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Cover: Stop for the dog — and now what? The crew of #260 ponders what to do about a very stubborn pooch protecting “his” crossing. The scene is from the AG-711’s CB&Q modular O Scale layout from Germany featured in this issue.

Centerspread: Mixed #618 waits for a train order on the AG-711’s CB&Q modular O Scale layout from Germany.
Our model railroad club was founded in 1964 by members of the former German Model Railroader’s Association (D.M.V.) of the GDR. Our latest project, an O Scale modular layout, was modeled after a U.S. prototype: the Chicago Burlington & Quincy. After many years of operating in TT-scale, we looked for new ideas for the future. We are more interested in older trains and equipment, especially from the late 1960s. After several months of brainstorming, an O Scale layout became the clear choice in a pool of four projects, so we went for it.

After extensive research and planning, we began to construct the five main segments of the layout. All the modules were built by the members from block-board. Our layout dimensions are 11.5 m x 4.9 m or in English measurements 37’ 9” x 16’ 1” (Figure 1).

Most of the track and switches came from AtlasO. For noise insulation we laid cork strips under the track. All switches are powered with a servo and controlled by DCC-switch-decoders from MB-Tronik.

The substructure of the scenery was shaped from paper maché. For detailing we use Woodland Scenics’ turf and foliage, plus material from HEKI along with real materials like sawdust. All of the buildings were scratchbuilt by the members, except for the tower and café which are commercially produced buildings.

The core section of the layout forms the junction at Serena, Illinois, which is equipped with two industrial sidings. Later we’ll set up a four-track staging and five curved-track sections. We require a continuous loop to connect the junc-
An SW 1200 is pushing several cars to the fruit dispatch company.

Is there any problem? No; only an inspection on the light Pacific.
tion’s exit to the marshalling yard.
In December 2004 we tested the layout for the first time in trial operations. We were visiting with the model railroading club in Koethen for six days and had extensive experiences with the layout’s operations. We learned you can deliberate and plan for the best but in the first startup, all things didn’t work out. Some weak spots were recognized and repaired.
After finalizing the curved modular segments in the summer of 2006, it was now possible to start planned operations for the first time. To provide interesting operations for public display, it goes without saying that numerous trains are necessary. At the present, we own several locomotives and over 120 cars.
At first we controlled the trains using straight DC operation. We have since converted to DCC, thereby making it possible to install sound decoders in the engines, which we did in April 2005. It’s just a beautiful effect and enriches the models immensely.
In the future, we face the task of building an extension of the track on the left side. Hopefully, the extension will be complete in late autumn this year. You can visit our website: [www.ag7-11.de], or contact us via e-mail: vorstand@ag7-11.de

The Towers’ staff watches a Steam Special hurry along.

Extra train No. 618 crosses the street.

Switching activities on Main Street.
Much of the scenery material is natural in this realistic landscape.

GP38 #712 coming out of the tunnel.

RSD # 1665 crosses a scratchbuilt bridge.
Power or Repower Kits for Red Caboose GPs

The P&D TWIN TOWER DRIVE for the Red Caboose GP body kit is functionally equivalent to the P&D power units already available for the P&D F units, GPs, RSDs, and the Weaver FAs, FBs, RS-3s and GP-38s.

The Red Caboose power kits provide only the necessary power related parts to supplement the Red Caboose GP body kit. These power kits fully utilize the underframe (platform), deck, air tanks, fuel tanks, motor mounts and screws that are furnished in the Red Caboose body kit.

These P&D Twin Tower Drive kits can also be used to repower existing Red Caboose GPs. Two kits are offered: #PDP2200K has plastic Blomberg trucks, while #PDP2201K features the P&D brass Blomberg trucks, which are truly some of the finest trucks on the market. Each kit also includes a powerful Pittman motor and all the necessary parts to complete the installation.

Detailed instructions are included.
Modeling Roads

Streets, boulevards, thoroughfares, country lanes, goat paths, whatever you care to call them; roads are an undeniable part of the landscape. Yet, too often modelers overlook these essential elements. True, we’re modeling railroads, not highways. However, when one element of a scene lacks the same level of detail as the rest, it can stick out like a sore thumb, calling undue attention to itself.

There are a variety of ways to model roads and streets. Cardstock was a staple in the old days. Today, many prefer sheet styrene. Plaster and water putty are also long-time favorites. Woodland Scenics has a road system that I’m not familiar with, but it might be worth a look. My personal preference is to use plaster or pre-mixed spackling compound. I actually prefer the pre-mixed spackling, since it isn’t as messy as pouring a soupy plaster mix and watching it go everywhere. To make a street, I figure on 12 scale feet for the width of each lane. This would make a two-lane road 24’ wide, which is actually kind of narrow really. You could add a few feet to either side for on-street parking or a shoulder, if you have the space.

Construction begins with tacking some formwork, made from 3/16” sq. pieces of stripwood, in place. These forms control the thickness of the spackling compound, acting as screeds for a wide putty or drywall taping knife used to smooth out the surface. The process couldn’t be simpler; just plop some of the pre-mixed compound onto the area and screed it off with the taping knife. A little water on the knife blade will help keep the surface smooth. If a few bumps and voids show up, I don’t worry too much about them; they’ll just become a pot hole or repair patch.

For most types of street surfaces, the joint compound will be fine as is. But this is O Scale, where texture plays a larger role than in other scales. I wanted to see if I could duplicate the type of road surface where highway crews lay down a layer of liquid asphalt and follow it with a thin layer of pea gravel. This makes a huge mess for a few days until heat and tire friction melt it together into a solid mass. The finished road surface has a smooth texture with the small gravel stones clearly visible but firmly imbedded in the road. I think this is called a macadam surface, but I’m not sure of that.

As an experiment one night, I sprinkled some fine sand onto a section of Mill Street I had just put down a couple of hours earlier. The spackling was firm, but still very moist and workable. My finger would leave an imprint when testing for firmness. I took a dowel rod and began to gently work the sand into the damp surface, using the dowel like a rolling pin. It worked! The rolling and pressing action worked the sand particles into the plaster, and worked up a bit of plaster cream at the same time. I managed to stop while I was ahead for once, and let things dry overnight. The next morning, the road had set up nicely and while it didn’t look like I had hoped, the results were promising anyway. I let it dry for at least a week or until there was no hint of moisture left, and then colored the road with acrylic craft paints to resemble a concrete surface. The imbedded sand gave a nice pitted effect, looking like spalled concrete. Not bad.

I’m still working on the macadam effect. If I can get consistent results and the appearance I’m after, I’ll pass the techniques along for all of you. Meanwhile, the streets and roads on the I&W are starting to look as nice as the rest of the scenery.

Look for bonus material on this subject under “Mike’s Projects” at the OST blog: [www.oscalemag.com]

Best regards,
Mike
General

Renee has been scratchbuilding structures in HO since 1992. After we started modeling in O Scale, she decided to build some of her hometown buildings for our new layout. She has fallen in love with O Scale and plans to keep building in this new and exciting nostalgia trip.

Designing a Building

Building with styrene is not difficult, but it does take some time to work out the construction details. The first thing that needs to happen is a design for the building you want needs to be put on paper. You do not need to be an architect to draw some basic lines on a sheet of paper. We usually take photos of each of the four sides and all four corners of a building, and a few close-up shots of any special details. Basic measurements, such as width and length, are taken or paced off to get an estimate. Height or elevation is easily figured by measuring a window or door. We also have a roofing estimator (a piece of clear plastic with the different roof pitches on it, available at lumber yards where shingles are sold). You line up the roof line with the line on the estimator to get the pitch, and transfer it to the drawing. You can use it on the actual building or on a photo of the building.

Renee uses some quarter-inch grid paper to draw the outline of the building, then places the window and door castings to locate their openings (Photo 1). Once you have a design it is easy to transfer the measurements to the styrene, and cutting out the walls may be done in various ways. Renee uses an Olfa P-cutter 450 with a tungsten blade. These are available at Lowe’s, Home Depot, and others.

She cuts out the basic structure from plain 1/16-inch thick styrene sheets available from architectural or plastic supply companies. Larger models require more basic stock than is normally available in hobby shops (Photo 2). The clapboard siding is from Evergreen Scale Models found in many hobby shops. The windows and doors are from Grandt Line and others.

Assembling The Main Structure

Once all the walls are cut out, Renee assembles the basic structure with CA glue. (Styrene glue may also be used, but we have found that over time the styrene glue will cause some warping, so she uses CA almost exclusively.)

When all the walls are assembled, the clapboard or other siding material is installed with the window and door openings cut in (Photo 3). After gluing on the siding to the sub-structure, the openings for the windows and doors are made by first drilling a hole in one or more locations within the window opening to
remove the bulk of the material, then finishing it up with files. She has a variety of flat files with different cutting capabilities, such as the diamond coated files that are available from Micro-Mark. Roughing out the opening with a file in styrene is easier than it sounds. You can creep up to the line for the opening and test fit the casting often. This makes for nice fitting doors and windows (Photo 4). Multiple window units may be made up on the bench and transferred to the model in one piece as shown in Photo 5. Installation of the windows and doors are done one at a time. Photo 6 shows the openings in the clapboard siding on the end of the building and openings ready for windows along the side. To finish the siding, corner boards made of scale 1x5 boards are installed, and the siding is butted to them as it was on the original house.

Adding the turn backs or cornice returns on the roof comes next (Photo 7). Normally, the siding would be butted up to this detail, but Renee decided that trying to cut the clapboard sheets around them was more trouble than the end result was worth; so she just put the returns on top of the siding and they look fine.

**Painting and finishing**

Painting the entire structure is next. Since the windows and doors were all painted the same as the siding, the assembly was completed and the model was spray painted with Floquil Reefer White. This paint dries to a semi-flat finish and it is perfect for the slightly weathered finish of a house that shows some flatness.

When the paint is dry, the bottom of the clapboard siding is masked and the foundation is painted Floquil Concrete or Aged Concrete, depending on the tastes of the modeler and the finish desired (Photo 8). This house had concrete masonry unit
foundation walls, but the stucco covered the joints. Renee used a 0.020” thick sheet to represent this foundation wall. This also allowed a starter row for the clapboard siding.

**Roofing**

Asphalt shingle roofing is next. We used the laser cut sandpaper shingles made by Mullet River Models. They are $14.00 per sheet, and the end result is worth the expense. They are by far the best looking shingles we have ever used on any model. They are made of wet-n-dry garnet paper and the tabs are right on the money dimensionally.

Renee glues a course of shingles to a piece of black construction paper from Wal-Mart, using wood glue. Once all the courses are in place and the glue cures, it is an easy task to cut the whole sheet the size and shape needed and transfer it to the building, attaching it with Elmer’s stainable glue (Photo 9). You may not think that this type of glue would hold to plastic, but it does. This keeps the roof from warping and the finished product is very realistic. These shingles are also easily weathered with chalks and coated with a clear lacquer dull-coat which seals the chalks.

**Storm/Screen Window Frames**

Modeling in quarter-inch scale allows for a lot of detail, which translates to a lot of work. Renee decided to model the outline of the screen (summer) or storm window (winter) with a scale 1 x 1-1/2 inch styrene strip painted black rather than replicate either (Photo 10). If screens were modeled, it would be difficult to see the window treatment on the inside of the structure. If the storm windows are modeled, it would have entailed a great deal more effort, since the glazing would have to be behind the wood frames to look correct. The effect is quite appealing with the black trim against the white window casings. The screen door was done using a fine mesh painted black.

**Railings**

The railings for the front and rear porch steps are 0.042” x 0.015” brass flat bar for the upper and lower railings, with 0.019” brass wire used for the pickets. Holes were drilled in the upper and lower rails at 4-inch centers (Well as close as possible using a hand-held power drill and a .021 [#75] drill bit), and the wire was soldered to each rail. After sanding them smooth, the assembled railings were painted black and installed on the steps (See the lead photo). The railings on the rear porch are plastic from Grandt Line.

**Stucco Foundation Walls**

This is something that Renee invented herself. She found that mixing Durham’s Rock Hard Water Putty with some acrylic craft paint of the same color as the stucco on the real building made for a realistic stucco texture on the model. (Check the craft center at Wal-Mart and other places for these paints.) We have found a variety of stucco colors from a concrete grey to a red. Mix the acrylic paint and Durham’s water putty approximately 50/50. If you add water the mixture bubbles up and is ruined when applied to the styrene walls of the foundation. Dab the mixture on with a flat brush and when the wall is coated evenly, let it dry for a day or so. Any light spots can be touched up or weathered.

**Base**

Renee makes a base from steel sheet that we bought at Lowe’s. This allows the model to be moved easily and placed on display at a train show or in our house. We cut the sheet steel to the basic shape of the sidewalk pattern with a small amount of grass area between the walk and the foundation. Once it is cut to shape, she glues the foundation onto the base with Elmer’s stainable tan carpenter glue. This glue dries clear and is easily painted. When it is cured, she applies actual dirt sifted from the yard of the real house, and plants grass over the dirt. This way, the grass does appear to have been planted in real soil just like the real house in Minnesota.

**Finishing Up**

To finish up the house, Renee plants some shrubs and flowers. She has also added some memories of her own. She remembers when grandma invited her upstairs to look out the window over the back porch at some robins that were nesting in the corner near the railing. She also placed a figure of her niece and her cat in the door of the front porch. The curtains are made using a variety of patterns cut out of catalogs and some lace that is readily available at Wal-Mart.

The gutters were made from an HO Scale 8-inch industrial gutters kit by Micro Engineering #80-163. Some brass channel would also work for this detail. The down spouts are made of 1/16 inch square brass tubing.

These houses and buildings are easy to build but they take time. Yes, there are many modelers today who do not want to set time aside to do this kind of work, but this is a simple, yet effective way of modeling specific buildings and a great deal of pleasure comes from the finished model. It is something that you will have personal affection for.

Happy modeling.
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O Scale Trains - May/June '08
I'm a firm believer in one all-truism when it comes to locomotives. Whether you're running conventional cab-control or command control, an O Scale locomotive drive should have impeccable mechanical and electrical performance properties before any electronics are added. In spite of the current wisdom of the ready-to-run marketplace, electronics such as DCC are not a satisfactory patch for the less-than-stellar mechanical performance inherent in the current design of Diesel drive-trains.

This brings me to the time-honored horizontal double-reduction drive we fondly remember, specifically the Weaver chain-drive. For those who may not know, this drive appears in quite a few different Diesel models, such as the older Weaver plastic offerings, P&D's beautiful F-unit line and a drive made for the Red Caboose Geep, and the various Alco and Baldwin switchers imported by Carworks. However, nice as they are in stock form, the starting performance still leaves room for improvement, hence this little piece of wisdom.

Recently, I picked up a Carworks Alco S2 from a gent who turned me on to Sterling Instrument. These folks make sprocket drives for instrumentation and small mechanical devices; they're not a hobby manufacturer at all. In their line are a variety of sprockets just perfect for tweaking up the Weaver chain drives. In the photo, you'll see my application. Look at the difference between the little stock 12-tooth lower sprocket and that big beautiful Sterling acetal resin 18-tooth sprocket (Part #A 6M 7-121806). These have a 0.1227 pitch and a shaft diameter of 0.188”. I just popped off the stock 12-tooth sprocket at the bottom of the tower and pressed on a 18-tooth sprocket. Simple. Make sure you line up the upper and lower sprockets nicely and shave the hub-face of the new one back a bit to clear the tube/half-shaft arrangement in the truck. Add three bars worth of Sterling’s plastic chain (Part #A 6M 7-12, it snaps right in place on the Weaver chain and is a matched replacement), and re-assemble the drive. I’ve done this conversion on Weaver, Carworks, and various P&D Diesels, and find the resulting switching/starting performance on par with any of the custom drives I own. The hour spent swapping sprockets yields wonderful low-end performance. The Alco High-Hoods on my railroad can now slowly push a car, knuckle-to-knuckle, without even opening up the couplers! It’s what O Scale is all about.

Sterling has sprockets ranging from 10-20 teeth with shaft diameters of 0.125”, 0.188”, and 0.250”, all matching in pitch to the Weaver chain, so the options for re-gearing to suit are myriad. The cost of my project was a tad over a buck a sprocket, and an additional pittance for the chain (about $8.50 per foot). They have a web-based catalogue and ordering site. A quick check on your part might also discover that the All-Nation, Electric Shop, and NJ/CB chain drives might use either the same components or something else in Sterling’s arsenal. The play-value possibilities are just endless. Sterling’s address is: Sterling Instrument/Stock Drive Products, 2101 Jerico Tpke., Box 5416, New Hyde Park, NY 11040 Phone: 516-328-3300 [www.sdp-si.com]
The Cabin Creek Coal Tipple is a freelanced composite of several different tipples located in West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Three tracks are serviced here. The tipple kit is laser cut and engineered for easy construction. Detail castings and bulkheads are included. Overall size is about 2’ x 4’ as shown.

#18105-L $ 549.95

Slatyfork Sawmill

Slatyfork is a double bandsaw mill that can handle the load! This Master Creations’ kit consists of laser-cut basswood, plywood, and detail castings. Interior walls and floors are included. And the standard features of B.T.S. kits are there... positionable doors and window sashes, slot and tab construction, brass door knobs, and well-engineered construction providing fast and easy assembly. The footprint is about a scale 115’ x 65’.

#18300 $ 850.00

McCabe Planing Shed

The McCabe Lumber Co. Planing Shed should be called a planing mill complex since it is more than just a simple shed. The planing complex consists of the transfer shed, two planing buildings, boiler house, water tank, and loads of details, and is a key part of the Slatyfork Sawmill Complex. The Planing Shed can also be used as a standalone manufacturing industry such as a box factory.

#18225 $449.95

Elliott and Sons Supply

While it is a freelanced structure, the Elliott & Sons Supply was based upon a tomato packing house in Florida. The kit features laser-cut basswood, cardstock and plywood; tabbed, easy construction; loads of Detail Castings; laser-cut, self-sticking shingles & sashes; laser-etched nail holes; optional skylights; and a scale 40’ x 60’ Footprint.

#18106 $ 229.95
I finally attended my first Midwest O Meet this past spring and I’m glad I did. In addition to seeing all sorts of O Scale goodies beyond my budget, I got to meet many of the “faceless” O Scale acquaintances that I’ve made through the years and a few new ones too, including the Clever Models’ clever brothers!

I’ve always enjoyed scratchbuilding structures, especially those written up by Frank Ellison and E. L. Moore from years ago. Now that I’m retired, I finally have time to build a few. When I saw Clever Models’ display of their laser-printed cardstock kits and textures, I was amazed. What a boon to the scratchbuilder!

I decided to try one of their kits before utilizing their texture sheets on a scratchbuilt model. I chose the Quonset hut kit and when it arrived, I was hooked. What a nice model it turned out to be. The kit was just fine the way it came but for my liking, it needed a few modifications.

On a fishing trip to Northern Wisconsin, I saw many old Quonset huts, false-front buildings and the idea for Toivo’s Garage was born. I’ve spent many years in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula where the name Toivo rolls off the tongue with ease as does the “Yooper” pronunciation of garage as “grotch.” Toy-vos Grotch has a nice ring to it, eh?

For this model, I made a false-front to display the name and offer support for the Quonset roof behind it. I also included a double-door with an overhanging roof or some sort of a rain-deflector for prospective customers.

I also felt that the cardstock in the kit was a bit wimpy and needed strengthening. So I rubber-cemented all the kit’s sheets to a filing folder backing before going any further. This resulted in a big mess; but a soft rag easily removed the excess goop oozing out around the edges. After a few sheets, the rest came out just fine. I carefully cut out all cardstock window glass and replaced it with clear styrene. The file folder backing made it much easier. To save time and trouble, on my model I decided to use Grandt Line’s #3722 Attic Windows. I used the four-pane windows for the gable windows on the sides of the building and two of the two-paned windows in the false-front (Photo 1).

I now offer some advice from “lessons learned.” Glaze your windows while the front wall can still be laid flat. Also, prepare and position whatever sign or lettering you choose, leaving clearance for the overhanging roof or rain-deflector. This is much easier than doing it after assembling the building.

Even with a cardstock backing, the interior stiffeners weren’t very strong and didn’t offer much support for the roof. I also realized that if one were to look in the windows or decided to light the interior, they’d block the view. I substituted four laminated arches as you’re going to have a big double door on one side to bring in vehicles and equipment and you’ll need support on either side of it. I carefully cut two master arches from artist’s illustration board to use as templates for the other 12. I made the arches by laminating three individual ones together with Goo, giving me four strong arches to work with (Photo 2).

Next make a big...
double door (instead of the one big door supplied with the kit) on one side, through which vehicles can drive into the garage. I scratchbuilt these doors from scrap cardboard and added a frame around them. This enabled me to have a pick-up truck or tractor sticking out of the doors. I made copies of the big door on thick paper so I could cut out enough to cover the front and back as I left my doors open. For the sake of symmetry, we’ll lengthen the sides of the building and center the big double-door to please the eye. Without centering the big doors and lengthening the building accordingly, it just doesn’t look right. Because I lengthened the building for the double doors, I added a third gabled window to the side opposite the doors. I ended up adding about two inches to the overall length of my model, giving it a 7” x 11” footprint.

I glued one arch to the back wall, and saved the other two arches for the center of the building (Photo 3). I made an illustration board floor to replace the one that came with the model and glued the front and back walls to it.

Gluing the roof to the arches was a little tricky. The center arch was difficult to work with but the rest of the assembly was fairly easy. For my false-front, I decided on the symmetrical shape you see in the photos. By all means, use your modeler’s license for whatever shape turns you on.

The arch behind the false-front will determine window and door spacing. I began with a piece of illustration board and traced my arch template on it front and back. This helps to determine the door and window spacing. Layout your false-front; determine your door and window locations, and cut them out with a sharp razor knife to accommodate the Grandt Line windows and your scratchbuilt door. Clever Models offers a nice selection of peel and stick textures, and I chose a distressed red siding for my new wall. Layout and cut the openings on your siding before you affix it to the illustration board or you’ll be an extremely unhappy camper! The windows need to fit snugly in the openings. The window trim will hide the edges of the siding if it doesn’t come out perfect. In a like manner, the door trim and corner trim will do the same. For my trim and double doors, I use the gray side of cereal box cardboard.

For the rear wall of the building, I simply used the curved wall provided with the kit, cutting out the window and door panes before gluing it to a piece of illustration board (Photo 4). How much interior detail you plan to use will determine the color of the illustration board you choose. I used the “white side” to facilitate layout work and a dark color for the interior side as I don’t plan to do any interior detailing other than soft illumination.

The remainder of the project is adding details to the scene. This, of course, is up to you. I put a bench with a couple of kibitzers on it against the front wall, some drums for trash, and am waiting for a couple of Texaco gas pumps to come. Later I’ll add advertising signs and maybe a hand-lettered sign for “Ma Toivo’s Pastries!” I was pleased with the results. I was anxious to show the model to a friend who promptly talked me out of it. I ended up with no Quonset hut and a grain elevator model in need of repair! But, it was a fun project and I’ve already done a different one with an entirely scratchbuilt building. But, that’s another story!
Information and Inspiration for Boston Traction Modelers

In preparation for an upcoming feature on one of Boston’s most interesting subway stations, I gathered together several of my favorite books and spent some time reacquainting myself with them. It struck me that several were quite valuable from a broader perspective.

**Streetcar Lines of the Hub**

One of the best, from the point of view of operations, is Bradley H. Clarke’s *Streetcar Lines of the Hub: The 1940s-Heyday of Electric Transit in Boston*. Published by the Boston Street Railway Association in 2003, this is an exhaustively detailed large format book printed on quality paper.

One of the best aspects of *Streetcar Lines of the Hub* is its 37 highly detailed maps showing car barns and terminals. Boston was a city of loops. At numerous locations, these loops permitted single-ended streetcars to exchange passengers at various elevated railway stations, or—underground—at a few key subway stations. At the other terminals, of course, the streetcars would leave the public right-of-way and loop on an adjacent private property.

*Streetcar Lines of the Hub* is organized in terms of routes serving various sections of the city. Operating details and sharp black and white rolling stock and right-of-way photographs are balanced by personal anecdotes of the men who ran the streetcars. Other anecdotes are by street fans; the book contains some truly great father/son stories that emphasize the lifelong bonds that railfan outings can create.

My favorite sections is Chapter 5, “The Central Subway and Its Branches.” This chapter contains a wealth of detail about building, expanding, and operating the pioneering subway. Numerous vintage photographs bring life to the story.

If you’re a traction modeler looking for terminal ideas, or interested in adding a subway module to add operational flexibility to your layout, you’ll want *Streetcar Lines of the Hub*, and its many maps.

**Boston Trolleys in Color**

If, on the other hand, you’re primarily interested in scratchbuilding rolling stock or structures, you’ll want William D. Volkmer’s two-volume *Boston Trolleys in Color*, published by Morning Sun books. You’ll probably want both *Volume 1: The North Side* and *Volume 2: The South Side*.

Both large format books are filled with color photographs showing the diversity of rolling stock and right-of-way structures, and adjacent buildings. Photographs cover operation in all seasons, and there are several two-page spreads showing important junctions or stations. Elevated and subway lines are also present, although this is primarily a streetcar and urban landscape book.

Buy these volumes for rolling stock and structure painting ideas, as well as to get signage ideas for the buildings lining your streets.

**Boston Traction Topics from Arcadia**

Arcadia Publishing offers several excellent and fairly-priced smaller-format books, each containing hundreds of photographs which focus on specific lines.

My favorite is Frank Cheney and Anthony M. Sammarco’s *Trolleys Under the Hub*. *Trolleys Under the Hub* is an excellent companion to *Streetcar Lines of the Hub*. There are numerous construction photographs that show the engineering necessary at several stations, as well as photographs illustrating the street congestion that precipitated the construction of Boston’s subway.

My favorite part of the book was the description of how the outside third rail Boston Elevated cars shared the Park Street subway station with streetcars for several years while the heavy rail subway was being completed.

Other Arcadia books on Boston traction topics include: *Boston’s Red Line: Bridging the Charles From Alewife to Broadway*, *Boston’s Blue Line* (which extends to Logan Airport), and *When Boston Rode the El* (currently out of print at Arcadia).

### Other volumes for Boston modelers (and their grandchildren)

Richard C. Barrett’s *Boston’s Depots & Terminals: A History of Downtown Boston’s Railroad Stations* provides a great context for traction modelers. The book contains details of South Station that I haven’t encountered elsewhere, and (continued on next page)
there are photographs of some beautiful, long-gone, smaller stations, like those that were replaced by Boston’s Back Bay station.

Finally, in order to develop the next generation of traction modelers, I strongly recommend Joe McKendry’s *Beneath The Streets Of Boston: Building America’s First Subway*. This is a thoroughly enjoyable, relatively inexpensive, large format book that just cries out for reading aloud to your grandchildren.

*Beneath the Streets of Boston* consists of captions and large scale drawings, many based on historical photographs, illustrating the cross sections and construction of various stations and other facilities. It’s a book that stirs the imagination and “Gramps” will find himself rereading it every time he visits the grandchildren.

Websites
Boston Street Railway Association: www.TheBSRA.org
Arcadia Publishing: www.arcadiapublishing.com
Out of print books: www.alibris.com

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Highly detailed passenger cars in O Scale have nearly always been limited to custom built models. In the 1930s, kits consisting of milled wood, stamped metal or pressed cardstock sides, and cast soft metal parts were introduced. More rare from that time were a few heavy, expensive cast aluminum cars.

The next development in O Scale passenger car kits came in the 1980s, when Ralph Brown introduced a line of cast urethane heavy-weight cars under the American Standard name. These kits offered much better detailing. In their time, these cars became the gold standard for well-detailed, heavy-weight passenger car kits. Imported brass passenger cars became available too. They were expensive, delicate and heavy.

The long-awaited, moderately-priced, ABS plastic O Scale 12 section 1 drawing room Pullman cars from Golden Gate Depot arrived last October. They come finished in several railroad liveries as well as Pullman green. Golden Gate Depot’s 12-1 Pullman is the first sleeper done in ABS plastic. These Plan 3410 Pullmans were among the largest group of cars operated, numbering nearly 4,000 units. Photo 1 shows Pullman St. Angele in B&O blue and gray right out of the box. The prototype St. Angele was built early in 1924. Originally Pullman green, it had blue and gray paint by 1951. The B&O owned 61 of these 12-1 cars following Pullman’s re-structuring of the late 1940s. Four other 12-1 cars from Pullman’s pool were also assigned to B&O use, including the Amsterdam. Shown in Photo 2.

The B&O’s blue and gray passenger paint job is not easy to do well, yet it has been done nicely on models in other scales. This car has some quality control problems. The alignment of the gray band over the doors is poor and the striping is too wide. However, the colors Golden Gate used are good. The Band O Blue is very close to Floquil’s B&O Blue and the Gray is reasonably matched by Floquil’s Primer which is a bit too light. The slightly darker D&H Gray would be closer. While Floquil paint is a close match, the car has a satin finish. Touchup work will need some Gloss Coat to help it blend in.

The road name and car lettering use accurate fonts. Car names Golden Gate selected for their B&O Pullmans include: St. Angele, McCluney, McElrath and McHarg. All are accurate for B&O 12-1 standard Pullmans with air conditioning.

The car rolls effortlessly on sprung, Pullman type 2411 bottom-equalized trucks; whereas many of the prototype 12-1 cars rode on type 242 top-equalized trucks. The Pullman 242 truck has not been available in O Scale since Lobaugh’s cast bronze offering of the early 1940s. The car’s doors are made so they can be pushed open, with a torsion spring inside to shut them. The doors are short, with a rather high vestibule drop-plate. There is a significant gap between the drop-plate and door bottom (Photo 3).

In spite of its flaws, the 12-1 Pullman is a good car for the price. With a little work here and there it can become a better one.

To begin, first remove the car steps. Then remove the two screws that hold the car end to the floor. Gently pull down to lift off the car end. I took off Golden Gate’s diaphragms and installed a set from Keil Line, then added floor plates to them after I finished with the other work. The floor plates were made
from an aluminum soft drink can, following the dimensions given in Fig. 1. Bend the floor plate 90 degrees along the dotted line and cement the short edge to the inside of the dia-

![Fig. 1- Diaphragm floor plate, made from an aluminum soft drink can. Bend 90 degrees along dotted line. Cement short edge to inside of diaphragm striker plate. Paint to match vestibule floor. Diagram is not to scale. Use dimensions given.](image)

phragm striker plate. Paint to match vestibule floor.

Take off the doors by pulling out the long brass hinge pin. Do not to lose the torsion springs, and note that they are right and left-handed. Now for some corrective surgery which will lower the vestibule drop-plate floor. Remove the existing drop-plate detail from the car end casting by scoring the drop-plate edges along the car end, top and bottom. Then, score a line that is 3/32” down from the top edge of the drop-plate on each side of the center pocket. Carefully cut along this line with a razor saw. Bend and snap off the drop plate (Photo 4). With an X-Acto blade, smooth the snapped-off area along the car end’s inner wall. Cut a tiny notch 3/32” wide to match the lowered floor line on the car end’s inner corner posts. Smooth the saw cuts along the floor plate’s top edges. This done, fit a 0.080” thick styrene filler into the floor plate. It is 3/4” wide and 15/32” deep. Chamfer the bottom sides and end. Test fit it in the car end floor pocket. It should be snug and level with the top edges.

Next, make a new vestibule floor sheet with 0.030” sty-

![Original drop-plates trimmed off and car end notched. The new floor will be level with the end opening.](image)

rene. The outline and dimensions for it are shown in Fig. 2. Test fit the filler piece and the floor sheet before cementing them together and into the car end. Photo 5 shows how the two pieces fit together. In Photo 6 the new floor is installed on the vestibule, with the 0.080” filler on the bottom. The floor is made so that the outer ends will extend a little beyond the doors, like prototype drop-plates. This part provides a full-width, flat vestibule floor.

![Fig 2- Vestibule floor sheet. This diagram is not to scale. Follow dimensions given.](image)

![The floor is made so that the outer ends will extend a little beyond the doors, like prototype drop-plates. The 0.080” thick car end filler piece is on top here. This part provides a full-width, flat vestibule floor.](image)

This should make the surface of the new floor close to that at the car end opening. Coupler mounting holes should now be drilled, using the car end casting as a pattern. You may wish to pre-paint the new vestibule floor and the exposed area underneath where the steps mount so it will match your car.

Rather than re-mounting the steps with the screws, I chose to cement them in place. Scrape the paint off the top edge and back of the steps, as well as the area on the drop-plate and car
end where the steps fit to ensure a good bond.

Next, install some angled door headers on the underside of the car roof. They are 1/16" on the outer side and about 3/32" on the inner side, because of the roof angle. They fit between the car body and car end and are painted the same color as the car side (Photo 7). Because the door will now be about 1/16" lower, carefully trim 1/16" from the bottom of the door’s lower hinge and cement that on top of the top door hinge. Test fit to be sure the door will go in without binding.

Re-install the car end. Measure the gap between the bottom of the car door and the top of the drop-plate. Cut and cement a piece of styrene to the door bottom to close this gap. You may need to use a bit of filler for the seam. Sand it smooth and touch up with matching paint. It helps to take the doors off the car to do this. For the doors to open and close there should be about 1/64" of clearance between the door bottom and top of the drop-plate. Take care when re-installing the torsion springs, so their ends lie flat against the door and the vestibule wall. Remember, the springs are right and left-handed.

To fit longer, finer, handrails and grab irons pull off the original handrails and carefully slice off the lower handrail detail on the car ends and carbody. Cement these parts so the new holes are in line with the vestibule floor (Photo 8). Plug the original holes, touch up the paint and drill new ones for whatever diameter of brass wire you use. In O Scale, 0.022" is about 3/4"; 0.025" is 7/8" and 0.028" is about 1" diameter. Fit the new handrails and grab irons in place, and paint to suit your car's livery.

For an optical illusion that seemed to help the wide B&O striping look a bit thinner, I painted the header strip over the Pullman’s windows gray, just as the B&O did. The gray band and striping over the doors was corrected and extended to include the car corner posts as the B&O did. Champ decals for “Watch Your Step” were added, as well as a 1/32” black decal stripe for the “Dutch door” seam (Photo 9). Because I had to disassemble the car to repair a staved-in window, I added shades made from ribbon. This helped take away that empty hulk look of the car (Photo 10).

The shiny silver prisms in the rest room windows didn’t look right. Real ones were leaded glass with dark, almost black outlines. The silvery prisms are overlays that are easily snapped off. New prisms were printed on transparency film, which was hazed over by rubbing with fine sandpaper on the back side, then installed. Three prisms were added for windows where they were missing (Photo 11, next page).

There is more that could be done on this Pullman concern-
The American Standard sleeper and modified GGD Pullman together. Perfect? No. American Standard doors are a little too narrow and long. The GGD doors are a bit wide. Even prototype passenger cars had some differences.

ing the drip rails on the roof; adding end details such as steam lines, air hoses, uncoupling rods, safety chains and end gates to further enhance it. But does this B&O Golden Gate Pullman now look better? Yes, indeed! (Photo 12)

The American Standard sleeper and modified GGD Pullman together. Perfect? No. American Standard doors are a little too narrow and long. The GGD doors are a bit wide. Even prototype passenger cars had some differences.

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In Living Color...

As a maturing modeler, this Hobo remembers when the first television sets came out. They had a small screen that featured black and white images with a lot of snow depending on your signal strength, the antenna you were using, and electrical interference. When color televisions were introduced they came with what the manufacturers called ‘living color,’ which offered degrees of the colors of the rainbow-violets, indigos, blues, greens, yellows, oranges, and reds. NBC’s famous peacock with its colorful tail soon became an icon. The contrast between black and white sets and the new color televisions was incredible and well received. Color does make the difference and this rule also applies to model railroading.

We tend to model certain time periods. For example, for those who choose the eras of the ‘30s, ‘40s and ‘50s (glory days of steam), the colors represented from those times differ greatly from those of modern times. The bright eye-catching colors of today certainly are out of place with model railroads of times gone by. Most of today’s color schemes just don’t fit into the realistic modeling colors of the past. Almost every building during the steam era was weathered either by the elements of time, or the smoke and fall-out from the industrial revolution. Coal was king. And in addition to being used for locomotive fuel, it was used for heating in homes and factories. Coal meant soot and lots of it. This was the time of the great American industrial revolution and smoke was everywhere. The result and colors by default were dark and drab. This was pre-EPA and there were no rules and regulations concerning smoke, ash, and soot. That caused a universal weathering to almost every standing structure of the time. When modelers consider painting and weathering buildings of this time period, they must take into account the reality of the time. For realistic modeling some suggestions and guidelines are in order to get it right.

Start with the basic four colors: flat black, flat gray, flat white and rust. These are great primer colors for realistic modeling of structures. These colors are what I have found to be the foundation of realistic model painting. Every master modeler has their time tested approach. I suggest that all projects need to start with these basic colors. You will be amazed that using flat black as a primer will add to the depth of the final color coat. In the same regard, using flat white as a primer will give a very different depth to the same final color. Experimentation will provide lots of combinations and quite acceptable results. That is the rewarding aspect of giving attention to color detail.

After applying the color primers, the next stage would be the choice of color for the final top coats. Grays abounded everywhere back in those days. Trim was limited to ‘weathered’ white with a few shades of green and brown. Many buildings of the time were lucky to get an original coat of paint. Times were tough and colors, as well as futures, were not bright. Most money was used for food and not paint. Pretty color was considered a luxury. Life in the Great Depression was indeed depressing, and was reflected in the lack of colors used during that time.

Wood siding abounded everywhere since wood was a plentiful and economical material. Whether board and batten or clapboard, the siding always showed signs of holding up against the elements. Many wood structures standing at the time were built in the previous century and although they were structurally sound, they usually displayed dark colors with lots of browns, grays, and blacks. Weathered wood was very prevalent during steam times. Faded red brick buildings were always common in the towns and villages. Again, they were subjected to smoke and soot and, of course, Mother Nature.

Color photographs of the time period are quite rare, but those available uphold these observations. Old original movies of that time show the same color schemes of rust and brown brick color, cement tans and grays, and the faded and weathered wood tones. Hollywood movies of the time captured the mood and color tones in many of the classic films of the past. Even modern films featuring themes of that period are helpful in that producers attempt to paint the scenes as realistically as possible. After studying the buildings and architecture in the films, it soon becomes apparent that “brand new” and “shiny” are words that were not part of the vocabulary of the past. Instead, dust, grime, and dirt are very much a part of this era and as we consider serious realistic modeling, we need to remember them.

Let’s get back to the painting. After you have applied the undercoat and top coat colors, the final step would be to use modeling washes to achieve the look that we have been discussing. This hobo notes that even though alcohol was outlawed during Prohibition, it will play a very important role in achieving the desired result. Start with about a quarter cup of rubbing alcohol in a small container with a lid. Add a couple of drops of India ink or flat black acrylic paint to the liquid until the alcohol has just a little color. This is the light wash. Now, do the same with some other basic colors like tan, brown, gray, and white and you will have a set of light color washes.

The next step Hobo suggests is that you go back and repeat the alcohol with the added color mixtures. This time add twice as much color to the mixtures and this will produce a darker wash. This will be the medium wash.

Applying the washes can be done with a brush or a common spray bottle. Apply several light washes and wait until the coat is dry before adding another application. Use different combinations of color washes. Use some light and some medium. Apply colors at random. Nature weathers at random. As the washes dry you will notice that the structure’s appearance is greatly enhanced and looks very realistic for this time period.

Congratulations! You now have produced some living color that will certainly make your model railroad come alive.
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Railroad Flatcars

Flatcars are an important part of the current railcar fleet. As freight cars have evolved to meet the needs of customers and the transport of various commodities, so have changes occurred to the flatcar. This basic car (a rectangular wooden floor mounted on a steel frame, complete with couplers, trucks and a brake system) has been stretched, depressed in the center, had side posts and rails added; also had end bulkheads and multiple platforms added; been enclosed, as well as other modifications that do not currently come to mind.

Photo 1 shows train M-BIRTUL1-05A at Palos, AL with two BNSF 60 ft. flats, each loaded with a Komatsu HM400 articulated Dump Truck. Typically, flatcars are used to move loads of this type, as well as materials and vehicles that cannot be transported in other types of railcars.

Photos 2 - 3 show more of the details of these two cars. Take notice of the chains and come-a-longs used on each vehicle to anchor it to a tie-down channel that runs the length of the car. Cribbing and blocking have been installed fore and aft of the vehicles wheels to prevent undesired movement, and when required, blocking will be placed to prevent lateral movement. After these loads were secured and inspected to insure they meet all Federal and Rail System guidelines, they are ready to be moved with the addition of the last detail: authorization and paperwork.

If you look carefully at the photos, you will notice that the vehicle's wheels extend beyond the sides of the flatcars. As a result, these two flats are classified as oversize loads or High-Wides. On the BNSF system a High-Wide shipment requires the train crews to have paperwork detailing the size and dimensions of the shipment as well as the authorized route of movement. A High-Wide clearance will have detailed information and instructions for the train crew regarding areas of close clearance, required actions, and specified routing for the load and the proper placement restrictions, which will usually require these loads to ride at the head-end of the train so the crew can monitor them while in transit.

To complete the story of these two High-Wide loads, they were received in interchange at Birmingham off the Norfolk Southern Railroad from the East coast. The cars were then moved by the BNSF to a location outside of the Tulsa, OK area where they were delivered to the customer for unloading. Once unloaded, the flats were returned to their respective Fleet Pools for their next assignment.

In adapting this prototype practice to the arena of modeling, we're taking a somewhat different approach. If you will look elsewhere in this issue, you will find the article “Modern Loads for the Weaver Flatcar” (page 29). This article developed around the theme of this column; while the loads and tie-down methods are different, the concept remains the same.

As O Scale modelers we have a variety of flatcars to choose from. There are the old AHM 40 ft. flats, the Weaver, Lionel and MTH 50 ft. flats, as well as kit built cars from Lykens Valley and Quality Craft, Brass models from Pecos River and others; and let's not forget the 89 ft. flats from AtlasO. The possibility of loads for these cars is the modeler's option, as a look through the eBay listings for 1:48 and 1:50 diecast vehicles will reveal. Scratchbuilt loads are another possibility, as well as pipe loads of 75 or 80 ft. sections for the 89 ft. flatcars.

The next time you are out and see a train passing by with loaded flatcars, take note of these loads and how they are...
secured to the flat. Even better, take photos to aid you in modeling the details that you may not remember. Articles concerning this subject matter have been printed in many publications over the years, covering the various eras of railroading; so do a little research when you have the time.

Last, but not least, we’re trying something new at OST. We’re making a path to put you, the reader, in touch with the author to pass along comments, ask questions, exchange ideas and see and read information that didn’t make the articles. Since you have read this column, now you will be able to go to the OST Web site at [www.oscalemag.com], then scroll down and click on the OST Blogs. On the right side of the Blogs page, click on Categories and then go to Gene’s Projects. You should then find the heading “Modern Loads for the Weaver flatcar”. Feel free to post your thoughts, ideas, or questions, as it would be my pleasure to respond.

So, until next time, “Roll’em.”
I’m sure there are O Scale modelers out there like myself, who have been operating empty Weaver flatcars on their lay-outs. Well, empties don’t produce revenue for the carrier and a flatcar with a custom load is much more interesting.

Let’s begin this project by taking your Weaver flatcar and completing it to the standards for your layout. In my case this was the installation of Kadee® #805 Couplers, Intermountain 33 inch metal wheelsets, and Microscale’s ACI & Lube plates. Don’t forget to install the handbrake in the lowered position (Photo 1).

Step 2 is to weather the car, either lightly or heavily; it’s your option. I varied the weathering on each of my cars using gray and oxide primers, as well as flat black aerosol spray paints. The spray job was either reflected off a piece of cardboard or directly sprayed from a distance that would allow for a dusting of the cars. Brian Scace had a good article on weathering flatcar decks in OST #34, page59, that you might check out for further tips.

Step 3 would be the selection of the loads for your flatcar. I used two versions of the 1:50 scale John Deere tractors by Athearn and two versions of the 1:48 scale, Military Hummers by Classic Armor, all of which were purchased at my local Wal-Mart (Photo 2).

Now the hard work begins. Make a light pencil line on the floor of the car from end to end and side to side showing the centerline and middle of the car. Now we need to measure the length and width of the vehicle’s wheelbase to determine the placement of the blocking and chocks (Photo 3). Once we have the dimensions in hand, do a little math to calculate how to space the loads equally. Once your spacing is determined, draw a light pencil line down the length of the cars, marking the outside point of the vehicle’s wheels. Now do the same for the width of the flatcar for the placement of each vehicle.

Step 4 is the fabrication and attachment of wheel blocks and chocking. I made all my chocking and blocks from scrap
balsawood that was on hand. This is done on the prototype by using any size lumber available from 2x4s up to custom cut 12x12s. With your blocking and wheel chocks ready, CA these to the flatcar deck in the appropriate locations (Photo 4).

I went for the look that these cars were in assigned service to each manufacturer. Once the vehicles were driven off the flatcars, they are returned to the same manufacturer for reloading. Prior to moving on to Step 5 you may want to do a little extra weathering to hide your pencil marks.

Step 5 is the mounting and tie-down of your vehicles. Builders in Scale chain can be used (I’m still looking for mine), or a heavy gauge black sewing thread will simulate steel cables. I found it easier to mount the center vehicles first (Photo 5), complete the tie-downs, then move on to the vehicles on the ends. I used an X pattern for the tie-down cables on the front and rear axle of each vehicle to eliminate lateral motion (Photo 6). I also tried different methods of securing the cables to the car’s deck. I began by using the car’s side stake pockets and changed to using brass wire bent in a “U” shape, attached to holes drilled in the car deck that simulate anchor brackets welded or mounted to the deck of the car.

Step 6 is the final details and touchup. Cable clamps are small brass wire bent in a “U” shape and attached with CA to secure the ends of each cable. A final paint detail is to paint the cable clamps silver to simulate new clamps, or a rust color to simulate old clamps (Photo 7).

You should now have a completed car ready for revenue service. But first, a few things to consider: You could add scrap choking and tie-down cables, as this is common debris found on flatcars. The weight of these cars now exceeds the recommended minimum and placing the load along the centerline of the car is critical for proper balance. Stay realistic; don’t overload your flatcar with a load heavier than the car is designed to carry. The heavier and more unstable the load, the more it will need to be secured.

Loads were added to each of these three flatcars at a cost of less than twenty dollars each. The time involved completing a single car was two evenings or more if you start with a new car out of the box. For skill level, a little experience working with modeling tools will help. Your satisfaction will be very high, knowing that you have a custom loaded flatcar that you created yourself.

While writing this article, the idea hit me to create an empty pool flat complete with old cribbing, chock blocks and cables or chains returning to manufacturer to be reloaded. I’ll throw this idea out to the guys in the train crew lobby and see what they think. Until the next time, “Have Fun.”
Roger Bernier of Plainville, Connecticut, sent this photo of a reefer he built using paper car sides from the January 1949 issue of Model Railroader. Roger says he has a large supply of older back issues and he goes through them periodically looking for new cars to build. This car has a basic body made of basswood with metal fittings from Bowser and Athearn trucks.

Bob Dupont of San Mateo, California, sent this photo of a wheel and tie car that he scratchbuilt for his Tall Pine Timber Company. The car is standard gauge. We featured Bob’s layout in OST #15.
In July 2005, Union Pacific Railroad announced that they would be decorating six special locomotives to honor the people and the companies of the major railroads that had merged with UP. Each locomotive number signifies the year that the railroad became a part of the Union Pacific system. All new for 2008. See your Williams dealer to purchase one today!

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Brick Pillars.
Making brick pillars is easy using my method. First decide what size pillar you need and select a piece of styrene that matches that size. Then bend plastic brick-sheet around the piece of styrene, one side at a time, until the glue dries. I use German “Faller” glue but any styrene glue is acceptable. The brick sheet I use is either Model Builder Supply (Canadian) or Slaters Plastikard (British). Both are very good and accept styrene glue easily.

Clamp the newly bent side.

Plastic brick sheeting.

Use as many clamps as needed.

Glue one side, then scribe the next side before bending.
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**38 • O Scale Trains - May/June '08**
Agrees With Our Changes

I completely concur with the decisions you have made about this magazine and its contents. You have found a balance and serve a real need in the O Scale community. I was very pleased to see a whole page of great traction models and applaud your decision to retain the excellent Roger Parker columns. Your philosophy of presenting excellence in modeling makes the magazine have real substance and value. That I believe is the secret of your success. Thank you for another fine magazine. I particularly enjoyed the article about making a model of a box-cab and the effort the author made to turn it into a fine running engine. This is a guy after my own heart, he could have simply installed two ready-made Q-Car trucks but he wanted the trucks to be equalized. An excellent article with good photos and good expository writing. Tell him next time to use Q-Car’s brass pulleys and spring drives. Much easier than those sprockets and chains. I know I have quite a few of each. Great cover. Again.

Gerald Brothers (via e-mail)

Mike replies: Thanks Gerald. We try for a great magazine with every issue.

About that Empress

Weaver’s CP “Empress” 4-6-4 needs a bit of tinkering to improve its pulling power. I found that the coil spring on the lead truck kingpin was strong enough to push the front drivers above the rails. I removed both the spring & its pin. The lead truck is mounted in a 3-Rail manner, with both a rear yoke and a front swinging yoke. These can be adjusted or one removed as desired to increase vertical movement.

In addition to removing the lead truck spring, I took a large-diameter plastic pill container and filled it with #9 lead shot. Some lead wool stuffed into the smokebox positioned the weight just in front of the gearbox over the #1 driver. (Modelers with the necessary equipment could cast a heavier, solid cylindrical weight.) My weight might not be exactly balanced, but it definitely improved the loco’s pulling power.

To add to your streamlined PRR K4 review, O Scale brass models (I think perhaps in 2-Rail in addition to 3-Rail) of #3768 were made by Weaver during the 1990s painted DGLE. Unpainted 2-Rail brass models were imported by ALCO Models during the 1980s. I’m not familiar with the Weaver Model, but the ALCO model’s drivers were closer to scale than those of the MTH Premier Line K4s.

J. W. “Woody” Mathews (via e-mail)

(For those of you who aren’t Slobbering Pennsy Fans, DGLE stands for Dark Green Locomotive Enamel. - Ed.)

Likes Puzzles

“Pieces of the Puzzle” by Mike Cougill was a great article and food for thought on layout design. His blending of a prototype into model form and the ideas behind his decisions are well thought out. The only problem is waiting two months for Part Two. Keep the traction. Anything that rides on two rails is of interest to this wide-gauger.

Richard Cooke, Marquette, MI (via e-mail)

He does too.

Congrats on your P48 series in OST! “Puzzle Piece #1” really hit home with me. I have always been a fan of shortline railroads (the former North Stratford RR) and switch engines, specifically 44-ton and 70-ton units.

Your series has inspired me to start work (again!) on my 2’x8’ P48 switching layout. The trackplan is a variation of the Pine Ridge layout on Carl Arendt’s website. I took a short cut and used Old Pullman turnouts without the ties and laid them to P48 using my scratchbuilt gauges. I’m looking forward to the rest of your series and will try to provide photos of my layout as I progress.

Matt Hogan, West Chester, PA (via e-mail)

Mike replies: Thanks for the comments, guys. There are a few big picture ideas I’m trying to convey with the series, which I’ll touch on in the final installment.

More, more Proto48

I very much want to see more on Proto48 in O Scale Trains! The main reason I subscribe to your magazine is to learn more about it, and the latest products and developments. When I get a new OST in the mail, I go straight to your column on finescale modeling. We see modeling and detailing of rolling stock get better all the time. Prototype-scale wheels, flanges, rails, ties, and track gauge are an inevitable further step in that advancement. I never cease to be amazed at how realistic P48 rolling stock and railways look in photographs with realistic scenery. I appreciate your pioneering efforts in this further development of 1/48th-scale. Keep up the good work!

William R. White, Newton, Iowa (via e-mail)

A 3-Railer Speaks

One recent comment regarding O Scale Trains’ coverage was about the contrast between 2-Rail Scale O modelers and Hi-Rail or 3-Rail Scale modelers. The words used to characterize Hi-Rail by the letter’s author were “toy trains.” While most of us involved as 3-Rail O Gauge hobbyists do enjoy toy trains, their history, and the involvement of kids and grandkids in the hobby, there are a lot of us just as (deadly?) serious about our railroad modeling as the devotee of 2-Rail Scale O railroading. The scale size of our trains, scenery, structures, and interest in operations based on our prototype are just as serious for hobbyists like me as for most of the 2-Rail fraternity, and we value the same things in a magazine. We have much more in common with the tradition-bound 2-Railer than he (mostly he) may believe—including being tradition-bound ourselves! Thanks for including us in your excellent publication.

A subscriber from near day one to O Scale Trains.

Don Thieman, Washougal, Washington (via e-mail)

Mike replies: We received several comments similar to Don’s. I regret that many of you were offended by Mr. Kelly’s comments. We don’t publish such letters to stir up controversy, but only to reflect a variety of viewpoints. Mr. Kelly’s comments about toy trains does not reflect the position of OST, only his own bias. I agree: bickering about whose approach to O Scale modeling is best, constitutes a complete waste of everyone’s time and talents. It adds nothing of value to the hobby. As Managing Editor I’m taking a stand: Divisive comments about another’s preferences and approach to modeling will no longer have a home in OST. Constructive criticism that adds to our knowledge base as modelers is always welcome. Name calling and snide remarks are not.

With regard to 2-Rail, 3-Rail and Finescale, it seems to me that each benefits the others. 3-Rail brings products to market that wouldn’t see the light of day otherwise. With an increasing demand for prototype fidelity among 3-Railers, 2-Rail and P48 benefit by having cars that are faithfully dimensioned and detailed; forming a solid foundation for additional detailing.

The practice of P48 encourages a closer look at the prototype, which benefits all by widening the knowledge base for modelers and manufacturers alike, thereby making it more likely that we’ll all see better quality rolling stock with a greater variety of car types to choose from. In the meantime folks, let’s just all relax and enjoy the hobby.

continued on next page.
A Useful Tip

Here’s a tip - I’ve been able to work on a lot of scenery this winter and have been using scenic cement and matte medium sprayed out of bottles to hold things in place. It seems no matter how well I cleaned the spray/pump nozzle, within two or three used it would either clog or lock up. I’ve found if I take the whole nozzle assembly and put it in a bucket of water upside down and then pump it full of clear water and leave it in there it does not clog up. When I go to use it next time I simply turn it up and pump the sprayer until the water is gone and then use it. Hope this helps others.

Thanks for a great magazine!

Very truly yours,

Phil Rowe

Errata!

We printed the wrong photo in OST #36 for Neville Rossiter’s Cab Control article. This is the photo of the interlock module.

Deichman’s Depot

ATLAS O Scale 2-Rail

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In Part 1 we looked at the thinking process behind the Indiana & Whitewater. I compared the choices made to pieces of a puzzle that when put together makes up the picture of your layout. Continuing that theme in this article, we talk about how those choices are fleshed out into a narrow shelf layout.

Puzzle Piece #4: Layout height.

How high to build one’s layout is as personal a decision as what to model in the first place, in that there is no one size fits all answer. If you host a regular crew for operating sessions, the debate gets complicated since any height chosen will be too high or too low for somebody. Planning a multi-level or mushroom design? Then life gets even more complicated. Clearly though, current trends in the hobby as a whole, point to building higher, around 45”- 56”, being popular now. I’m not here to set off the layout-height-debate brushfire. The obvious conclusion to all the haggling and handwringing is simple: it’s your layout. Build things to your comfort zone and let visitors and guests accommodate themselves as needed.

I set the base height of the lowest track at 56” off the floor. All other tracks are a 1/2” higher at 56.5”. This puts trains about ten inches below my standing eye level; close enough to clearly see the action, line up switch points and do other chores. Any higher for me and working cars on the rearmost tracks would be difficult. During construction of the track, I used a couple of homemade platforms to stand on for a more comfortable reach, and using one during operation will make uncoupling cars easier on the farthest track from the front edge. While it might seem excessively high, this height helps recreate memories from childhood of watching a PRR local switch the industries in my hometown. The spur tracks ran along both sides of a street next to my house, and I could see everything going on up close and personal. I could be a part of the action without getting in the way. Having a similar viewpoint for the layout is very satisfying.

A higher layout also allows for storage opportunities underneath. I put my workbench under one end of the layout to save space (OST #34). Bookcases, storage shelves or other configurations can be tucked away down under too. I really can’t stand seeing a bunch of clutter underneath the layout, so I built a knee wall to support the benchwork. Set back from the front edge of the layout eight inches, sheathed with some beadboard paneling and painted to match the fascia, it eliminates legs completely and gives a finished appearance to things (Photo 1). Some forward-thinking modelers actually plan access room for under-the-layout maintenance when designing such things. I left a couple of reach in holes for a pair of wall outlets, trimming them out to match the rest of the woodwork in the room (Photo 2). I’m not too worried about maintenance access since I use above ground switch throws and linkages. Everything critical is either on top or easily reached from below (Photos 3-4).

Puzzle Piece #5: Narrow Benchwork.

Another clear trend in layout design is narrow width benchwork. Depending on what you’re modeling, a narrow shelf has many advantages over deeper benchwork. Not convinced? How deep do you think the scene in Photo 5 is?
the center of the track to the backdrop it’s only 14”. Where appropriate, a narrow shelf puts you right up to the action, and the scenery need not suffer from the lack of depth. I would suggest that in designing a new layout, we seriously consider a different approach.

Each modeling scale has its own distinct advantage over the others. For O Scale it’s the size. Our models are big enough to appreciate the detailing. This size factor is often considered a disadvantage in that you can’t stuff as much layout into a given space. However, when planned for deliberately, this size can be used to great effect.

My benchwork is only 24” wide for the most part. There’s nothing sacred about this dimension, it just happens to be a width I prefer. In O Scale, this depth represents 96 scale feet. Not a lot is it? However, this lets me focus on the right-o-way, putting the trains up close where I can enjoy them. Initially I was dismayed at how much room the track alone was going to take out of this depth. I guess I was still thinking in HO dimensions. Space got tight near the shingle plant, with only enough room for a shallow building flat between the track and the back wall. But that’s a compromise I willingly accepted. Remember the design criteria of following a train up close. Having everything easily reached was of greater importance to me than deep scenes or full depth buildings. If I’d modeled a stretch of rural single track, I might have gone even narrower, say down to 16”, as I did near the entrance to the staging case. Focusing on the track and immediate surroundings also let me detail the scenery to a high degree. I model trees to full-scale heights, some nearly 24” tall. This looks very realistic and gives a sense of scale to the buildings, trains and other elements in the scene (Photo 6).

I didn’t waste any time wondering whether L-girder or conventional grid style was the better choice, though grid style does work better for narrower sections. The objective was a strong, stable platform to build on, not how it was done. I made my benchwork out of 3/4” birch plywood, ripping the sheets into four inch wide strips with my table saw. The birch
ply is a joy to work with, being straighter and more stable than the traditional 1x pine. Overall it might even be less expensive too. I built three 2’ x 8’ boxes to cover the 24’ length of the layout. I assembled them with glue and drywall screws, using a driver bit in my drill. Cross pieces are 16” on center and support a 3/4” thick subroadbed with a doubled layer of 1/2” Celotex insulation board on top.

In the corner where the branch leaves the old main and crosses Canal Road, I curved the fascia panel for a nice seamless look. The fascia is made of 1/4” luan plywood painted a deep maroon that sets off the winter grasses and colors of the scenery. At each end of the layout I extended the fascia all the way up to the ceiling where it meets the lighting valance. These extensions are like the wings in a theater, which help to frame the scene and disguise the transition from the modeled portion of the layout to the staging area. You can see this in Photo 7. These pieces will be painted to match the sky color on the inside and the fascia on the outside. This style of benchwork lends itself to a linear design quite naturally, and leaves the rest of the room open for ease of movement and other uses. I made no concessions to portability or moving. We’re in our retirement home, so I didn’t worry about it. If circumstances change, well it’s a model railroad, not a priceless work of art.

Of course, benchwork depth is greatly determined by the scene you’re trying to represent. A yard or roundhouse area will obviously require more depth. Many modelers build a free form type of benchwork where the depth varies according to the scene being modeled or the number of tracks required. L-girder construction is a good choice for such benchwork and opens up many design options.

Layout design, height, and the depth of the benchwork all work together to create an enjoyable experience of model railroading.

Now that we have this long shelf to run on, we’ll consider how scenery can maximize our enjoyment of things. Shelf layouts ask a lot from the scenery and Part 3 will look at those considerations.

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After the article featuring my Ironbound RR ran in OST #33, I received several requests for information about the layout’s backgrounds. Having spent a significant amount of time on this particular phase of modeling, I learned a few things. First, backgrounds require a different set of skills from model and layout building, and secondly, it’s more art than craft. But armed with good advice, a modeler with a modicum of artistic ability should be able to create an impressive background for his pike. Failing that, find someone who has the ability and refer ‘em to this article.

**General Principles**

Why do many layout backgrounds look unrealistic or not seem to match the layout’s foreground? They generally overlook an important principle: In real life, the farther away from the viewer’s eye an object is, the more its color will be affected by the atmosphere. Daytime atmosphere will generally shift colors towards the blue end of the spectrum; so that even a bright white structure will be grayed-down by distance. But bluish-gray colors can be a bit cold and even unpleasant. I take some artist’s prerogative by pushing my colors more toward the neutral tans. This is essentially a matter of taste, and the color temperature of the lighting in your layout room. Never, ever use raw, un-tinted colors. (Unless it’s supposed to be a bright neon sign!) Using bright, vivid, colors is the surest way to create toy-like backgrounds.

If you are not sure how to gray-down (the correct term is shade) a color, the easiest way is to add some of its opposite or complementary color. For example, in painting, if you want to gray-down red, you would add a small amount of green until you get the shade you want. To gray down green, you add some red. Same is true for blue/orange, yellow/purple and all the colors between. [A color wheel, a tool used by artists and available at any art supply store, is very helpful in deter-
mining what colors are opposite each other – Ed.] Shading a color can also be done by adding a small amount of black, but often black paints and inks aren’t truly neutral and may turn green or even an ugly shade of purple when mixed with lighter colors. Tinting means adding white to a hue, which comes in handy when trying to make your scenes fade into the distant haze. The same principles work when adjusting your color photos using a computer photo-manipulation application. Keep in mind that in the real world, distant objects do not appear as sharp as close objects. The atmosphere dulls sharp edges and even adds some shimmer to them. The hotter the day, and the lower the elevation, the more noticeable the effect is.

The first step in creating your background may be the most time-consuming part of the process: finding photos of scenes you think will look right on your layout. Ideally, they will be photos of the actual area you want to model. Let’s toss this idea around a little before going on to the how-to stuff.

Research

This can be done over a long period of time and between other projects. Start collecting photos of the areas your railroad runs through. Some sources are calendars, books, geographical magazines, slide and print collections, and anywhere else you find large numbers of good-quality photos. Don’t worry, you don’t have to destroy the books; images can be scanned without removing them from books.

Get down to the particulars: what kind of scenes or structures are on your layout? Say you have a station scene that’s three feet wide. You’ll need a photo of whatever kind of background that station area would have had in the era you

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Photo #2 Warehouse: The sky and clouds image is a large print mounted on foam-core and acts as the field against which the rest of the pieces are mounted. The sprawling refinery-type complex with its large central tank is a commercially available background print (the only section which was not created on my computer) mounted on foam-core and carefully cut out. This is mounted about 1/2” from the sky background. The Gilroy Dist. Warehouse is a “flat” type O Scale kit which is a mere few inches deep. The trick here was to “grey down” the refinery photo because it’s a little too vivid and purplish right off the shelf. I used a series of thinned-down white sprays and even rub-on tinting powders to accomplish this. There are several parallel tracks in the foreground as well as a fully-dimensional junk yard which has the American type crane working in it. Piles of crushed cars, fences and such help to layer the scene as well. But what you see in this picture is no more than 10” deep. The stormy sky helps to give the scene character.
are modeling. If you can't find the actual scene find one that's similar that can be modified. This scene of the Ironbound's East Newark station in Photo 1 is a bit tricky because it's a corner situation. The most distant background, which includes the large structure toward the left side and various other components visible on the right, is a large print made in sections, mounted on foam-core (a stable, lightweight sheet stock), and literally semi-curved (several flat facets angled to give the impression of a curve) around the corner. The Woolworth building on the far left is a commercial kit cut in half depth-wise and mounted against the background. The station itself is a shallow Berkshire Valley drugstore kit which has a track run-

Photo #3 Factories: Here, the sky and distant buildings are on a large sheet of foam-core. The old coaling tower is a photo print mounted on foam-core, completely cut out like a silhouette, and mounted about 1/2" forward of the mural. The large factory structure on the left, theoretically closer to the foreground than the tower, is a flat about 4" deep. The large structure on the right is about 3/4 full-depth with the rear quarter cut off and mounted at an angle against the background. The oil tanks are modified to be about two-thirds the full depth of the kits. All objects forward of these are full depth. They all blend together, with the more distant objects fading more and more toward a warm grey and sky color, to convey a feeling of a large factory area in somewhat polluted city air. What you see in this photo is a mere 10" or so deep.
ning behind it as well as in front of it, where you can see the RDC. The newsstand, lamps and other railroady objects act as a middle-ground, helping to tie the back and foregrounds together. The stone retaining wall in the foreground is also a print mounted on foam-core which is in turn mounted to a wooden sub-structure. The depth of what you see in this scene is perhaps 18” to the deepest part of the corner but much shallower on either side. There are additional tracks running in the foreground which are out of the picture, below the retaining wall.

Maybe you have an industrial area and want a large refinery that will compliment the foreground structures. A good photo of a refinery complex is far more believable than anything you can build in three dimensions. The sprawling refinery-type complex with its large central tank in Photo 2 is a commercially available background print, the only section which was not created on my computer. The Gilroy Dist. Warehouse is a flat type O Scale kit just a few inches deep. The trick here was to gray down the refinery photo because it’s a little too vivid and purplish right off the shelf. I used a series of thinned-down white sprays and even rub-on tinting powders to accomplish this. The sky and clouds is a large print, again mounted on foam-core, and acts as the field against which the rest of the pieces are mounted. The same thing applies to forest areas, mountains, cityscapes, highways and riverside scenes. Trust these to a photographic background and suddenly they become expansive, highly detailed and totally believable within the context of a layout scene.

And remember, they needn’t be totally flat.

Size

Obviously, a background should extend the full length of your layout, including any center baffles if you have a peninsula or an island layout. But just how tall does a background need to be? In general, the larger or lower your layout is, the taller your backgrounds will need to be in order to give the impression of real distance on your pike. For example, an O Scale layout roughly at eye-level can get away with a background 12” to 16” high and still look right (provided there are no structures or hills higher than that) and especially if there is a soffit or other top frame over your layout. Whereas, a layout
that’s waist-high will need a background that reaches at least to your eye-level to be effective; even better if it tops out at or above your head. This may result in backgrounds 24” or more in height! Believe me, producing background murals 12” high is a heck of a lot more practical - perhaps I should say easier and less expensive than 24” backgrounds. The backgrounds on the Ironbound RR run from about 12” to a maximum of 24” depending upon the height of the structures in the foreground.

**Perspective**

This is a tricky aspect in creating an effective background, one which cannot be stressed too strongly.

If your layout is at or near eye-level, your background should also appear to be at eye-level. In other words, you don’t want to be looking at an eye-level scene in the foreground of your layout and have the background suddenly appear to be a looking-down or looking-up view. This is jarring to the eye and looks extremely unrealistic because it is! The real world does not exhibit more than one perspective for any given pair of eyes at any given point-of-view.

So when you gather your photos for reference, try to find images which reflect the same or very nearly the same angle of view, or else you will end up with a poor marriage between foreground and background elements.

Other elements of perspective are size and horizontal angle. A background tree which is supposed to be a quarter mile away ought not to appear as tall or large as a tree in or near your foreground. This may seem obvious but I am surprised at the backgrounds I see which seem to defy the physics of optics! In this same regard, one may selectively make use of smaller scale items in near-background scenes. For example, I have a scene where a large trestle crosses a river. As the layout is not very deep at this point, I was able to use an HO Scale tugboat, placing it near the background. When viewed at eye-level it appears to be quite a distance behind the trestle, even though it’s almost underneath it.

S Scale structures, vehicles and figures can be placed in the background, as long as there are no tracks or other O Scale elements right up against them. These are especially effective when modeling mountain scenes where the structures are intended to be distant from the viewer. Let’s face it; any mountain we can build, no matter how high, is just a small hill in O Scale. Even a ten-foot high O Scale mountain represents a paltry 480 scale feet. And how many of you build ten-foot-high mountains? I live up almost exactly at 5,000 feet. That would be more than 100 actual feet in O Scale. But, by carefully blending your foreground foothills with the right background images, you can create a believable scene showing your O Scale Espee Daylight streamliner cruising past Mt. Shasta.

**Theme and Era**

After establishing the height of your background, you will have to map the image content. This is of course dictated by the theme of your railroad. Obviously someone modeling a timber harvesting operation will want a background very different from a modeler trying to recreate the steel mill environment of, say, the P&LE, and certainly different from the Florida coast passenger lines. Be true to your theme. Visitors to your layout may not say anything to you but they have a knack for spotting things like Santa Fe Warbonnet F-units running past the rolling green hills of Pennsylvania or New York State. The Ironbound RR runs through the crowded urban and industrial areas in and around Newark, NJ and the background reflects this 100%.

You will also need to decide what era your background should suggest. Rocky Mountain, deep woods or desert lines can get away with images from a broad time span. Except for details of human manufacture, they don’t change that much over time; whereas, someone modeling a certain city, station area or seaport will have to try and find images that match his layout’s era. Otherwise you will have modern structures behind turn-of-the-century trains, or 2007 Chevies running on the streets of a 1950’s scene.

**Assembling the Pieces**

Once I have gathered enough of the right stuff photo-wise, I scan the photos at approximately 240 dots per inch or dpi. More than that and the file sizes become too unwieldy as you add them all together. Smaller size photos may require higher dpi scanning to compensate. After images are scanned, I digitally combine them (using a computer image-manipulation software such as Adobe Photoshop) to make a long, linear montage or a series of edge-matching files.

Now the elements of the montage get blended together into a believable scene. This is where an art background really comes in handy, as by the time I am done it’s really more art than photo. I usually have to add and subtract elements of the different photos, correct size and color mismatches, and even correct perspective.

Some sections of the backdrop may also have photos that are scaled and cut out cookie-cutter style, and then mounted right onto the backdrop, sticking out about 1/2” so as to lend more dimension to the background. In Photo 3 the factories, the sky and distant buildings are on a mural mounted on a large sheet of foam-core. The old coalage tower is a photo print mounted on foam-core, cut out like a silhouette, and mounted about 1/2” forward of the mural. The large factory structure on the left, theoretically closer to the foreground than the tower, is a flat about four inches deep. The large structure on the right is about 3/4 full-depth with the rear quarter cut off and mounted at an angle against the background. The oil tanks are modified to be about two-thirds the full depth of the kits. All objects forward of these are full depth. They all blend together, with the more distant objects fading more and more toward a warm gray and sky color, to convey a feeling of a large factory area in somewhat polluted city air. What you see in this photo is a mere 10 inches or so deep. As elements of the photos recede from the foreground they are ghosted out so they appear to fade into the lovely Jersey haze.

**Printing**

When all the photos are blended to my satisfaction, they are printed out on a large-format printer. They can just as easily be printed on a regular letter-size printer by tiling the files to 8” x 10” and then mounting them and hiding the seams as
best you can. When viewed from a few feet away, the seams won't show if you are crafty with your mounting. It's also a lot easier to mount letter-size prints than larger prints. The best way to mount prints is with a waxer, which allows you to use a slip-sheet between the print and the foam-core, thereby allowing you to make minor adjustments to the positioning of each print before it is burnished down. But most of us don't have access to large-format waxers, so we use spray adhesive.

**Mounting**

All sorts of materials have been used over the years to create backgrounds for layouts. These range from a roll of heavy paper, linoleum or vinyl sheeting to curvable hardboard or other sheet stock. Flexibility is important so that backgrounds can be curved, thereby avoiding deep, dark corners! Some modelers even paint their backgrounds directly onto the wall behind their layout. I do not recommend this unless you are a DaVinci.

Since my backgrounds are printed in sections on medium-weight matte paper about 17” x 22”, I decided to mount each piece on 1/4” foam-core sheet stock which is quite stable and has the added virtue of being very lightweight. These are available from discount art supply outfits in packs of about a dozen large sheets which I cut down to the size I want. They are mounted to the walls by pins and in some cases by double-sided foam tape. The foam-core sections are butted side-by-side. Seams can be hidden by just slightly overlapping the background prints – about 1/8” will do the job nicely. Mount the prints to the foam-core with 1/8” overhang on one edge. After mounting, the prints are sprayed with a fixative to make them more moisture-and-fade-resistant.

Your background may be installed, but the job’s not done. The bottom edge that meets the back of the layout must be well-camouflaged. This can be done with bushes, fences, walls, structures, slight rises in the terrain and so forth. Try to place as many appropriate objects as possible between the track and the background. They will all add up to a well-blended and believable scene. In Photo 4 the CNJ TrainMaster and passenger train crossing the bascule bridge is a print mounted on foam-core, about 1/2” forward of the background itself. Double-sided foam tape is used to mount the pieces. The foreground caboose and boxcar are real O Scale models, running on track which is only an inch or two forward of the TrainMaster scene, with some grass, poles and other objects between the two to help blend the visual elements. The deck girder bridge only has the forward side in full dimensions; the rear is a flat print. This scene is only about 8 inches deep.

Sure, it’s a bit challenging to create authentic-looking backgrounds that fit your particular layout, but no doubt about it; it’s worth the effort. A layout without a background is a layout set in the middle of nowhere. Now step back and watch your trains run through a series of believable scenes which will add considerably to the enjoyment of your layout.
Many excellent track cleaning cars are presently on the market, but we trolley modelers may have to make our own. Here are some ideas for converting a snow sweeper into a useable track cleaner.

First I obtained two rollers from Aztec Manufacturing Co. and had a local machine shop core them at 1/8". The owner of Aztec, John Claudino, was very encouraging and informed me that these rollers needed to be mounted at a 1-1/2 degree angle. They come in two styles; one is called a Cratex Roller and is abrasive, the other is called a Sider- winder and is canvas covered. The canvas is washable and replaceable, while the abrasive one is easily cleaned. Check with Aztec for details.

Drawings and photos of sweepers are easily obtained. *Trolley Talk Volume III* is an excellent source. Sweepers came in several variations depending on the builder. You, as the modeler, will have to establish many of your own measurements along with window and door treatments. I departed from the prototype in order to provide a robust frame and closely mounted set of rollers. The rollers are allowed to drop out of their mounting when the car is picked up so that they can be easily swapped out or cleaned and remounted. The accompanying drawings show the measurements I used (unmarked measurements will depend on the other measurements you choose), but you should consider these only as a starting point. For instance, the width is going to be determined by how you wish to mount the wheels, what drive you will use, and the mounting of the rollers. Length is also under the same constraints. How close you mount the rollers to the drive wheels depends on the minimum radius of your railway. Door width and height will depend on how you model these items. I used Grandt Line windows on the sides and cut the end windows to closely match. I used a 4' wide door and a 2-1/2' small door. The walls are 6-1/2' high and 20-1/2' long. All nominal dimensions such as these are in scale feet and inches.

**Frame and Chassis**

Once you have settled on your basic measurements (see Fig. 1), start by making the chassis from one piece of 1/8" thick basswood and frame it with pieces of 3/32" x 3/16" brass I beam. The prototype chassis is usually angled to match the angle of the brooms, but I chose to make mine symmetrical to present a nice appearance and match the cabin structure. I made the front and back I beams by cutting a slot at the points where I wished to bend them, then bent the beam to the required angle, and filed it for a proper fit. I soldered the ends together which results in a sturdy frame on which to mount the wheels, motor, cabin, etc. I placed the pedestals just far enough apart to allow the wheel assemblies to be held firmly without binding (Photo 1). You need to be careful to get these pedestals squarely aligned. I attached the pedestals with small wood screws. This allows me to unscrew one side in order to place the wheel assemblies into or remove them from the pedestals (which you will need to do for painting) with a very small jeweler's screwdriver. Just loosen the screws, don't take them all the way out.

For the drive unit, I chose two of Northwest Shortline's newest ball-bearing gear boxes: #750-6, 14:1, 1/8" axle. These have slotted drive shafts that can be coupled together with a simple bit of brass tubing having an inside diameter of slightly more than 1/8". With the pedestals spaced at a distance of 6' 6", the two short ends of the shafts are just about perfect and one long end will be used to hold the plastic gear. When you order these gearboxs, you need to specify what size (diameter, width and insulated or not) of wheel you want them to put on these gear boxes. I use 36" wheels, 0.135" thick, uninsulated. The plastic gear from Grandt Line will just fit on the drive shaft of one of the gearboxes. Determine the position of this gear and then cut a hole just above it large enough to pass the plas-
tic chain through and large enough so that you can maneuver the chain into place later. The motor I used is quite large with a heavy flywheel; so I mounted it to balance its weight over the wheel assembly. The plastic gear on the motor will have to be shimmed with a small piece of brass tubing, 1/8” diameter, 0.014” wall thickness. Glue this in place with CA, being careful to keep it away from the motor bearing. Make a cradle for the motor out of thin brass plate. Bend it to shape and line it with double-sided foam tape. This will hold the motor quite securely and dampen sound and vibration. Now place one piece of the same tape on the bottom of the cradle but don’t remove the cover from the tape just yet. Position the motor for proper alignment of the drive and slide very thin pieces of wood under it until the chain is fairly snug but turns freely and it does not bind the wheel assemblies. (These assemblies will move just a little in the wheel bearings.) Glue the wood in place but don’t mount the motor until after you have painted the chassis.

**Carbody**

The sides are made of a sandwich of plain (inner) and scribed (outer) panels (Fig. 2). Make the plain panel by cutting to the desired length and height, and then mark the location of the window openings and door placement. These openings will be cut out after placing the scribed panels.

Make cuts in the scribed outer panels for the windows (Fig. 2). Place one piece of scale 2x6 basswood along the top of the plain inner panel. Glue the scribed outer panels on top of the inner panel using heavy weights until dry. Place two pieces of stripwood at the bottom of the door openings, then line the inner panel using heavy weights until dry. Place two pieces of plain inner panel. Glue the scribed outer panels on top of the 2). Place one piece of scale 2x6 basswood along the top of the window openings and door placement. These openings will be cut out after placing the scribed panels.

Cut pieces of scribed outer panels to the approximate height cut out the window openings; then separate the end pieces. Cut pieces of scribed outer panels to the approximate height and carefully fit these to the end panels and glue. Now glue each of the end panels to the upper braces and the sides forming the enclosed end of the carbody. Insert the lower braces and glue in place so that they are flush with the sides. Repeat at the other end. When dry, the bottoms of the ends can be sanded to length.

Next cut and glue lengths of scale 1x2 for the ledges on the windows. Cut and glue three pieces of scale 3x4 wood to the tops of the windows against the roof. Now outline the windows with pieces of wood sized to fit. Put two sizeable beams along the bottoms of the sides, remembering that this will be handled quite a bit and will be used to mount the cabin to the chassis. Now make sure the cabin fits on the chassis. Finish the roof to fit at this time.

The drawings and photos I have show that a link and pin type of coupling was used. For modeling purposes, I needed a good stout coupling so I used a device that many traction lines used, a coupler with a hole in it that was temporarily pinned to the regular coupler in order to provide the swing necessary to get around really sharp radius curves. Simply cut the slotted end off a regular Kadee® coupler and drill a mounting hole in the short neck that is left. Now make two mounting devices as shown in Fig. 4 with the measurements adjusted to mount the coupler at the proper height. Two screws will hold this device to the car and the two braces will be mounted into holes in the chassis. The “pin” to hold the coupler can be a very small screw (0-80) with a hex head for appearance.

Make the roller cradles as shown in Fig. 5 slotted to fit the roller axles. The axles are brass rod and washers sized for a snug fit. Mount this to the chassis at a 1-1/2 degree angle using two very small screws and epoxy cement for a strong attachment. Check for clearance of the screw heads and rollers. You may have to use countersunk flat-head screws.

Attach the cabin to the chassis using countersunk 2-56 flat-head machine screws. Check for fit. Make two scribed wood platforms, one for each end. Attach the platforms with epoxy, sand to fit when dry.

continued on next page
Several nut-bolt-washer castings will give the chassis a finished look. Paint and finish the cabin and chassis. I made a roofwalk from scale 2x10 boards with 2x3 cross braces (sanded to fit the roof contour). Finish this with a centered trolley pole base and two hold down hooks. Not shown are grabirons up one side next to the front door that form a ladder for roof access.

I wire my cars for DCC. The decoder I selected is a 1.8 amp device which should be plenty for this critter. It fits nicely against the motor cradle using double sided foam tape (Photo 2).

Finally mount all the lights, retrievers, gongs, etc (Photo 3). Finish the motor mounting and test for proper operation. Add weight as you deem proper. If it comes off the track occasionally, well, so did the real sweepers.

Materials List
Aztec Manufacturing Co.
TS 1126A-2 Cratex Roller
TS 1126B-2 Sidewinder Canvas Covered Roller

North West Short Line
#750-6 (series) 14:1, 1/8" axle ball-bearing gearbox (specify wheel size)
#29401-9 DC motor, 28.5mm dia. x 40mm length, 8,300 rpm
#404-6 flywheel, 2.4mm bore, 25mm OD x 11mm (1" by 7/16")

Current Line Models
McGuire Sweeper Sideframe Set
C-61 Headlight
C-110 Retriever

Grandt Line
#7006 Delrin chain and 8 tooth sprocket
#3722 Attic Window

Q- Car Company
B-120 Trolley Pole
CS024 Trolley Pole Base, large
B-150 Trolley Pole Hook, high inside loop

Lenz
LE 1835 Decoder

Samtec
BDL-136-T-F Plug
SDL-136-TT-19 Socket

Special Shapes
B-6-3 Brass Beam
Various brass bars & rods
**NEWS: LASERkit O Scale Structures** (see text for MSRP)
American Model Builders, Inc., 8229 Brentwood Industrial Drive, St. Louis, MO 63144
314-646-8588 • www.laserkit.com

Kit #484 Elevated Warehouse: MSRP $79.95 – This kit is the latest addition to LASERkit’s O Scale Lineside Structures series. The Elevated Warehouse, offers modelers a multipurpose facility that will fit just about anywhere on their layout. Used by itself, the structure could be a small freight house for a railroad, a warehouse for a local merchant, or a distribution center for a trucking company. It could also be part of a larger industry sitting along side a grain elevator or as an annex to a factory. This kit features 100% laser-cut parts with tab and slot constructed walls, and roof with peel and stick doors, windows, and trim. The elevated building rests on top of six cast resin brick piers and is finished off with an interior floor, rolled roofing, and a white metal smokejack. Also included is a detailed loading dock, access ladder, truck bumper, and stairway that can be placed at different locations on the structure. The assembled warehouse measures 9.75” long x 4.75” wide x 4.5” high with the dock adding another 2” in length or width depending on where it’s located.

Kit #489 Loft Barn: MSRP $42.95 – Although not considered a great architectural design, the American barn is one of the most beloved icons of our culture. In particular, the loft style barn was common all across the US with an upper story suitable for storing hay while the lower level provided storage space for feed, seed, and planting and harvesting equipment. The overhanging loft provided protection for parking a small tractor or plow beneath. LASERKIT’s first barn release for the O Scale market is designed not only for the model railroader short on real estate, but also for those folks new to the craftsman kit market who will find this utilitarian structure very easy to build and a great introduction to the LASERKIT product line. This easy to assemble laser-cut wood model uses tab and slot, and peel and stick construction, which will give any modeler the ability to have a painted and assembled barn in as little as two evenings. The structure features a second story interior floor, panel roofing sheets, and sliding style doors that may be modeled in any position. Best of all, the 6” tall Loft Barn has only a 6” long x 4.25” wide footprint making it ideal for any size layout.

**NEWS: DCC Options from MRC; MSRP: see text.**
Model Rectifier Corp. 80 Newfield Ave, Edison, NJ 08837
732-225-6360 • www.modelrectifier.com

MRC has announced new DCC sound decoders suitable for O Scale. These are:
- # 0001817 Universal G Alco/SD60/SD70/F — Four different prime mover sounds and 33 horn sounds. Five amp capacity: $99.98
- #0001818 Universal G SD45/MP15 — Two different prime mover sounds. Five amp capacity: $99.98
- #0001819 Universal G — Sixteen steam sounds with 33 whistles. Five amp capacity: $99.98

All MRC sound decoders include speakers and a choice of horns (for diesel decoders), whistles (for steam decoders) and bells. All have 28 NMRA function capability. The MRC sound decoders are dual function, meaning they can run on DC as well as DCC.

MRC also announced a new DC power pack with their Blackbox DCC function (see OST #33) activator built-in. The TECH 6 (P/N 0001200) only has a current capacity of 1.5A which may be useful for some O Scale.

**NEWS: East Gary Car Company Acquires Ashland Car Works**
East Gary Car Company, 3828 St Joseph Ct, Lake Station IN 46405

East Gary Car Company has purchased the Ashland Car Works. EGCo will make parts available soon and will consider releasing some of ACW’s kits. Andy Sunderland, East Gary’s chief-cook and bottle-washer, would like to know which kits people would like to see reissued. Drop him a line at the address above.
NEWS: New Books on CD in PDF format, MSRP: $16.95 plus $4.85 S&H (US), International Priority Mail to Canada and Mexico is $9; $11 for all other countries.
Highlands Station, LLC, 4255 S. Buckley Rd, #137, Aurora, CO 80013-2951,
303-829-4449 • www.HighlandsStationLLC.com


Each CD is a re-release of the 96-page printed version of these books, but since the drawings are now available in PDF form, the user is able to print out the drawings in the scale desired. These CDs will also be valuable tools for scratchbuilders and freelancers, regardless of road modeled. All drawings and chapters are hyperlinked for easy access. Each CD also has a brief Printing Guide to assist modelers in resizing the drawings for their scale of choice. A sample page is available for download on the Highlands Station website.

**Prototype Photos of Warren Calloway; Retail $20.00 each plus $4.85 S&H per order (US). S&H via International Priority Mail to Canada and Mexico is $9; $11 for all other countries.**

Highlands Station, LLC, has entered into an agreement with Warren Calloway, former Editor, and a current Contributing Editor, of *Diesel Era* magazine to distribute his extensive collection of prototype locomotive, rolling stock, and train photos on photo CDs. Warren has been scanning his extensive collection of slides and negatives to save them in JPG form. At present, over a hundred CD collections are available, and more will be added as his time permits. Unless otherwise indicated, each CD contains about 100 JPEG images with a typical resolution of 1024 x 700 pixels. For a complete list of available CDs, please visit the Highlands Station website.

NEWS: 1:50 and 1:43 vehicles
Diecast Direct, Inc., 3005 Old Lawrenceburg Road, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601-9351
502-227-8697 • www.diecastdirect.com

**Athearn 1:50 ’31 Model A Ford Vehicles; MSRP: $24.95**

Diecast Direct is now offering the Athearn 1931 Model A Ford vehicles for immediate delivery. Body styles available are a coupe, sedan, and pickup truck. The vehicles are die-cast in 1:50 scale and feature separately molded interiors, clear window glazing, and rubber tires. Each body style is offered in a variety of colors. Diecast Direct carries the complete line of Athearn 1:50 vehicles.

**First Response Replicas ’41 Ford Police Cars; MSRP: $14.95**

Diecast Direct is now offering First Response Replica 1941 Ford police cars for immediate delivery. These vehicles are die-cast in 1:43 scale. Each one is painted and detailed for a specific state. There are also several railroad superintendent cars. In all, there are 49 offerings.

(Comment: Both of these vehicles are quite nice and will work well on steam and early Diesel era railroads. I prefer the 1:50 models over the 1:43 strictly on the basis of the relative size error. The 1:50 models are much closer to U.S. O Scale. I checked out the wheelbase on both cars and they both scale out perfectly. They look proportionately correct in all aspects. Side-by-side, the 1941 Ford overwhelms the 1931 Ford so I would not use them in the same scene. - Joe Giannovario)
History

By the late 1960s and early ‘70s, the nation’s railroads faced a looming shortage of general service or XM boxcars. The steam-era fleet of forty-foot cars was reaching the end of their useful lives. While some were being rebuilt into 50-foot cars, many were destined for the scrapper’s torch. Against this background, freight car manufacturers began a building blitz of new cars based on the virtually standard dimension of 50’-6” interior length. Companies like Pullman Standard, Southern Iron and Equipment Co., American Car & Foundry and others produced cars of a similar design, utilizing single-sheathed steel construction with exterior posts (X-post), cushioned underframes and non-terminating ends as opposed to the Dreadnaught ends of earlier designs. Commonly called “Railbox” cars, due to their predominance in Railbox’s striking yellow paint scheme, these new cars became the Diesel era’s version of the once common forty-footers.

Fidelity and Compatibility

As part of their Trainman Line of rolling stock, AtlasO has given modern-era modelers a much needed car in the form of an American Car & Foundry X-post boxcar. Upon opening the box, you’ll find a well detailed, accurately dimensioned, ready-to-run car.

Comparing the model to photos of the prototype reveals that all of the details are there, and for a car aimed at the entry level market, they are well done. The carbody detailing is crisp and features the correct diagonal panel roof plus working freight doors. The non-terminating ends have freestanding end ladders, brake platforms, grabirons, tack boards and brakewheel (a nice feature that I’ll return to later), while the side grabirons are molded on. The underframe features cast-on brake components and piping with a wood grained floor. The wood floor is incorrect for this car as the prototypes had a nailable steel floor.

Since I model in P48, I don't even own an NMRA Standards Gage for 1-1/4” track; therefore I can’t confirm that wheels were properly gauged, but I suspect that they are. The axle end caps on the roller bearing trucks rotate with the wheels. The AtlasO couplers were at the right height and no problems were encountered in coupling up to my Kadee® equipped cars.

One of my initial impressions was that the car sat too high on the trucks. However, after looking at my prototype photos, I changed my mind. What I saw on the model was the lack of a centersill around the bolsters to accommodate the truck swing on tight radius curves. This left a visual gap, giving the impression of sitting too high.

The finish of the paint is excellent with clean color separations at the carline. One item that is quite distracting is the shiny finish on the wheels. Perhaps AtlasO will find a way to chemically blacken the wheels. Most modelers will paint and weather them anyway; so maybe it’s a moot point. The lettering is opaque, crisp and legible, even down to the smallest print in the lube stencil. A close examination of the dimensional data showed some variation in the dimensions between the model and the prototype. The biggest discrepancy occurred in the interior height. The prototype was labeled at 10’-7”, while the model read 11’-0”. The overall height as measured from the railroad track was 14”-4” on the prototype and 14’-8” on the model. None of these are really noticeable unless you’re measuring like I did. Since we are just talking a matter of scale inches, I really don’t consider these discrepancies to be a major issue. Further checks with my scale rule indicated that the carbody is quite accurate. A quality I rate as excellent.

Finessing for Finescale

I’m always pleased when I find a well detailed, accurate modern car model that will provide a good foundation for a finescale makeover, and this new Trainman car fits that description to a tee. With accurate dimensions, correct diagonal panel roof, and modest price, these models are ripe for kitbashing and sweetening up some of the details. Whether you work in P48 or Standard O, a little extra work will turn a good car into a great one. Here’s what I plan to do:

I’ll replace the molded on grabirons with freestanding ones made of 0.15” wire. I’ll also replace the stirrup steps, making new ones from brass. I previously mentioned that all of the end details are separately applied. This makes them easy to remove without damaging the carbody. I’ll replace the end ladders with scratchbuilt ones of 0.15” wire and 1/32” brass angle. I’ll reuse the brakewheel since it’s a nice casting, but will replace the housing and chain. The brake platforms aren’t bad and since these are often quite fragile on a model, I might leave them as is. If I do replace them, I’ll use some HO Scale Plano roofwalk material or scratchbuild the platforms out of small mesh screening and brass strip.

The underframe is well done, but I’ll likely build a new one from scratch. Why? Mostly to fill in the missing portions of the centersill left out to accommodate the truck swing, and to correct the flooring material. There are some I beams that run the length of the underframe that are visible on the car ends that don’t show on the model. These cars also had visible brake rodding below the centersill. P48 modelers sweat these types of details as a matter of routine. Doing so is a huge part of our enjoyment of the hobby. Of course, I’ll certainly look for a way to convert the trucks to P48 standards.

Summary

To wrap things up, I think this is an excellent car overall. AtlasO has done a good job attending to the basic details that make for an accurate model. I give them high marks for this, and I’ll certainly be adding a few more of these boxcars to the roster.
I'm not a rolling stock expert. Many of you know far more about freight cars than I'll ever learn. Fortunately, I know a couple of you who still respond to my e-mail inquiries and mercifully share the expertise that I sorely lack for these reviews. Thanks again to Warner Clark; I can sound like I might actually know something.

Covered hopper cars were designed to carry a variety of ladings that needed to be kept dry in transit. Among them were unprocessed food products such as flour and raw sugar. The problem these commodities had was they would pack down tightly in transit, thereby making the unloading process very frustrating for the receiving customer. Since frustrating often equaled expensive, in terms of time and labor costs, car companies looked for ways to speed things along using commonly available technology that customers might already have on hand. Thus the Airslide® hopper was born.

Produced by General American Transportation Corporation in the early 1950s, an Airslide® hopper car consisted of two trench style compartments on either side of the centersill. At the bottom of these compartments were U-shaped steel chutes covered by a 1/4" thick, silicone impregnated fabric membrane. Low pressure compressed air could be pumped into these chutes via the car's external piping, which aerated the contents, allowing the material to flow more easily to the unloading gates at the center of the car.

Fidelity and Compatibility

AtlasO has produced a nice rendition of a 40 foot, 70 ton, 2600 cubic foot Airslide® Covered hopper car as part of their Master Series of freight cars. Our 2-Rail sample checked out in most respects having an excellent paint finish, sharp lettering and fine detailing overall. As noted in my boxcar review in this issue, I don't own an NMRA Standards Gage because I model to P48 track standards. (I have the feeling I'll be picking one up though.) Therefore, I can't confirm whether the wheels are correctly gauged; however, they are free rolling and the Bettendorf trucks are well done. The couplers did check out at the proper height and as noted previously, no problems were encountered with my Kadee® equipped cars.

Dimensionally, the car is very accurate, matching the prototype's length of 42' 6" over the strike faces of the couplers; an overall height above the rails of 14' 6" compared to 14' 5-9/16" prototype, and 10' 8” overall width. The truck centers sounded the only off-note being six inches too wide at 30' compared to the prototype's 29’ 6". Topside you’ll find six operating loading hatches and a see-through roofwalk which, while nicely done, seems a bit thick for my tastes.

The detailing of the carbody on this model is excellent. The grabirons are especially well done, having a fine cross-section, yet they're robust. On my car the brake cylinder was mounted in a crooked manner. (This might have been a fluke.) It's a clearly visible part and having it out of alignment is distracting once you notice it. It's also hard as nails to get at too. The underside is well done and features the chutes and unloading gates, the brake rodding, and the piping for pressurizing the load compartments.

Finescale refinements

In truth, there isn't much I would consider changing on this model beyond a set of P48 wheels or replacement trucks. The bolster area on ready-to-run models such as this often suffers the most in order to accommodate the truck swing for short radius curves. On hopper cars this area is quite visible and I would consider filling in some of the missing pieces here. The car ends need an air hose and there seems to be an absent mounting bracket for the outboard end of the air reservoir. I'd look at replacing the thick roofwalk and giving the car a weathering job to tone things down, especially the bright finish of the wheel faces. Overall it's an excellent model of a special service car that would fit well on any Transition-Era or early-to-mid Diesel-era layout. For their attention to detail and fidelity to prototype dimensions, AtlasO gets high marks again.
REVIEW: Sunset/3rd Rail SP AM-2 4-6-6-2; MSRP: $1800
Sunset/3rd Rail, 37 S Fourth St, Campbell, CA 95008
408-866-5764 • www.3rdrail.com

Reviewed by Joe Giannovario

The Prototype

The Southern Pacific built a group of 12 compound 2-6-6-2s for passenger service in 1911. These were built as cab-forwards, i.e., the cab was placed at the front of the locomotive, because of problems with smoke asphyxiating the engine crews in long tunnels and numerous snowsheds. Since most SP locos were oil-burners, there were no great technological barriers to building a locomotive in this configuration. Indeed, the SP is noted for its many cab-forwards. The early 2-6-6-2s were classed MM-2s and numbered 4200-4211.

The two-wheel lead truck turned out to be problematic. It experienced excessive flange wear and tended to derail at passenger speeds. It also allowed the cab to swing out farther than normal, causing problems in snowsheds and tunnels. So, the SP extended the frame and installed a four wheel lead truck. As built, the original MM-2 locomotives were equipped with semi-cylindrical Class 98-SC tenders. These tenders were later enlarged to Class 120-SC, capable of holding 12,000 gallons of water and 3,817 gallons of oil.

In 1929, engines #4200, #4205, and #4209 were shopped at Sacramento and rebuilt as simple expansion engines and were reclassified AM-2. Besides new cylinders, the locomotives were also equipped with superheaters and Worthington 4-B feedwater heaters located on the engineer’s side. The rest were rebuilt during 1935 and 1936. In 1938 all of the AM-2s were renumbered to the 3900 series to make room on the roster for newer 4-8-8-2 AC-8s and AC-10s. The AM-2s were scrapped between 1946 and 1948.

The Model

Sunset provided us with a pre-production model of the pre-war version of the AM-2 with the boiler tube pilot. The model is made of formed, stamped, and etched brass parts with lost-wax castings for details. It is painted and lettered for number 3900, which puts it post-1938 but pre-1941. The assembly and finishing are excellent.

The tender is the semi-cylindrical whaleback type. The locomotive connects to the tender with a typical drawbar, plus a plug for lighting. I was able to close-couple the engine and tender with no clearance problems. The locomotive is equipped with a sound cam on one axle and the tender frame is pre-drilled for a speaker. The tender also came with a Kadee® coupler pre-installed.

The handrails on the rear deck of the locomotive are quite delicate and can easily be damaged, so take care in handling the locomotive in this area. The model includes working class lights, working rear markers and an operating headlight and backup light.

Fidelity

Finding plans or dimensions was a challenge as I do not have any SP references in my library. I did find several photos online and was able to scale some dimensions from these. I also found an S Scale drawing of an SP 2-8-8-2 cab forward in the November 1970 MR which I used for some dimensions such as the cab and tender.

For those dimensions that I could find in references or measure directly from plans, the model was dead-on. For those dimensions that I estimated from photos, the model was well within my personal tolerance (two to three scale inches). I concluded that the model is dimensionally accurate.

Compatibility

I checked all of the wheels and drivers with an NMRA O Scale Standards Gage. A couple of the driver pairs were tight but not enough to cause any operational problems. The model runs on plain-vanilla DC and is compatible with any other locomotive that runs on the same.

Performance

Running light, the model started moving at one volt drawing about 600 mA. There was a stutter in the drive which turned out to be an errant brake shoe causing an intermittent short. Once restored to its proper location, the locomotive ran like a dream. The best slow speed performance was at 1.75 volts, 600mA at a speed of 4.8 smph. Unlike most brass models, this one ran equally well in forward and reverse.

I ran the AM-2 through the tightest curves on the OST layout, 40” at one end and close to 36” at the other. It made it through the 40” curve without difficulty, but the 36” curve posed a problem. The boiler swung over far enough so that the exhaust pipe from the rear cylinders to the smokebox touched the top of the last driver causing a short circuit. The cure for this would be to relieve the exhaust pipe where it touches the driver. Another possible fix would be to wrap the exhaust pipe to insulate it. However, I don’t consider this a serious problem.

I coupled up the AM-2 to my test train of 10 mixed brass, plastic, and die-cast freight cars and sent it out onto the main track. Under load at five volts the loco drew 800mA on level track and 1200 mA on a 3+% grade. At this voltage level all of the lights on the model were lit and it was running at 18.7 smph. I stopped the train mid-grade and restarted it. The AM-2 walked away with the load as if it were on level track.

This is one of the best running locomotives I have seen, ever, and one of the quietest. While running the test train I noticed a thumping noise coming from the train. At first, I thought it was the locomotive. Then, I realized it was coming from the rear of the train. My caboose has gunk built up on one wheel which was hitting the underframe.

Conclusion

The AM-2 is an ugly-duckling with a face that only a mother or an SP modeler could love. However, this model is so well done that I’d be tempted to buy one were I less fiscally disciplined. The Sunset AM-2 is a well-made model that exhibits excellent performance and should be in every SP fan’s steam collection.
A Bit of History

Billboard reefers have a long and colorful history in American railroading, and have been a favorite of modelers from the very beginning of the hobby. Although the classic wood-bodied billboard reefers have long since disappeared from today’s railroads, they remain a staple in the model world to this day. In the past several years, AtlasO has produced more than 200 different wood refrigerator cars in O Scale, colorfully painted and lettered for numerous private owners, both real and fanciful.

The story of these cars has been told many times, but the short version is that billboard reefers began to appear in the late 1800s and were seen far more frequently when URTX started building them in large numbers and leasing them to private owners in the 1920s. The billboard era began its decline in July, 1934, when Interstate Commerce Commission regulation 15-201 came into effect, providing that no new cars intended for interchange service could be painted with the lessee’s name in lettering larger than 12” and that existing billboard cars could not be used in interchange at all after January 1937. By the beginning of World War II virtually all these highly visible cars had been painted back into the original owner’s standard colors, although many of the cars remained in service until the 1960s in their more modest paint schemes.

The AtlasO car I reviewed is lettered for Krey’s, a meat packing company that dates back to 1882 and was located at the corner of North Florissant and Bremen avenues in St. Louis, MO and was absorbed by another corporation long ago. The car number, QREX 877, indicates that the car was leased to Krey’s by the Quaker City Refrigerator Line. QREX itself came under the banner of the General American Transportation Corp after 1928. These 36-foot wood ice-refrigerated cars were frequently used by packing plants, and came to be known simply as “Meat Reefers”, used primarily to transport meat in bulk from slaughter houses to regional processors who prepared the products for delivery to local markets.

I wasn’t able to find a photograph of a prototype Krey’s car, but the general dimensions of the model compare closely to published drawings of similar cars. Atlas has stated that its reefers are based on prototype photos and cars built by the General American Car Company for the Cudahy Packing Co. in 1925 and, a few years back, Atlas published a “Wood Reefer Collector’s Guide” which should include a photograph of most of the cars they’ve produced.

The Model

The AtlasO Krey’s reefer has been released with three numbers, 877 through 879, and was first produced by Atlas in 2003. My friend and fellow O Scaler John Whipple has credentials as a mechanical engineer, so I enlisted his aid in checking the more critical measurements on the car. The metal Bettendorf trucks, with 33” wheelsets, meet all the NMRA dimensional standards as to tread width, gauge and flange depth and their rolling quality is excellent. The die-cast knuckle couplers are quite close to optimal height. On the minus side, I’ve found the Atlas knuckle couplers to be more fragile than Kadees®, which might be a problem if you do a lot of switching or plan to run long trains.

The model measures a scale 36’ 9” over the carbody ends, which just happens to be the exact same length as the ubiquitous All-Nation refrigerator cars most O Scalers are familiar with. The carbody is a scale 8’ 9” wide, while a comparable All-Nation car is slightly wider at 9’ 3”.

I happen to have a couple of the Walthers “Grand Union” QREX wood reefers, and they measure out at 9’ 3”. Despite the slight difference in width of these models (which may well be accurate for the particular reefers involved), the AtlasO car looks perfectly at home together in a string of reefers of several makes.

NMRA Recommended Practice RP-20.1 suggests that these cars should weigh 14 ounces, and the Krey’s reefer comes close at 15.3 ounces.

Having passed technical inspection, what really sets the AtlasO car apart from the crowd is the level of detail and the quality of the paint job. The underbody brake detail is well done, the doors and hatches can be opened (with working latches), and the grab irons, brake staff and brakewheel are all of appropriate scale dimensions. Yes, the hinges on the roof hatches are a bit thick, but that’s undoubtedly a concession to durability. The metal grab irons are appropriately thin, as are the coupler lift bars and the latches that secure the roof hatch covers.

But I’ve saved the best for last, as the five-color paint job can only be described as stunning. The tiny lettering used for the dimensional data is crisply done, as is the thin black outline surrounding the “Krey’s” lettering. Even the almost microscopic lettering on the underbody brake gear is clearly readable.

It would take a very complex decal set, a steady hand and a lot of patience to even come close to the quality of the lettering Atlas produces.

All in all, a very well done piece of rolling stock, flawlessly painted and ready to run.

[Editor’s note: The Krey reefer is only available as part of the Special Anniversary 4-Pack (P/N 7797) which includes the following billboard reefers: Decker, Eagle Beer, Krey’s, and Selecto.]
REVIEW: “Gold” Series Alco C630; 2-Rail MSRP: $459.95; Unpowered MSRP: $229.95
AtlasO, LLC, 378 Florence Avenue, Hillside, NJ 07205
908-687-9590 • www.atlasO.com

Reviewed By Gene Clements

For those readers who may recall, in the Nov./Dec. 2006 issue (# 29), Brian Scace reviewed the AtlasO Silver Series, Alco Century 628. Unlike Brian, I have spent my railroad career around or on EMD and GE locomotives. In order to do justice to the manufacturer, the model and the prototype, I had to dig into the reference library and videotapes to research this locomotive.

The Prototype

Built by Alco (American Locomotive Company) as the Century Series 3000 HP version, these locomotives were produced from July 1965 until October 1967 in the U.S. and continued in Canada until July 1969. The designation 630 stands for 1960s production, 3000 HP. With approximately 126 units sold to American and Canadian lines, the 630 was Alco’s heavyweight entry into the horsepower battle with GE and EMD during this time period. Similar to, but distinguishable from the 628 by the large aftercooler housing behind the cab, the 630 was a higher rated horsepower unit due in part to its AC-DC alternator-rectifier transmission.

The Model

Originally released by AtlasO in 2006 as the Silver Series (2-Rail DC & 3-Rail TMCC), this model is a 2007 Gold Series release, 2-Rail version with QSI Sound and DC/DCC capabilities.

My model came painted and lettered for the Pennsylvania R.R. and my research revealed that Atlas did their homework. The paint and lettering meet the standards that we have come to expect from Atlas and are correct for the era of this engine’s working life. The locomotive is also available in Canadian National, Conrail, Reading, Union Pacific, Alco-Demonstrator and undecorated. The carbody comes complete with windshield wipers, lift rings, grab irons, cab crew and other details. It also has pilot footboards, which would date the engine as pre-late ’70s when footboards disappeared from the pilots.

My first impression upon opening the box was: “What a monster.” This is a large locomotive even in model form. This engine came in the new shipping arrangement, mounted in a cradle inside the Styrofoam carton. I ended up removing the Styrofoam from its box in order to break one corner of the container so I could slip the engine and cradle out because of the very snug fit. Once you remove the 4 screws that hold the engine to the cradle, save all these pieces in the event you ever need to ship the engine.

At approximately 68 scale feet over the coupler faces and standing 14 scale feet over the top of the rail, this brute weighs in at 6 actual pounds. The three axles on each truck are powered by a vertical can motor and gear drive; a design that has become standard. In testing this engine to date, it has handled everything I’ve coupled to it, including M.U. consists and various heavy freight trains. Rated by AtlasO at 40.5” minimum radius, the engine handled the nos. 6 and 8 turnouts and all curves on my layout down to the 48” radius.

When following the DCC Startup guide, I ended up making a trip to the DCC programming track in order to activate the short address of 003. (I use an NCE System.) While there I took care of a few other tasks. So if in DCC mode you program in 003 on your Cab or Controller and nothing happens check the address to make sure it is active before pushing the panic button. Testing was performed in both DC & DCC modes, where I encountered no operational problems.

What about the sound? I’ve become a fan of QSI sound, but not being familiar with Alco locomotives I had to find a set of Alcos on an old VHS tape to compare the sound. The model sounds like a 630, (a GE U Boat on steroids) to me. The engine comes with the volume set at maximum from the factory so be prepared to turn down the sound to a level that will not overload other sound equipped engines, or run the cat out of the train room. The sound is also playable and adjustable in DC with the Quantum Engineer as well as most DCC systems and their programming abilities.

The engine is equipped with yellow tinted LEDs for head- and red class lights, which operate red to the rear during movement. There is no “Scace switch” to turn the class lights on or off, but the F11 function in DCC may do it.

In Summary

A very impressive model from AtlasO that looks sounds and operates great. If you’re an Alco or Atlas fan in the need for some heavy-duty 6-axle power, then here’s your engine. To the people at AtlasO, a big thumbs up. Now, how about some EMD and GEs from the same time period for competition purposes? Those I have experience on as a Hoghead.
Contest Results

**Diesel**

1st Place - Richard Rusnak, GTW SD-40, custom painted and detailed from kits.

2nd Place - David Schultz, NP NW-2 #99, started with an All Nation kit. Dave added scratchbuilt and other detail parts. Model has a full cab interior.

**Freight Car**

1st Place - Marc Knoll, N&W Wooden Hopper, scratchbuilt.

2nd Place - Carl Jackson, PRR H-31 Hopper, QC kit with much added detail.

**Passenger Car**

1st Place - Bruce Aikman, 14-sec Pullman, kitbashed from Amer. Std. Car Co kit.

2nd Place - Ed Campbell, UP Pullman Sleeper, rebuilt and redetailed import body.
Contest Results

Steam

1st Place - Chuck Bard, CNR #6404 4-8-4, scratchbuilt.

2nd Place - Lou Bartig, MoPac #1901 2-8-4, scratchbuilt
Best of Show: Lou Bartig MoPac #1901.

Structures

1st Place - Marc Knoll, Covington (KY) Station, scratchbuilt.

2nd Place - Tim Anderson, Barber Shop, Bar Mills kit.

Traction

1st Place - Rich Nelson, CSL (Chicago Surface Lines) #1465, scratchbuilt from wood and Strathmore.

2nd Place - Greg King, CSL #804, parts & scratchbuilt.
In February 1990 the Amherst Railway Society's show director Robert Buck expressed concern to John Roberts over the lack of O Scale model railroads at their annual show. John, never one to duck a challenge, assured him that he and his friends would build an O Scale layout that would put O Scale back in the minds of next year's show attendees. With this commitment, the gauntlet had been laid down and it was up to this small group of O Scalers to prove they could do it.

The first brainstorming session was held in April 1990 and included John and Roland Roberts, Tom and Fred McCarthy, Rich Godfrey, Phil Ginkus and Bob Jones. Construction procedures and standards were established by slightly modifying those of the Chicago Area O Scale Club (ChAOS) published in O Scale News magazine the year before. These standards would allow each member to construct his section of the layout and then assemble the completed modules at the show the following year with the knowledge that they would connect into a fully operational model railroad. The modification was to reduce the main line radius from 96" to 84". This allowed us to cut down on the number of modules needed to build the curves from 24 modules to 12.

We created an oval layout 21' x 45', with over 100 feet of length on the 2 mainlines. Not all the track was laid for the first show, but the mainlines and part of the receiving yard were operational. Ballast and scenery weren't even started at this point. With the show just days away, a name was needed to indicate who we were, but who were we? Since the members were all from Massachusetts or Connecticut, the name Southern New England O Scalers (SNEOS) was chosen, and Phil lettered two signboards to proudly display on the layout. Reaction of the 10,000 people attending the 1991 show was very positive to the O Scale trains that ran flawlessly.

Each year something new was added or changed. The first addition was a freight yard that extended to the interior of the oval. The new yard gave the layout the ability to store over 100 freight cars. Next all the switches in the receiving and departure yard were changed from number 6s to number 8s, providing better operations for moving large trains in and out of the yard. The layout was then lengthened to 63'. This allowed us to lengthen the freight yard and add a steam facility (Photo 3). The steam facility has a servicing area, a 112' turntable and a five stall roundhouse with 11 service tracks. That was soon followed by a large industrial area that requires its own switcher.

Shrinking the interior space even more, we decided to add a diesel facility (Photo 1) with 10 tracks, oil and sand facilities, and a repair shed. It was then decided to add a station scene to the front of the layout (Photo 2). Gardner Station was added with platforms and a parking area. We also added building flats for backdrops. They are cardboard flats that were modified and detailed, giving the buildings a wonderful three-dimensional look.

A large bridge scene with a deep gorge was added to the rear of the layout. The scenery in the gorge almost reaches the floor. Another railroad passes through at the bottom of the gorge along the East Hubbardston River. There is a lot of whitewater tubing and rafting through this area. The truss bridge over the gorge is 8' long with shorter deck girder bridges at both ends. With these new additions the layout size became 21' by 81'. At this point it was very difficult to move around the interior of the layout; so the next logical step was to make the layout wider. We added 6' to the width so the dimensions now became 27' by 81'.

Still not satisfied, we now wanted to add a coach yard. In order to add the yard we added six more feet to the width of the layout and arrived at our final dimensions of 33' by 81'. The coach yard was built on the rear of the layout and has seven tracks for coaches and two tracks for express reefer storage. We are planning to add an elevated station over the coach yard. Hopefully the scenery work will be done for East Wind '08.

The club decided to convert from DC to DCC. DCC is the best invention for modular layouts. It cuts down on wiring and makes it much easier to setup or take down the layout. In 2004 we purchased a signal system and went to town installing it however, the modular aspect made it difficult. We needed to find a way to setup and take down the signals quickly and delicately. We mounted the signals to a permanent base and changed the connections to computer DB type connectors. After trying five separate signal panels around the layout, we built a large panel on wheels for all the signal circuitry. Now we string two cables from the signal panel to the layout. It took a bit of work, but the signals are working well, providing block and interlocking indication.

The detectors get detection from locomotives, lighted cars and with a 4.7K resistor across a set of wheels. The signals' turn-out control is done with Tortoise switch machines and accessory decoders. Now all the turnouts can be operated from the cab you operate with or from a laptop interfaced to a command station for a central dispatcher. The best feature is the macros where you can program a number of turnouts. This is a great feature for route trains out of the yard to the main line. The only issue we have found with macros is to remember to re-align the turnouts after the train passes.

Scenery has been an ongoing project throughout the evolution of the layout. The modules are only 24" wide and adding scenery is difficult at best; so we started with ground cover and ballast. We were able to place some hills on the curves along with removable trees. We added a backdrop using a combination of commercially-made scenes and in-house painting.

The eras modeled cover the 1920s up through today's modern Amtrak passenger trains and inter-modal fast freights, providing interest to model railroaders, railfans, and the general public regardless of their interest in trains.

Transporting the layout is a large undertaking. The club built racks on wheels to transport all the modules. Each rack holds 6 to 8 modules and allows us to roll them up on a truck or trailer. To transport the entire layout we use a 28' automobile trailer and a 12' utility trailer. We have used a 24' box truck in the past but that is not large enough to carry all the modules. Most of the members have SUVs or pickup trucks to help with transportation. Don't forget to visit our layout at East Wind '08 The 2008 O Scale National convention.

Photo Captions (See photos next page)
Photo 1: A wide variety of power is waiting assignment in the diesel facility. In the photo we see Santa Fe, D&H, CB&Q and Guilford power.
Photo 2: A fast Pacific slow for a stop at Gardner Station with the morning limited.
Photo 3: GN S1, #2588 heads off the turntable for assignment on the morning Empire Builder.
Photo 4: A west bound SP freight waits under Interstate 90 for the block to clear.
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The 2008 National O Scale Convention will be held at the DCU Center in Worcester, Massachusetts. The DCU Center will provide us with over 50,000 square feet of exhibition space. In this large area we plan to have a large amount of dealer tables, wide aisle spacing and many operating layouts including the Southern New England Modular Layout that measures 27’ x 81’. The DCU Center is located in downtown Worcester about 2 blocks from the newly renovated Union Station. One of the Providence and Worcester mainlines runs across the street from the front of the DCU Center. An all day railfan trip is in the planned for Convention goers on Wednesday 7/23/08. Please check back later for more details.

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FOR SALE: Forced to leave hobby due to health problems. Kits, parts, supplies, some rare items, reasonably priced. Send $1 bill for 20 page list. Phil Shuster, 1325 Corbin Rd, Toledo, OH 43612-2249

FOR SALE: 2-Rail, Sunset/3rd Rail SP MT-4, 4-8-2, Daylight colors, new and unwrapped in box, $1000. Sunset 2-10-0 Russian Decapods: (1) MoPac, unpntd, like new in box, $800; (1) WM, ptd, 99% new in box, $800 -- both for $1450. Williams #6007 ATSF “3400” Pacific, brass construction, sprung drivers, constant lighting, new in box $500. Weaver Pullman-Bradleys: #G1256s Pullman 2-pack, new in boxes $200; #G1251s SP 2-pack, new in boxes, $200 -- all four for $350. Plus shipping. Thomas, 3601 S. Noland Rd. #149, Independence, MO 64055, 417-230-9157.

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The Return of the Kit?

The cost of our models is going up! That’s a fact. A majority of the railroad models sold in the U.S. are made in China, and that’s for every scale from N to G. (Truth be told, nearly all the toys sold in the U.S. are made in China.) Costs have been rising in China due to wage inflation and the cost to control pollution. Plus, the Chinese Yuan has been rising in value while the U.S. dollar has been falling. All of this has led the Chinese manufacturers to raise prices to their U.S. customers.

On top of this the rising cost of oil (107$ per barrel as I write this), which impacts everything from transportation costs to the paper to make boxes and the ink to print on those boxes, and the inevitable conclusion is model trains are going to cost more in the future. Add a recession in the U.S. economy (and some say stagflation), and one might predict hard times for the model railroad industry.

That could be the case, but it could also present an opportunity for businesses flexible enough to pivot with the times. I think it’s time for a return to kit building.

We’ve been spoiled by relatively inexpensive models in the last two decades. It was simpler and far cheaper to have models made in China and assembled there. But with Chinese costs rising so rapidly (China has its highest inflation rate in 11 years), maybe it’s time to start offering kits again. There are several manufacturers who have stopped offering kits or stopped designing new kits because it was not economically feasible to compete with Chinese ready-to-run models. Maybe now is the time to revisit that spreadsheet analysis.

Kit building and kit-bashing are two of the greatest pleasures for me in this hobby. They were the foundation of the hobby for nearly 50 years. Now, most of the hobby is the model out of the box, put it on the track then run the train. To me, that’s boring. Nor does it help novices to acquire any modeling skills.

I spoke with Boyce Yates of Babbitt Railway Supply recently. Babbitt is the only domestic supplier of steam locomotive kits in O Scale, and is the home of the General Models/Varney/All Nation, B&O 4-6-0 and several other kits. Mr. Yates told me that the cost of castings and the cost of motors have caused him to cease offering his kits once the current supply is depleted. (By the way, both of those costs are related, again, to China and its demands on strategic supplies like oil and copper).

But what if there was a surge in demand for Babbitt kits? Would that offset the higher costs of castings and motors? And might not a modeler get more satisfaction from building a Babbitt B&O 4-6-0 than by pulling an Atonel Rail-Queen B&O 4-6-0 out of a styrene coffin? I know I would, but that’s just me.

OST is all about kit building, kit-bashing and scratchbuilding, so you know where our bias is. Where is yours? Let us hear what you think about the future of kit building, kit-bashing and scratchbuilding in this hobby.

That said if you are looking to sharpen your modeling skills there are many fine kits you might start with. There are loads of old All Nation boxcar kits floating around at swap meets and on eBay. They are not too expensive and fairly easy to assemble out of the box. The key with these kits is to update them with extra details. This way you get some experience with drilling and fitting fine parts. These kits usually have the modeler pin the pre-painted sides of the car to the wooden blocks holding the floor and roof together. I like to solder the ends to the roof and then slip the sides in and hold them with glue.

A quick search of eBay turned up freight car kits by Red Caboose, Westbrook, Walthers, LaBelle, Ambroid, Graceline, Intermountain and more. Prices range from $15 to $30. Yer pays yer money and takes yer choice!

Once you have experience, you may want to try one of the more challenging craftsman kits by San Juan (yes, San Juan makes some fine standard gauge kits as well as narrow gauge), Chooch, BTS and others. Kits in this class run from $50 to over $100 each.

Now, how do you know what details to apply other than what came with the kit? Research and reading. While kit and scratchbuilding may have fallen out of favor of late, it was the meat and potatoes of the hobby mags during the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s. So the first place to start is old copies of Model Railroader and Railroad Model Craftsman. If you are looking for details on a specific model try searching the MR Magazine Index at [http://index.mrmag.com/]. Photos found on the Net are useful, too.

Where do you get the extra detail parts? Those are available from a variety of sources like Precision Scale Co., Keil-Line, Grandt Line, and many others. Check our advertiser index for companies that make kits and detail parts. Don’t forget that you will need good tools in order to do fine detail work. Micro-Mark is a great source for tools.

Finally, don’t forget to check out Walthers online catalog. They have tons of O Scale kits, detail parts, and tools as well. Keep Highballin’...
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