaukee Road No. 943 for Clark Propst's layout.

Upgrade a **BRASS STEAM LOCOMOTIVE**

Tips for improving the running quality and details on an HO scale 2-6-2 Prairie

By Peter Hall

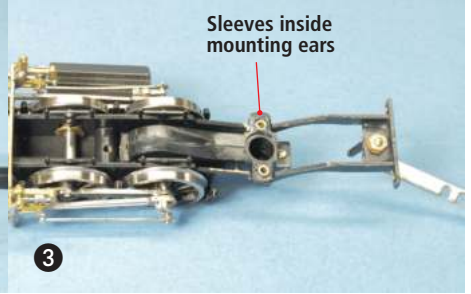
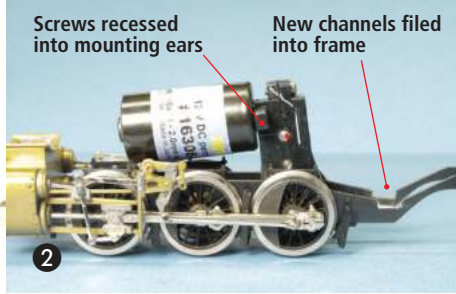
Photos by the author

Sometimes modeling projects come about in unusual ways. Clark Propst, whose modeling work has appeared in the pages of *Model Railroader*, had a NorthWest Short Line (NWSL) HO scale Milwaukee Road 2-6-2 Prairie steam locomotive. He wanted me to improve the running qualities of the brass model and customize it to match the railroad's 900-series locomotives.

The project took almost two months to complete. Other people contributed to the finished model's success, including Ken Clark, who advised me about motor replacement; Gary Schrader, who provided input on drivers; and Ted Douglas of the Milwaukee Road Historical Association, who shared prototype photos and offered many detailed suggestions. [MR](#)

Peter Hall began model railroading with unpainted wooden trains when he was 4. His working career spanned 46 years, starting with the U.S. Navy Submarine Service and ending with 20 years as Director of Safety with Amtrak. This is his sixth MR article.

GETTING STARTED



The NorthWest Short Line (NWSL) model is nicely constructed with etched-metal running boards and good castings. However, it has an unusual drive train, something that was "designed by NWSL to make the model more like a real locomotive by eliminating the usual obtrusiveness of the gearbox under the boiler." Instead of the normal gearbox position sitting on top of the geared axle with the motor in line with the worm shaft, the NWSL 2-6-2 Prairie steam locomotive has a double-idler gearbox trailing back horizontally from the rear axle.

This is connected to a vertically mounted motor with the worm soldered onto the motor shaft. While it does achieve the NWSL goal of eliminating the usual gearbox, this arrangement makes motor changes more difficult. You can see the gearbox tilted up and opened to show the internal gearing in **1**. The two motor-mount screws rest on the frame.

With an understanding of how the model was constructed, I next test ran the locomotive with five Pacific Fruit Express refrigerator cars and a caboose. The engine could barely pull the cars up my 1.5% grade, and became very hot while doing so. It was drawing almost 150ma, far too much for the Sagami 1624 motor. The motor needed to be replaced, but I wanted to keep the original gearbox. A pair of 2mm screws secured the motor to the gearbox. A similar Sagami motor would be a good choice as the threaded holes would be in the same positions.

I replaced the Sagami 1624 motor with a 1630, which is 16mm in diameter by 30mm long. According to Ken Clark, it has twice the torque of the 1624. However, the longer motor was too tall for the mounting. The top of the motor impinged against the inside top of the boiler, and the engine wouldn't run.

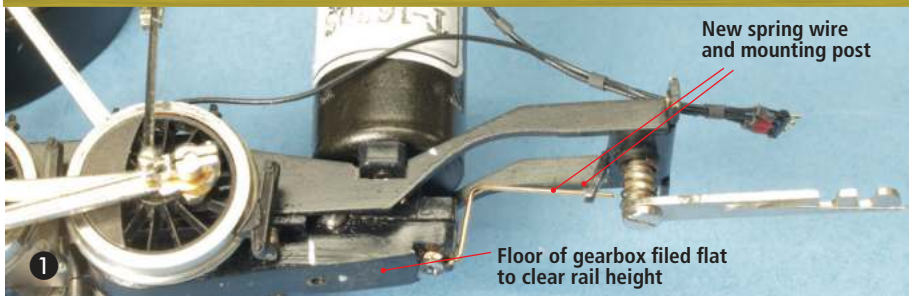
I tried rotating the assembly forward into the boiler, but that would have

required extensive cutting into the boiler. In addition, this approach would also have required the factory-installed weight to be repositioned.

Fortunately, the model has no backhead, so I took advantage of the unused space. I used new screws with thinner, smaller-diameter heads to lower the motor. Then I cut a channel in the frame so the motor could tilt back about 10 degrees **2**. This provided enough clearance for the motor to fit inside the boiler cavity without having to make any modifications.

I replaced the original large-head screws with smaller ones that fit the motor. I wanted to recess them as well, to provide as much room as possible to tilt the motor. However, my attempts to cut a recessed shoulder into the plastic gearbox ears weren't successful. Instead, I inserted two short sleeves made from brass tube and glued them into the ears **3**. The mounting screws fit nicely up inside the sleeves.

GEARBOX MODIFICATIONS



Though the steps outlined above solved one problem, they introduced another. The new installation dropped the gearbox down so low that the trailing truck mounting screw was below rail height.

The floor of the gearbox casting is .050" thick, so I filed the gearbox floor to be parallel with the rails, as shown in

1. This allowed the screw to sit high enough to clear any obstructions.

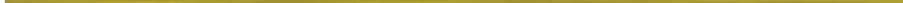
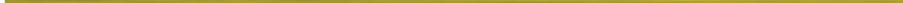
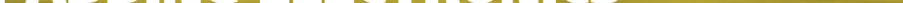
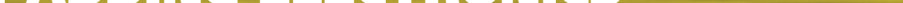
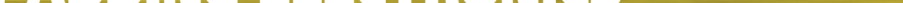
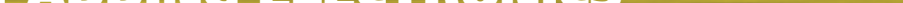
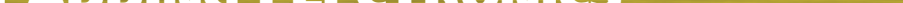
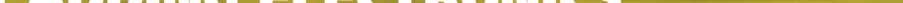
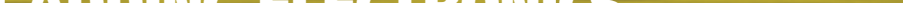
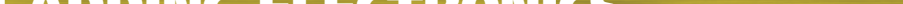
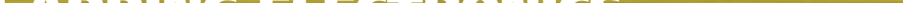
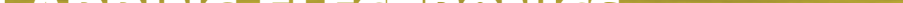
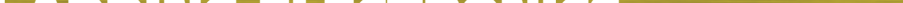
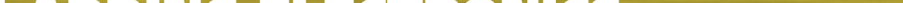
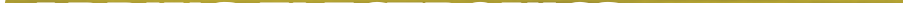
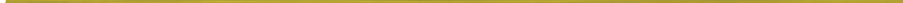
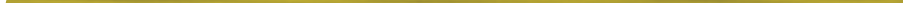
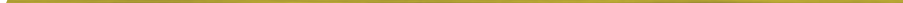
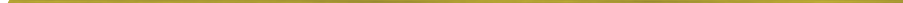
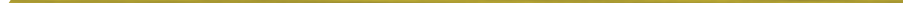
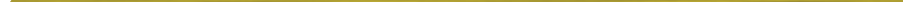
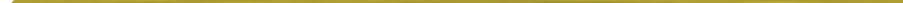
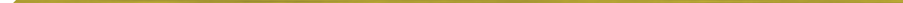
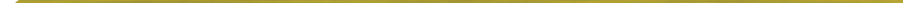
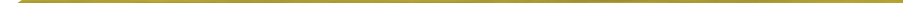
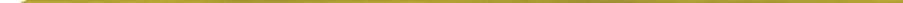
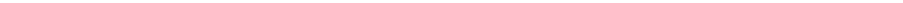
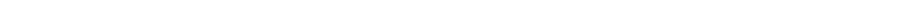
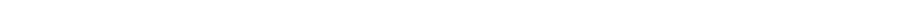
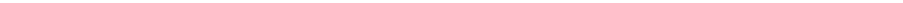
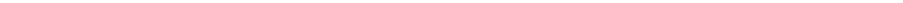
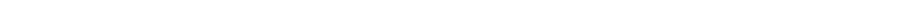
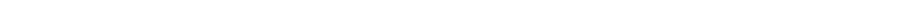
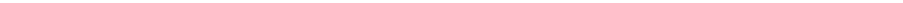
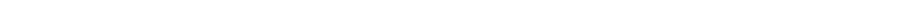
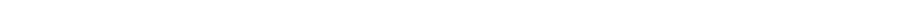
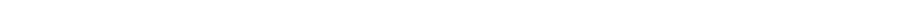
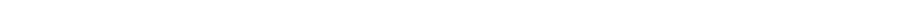
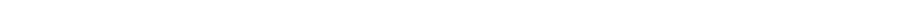
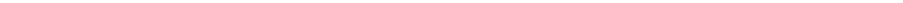
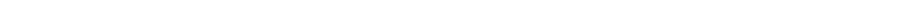
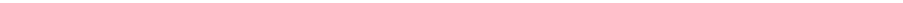
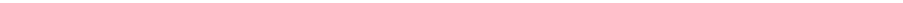
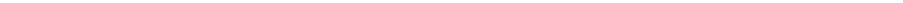
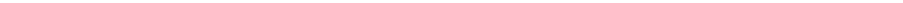
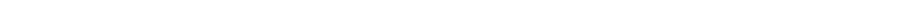
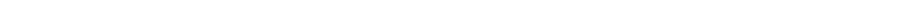
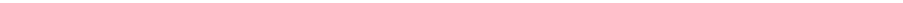
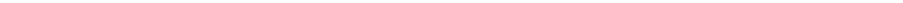
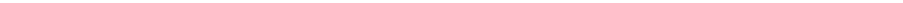
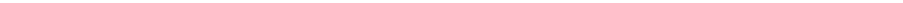
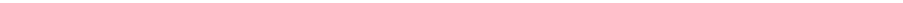
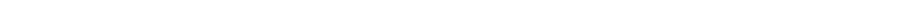
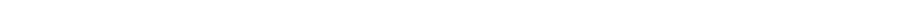
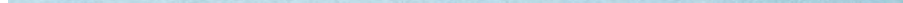
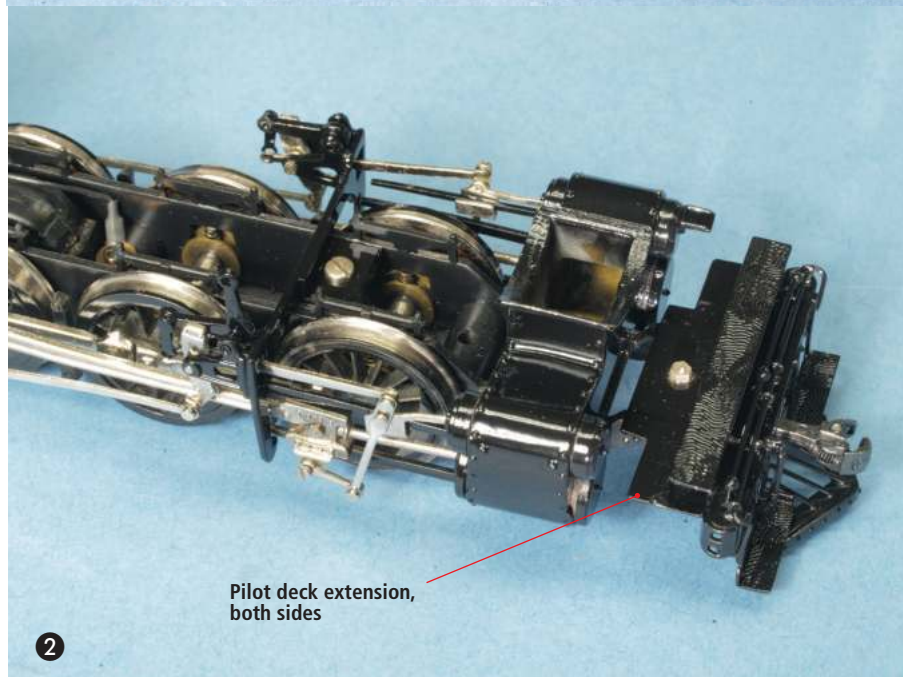
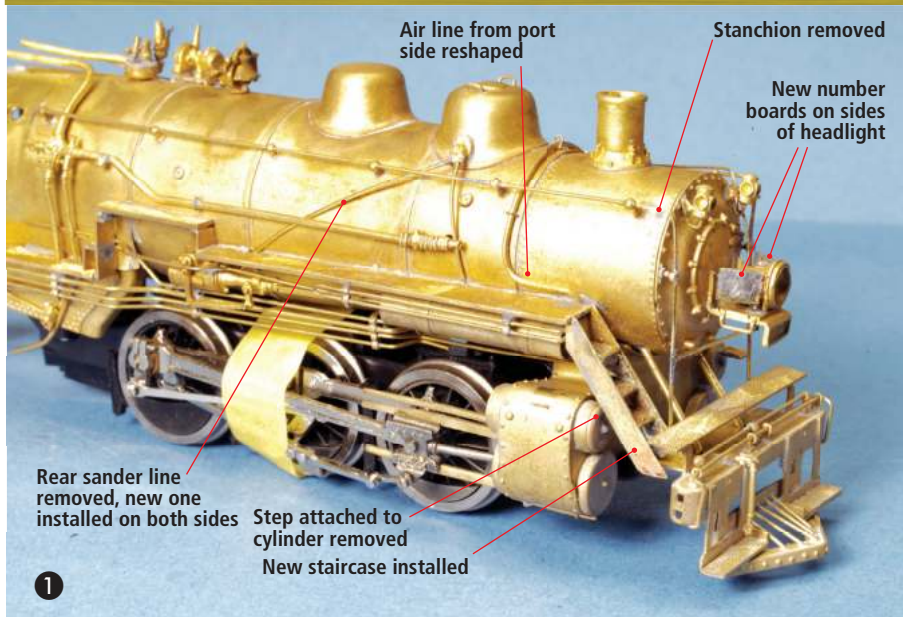
The lower position meant that I needed a new spring wire to hold down the gearbox. I made the spring from .020" phosphor bronze wire. This is also shown in **1**.

Installing the spring required moving the trailing truck backward. I made

a tongue extension for the truck **2** and used a short piece of tubing to act as a pivot. I secured the truck to the gearbox with a thin-head screw.

With the modifications complete, I test ran the model. The 2-6-2 was now capable of pulling 11 refrigerator cars up the hill and drew just 40ma. The new motor also ran cooler.

EXTERIOR MAKEOVER



RETURN TO SENDER



I thought I was done with the 943, but it turns out I wasn't finished with the project just yet. Clark's layout has tight radius curves, which is how he gets so much layout into a small space. This created problems for the 2-6-2. Though the model worked fine on my layout, it derailed and shorted on his. Clark shipped the engine back to me for diagnosis and repair.

When I opened the box and lifted out the engine, I made a lucky find. In

the box, between the upper and lower foam blocks, was a substitute casting for mounting the pilot coupler. The engine originally had a Kadee No. 5 in a regular draft-gear box. I'd installed a No. 58 scale-head coupler in a No. 23 box, which reduced the swivel range of the front truck. I replaced the No. 23 box with the casting. This increased the swivel range of the front truck ①.

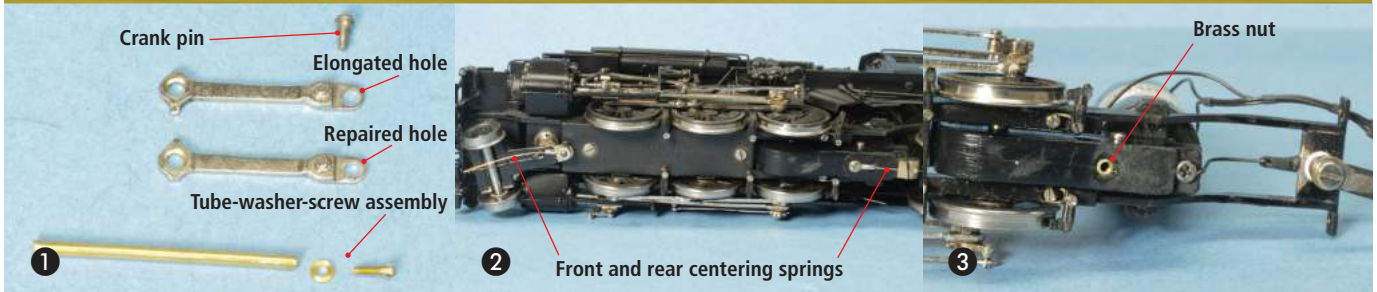
The rear truck also swiveled farther on tighter curves. This caused the inside

rim of the left wheel to touch the spring wire post, creating a short.

I fixed this problem by rotating the post forward and up 90 degrees. I also created a new spring wire that arched up high enough to clear the truck ②.

In addition, the pointed end of the original drawbar, a NWSL slip-on design, impinged against the tender's first axle and front wheel. I replaced it with a drawbar that has a shorter, rounded end.

TO THE TEST TRACK



I re-assembled the engine and tested it in my yard. Though the curvature issues were resolved, the engine didn't run smoothly. While examining the model, I noticed the front set of drivers were significantly out of quarter. The hidden problem, though, was still to be found: The front and rear siderods on both sides had elongated holes. This allowed the siderods to misalign and bind the engine.

To fix the problem, I put a brass 00-90 washer onto a screw, inserted it into a threaded brass tube, and chucked it into a drill press. Filing gently, I reduced the outside diameter of the washer.

Then, leaving the washer still assembled, I filed the washer so it would fit snugly into the elongated hole in the siderod. I used silver solder to fix it in place, then filed and reamed the hole

until it was centered and large enough to accept the crank pin ①. The holes in the siderod have to be, center-to-center, the same distance apart as the axles. It took a bit of calculation to determine the exact distance.

The reassembled engine ran smoothly and drew less current than before. So, I tried it on the layout again. This time, the front and rear truck derailed on switches, particularly my double-slip switches. This led me back to the drawing board once again to search for a solution.

I'm not a fan of centering springs, but the Milwaukee Road 2-6-2 Prairie steam locomotive seemed to need them. I added some lead weight to the front truck. I then soldered a piece of .010" phosphor bronze wire to a thin solder lug and added it onto the truck mounting post. The truck already had a

tiny loop that could capture the far end of the wire, leaving it free to move as needed on tight-radius curves.

For the rear truck, I drilled a .014" hole in the tongue, soldered in an eye-bolt, and made another centering spring. The front and rear centering springs can be seen in ②.

After all the assembly and disassembly, the 1.7mm pivot screw for the rear truck, which secured into the plastic gearbox, stripped the threads and the plastic would no longer hold it. I tried a few things, but ended up re-threading an 00-80 brass nut to accept the 1.7mm screw. I used the heat of a soldering gun to embed the nut into the plastic gearbox ③, and further secured it with cyanoacrylate adhesive (CA).

The springs not only center the front and rear trucks, but they help hold them down as well.

BACK IN BUSINESS

Even after all of these fixes, the Prairie still didn't run as smoothly as I wanted. I re-quartered the engine three times. After running for a while, the binds returned and got worse with continued use. Somehow, the drivers were slipping out of quarter.

I dismantled the entire engine and found the drivers were so loose on the axles that I could turn them by hand. On Gary Schrader's advice, I removed all six drivers from their axles. Then I cleaned the parts with acetone and re-assembled them using the NWSL Quarterer. It took considerably more force to re-assemble the drivers than it took to remove them. Finally, I applied CA to the axle hubs, inside and out, being careful to avoid the bearings. This time they stayed.

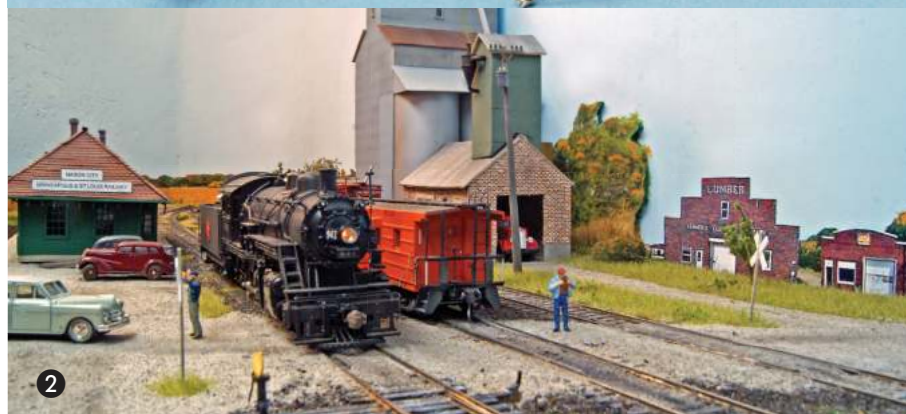
Another problem then cropped up. Part of the valve gear, the combination lever hanger, kept bumping against the crosshead. For some reason, these pieces were made in a U shape, but hanging upside down without a top, they didn't stay in place on their hanger. Instead, they dropped down and got in the way of the motion of the crosshead. So, I removed each one and soldered a piece of brass strip across the top ①.

After looking at many photos of the prototype during this project I realized that, unlike every other steam engine I own or that I've worked on, this class

Valve gear with top soldered in place

①

Valve gear with top soldered in place



had the eccentric crank trailing the axle instead of leading it. That means, looking at the engineer's side driver with the counterweight at top center, that the eccentric crank is pointing to the 11 o'clock position. On the fireman's side, with the counterweight at top center, the crank points to the 1 o'clock

position. I don't think that would make any difference on a model, but it's an important feature. I had to re-position the eccentric crank on both sides.

I then shipped the engine back to Clark. He took a photo of the 2-6-2 earning its keep on his Minneapolis & St. Louis Story City Branch ②.

Materials list

Archer Fine Transfers

88071 S scale 7/8" railcar rivets

Assorted brass

.010", .015", and .020" diameter rod
.005", .015", and .025" strip
.125" tubing

Bowser

691-1291 double sugar cube speaker

Detail Associates

2206 eyebolts

Evan Designs

E8540 pico light-emitting diode

Evergreen Scale Models styrene

9009 .005" sheet

Kadee

58 scale head couplers (2)

Microscale decals

87-63 Union Pacific steam locomotives

Miniatronics

18-C03-10 1.5V, 30ma 1.2mm bulb

NorthWest Short Line

1.7mm and 2mm screws
Brass 00-90 washers (2)
Brass 00-80 nut (1)
44-4 The Quarterer

Precision Scale Co. Inc.

GH-48251 brass safety tread decking

Sagami

1630 motor

SoundTraxx

810140 CurrentKeeper
884007 Tsunami2 decoder

Streamlined Backshop

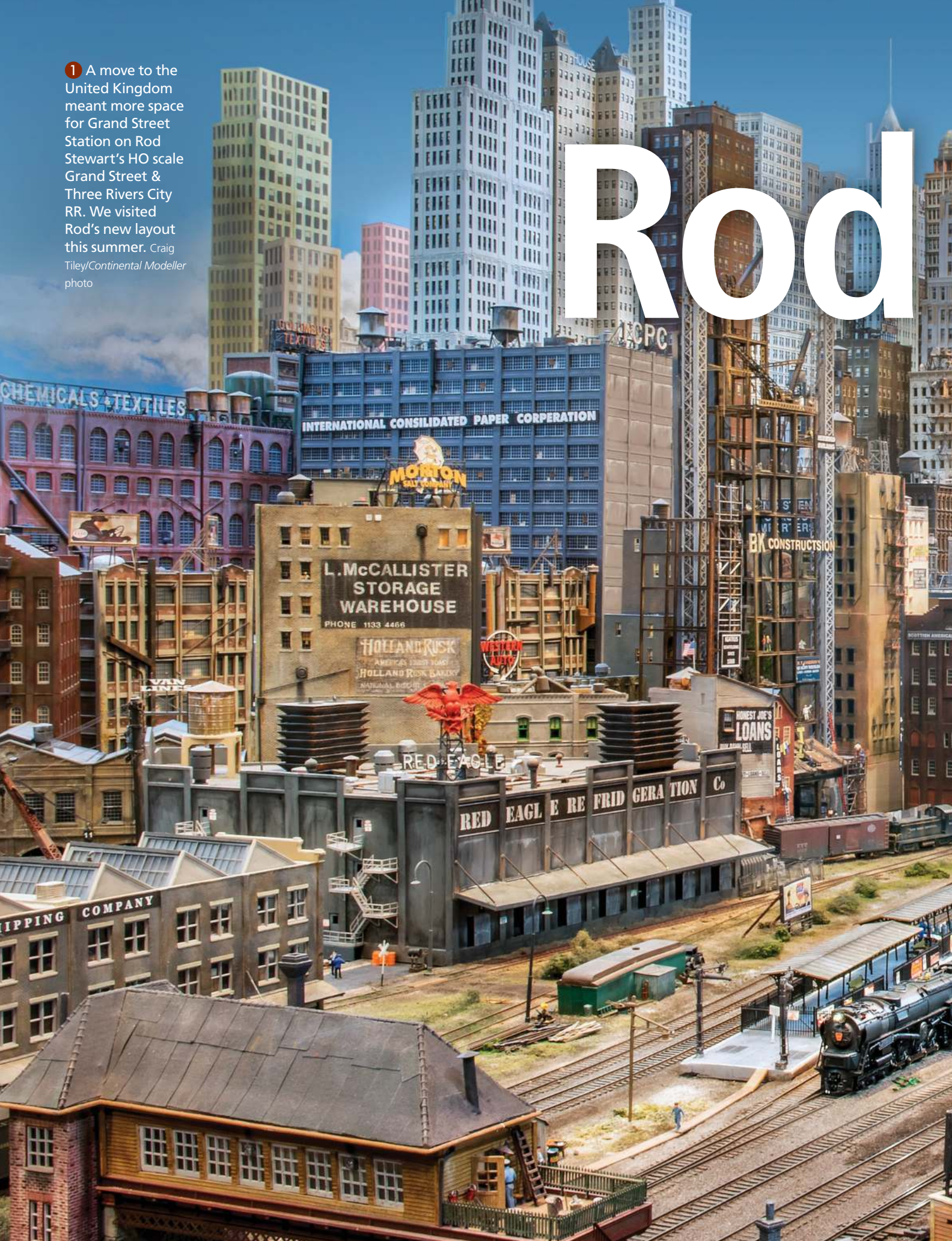
2018 2-56 ring terminal (2)

Miscellaneous

.010" and .020" phosphor bronze wire
3/64" heat-shrink tubing
470Ω resistor

1 A move to the United Kingdom meant more space for Grand Street Station on Rod Stewart's HO scale Grand Street & Three Rivers City RR. We visited Rod's new layout this summer. Craig Tiley/Continental Modeller photo

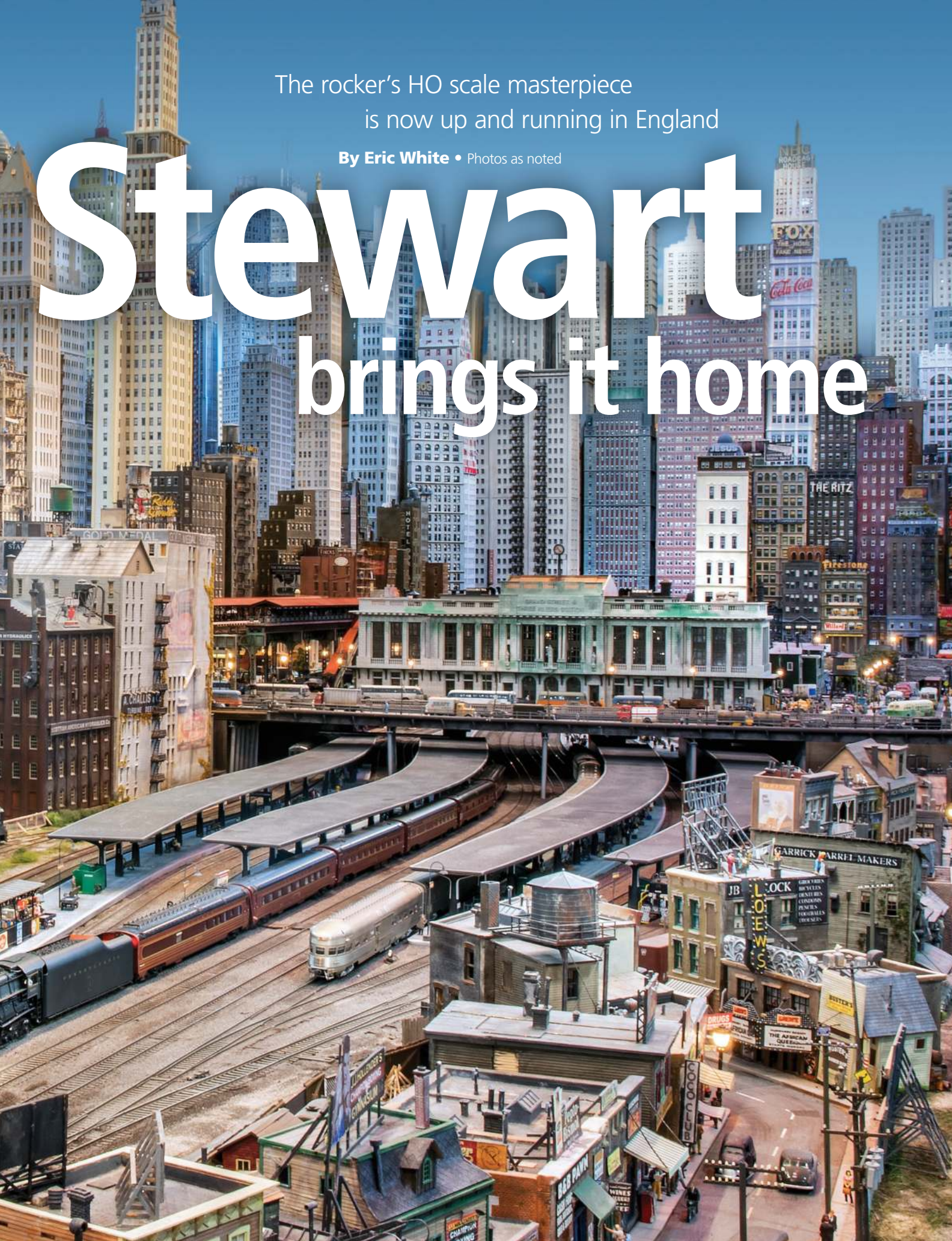
Rod



The rocker's HO scale masterpiece
is now up and running in England

By Eric White • Photos as noted

Stewart brings it home





② The expanded space made room for a larger Grand Street Station with platforms to handle eight passenger trains at once, along with three tracks for through trains, and a new EL line from ITLA Scale Models. Steve Crise photo

③ Rod has been adding to his harbor scene as well. Steve Crise photo



Most model railroad visits begin in a basement. This one began in a pub. Sir Rod Stewart, CBE, had brought his two teenage sons, his tour manager, and other family members to the

local pub to watch Scotland play Switzerland in the European Championship Group round. Rod and his sons are keen football (soccer in America) fans. An early goal for Scotland had the lads in high spirits, but Sir Rod was philosophical. "You can see

Three Rivers City

Power plant

Coal tower

Diesel shop

Sanding tracks

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4 “I went a bit mad on cranes for a bit,” said Rod. Many of the new structures on the layout are modeled under construction.

Andrew Burnham/
Continental Modeller
photo

Famous influences

I was heavily influenced by George Sellios, so much so that one of the first buildings I made was a copy of George’s overhead signal cabin.

I’m already starting work on expanding the layout, and I’m going to dedicate it to my mentor George and name that section after his masterpiece and copy some of his buildings in tribute.
— Rod Stewart



which is the better team,” he said quietly. An answering goal from the Swiss quieted spirits a bit, but Rod’s older son was confident: “Dad! Dad! Dad!, if we can hold on for a draw, then beat Hungary on Sunday, we could advance!”

What’s clearly advancing is Rod’s model railroad. The layout he had built in his Los Angeles home, the Grand Street & Three Rivers City, has been moved to the UK and is coming alive again. Rod invited us to come over and see what he’s been up to.

A working modeler

When photographer Steve Crise and I arrived at Rod’s estate near London, we parked outside the building that houses Rod’s workshop. A sheet of



plywood stood on sawhorses next to the door with several cans of spray paint. “Here’s where I do my painting,” he said, as he showed us in the door. Inside was a large room with worktables and tools, plus the usual scratchbuilding supplies of stripwood and plastic as well as bits of heavier material such as plywood and medium density fiberboard (MDF). In an adjacent room were more worktables, including the core of a new skyscraper Rod was working on. The core was made of high-quality five-ply plywood. Near the worktable, a heavy bolt was suspended from a beam in the ceiling. “Plumb bob,” Rod said. “I hate when the buildings aren’t straight. It ruins the look.”

After a walk across the lawn past his home and beautiful gardens, we arrived at the layout. While



⑤ Family is important to Rod. The Lancaster, built by ITLA, is named for Rod’s wife, Penny Lancaster. A sign on the “Jesus Saves” building references Rod’s nephew and house manager, Warren Cady.

Steve Crise photo



6 “It’s all about the plumb line,” says Rod. He hates when the buildings aren’t standing straight.

Craig Tiley/Continental
Modeller photo

Rod is wealthier than the average model railroader (a 50-year career as a rock star will do that for you), his is in most respects a layout room like most any other. There are boxes with projects and materials stored on work surfaces — yes, even a stack of Athearn “blue box” kits — as well as buildings from earlier iterations of the layout. Under the layout’s staging yard are the usual boxes of models either waiting to join the layout, or removed for repair. Rod is, after all, a working modeler.

“I’ve never seen anyone as prolific as Sir Rod,” said James Hudson of DCC Train Automation. Pointing to a veritable wall of buildings, he said “That wasn’t here last week.”

Inspiration can come from most anywhere.

“I make it up as I go along,” Rod said. “There are a lot of different things that influence me. I’m always looking for ideas, especially when I’m in New York and Chicago.



“When I started building (the Grand Street & Three Rivers) in ’92-’93, I wanted depth. I don’t care for buildings that are up against the backdrop.”

Musician and friend Sam Tanner’s backdrop painting behind the city scenes is designed to mask the edges of shadows cast by the layout lighting, which offers a variety of moods using light-emitting diode (LED) spotlights.

“I’ve experimented with all sorts of kits, and I’ll scratchbuild a bit here and there. It’s interesting how colors of buildings change — how they look in the morning sun, compared to an afternoon, or when it’s cloudy. However, I’m a bit colorblind. I painted a building pink that I thought was gray.”

A move, and expansion

While Rod said at the end of his last story in the June 2017 issue that the layout was essentially



finished, the move to the UK brought new opportunities. “The station is now twice as big as used to be.”

In fact, the layout itself has grown. While the outline is very similar in England to what it was in California, the new space is wider than it was in Los Angeles. There’s now a 7-foot-wide aisle down the center of the layout, making it a very comfortable space to enjoy Rod’s city and industrial scenes.

Mike Cartabiano, owner of Durango DCC (durangodcc.com), has been working with Rod since 1994, and when Rod decided he would move the layout from LA to England, Mike built new benchwork in LA that was shipped over to England.

The new benchwork is an open grid of 2 x 4s with a high-quality plywood surface under the city scene. Built in 2 x 8 and 4 x 8-foot sections, it features all new Walthers code 83 track and handbuilt No. 8 turnouts. We’ll have more about the move in next month’s issue of *Model Railroader*.

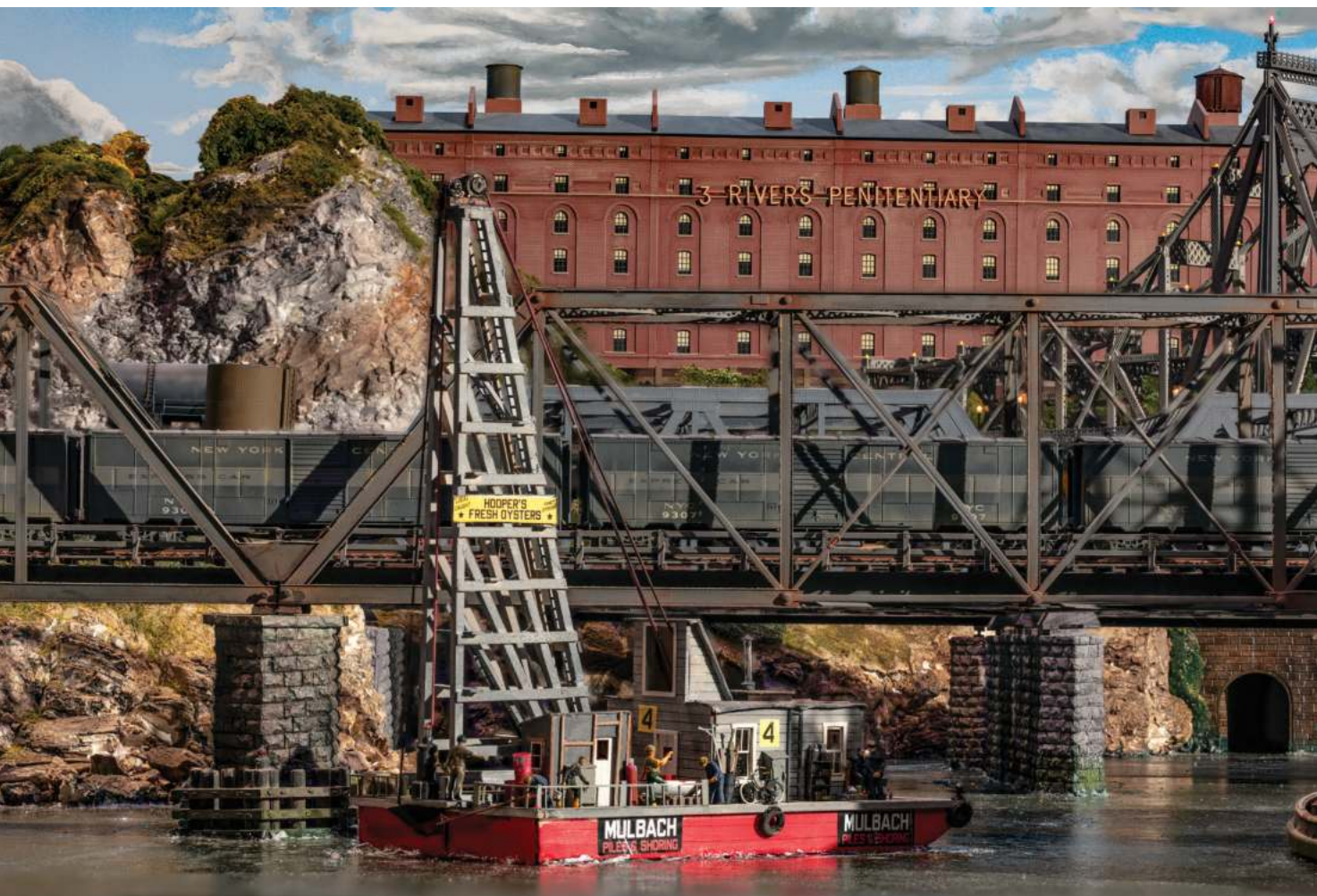
Rod likes to run long freight and passenger trains. To improve reliability, Rod commissioned James Hudson of DCC Train Automation (dcctrainautomation.co.uk) to rewire the layout for computer control. James and his associate, Geoff Hammond, were busy installing a Fleischman Z21 Digital Command Control system that will use detection to allow one person to run eight trains at once on the four-track main line without interfering with one another. The newly installed EI line and the line across the viaduct are also automated, among other lines.

New construction

Before Steve and I arrived to visit, there had been a flurry of activity to get the layout ready for us.

“Our man Sam started painting the skyscrapers about a week ago,” Rod said. Sam had painted the sky background about a year prior.

7 The brick viaduct was constructed while Rod was on a recent tour. Precision is the key to these projects, and the model slid right into the space allotted for it. Andrew Burnham/
Continental Modeller
photo



8 This barge is a recent addition to the Grand Street & Three Rivers RR.

Steve Crise photo

The projects aren't just being completed in the layout room or Rod's workshop. Rod is still traveling with his modeling case. It was sitting on the floor of his workshop, ready to go with him on the next tour. It's the first thing that goes on the plane before a trip. A recent addition to the layout is a brick arched viaduct about 4 feet long. The model was built while Rod was on tour, then dropped right into place when he had it finished. In order to have the model travel, it was built in two pieces that were joined when Rod returned to the layout in England.

The section between Celtic Steel and Horseshoe Curve has been updated as well. A square area that had accommodated the old layout's air conditioning system has been filled with a new mountain and quarry scene. New track was laid in the area as well, making a separate dogbone circuit that crosses Rod's new brick viaduct. Another circuit circles above this track and includes a spur into the quarry. Other new track includes the new Elevated (El) structure that runs from Grand Street Station and back into the city proper, crossing Grand Street in the background. All of the new track is automated.

The layout is constantly evolving. New buildings come in to replace those built earlier in Rod's life. Like all of us, his skills improve, along with the standard of what he considers good enough to be on the layout.

"I'm going to start building behind the harbor. The buildings have been there awhile, and I'm going to replace them," he said.

In addition to Rod's work, the layout features contributions from ITLA Scale Models Inc. (ITLA, itlascalemodels.com) ("Nick, Renee, and the boys at ITLA are lovely," said Rod) as well as fellow musician and model railroader Jools Holland, whose model of a stone church stands at the end of a row of company houses. In the churchyard, a woman attends the grave of a fallen veteran of World War II.

Custom Model Railroads (cmrtrain.com) contributed a long highway truss bridge, featured in our story in the February 2014 issue of *Model Railroader*, as well as a steam generator plant. "Jeff and Gayle are lovely people," Rod said of owner Jeff Springer and his wife.

Paul Wells of Vernacular Miniatures was acting as project manager while Rod was away performing as part of his European summer tour. Paul has contributed modeling projects as well as landscaping. Rod found through experience that his partial color blindness rendered his scenery a bit too red.

More to come

When Rod originally planned to move back to England after living in the States, he wasn't planning to bring the trains along.

9 A train of war materiel sweeps into the Horse-shoe Curve section of Rod's layout with Three Rivers City and Celtic Steel in the background. Wide-open vistas are a hallmark of Rod's layout.

Craig Tiley/Continental
Modeller photo





10 The Ron Wood Banjo and Guitar Co. is a tribute to the Faces and Rolling Stones guitarist made from bits of ITLA and other kits. Ron has painted several portraits of Rod, so it's Rod's way of thanking him. Andrew Burnham/
Continental Modeller photo

11 The hustle and bustle of Three Rivers City is inspired by the time Rod has spent in hotels in Chicago and New York City. Andrew Burnham/*Continental Modeller* photo



"Penny (Lancaster, Rod's wife) said, 'You're going to miss your trains, bring them over,'" Rod said. "Now I'm up at half past 8 modeling. I turn on Sky News or CNN on the television in the my workshop. I like to keep abreast of world news, unless of course there's football on — it's marvelous," he said.

With the push to be ready for our visit, Rod had completed many of the projects he had on his list of things to do while on the road. "Now I have nothing to do in my hotel rooms. I've been to them so many

times. Paul and I will have to find an extension, and make it bigger.

"I'm very proud of (the layout). It's a divine, divine hobby. Jools and I speak of it. He's a bit cramped. He's got to do what I did — expand." **MR**

Rod also wanted to thank Ritchie Grover ("He does the woodwork"); Warren Cady, house manager; and Oliver Lancaster. All have been instrumental in bringing this project alive.



12 Rod's layout is designed to handle heavy traffic, perfect for a model railroad set in the mid- to late-1940s. Work by James Hudson, owner of DCC Train Automation, will simplify operation.

Steve Crise photo



A last look at the **MR&T**

Our 28 x 54-foot
HO scale staff layout
enjoyed a 35-year run

By Cody Grivno

Photos by the author

As we wrap up what has been a busy 90th anniversary year, we would be remiss if we didn't take a last look at the Milwaukee, Racine & Troy, our HO scale staff layout. By now, many of you are aware that our storied 28 x 54-foot layout was torn down in late July as *Model Railroader* and other Kalmbach Media properties relocated to new offices in suburban Milwaukee as part of the sale to Firecrown Media. Before the Myrt was dismantled, we took a final photo and video tour of the layout.

The version of the MR&T shown here celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2024. A veritable who's who of modelers laid the foundation for the layout's success — Dick Christianson, Art Curren, Mike Danneman, Bob Hayden, Jim Hediger, Gordy Odegard, and Andy Sperandio, among others. The model railroad served as the subject of dozens of magazine articles and the setting for many product review videos. And for those who visited our offices, it was the highlight of virtually every tour.



① Amtrak No. 813, a General Electric P40DC, leads the westbound *Empire Builder* past an intermodal train at Lake Beulah, Wis. The scene takes place on the HO scale Milwaukee, Racine & Troy, *Model Railroader* magazine's staff layout. The 28 x 54-foot model railroad was torn down in July 2024.



② The Canadian National (formerly Wisconsin Central) interchanged with the MR&T at Mukwonago. A cat perched on the 55-gallon drum has a front row seat as CN GP40-2LW No. 9615 rumbles past the abandoned GO Tower with a cut of cars for the Myrt. Cody Grivno wrote about modeling the tower in the June 2014 MR.

A clean slate

The first version of the MR&T was built at Kalmbach Publishing Co.'s famed offices at 1027 North 7th Street in Milwaukee between 1975 and 1989. The 29 x 45-foot layout was on the third floor of the building, where the company's printing presses were previously located. Though the model railroad enjoyed a successful run, the space wasn't necessarily ideal. The room lacked climate control; the layout had to be built around support columns; and sun passing through the large windows caused the scenery to fade.

In 1989 Kalmbach Publishing moved to Waukesha, a western suburb of Milwaukee. The new offices had a dedicated space better suited for a layout. There were no columns or exterior windows to

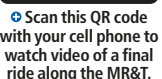
contend with; the room was well lit and featured air conditioning, a drop ceiling, and a tile floor; and there was a large sink. Andy Sperandeo designed the new MR&T, drawing on concepts from the original model railroad and making operational improvements.

"I would say he was the only one that really wanted to do it," said Jim Kelly, former MR managing editor. "It was a big job. But track planning was something that he was really into and really loved. Anybody else would have had a hard time even trying to offer some ideas for a design. It was Andy's plan from the get-go."

Members of the MR staff and other Kalmbach employees helped with the layout during lunch brakes and after-hours work sessions. Throughout the first half of the 1990s the primary focus



③ The newest section of the MR&T was Jones Island, based on the prototype location in Milwaukee. In this scene, MR&T Electro-Motive Division MP15AC No. 1505 — an ex-Milwaukee Road unit — spots a boxcar at Port of Milwaukee General Cargo Terminal No. 2. Continental Grain, an export elevator, is partially visible in the background.



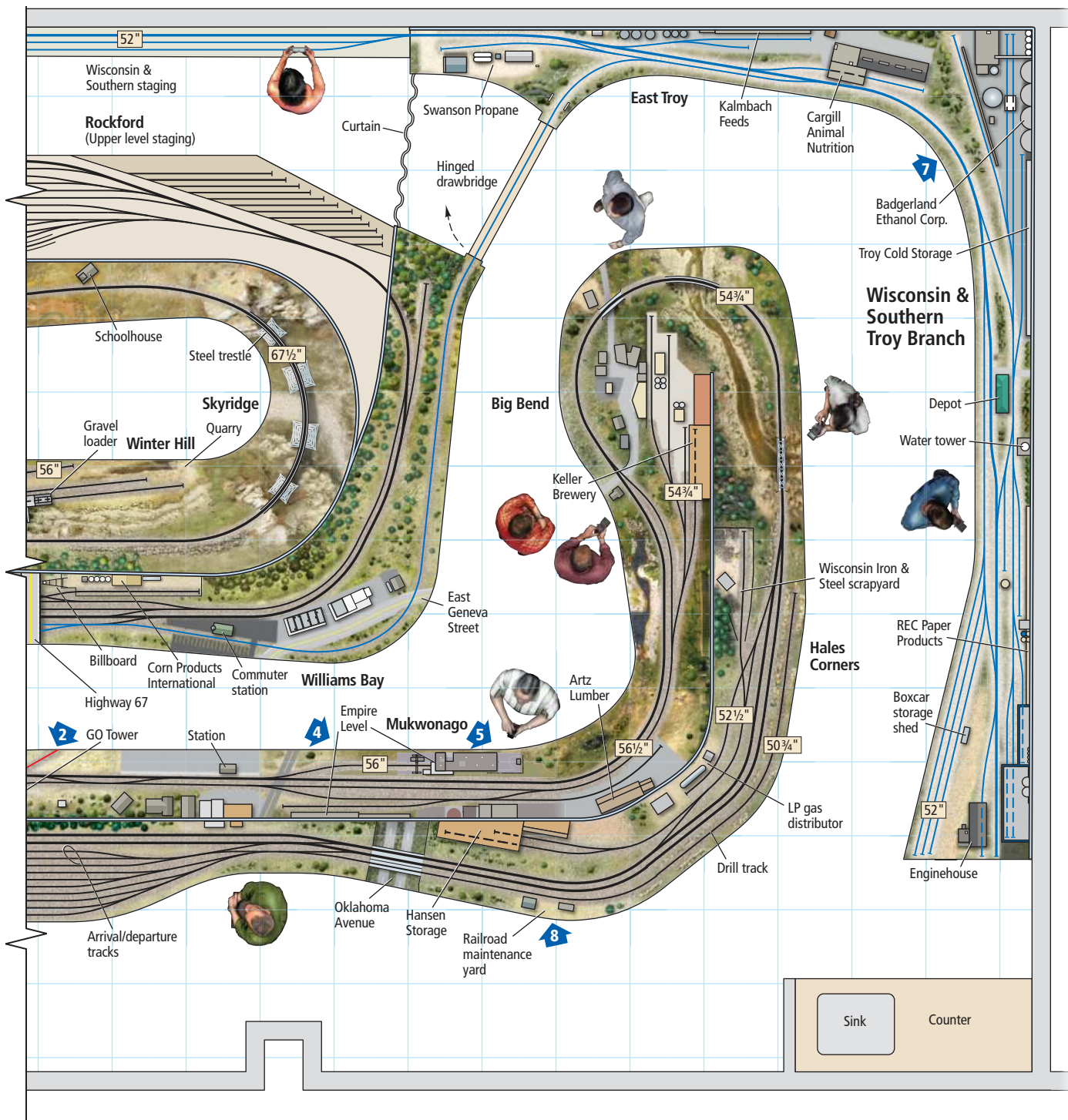
HO scale (1:87.1)
Room size: 28'-3" x 54'-9"
Scale of plan: $\frac{1}{4}" = 1'-0"$, 24" grid
Illustration by Rick Johnson

+ Find more plans online in the Trains.com Track Plan Database.



"I started with MR in 1991, and when I first got here, the MR&T was in pretty good shape," said Jeff Wilson, author and former MR associate editor. "The benchmark was all in place, the track was all laid, and the bridges were installed, but the scenery was kind of hit and miss."

48 [Trains.com](#)



The layout at a glance

Name: Milwaukee, Racine & Troy

Scale: HO (1:87.1)

Size: 28'-3" x 54'-9"

Prototype: freelanced bridge line

Locale: southeastern Wisconsin

Era: 1980s and 1990s

Style: walk-in

Mainline run: approximately 200 feet

Minimum radius: 36"

Minimum turnout: No. 6 (main), No. 4 (spurs)

Maximum grade: 3% eastbound, 1.5% westbound (5.5% on ramp)

Benchwork: 1 x 4 open grid

Height: 49 3/4" to 67 1/2"

Roadbed: cork on 3/4" plywood

Track: code 83 flextrack

Scenery: plaster over cardboard webbing

and Sculptamold over extruded-foam insulation board

Backdrop: painted tempered hardboard, photos at Milwaukee Harbor and Port Marquette Yard

Control: CVP and NCE Digital Command Control (MR&T), Model Rectifier Corp. DCC (Wisconsin & Southern)



5 The Milwaukee, Racine & Troy was a mix of old and new. Artz Lumber Co. was located at Mukwonago, Wis., on the original layout. The structure, another Art Curren project, called the same location home on the new MR&T.



6 Downtown Milwaukee was a section of the layout the MR staff had hoped to update. Among the plans were replacing Milwaukee Union Station with the new Milwaukee Intermodal Terminal and adding a photo backdrops of the city skyline.

held in nearby Madison, Wis., in 1997, an emphasis was placed on getting a base layer of scenery on as much of the layout as possible.

After the convention, work on the MR&T slowed. Increased work responsibilities, staff changes, home layouts, and family commitments put the Myrt on the back burner from the late 1990s to the early 2000s.

“When I first got here 20-plus years ago, there was a lot more work than progress going on,” said David Popp, who joined the MR staff in November 2001 and currently serves as director of Trains.com. “As a matter of fact, the Troy & Northern was pretty much unfinished plywood. It had been brought

from the building in downtown Milwaukee and just installed here. The rest of the railroad was built next to it.”

Rebooting the Myrt

Kalmbach was in a period of growth in the early 2000s, and the future of the Myrt was uncertain. “We had people in the company starting to look at the space and say, ‘Well gee, that’s an awful lot of space we can use [for other things],” said Terry Thompson, former MR editor. “Dick Christianson and I were together at MR at the time, and we felt like we really needed to preserve the MR&T for the future, not necessarily knowing exactly what we would do with it.”

The idea Thompson and Christianson later came up with was Scenery Step by Step, a photo-driven column that made its debut in the February 2006 issue. The Scenery part of the column’s name was later dropped so a broader range of projects could be covered, such as lighting, structures, and track work.

“It was nice to suddenly see all kinds of new areas popping up on the layout and articles being produced from it, which I wish we’d done a little bit earlier,” Wilson said. “I think we just lost sight of that in the business of the 1990s, but it was nice to see it come along and get developed to where it is right now.”

Projects from the monthly column completed 4- to 6-foot sections of the model railroad. To finish larger areas, the MR&T was used as the basis for projects layouts. The first was converting the Troy & Northern to the Wisconsin & Southern (WSOR) in 2008.

“Basically we took the bare plywood, removed the few pieces of track and other things that were on it, and completely redid it as a functional version of the Wisconsin & Southern,” Popp said. “Athearn had come out with a whole bunch of Wisconsin & Southern models around that time, so we didn’t have to paint the equipment ourselves.”

The WSOR project layout was followed by Bay Junction in 2011 and Winter Hill in 2013. The last major project on the MR&T was rebuilding Kelly's Island as Jones Island, featured in the May 2023 issue. The projects resonated with Bryson Sleppy, MR's associate editor, who joined the staff two years ago.

"When I came to *Model Railroader* for my interview, David Popp took me around the building. One of the areas we visited was the MR&T. To see Williams Bay, which I read about as a child, was a dream come true."

A few of our favorite things

Though we all enjoyed the MR&T, there were specific scenes that had special meaning to some staff members. When I built the scrapyards at Hales Corners, I based the corrugated metal fence around the property on the fence that enclosed the automobile salvage yard my father and grandfather operated in northwestern Minnesota.

Former MR Senior Editor Dana Kawala's favorite project, the abandoned schoolhouse near Skyridge, came to be in an unlikely fashion. "I'd only been at the magazine for a few months and we had a snow day. I was living in my apartment in Milwaukee at the time, and my cable went out. I really had nothing else to do, so I went ahead and started building the Cottage Grove schoolhouse. After I built it, I decided to weather it and make it look abandoned."

Regrets? We had a few

At first blush, you might think the MR&T was a polished model railroad. However, not everything went right on the first try.

"The town of Big Bend was one example," Wilson said. "The initial town scene was a group of buildings that just didn't quite work. The scene started to look kind of tired. Finally, we decided, 'Let's pull it out and try something new.' And the new worked better than the old."

In addition to a few do overs, there were other projects that we'd hoped to complete. At the top of the list was getting the layout fully operational and hosting sessions again, much like staffers did in the 1980s.

"That never quite happened," said Eric White, MR's current editor. "But as I saw more things getting done, I realized we weren't that far away from getting the layout into a position where we could actually run some trains and have



7 The Wisconsin & Southern section of the layout marked the first time the MR&T was used for a project layout. Among the industries on the WSOR was Badgerland Ethanol Corp., built by longtime MR Senior Editor Jim Hediger.



8 The monthly Step by Step column breathed new life into the MR&T. Cody Grivno wrote about this maintenance-of-way yard for the March and April 2015 issues. The baggage car was published in March 2019.

operating sessions. I was busy working on that, along with [Trains.com Producer] Ben Lake, who helped me redo the upper level staging yard."

Along those lines, we also wanted to revise the Port Marquette Yard. As it was, the yard had become a gathering point for rolling stock to collect dust. We considered making the yard smaller, adding an intermodal terminal, and repairing (or replacing) the many turnouts that were in disrepair.

The final item on our punch list was downtown Milwaukee. We wanted to replace the scratchbuilt Amtrak station from the 1980s with a selectively compressed version of the contemporary Amtrak structure. We also envisioned adding a photo of the Milwaukee skyline to the backdrop and some low-relief, multi-story buildings that better captured the look of the Brew City.

Jim Kelly reflected on how much the Myrt had changed between his retirement in March 2002 and the summer of

2024. "It was raw compared to what it is now," Kelly said. "I'm just flabbergasted to see what it's become. It's one of the most beautiful layouts I've seen anywhere in the country."

Epilogue

After the final photo and video shoots were complete, members of the MR staff got to work salvaging structures, locomotives, and rolling stock from the model railroad.

Though most of the MR&T is gone, a 6-foot section featuring the feed mill and cow pasture at Lake Beulah was saved and donated to the National Model Railroad Association Museum. You can learn more about the mill and pasture projects in the August and Sept. 2010 issues of MR, respectively.

Almost half a year since its demolition, we look back on the MR&T with great fondness. Thanks for sharing the 35-year journey with us! **MR**



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20 YEARS OF RAPIDO TRAINS

Jason Shron reflects on founding a model railroad company

By Eric White • Photos as noted

At some point, many model railroaders wished they could have a company make items for their layout. Jason Shron has managed to make this work as a business for the past 20 years as founder and president of Rapido Trains Inc.

"I was living in England, a place called Birmingham. And I was doing a Ph.D. in history of art," said Jason in a recent interview with Senior

Editor Cody Grivno and me. "I really was miserable. I just wanted to be doing trains all day. So all my spare time, I'd been working on my models." Jason was building models of VIA Rail passenger cars that weren't available elsewhere.

"I built a layout in our living room in England; a very narrow shelf that was just a place to run my trains. And, you know, it would take me a month or two to do one coach, because modeling VIA



Jason Shron, founder and CEO of Rapido Trains Inc., put his doctorate in art history on hold while he developed these models, the company's first two products. "When I got my first \$10,000 check from a customer in late 2006... I sent a CN sleeper to my Ph.D. supervisor and said, 'This is my thesis, I officially retire from the Ph.D. program.'" Firecrown Media photo

TOP: Jason works on Guildwood Station on his HO scale VIA Rail Kingston Subdivision model railroad. Jason has turned his hobby into a successful business over the past 20 years. Sidura Ludwig photo

Rail in Canada, there's no off-the-shelf model."

Jason started with Rivarossi cars. "I would then have to shave off all the detail, shave off the underbody, scratchbuild battery boxes and whatever air conditioning equipment, all that stuff. I was casting my own Trane AC parts, et cetera, and that's what I loved doing. I didn't like the school I was doing. I love living in England. I love making trains.

"So, I started this as a part time thing while procrastinating on my Ph.D. And then it was in early 2004, my wife and I came to New Haven because I got a fellowship at Yale, and I sent out my resume to all the different art history departments across Canada, I got crickets in response.

"So I finally called a guy up and I said, 'OK, come on, you got my resume.'

"Oh, it's a great resume,' he tells me.

"That's good. So?"

"We have no money to hire anybody. You know, we hired the boomers in the late '70s, early '80s. Now everyone who's got their Ph.D. since about 1983 has been waiting for us to either retire or die."

"Right. So I turned to my wife and said, 'We've got to try and make the model train thing happen, because the art history thing's not happening. I don't even enjoy it.' So I spent the rest of my time, at Yale, actually, over at Stratford, Conn., at the Sikorsky Archives, studying the Turbo Train.

"So it was a very productive trip to Connecticut because Rapido brought out the Turbo Trains, our first powered model, in 2008. But I was already looking ahead to that."

Starting out

Jason started the company in 2004, developing the design for the company's first products, VIA Rail passenger cars, between 2004 and 2006. "I went to China. I found factories to work with."

Jason now has five factories building model trains in China for him. I asked him about making trains in North America, especially when COVID started causing production delays.

"The challenge is the cost of lunch. OK? So I live in Toronto, Canada. If I was

going to start a factory, it'd be somewhere near Toronto. And lunch is about 15, 20 bucks, right?

"So what are people paid an hour, minimum wage? Here it's like 16 and change, say 15 to 20 bucks. So if you think about it, it takes eight hours to put together a model train and you're spending 20 bucks an hour, you're spending 160 bucks just to put the thing together. That's not your overheads, your rent, your heat, your lights, your design, your tooling, your injection costs. That's just your assembly costs.

"So currently in China, lunch is about 3 bucks, right? So people are paid roughly \$3 an hour to do the same kind of work. But that \$3 an hour gives them the same quality of life that someone earning 20 bucks an hour here in Toronto will get."

When Jason started, his factories were all in the city of Dongguan.

"They're not big factories. There's a couple of very, very large factories in China that make stuff for almost everybody. We would rather work with a smaller factory where we're much more involved in

the whole process from start to finish. So that's what we did and, yeah, it's gone well, actually. Two of our factories have moved back to the respective hometowns of the guys we started them with.

"So everyone comes to southern China, to a city called Dongguan, which is where the big factories and Sanda Kan and Kader have always been. Sanda Kan's not there anymore, but now mainly Kader. But that that's where the model train industry is kind of born.

"So we initially started these factories in Dongguan, but then our guys we were working with, they said, 'well, I want to go home,' right? And that's Guangzhou province, which is, you know, 400, 500 miles away. So 'I'd rather go home' [they said], and so we were able to start the factories in their hometown. So we've got two factories in Guangzhou province."

Having the factories where the workers are from has paid dividends for Rapido Trains. Normally, the workers in the Dongguan factories come from remote provinces in China for work. However, the Chinese New Year is an important cultural holiday, and all work shuts down during that period, which lasts about a week. Workers go home to celebrate with their families, but when the holiday is over, up to 20% of



Guildwood Station takes shape on Jason's layout. Being able to produce models for his layout has been a big perk of owning a model railroad manufacturer. Jason Shron photo



employees don't return to their old jobs.

"The other find other jobs because they speak with their cousin. They go home, talk with their cousins. 'I got a great job in this city 2,000 miles away,' and they end up going there instead, right?"

So now the factories have to train a new group of people, and production gets delayed during this time in the big factories in Dongguan.

"But it means that after Chinese New Year, they all come back (to Guangzhou) right away and they're not waiting for people to show up a week, two weeks, three weeks, whatever.

"So it's much, much nicer working with local people. They come back and you can actually have a shipment leaving in March, which is very rare because Chinese New Year ends March 1st."

The Chinese holiday in March leads to a snowball effect as Chinese and North American holidays combine to create bigger problems.

"And this is something I've talked about with my staff. It's very frustrating that, the busiest time for us to get shipments is always August, right? We always get so many. And that's when all the hobby shops that closed down for vacation, people go playing golf and seeing family."

So just when all of the product is arriving from

China, the hobby shops in North America are using the lull at the end of the summer to take their holidays, with no one available to receive the product shipments.

What's in a name?

I asked Jason how he came up with the Rapido Trains name, and whether after 20 years there was still any confusion with the old Arnold Rapido brand of N scale model trains.

"So, it's contrary to popular belief. It's not just an N scale brand of Arnold from the '60s. Rapido was the name introduced by Canadian National in 1965 for its fast train services. At the time, they were the fastest schedule passenger trains in North America.

"It would do 335 miles in under five hours and, so that was 1965. And that name kept on when VIA Rail took over operations in '78, they kept the name, they kept it until about 1980, '86 or '87 or so. And then they just stopped using the name Rapido for passenger trains.

"Growing up in Toronto, I was born in Montreal, going back and forth all the time, we were off and on the Rapido, we were on the Turbo or the

Rapido, the Turbo being my absolute favorite train.

"And so when it came to naming the company, I said, well, I want to call it Rapido Trains. I couldn't call it Turbo Trains because that's just one type of train. But Rapido is a more of a broader idea for it. It's Spanish, it's French and English, everything. So I did some searching and trademarks or discovered that I knew about Arnold Rapido and discovered that their trademark had expired in 1982.

"This was now 2004, '03, whatever it was, I said, OK, Rapido Trains. So I contacted VIA, and I had a very good relationship with them, and I said, 'Do you have any plans to use this name again? Because if so, I'll back up.' They said no. So I registered Rapido Trains, and it's been that way now for 20 years."

During the interview, Jason was in his layout room. [See the June 2022 *Model Railroader*. — Ed.] Every so often, he'd stop to show us something he was working

on or something that related to what we were talking about at the time. His project the day of the interview was building the framework for a chain link fence for one of his layout's passenger stations.

The United Aircraft Turbo Train was Jason's pet project. He was able to spend hours at the Sikorsky archives in Connecticut while on an art history fellowship. It ended up paying off for his new company. Firecrown Media photo

"I've been using brass wire and I've got a laser engraver, so I just engraved a template... You put the wire into the grooves and just solder away. It's wonderful. So, yeah, I'm supposed to be working today, but I haven't been working on the model railroad in a while, so I decided to play hooky."

What's up next?

Jason certainly hasn't been playing hooky from work too much. The company that started with a couple of VIA Rail passenger cars is now making models of a wide variety of North American railroad models, and even has an English division, Rapido Trains Ltd.

"So we started this about five years ago and really got up and running in 2022. I mean, they're not as big as [the] North American company, but they're growing and they're growing at a faster rate.

"So I could see in five years' time, the two companies both being around the same size, which is amazing, like just wonderful." MR



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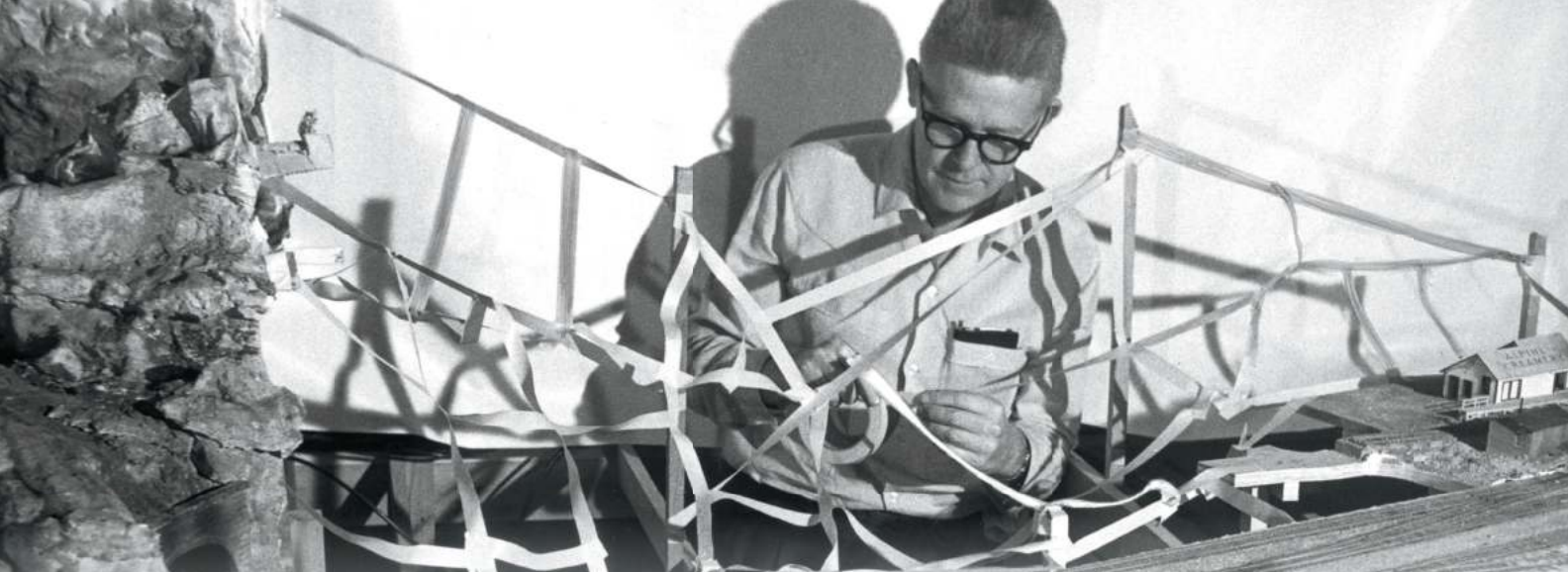
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HALL OF FAME

This month, we name the inaugural class to the Model Railroader Hall of Fame

WINNERS

By Eric White • Firecrown Media photos

As we wrap up our 90th anniversary year, it's time to unveil the names of the people who will be inaugurated into the Model Railroader Hall of Fame. While this has been a project of *Model Railroader* magazine, our hope is that this will be picked up by the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) and contributed to by modelers and publications in North America and abroad.

We opened up voting to our readers through surveys on Trains.com, and we were thrilled to get the input of thousands of people, who also sent us their nominations for potential members, either through the website or by sending us e-mails.

Here are the winners, in alphabetical order.

John Allen

John is the reason this all started. I was giving a tour of the old MR offices and presented the John Allen steam locomotive that sat in Andy Sperandio's office for years. The two middle-aged guys were unmoved. I mentioned the Gorre & Dephited, their faces were blank. I knew right then that we had to do something so that the people who

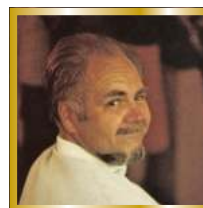
helped develop the hobby weren't forgotten. John laid out the template that others followed. Weathering, creating a story behind your model railroad, operations, photography, scenery, all of it came together in John's modest basement.

Irv Athearn

If John showed us how to do it, Irv Athearn gave us the means to accomplish it. The famous "blue box" line of kits were the standard rolling stock and locomotives for a generation of devoted model railroaders. While the models weren't perfect (some freight cars had the molded-on underbody brake appliances upside down), they looked the part and were great fodder for making more accurate models if you so desired. They ran reliably, and could be upgraded with Kadee couplers and other touches.

Hal Carstens

While he didn't found *Railroad Model Craftsman*, Hal was synonymous with the magazine. During his tenure, RMC was often seen as the magazine of Eastern modelers, perhaps due to the headquarters location in northwestern New Jersey. We also have Hal to thank for bringing us Tony Koester, as well as



John Allen



Irv Athearn



Hal Carstens



Frank Ellison

revealing Allen McClelland to the world. The hobby would've been a poorer place without Carstens Publications and RMC.

Frank Ellison

Frank wrote the book on model railroad operations. This New Orleans area modeler presented his ideas in a series of magazine articles and a book, "The Art of Model Railroading" and *Frank Ellison on Model Railroading*, respectively. Frank developed the idea of running a railroad model, not just running trains, following rules and procedures similar



Gilbert Freitag



Malcolm Furlow



Jim Hediger



Al Kalmbach

to those that full-sized railroads used, so that he was modeling railroading. This in an era when it was considered an accomplishment just to get a locomotive to run around a loop of track.

Gilbert Freitag

Gil was known as a premiere ambassador for the hobby. His Stoney Creek & Western was the site of thousands of people's first view of a completed model railroad. He opened his home to visitors any time there was an NMRA convention in his area of Texas, and surely inspired many to take up a hobby they may not have even known existed.

Malcolm Furlow

When Malcolm passed away a few years ago, the response was instant and strong. If that's not an indication of fame, I don't know what is. And Malcolm earned that fame with his outstanding narrow gauge modeling that showed his strong artistic background. Malcolm came on the scene in the early 1980s, and just about as quickly as he appeared, he was gone, back to the Southwest to paint, as he had been trained to do. But he wasn't finished. A second act with wildly imaginative G scale trains appeared in the 1990s, bringing in a new batch of adherents before he disappeared again.

Jim Hediger

Jim was an institution at *Model Railroader*. He worked with Linn Westcott and Al Kalmbach, he built one of the first double-deck model railroads, he traveled around the country and even to the Caribbean to document model railroads for MR, and he did it all with

graceful good humor. Jim served 42 years on the MR staff, working for Kalmbach Publishing/Media for almost half of its existence. We still use his notes on pulling power of locomotives, and we still quote favorite words and phrases such as onward! and krausening, a word from German beer brewing tradition that Jim used to mean to allow something to reach a state of readiness.

Al Kalmbach

Without Al, there would be no *Model Railroader*. Without *Model Railroader*, you wouldn't be reading this article right now. What started as a sideline in the middle of the Great Depression became the marquee product of a 90-year-old company. The magazine's value to the hobby is immense, if we do say so ourselves. Innovative ideas, creative thinkers, beautiful modeling have all found a place in these pages, and without Al starting the business and developing it into something more than a hobby itself, it helped cement model railroading into an established hobby that entertains hundreds of thousands around the world, even if they've never read the magazine.

Allen McClelland

Allen gave us many concepts, but the one that probably gets quoted more often than others is "good enough modeling." Now this didn't mean to do things shoddily. If you've ever seen Allen's modeling in person, or even in the pages of this or other magazines, Allen didn't do things to a low standard. But everything on his layout was built to an equivalent standard. One part of the scene didn't outshine another, and his term meant to find a balance to where the modeling could be brought to a level that everything in the scene was good enough to carry the illusion that this was a depiction of real life.

Of course, similar to John Allen (what is it about Allens?), Mr. McClelland was an innovator who brought the practice of model railroading to a higher level. Allen was an operator, and he knew just by doing it that the best way to run a layout was to follow a train as it moved around the model railroad. To do so, he had to get creative and make the means to fulfill his ideas.

Andy Sperandeo

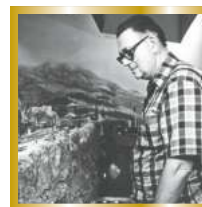
Andy was an operations connoisseur. When he was in the Army, he met and



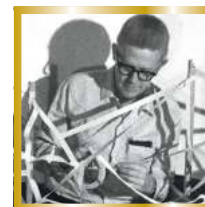
Allen McClelland



Andy Sperandeo



Whit Towers



Linn Westcott

operated on John Allen's Gorre & Dephited, where he met many of the West Coast modelers who were either already known to *Model Railroader* readers, or who would soon be. Once he joined the staff of MR in the 1970s, he began extolling the joys of operating model railroads, and could be found at sessions around the country. And Andy shared his stories for years in his column "The Operators." Oh yeah, he was also editor and executive editor of the magazine you're reading.

Whit Towers

Another ambassador of the hobby, Whit helped spread the word of model railroading through more than 100 articles in the hobby press, as well as being the editor of the NMRA Bulletin. His Alturas & Lone Pine HO scale layout was the dream of many magazine readers when it first came onto the scene in the 1950s, and Whit continued to contribute articles to the hobby into the 1980s.

Linn Westcott

Linn was the editor, draftsman, helper, everything for *Model Railroader* almost from its founding issue until he retired with the September 1977 issue. While working for Al Kalmbach, Linn created such techniques as hardshell scenery, zip texturing, and L-girder benchwork.

An inveterate tinkerer, he also worked on electronic circuits, using transistors to create direct-current throttles that more accurately mimicked what full-sized locomotives do.

After 25 years at the magazine, he was named editor in chief of *Model Railroader*, a position he held for the last 18 years of his 43-year career at MR.

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 Jan 11-12 Oaks, PA - Greater Philadelphia Expo
 Jan 11-12 Ridgefield, WA - Clark County Fair
 Jan 18-19 Richmond, VA - Richmond Raceway
 Jan 18-19 Novi, MI - Suburban Collection Showplace
 Jan 18-19 Puyallup, WA - Washington State Fair
 Jan 25-26 St. Charles, MO - Convention Center

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 NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024



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Train order lite

Permit me confessions. I ignored Rio Grande's fabled narrow-gauge operations in Colorado for most of five decades, sniffing that all the equipment looked alike. Only when a friend's appeal had me join a 2008 photo charter covering Durango & Silverton and Cumbres & Toltec Scenic did I break through my myopia. My goodness, why did I wait so long? Similarly, I ignored the Illinois Railway Museum because I shrugged off its traction roots. A recent visit proves I'm my own worst enemy. Borrowing words Harry Caray made famous at Wrigley Field, HOLY COW!

Union, Ill., is northwest of Chicago, less than an hour's drive from O'Hare International Airport. There, IRM's main campus occupies a 65-acre site that holds six display barns and two garages that are open to the public. An active streetcar loop connects them: visitors can jump on and off period equipment to move around the site. Four barns house interurban, rapid transit, and streetcars; two others, passenger cars and locomotives. The garages exhibit motor and trolley buses. The museum's equipment collection now numbers more than 500 pieces, much of it kept under roof in storage barns not yet open to the public for viewing.

IRM relocated several historic structures to its campus, including Chicago & North Western's Marengo (Ill.) station, now East Union Depot, and Milwaukee Road's Spaulding (Ill.) Tower. Fully restored, operating highlights include Burlington's *Nebraska Zephyr*, a North Western bi-level commuter train, North Shore Line high-speed interurban coaches, vintage



Classics by Baldwin and Buick, a 1918 Decapod and a 1958 Special, vie for attention at the Illinois Railway Museum grade crossing with Olson Road on September 19, 2021. Dave Zeman photo

Chicago "L" cars and so much more. Other steam, diesel and traction equipment also sees operation. Any enthusiast would marvel at the extent of the collection and its curation.

The museum built its 5-mile electrified main line on part of abandoned Elgin & Belvidere interurban right-of-way between Elgin and Rockford, Ill., acquired in 1963. It's single track with two passing sidings, protected by automatic block signals. The main sees daily operation: special event weekends can have as many as five trains. But wait a minute: five trains, all extras, spaced over 5 miles? This keeps the dispatcher's office in Spaulding Tower hopping.

The day of my visit this past August saw hundreds of classic cars and trucks crowding the grounds with visitors during IRM's popular Vintage Transportation Extravaganza. Four trains served riders on the main line while three cars circled the street car loop. Superintendent Harold Krewer described the action on the main.

"Our coach train behind the 1630 departed every hour on the hour. This placed three other trains on the line: one nearing each end and one ready for boarding at the depot. Trains exchanged places every 15 minutes, moving from one to the next in rotation. But feeding trains into the pattern to get things rolling feels like the plate spinning act on *The Ed Sullivan Show*."

IRM Rule 12.7 includes "Train Orders may be issued to a Train crew verbally (by radio, phone or in person) or in writing."

Note "verbally," distinguishing the rule from traditional train order operation. Harold explained that this derives from prototypical electric railway practice which IRM operation follows, so-called "booth orders" by which crews received instructions over the phone. These

verbal orders must be repeated to the dispatcher, whose "that is correct" response confirms accuracy and makes them effective. Harold and Assistant Superintendent Jeff Fryman are testing a pocket-sized, checklist type of train order to record verbal orders. It resembles prototype Form D and track warrant forms. Theirs adds a line diagram of the railroad, an improvement that could be useful for layouts whose crews can't learn their track by earning a living on it like railroaders do.

The traditionalist in me shudders to say so, but I see

TTTO-lite emerging from this system. Operating sessions can be as fast paced as IRM's, straining dispatchers and operators to keep up with dictating, repeating, and delivering written orders. The IRM system may be just what's needed to attract more to TTTO. **MR**



BUT WAIT A MINUTE: FIVE TRAINS, ALL EXTRAS, SPACED OVER 5 MILES? - JERRY

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COMING SOON



Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe No. 276, an Electro-Motive Division F7A, leads Train 176 westbound through Caliente on its way to Bakersfield. Craig Wilson of Cadillac, Mich., photographed the scene while "railfanning" the La Mesa Model RR Club's HO scale layout during a visit to San Diego. He added the background in Adobe Photoshop. The La Mesa club layout was featured in our September 2024 issue.





Though in real life the New York, New Haven & Hartford scrapped its Baldwin-built streamlined 4-6-4 Shore Liners in 1951, on Rick Abramson's HO scale layout, one was saved for steam excursion service. The locomotive is a Broadway Limited Imports model, as is the crossing tower. Rick took the photo.

Send us your photos

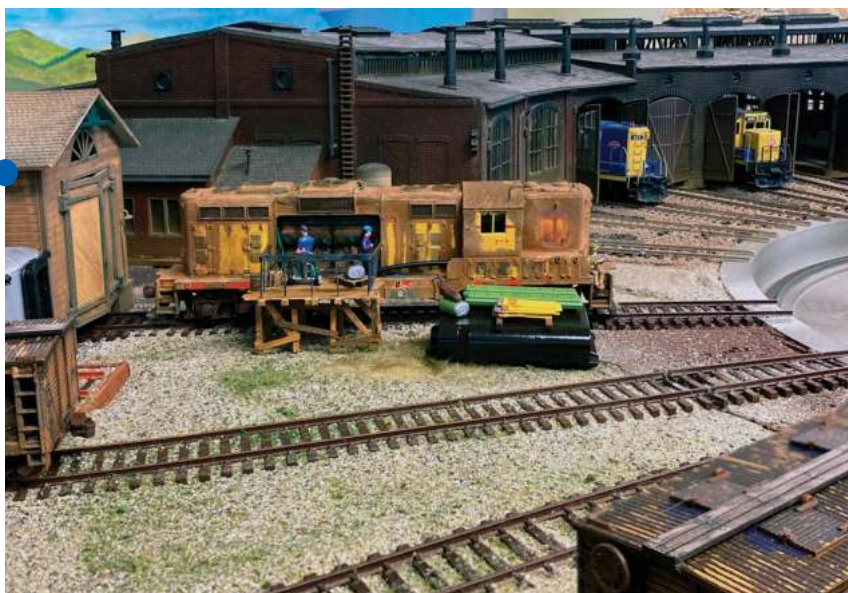
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Reading Co. freight and passenger power mingle on a sunny summer day in 1970 at the Reading's North Philadelphia Yard. The Electro-Motive Division GP35s are awaiting freight assignments, while FP7As No. 270 and 271 stand ready to provide passenger service to Reading, Pottsville and Shamokin. Kevin Connell of Dahlenega, Ga., shot the photo on his two-rail O scale layout.



The museum restoration crew is busy replacing the prime mover on this former Union Pacific Electro-Motive Division GP7. Though it's been standing neglected out in the open for many years, the museum staff plans to return the aging diesel to service for fan excursions. Ruedi Steffen of Wiedlisbach, Switzerland, shot the photo on the HO scale layout of the Red Rock Canyon Railroad club in Nunningen, Switzerland (rrcrr.com). Club member Mario Cairolì modified and painted the Athearn locomotive.



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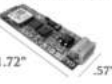

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All ads must be prepaid and pertain to the subject of model railroading.

Schedule of Events

AZ, GLENDALE: ARHS Model Train Swap Meet. Glendale Christian Church, 9661 North 59th Ave., Glendale, AZ 85302. Saturday, November 9, 2024. 9:00am-1:00pm. Everything Trains — Food — Fun. Admission \$5.00. Tables \$25.00 — to sign up, send check or money order to: ARHS, PO Box 5816, Glendale, AZ 85312-5816. Contact: Craig Faris, 623-340-3529

CA, ANAHEIM: 2024 TTOS-SP Super Meet. December 13-14, 2024. Friday, 5-8pm; Saturday, Noon-6pm. Brookhurst Community Center, 2271 Crescent Ave. Buy-Sell-Trade Trains, Toys, and Railroad Memorabilia. Train races, super raffle, and more! FREE kids train set raffle Saturday. 2-day admission: \$5/person, \$10/family. FREE parking. Vendors: 8-ft tables, \$25, \$30 after 12/01. Visit: TTOS-SP.ORG/THESUPERMEET/ to register. Questions: info@ttos-sp.org

CA, TURLOCK: San Joaquin Valley Toy Train Operators, Inc. Model Train Show. December 7 & 8, 2024. Saturday 10am-5pm. Sunday 10am-3pm. Admission: \$10, kids under 12 free with an adult. Operating layouts, vendor tables, free parking, pizza food truck. Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, 900 N. Broadway. Information: Jack Smith 209-765-1354 or Vern Cowan 714-686-7165 www.sjvttoinc.com

CO, LONGMONT: Boulder Model Railroad Club 47th Annual Model Railroad Expo. December 13-15, 2024. 10am-5pm. Boulder County Fairgrounds Exposition Hall, 9595 Nelson Road, Longmont, CO 80501. Adults \$8, Seniors \$5, Kids 12 and under FREE. Multiple scales, layouts, and vendors. Additional information, visit: bmrconline.org or email: bmrexpo@gmail.com

CT, NEW HAVEN: Classic Shows, LLC will hold a Train and Toy Show on Sunday, December 8, 2024, from 10:00am-3:00pm at the Annex YMA Hall, 554 Woodward Ave., New Haven, CT 06512. Admission: \$6.00, children 15 and under are free with an adult. For information, please call 203-926-1327 or go to: www.ClassicShowsLLC.com

FL, CRYSTAL RIVER: Regal Railways presents a Toy Train, Collectible and Hobby Christmas Sale/Show. Florida National Guard Armory, 8551 W. Venable St., Crystal River, FL 34429. Saturday, December 7, 2024. 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$6.00 adults, children under 12 free. Vendors and model train layout. Lunch items available. Contact Joe: 727-244-1341 or visit www.regalrailways.com for more information.

FL, MELBOURNE: The Melbourne Train and Toy Show. Azan Shrine Center, 1591 West Eau Gallie Blvd, Melbourne, FL 32935. Saturday, December 7, 2024. 9am-2pm. Admission: \$5, kids under 10 FREE. Vendor tables \$25 each or 3 or more \$20 each. Join us for trains, toys, and fun! Lunch/snacks available. For more information: SchultzSpaceCoastTrains@aol.com or 321-805-1963

FL, OCALA: "Trains for Christmas" — Free train show November 9-10, 2024. Saturday 10am-4pm, Sunday 11am-4pm. Experience multiple layouts and participate in great raffles. We are a collection site for Toys for Tots. No vendors. NEW LOCATION: Marion Oaks Community Center, 294 Marion Oaks Lane, Ocala, FL 34473. Information, contact Bill Quast at 352-209-5422 or email wmquast@gmail.com

FL, PINELLAS PARK: Regal Railways presents a Toy Train, Collectible and Hobby Christmas Sale/Show. Lopez Inc. Hall, 7177 58th St. North, Pinellas Park, FL 33781. Saturday, December 21, 2024. 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$6.00 adults, children under 12 free. Vendors and model train layout. Lunch items available. Contact Joe at 727-244-1341 or visit: www.regalrailways.com for more information.

FL, PINELLAS PARK: Suncoast Model Railroad Club Train Show/Open House. Saturday, December 14, 2024. SHOW- New venue! Pinellas Performing Arts Center, 4951 78th Avenue N., Zip: 33781. 9am-3pm. Admission: \$8.00, Children \$3.00, under 11-free. Free parking. Food/snacks. Tables: Event Planner, smrrclub@gmail.com, 727-523-1860. OPEN CLUBHOUSE: 12355 62nd Street North, Suite A, Largo, FL 33773. Admission: FREE. www.suncoastmrrc.com

IN, DANVILLE: Central Indiana Division-NMRA 17th annual Danville Train Show. Saturday, November 23, 2024. 10:00am-3:00pm, Hendricks County Fairgrounds, 1900 E. Main St. Operating layouts, displays, door prizes, memorabilia, model trains in all scales. Food vendor, free parking. Admission: \$3.00/adult, 16 and under free w/adult. Dealer Tables \$16.00 each. Contact: Dave Mashino, danvilletrainshow@gmail.com or 765-860-1560. Visit: <http://cidnmra.org>

IN, LA PORTE: Duneland Model RR Club Train Show and Swap Meet. La Porte County Fairgrounds Community Building, 2581 In-2, La Porte, IN 46350. Sunday, November 24, 2024. 9:30am-2:00pm (Chicago time). Adults \$5.00, youths 6-12 \$1.00, 5 and under free. Contact: Dave Novak at trains86@myyahoo.com or 219-778-3195.

MA, MARLBOROUGH: Hub Division NER/NMRA. Royal Plaza Trade Center, 181 Boston Post Road West (Rte. 20 West), Marlborough, MA. Saturday December 7, 2024. 10am-4pm and Sunday December 8, 2024. 10am-4pm. Admission: \$15.00; Children under 12 and Scouts in Uniform FREE. Admission good both days. Information: Gerry 617-543-0298; E-mail: TE.info@hubdiv.org; website: www.hubdiv.org

MI, ANN ARBOR: Southeast Michigan Model Railroad Show. December 1, 2024. 10am-3pm; Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds; 5055 Ann Arbor Saline Rd; Ann Arbor MI 48103. 130 Tables; Modular Railroads; Free Parking; Concessions; Admission: \$5.00 per person. Children 12 and under FREE with adult. Early Bird \$10 at 8am. Contact: John Young; 517-449-9063 or cdjyoung@yahoo.com

MO, JOPLIN: Joplin History & Mineral Museum Model Train Show and Swap Meet. Saturday, November 30, 2024. 9:00am-3:00pm. Schifferdecker Park, 504 South Schifferdecker Ave., Joplin, MO 64801. Admission: \$5 adult, 12 and under admitted free with paid adult. Swap Tables \$20 each. Contact Steve Gardner, 620-230-9545 or email: sogardner1@att.net

OH, MASSILLON: CJ Trains Winter Train and Toy Show. Massillon Knights of Columbus Hall, 988 Cherry Road NW, 44647. Sunday, December 15, 2024. 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: \$5.00, 12 and under FREE. \$25/dealer table, 152 - 8' dealer tables. Jon Ulbright, PO Box 446, Wooster, OH 44691, 330-262-7488, cathijon@sssnet.com www.cjtrains.com

TX, HOUSTON: Greater Houston Train Show presented by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. Saturday, February 15, 2025. 10:00am-4:00pm. Pasadena Convention Center, 7902 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, TX 77504. Operating Layouts, Classes on Railroads and Modeling Subjects, NMRA Contests, and Vendors from across the Southwest. Admission: \$5, under 12 FREE, \$10 Family. Concessions and free parking. Visit: <http://sanjacmodeltrains.org/>

VA, FREDERICKSBURG: Rappahannock Model Railroaders 27th Annual Christmas Model Train Show, December 14-15, 2024. Operating G, O, S, HO, N, Z and LEGO train layouts. Vendors, Santa, train set raffle, kids area. Saturday 9am-5pm. Sunday 10am-4pm. Adults \$10, Youth 13-17 \$5. Under 13 free. Eagles Lodge, 21 Cool Springs Road, Fredericksburg, VA 22405. Info: www.rmrrailroaders.com

WA, KENT: Boeing Employees Model Railroad Club Annual Swap Meet. Saturday, November 9, 2024. 9:30am-4:00pm. Kent Commons Community Center, 525 4th Avenue North, Kent, WA 98030. Admission: \$10.00, under 16 free. Ed Sherry, 550 SW Colewood Lane, Normandy Park, WA 98166; 206-244-3884; Seattleandnorthcascades@gmail.com

WA, LONGVIEW: November 23, 2024. LK&R Model Railroad Club presents our 2024 Holiday Model Train and Toy Swap Meet. NEW LOCATION - Cowlitz County Event Center, 1900 7th Ave. 10am-4pm. Admission \$5.00. See www.cceventcenter.com, click on Contact Us for directions. Over 150 tables. Information for vendors and guests, visit: <http://lkrrtrains.yolasite.com> or contact Howard Flick. 360-751-7276, email: flickh@yahoo.com

WI, LA CROSSE: The 33rd Annual Great Tri-State Rail Sale. La Crosse Center, 2nd & Pearl Streets. Saturday, January 25, 2025. 9:00am-3:00pm. Admission \$8.00, under 12 free. 300 vendor tables. All Scales: Model, Toy & Antique Trains & Memorabilia. Information: 4000 Foundation, PO Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, 608-781-9383. Visit: www.4000foundation.com

All listed events were confirmed as active at the time of press. Please contact event sponsor for current status of the event.

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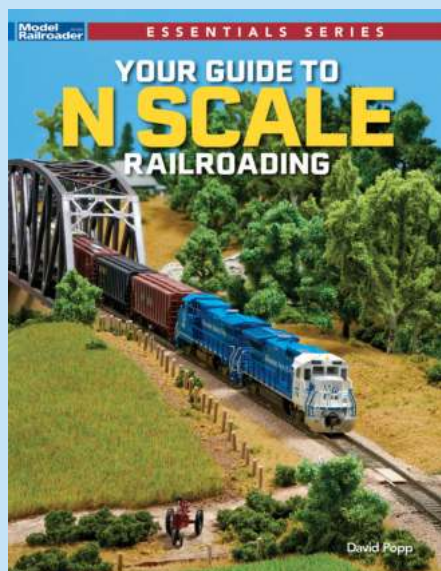


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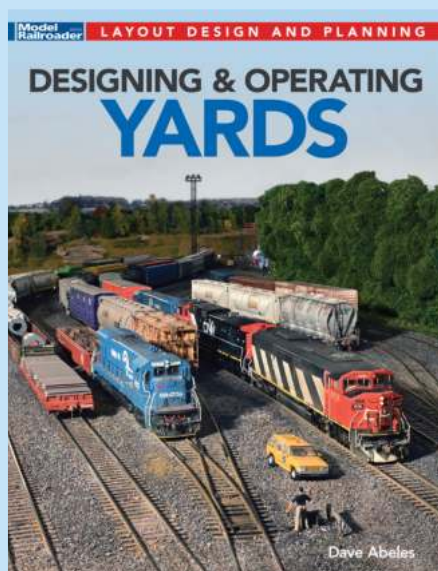
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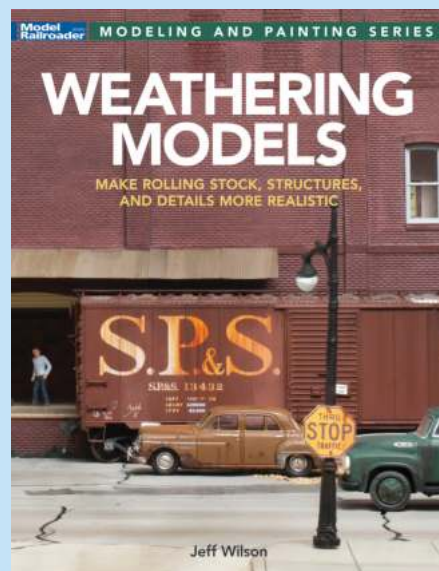
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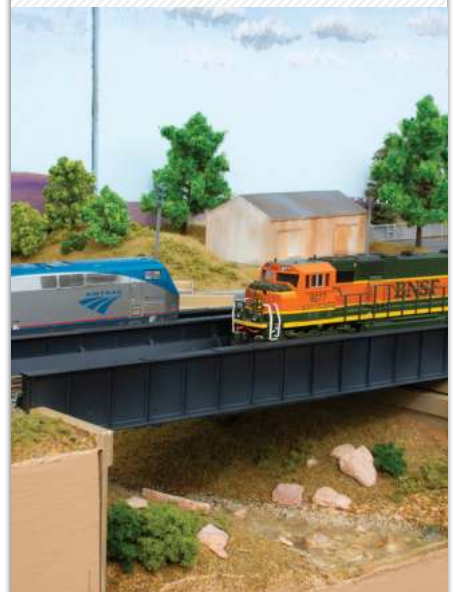
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A bit of daydreaming



A promo photo for Home Shops' new boxcars triggered Tony's pondering whether the Allegheny Midland could be relocated to the Midwest and become, perhaps, the Atlantic Midland, as this retouched photo suggests. Tony Koester photo

I suspect all of us let our minds wander away from focusing on the direct path to an objective now and then. What if this? What if that? Some of the world's most important discoveries have been made by someone indulging in a bit of daydreaming.

Where model railroaders are concerned, we might wonder what we'd do if we had a million bucks to invest in our next model railroad, or a gymnasium to put it in. Or we think about modeling in a different, often larger, scale. I can't help but think about modeling one of the Wabash branch lines that was home to its fleet of Moguls (2-6-0s) in O fine scale (Proto:48), or maybe the queen of East Coast 3-footers, the East Tennessee & Western North Carolina, in Gn3.

But then I remember my Midwestern roots and my

love for a higher density of traffic than the typical branch or narrow-gauge line affords.

Not long ago, Home Shops asked me to send them painting and lettering information on Allegheny Midland Appalachian Lines-era boxcars. They were also doing cars for the other two AL railroads, Allen McClelland's Virginian & Ohio and Steve King's Virginia Midland.

I quickly agreed but remain somewhat amazed that sales of AM-lettered equipment remain so good almost a quarter century since it was displaced by my current Nickel Plate Road layout. Strong V&O sales I understand; thanks to Allen's seminal *The V&O Story* series in *Railroad Model Craftsman* and subsequent book in the 1970s, his many articles in RMC and MR, and his clinics at NMRA venues, modelers

came to appreciate what he had single-handedly done to advance our hobby.

But I'll enjoy seeing the Allegheny Midland live on through the production of cars and even diesel locomotives ranging from EMD SD40-2s to today's GE GEVOs. Which brings us to the accompanying photograph.

The Midland Road — Allegheny Midland's nickname and the way I prefer to refer to the railroad to underscore its strong ties to parent Nickel Plate Road until the NKP merged into the Norfolk & Western in 1964 — was a mountain goat. It

had a number of central Appalachian ridges to surmount in the heart of the Allegheny Mountains.

But as I set up the photo for Home Shops' website using four of their AM boxcars coupled to a pair of InterMountain SDs, some old thoughts emerged. "Midland" is often used to mean "Midwest." What if I had located the railroad in the Midwest instead of in Appalachia? Could I use the same paint scheme by painting over "Appalachian Lines"?

A half-hour's work with Photoshop erased the AL lettering and re-lettered the bridge, but one major problem remained: What would the A in AM stand for? Clearly, it was time to put the railroad on a map (Toledo, Indianapolis & Kansas City?), but checking the index of several Midwestern states under "A" couldn't hurt.

America/American and Atlantic were the only A-names with any interstate significance. "Atlantic" could signify connections through the Great Lakes.

There are other concerns such as how much traffic (number of trains) and method of dispatching we'd have in the 1970s compared to the NKP in the 1950s.

Bottom line: I doubt that the Nickel Plate will get bumped aside by Atlantic Midland units any time soon.

But it was fun to daydream for a while, and maybe when no one's looking, a Midland Road train will make a run over the subdivision. **MR**



WHAT IF I HAD LOCATED THE RAILROAD IN THE MIDWEST INSTEAD OF IN APPALACHIA?
—TONY



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