



Non-Clinic Report

May, 2020

Clinic Cancelled: Obviously, the May clinic was cancelled. And, as a reminder, we do not hold clinics in June, July, and August. So, let's keep our fingers crossed that we will be able to resume clinics in September.

From the Editor: Y'know, we as model railroaders are fortunate that we have a great hobby to fall back on to fill out these long stay-at-home days. Even if we do not have a layout at home, we can work on models, or maybe build a diorama. Or burn up the internet, so to speak, watching railroad and model railroad related videos, or perhaps researching our favorite prototypes. Much is available for us to keep occupied – better than continuously rearranging your sock drawer!

Stay At Home Activities: To keep abreast of what some of us have been doing, I once again reached out to various clinic members to see what they had been doing in the past month, and received some great photos and words from: **Mike O'Brien, Stephen Winter, Ray Mitchell, Tom Buckingham, Ted Becker, Karl Kleeman, Nick Muff, Jim Betz, Jim Mays, John O'Connell** and **Don Jones**. Thanks so much, guys! Read below to see what they have been up to.

Tom Buckingham had what could be called a "near miss" and writes of his experience. I think we all should read this and pay attention:

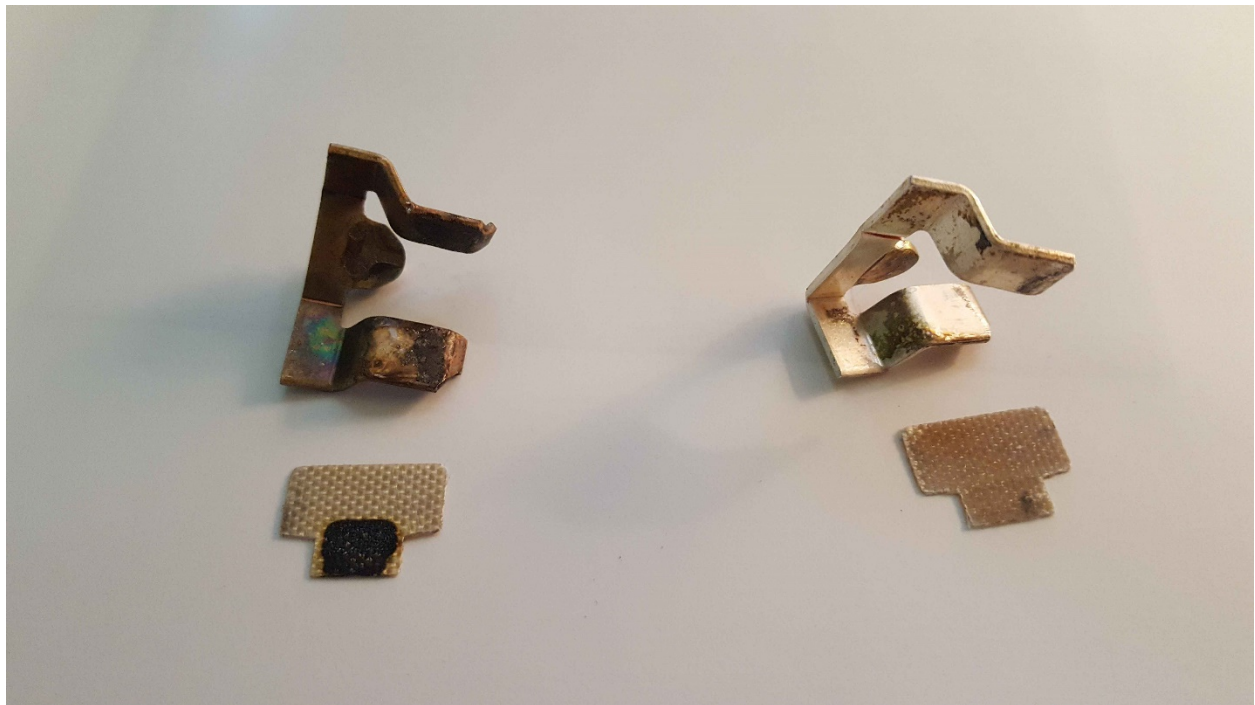
When we built our house, I asked the electricians to put in a dedicated 2x100 amp dedicated circuit for my train room. My thought was that if every circuit was on that one panel it would be easy to just turn off the master breaker for the panel when I left the train room and then I wouldn't have to be concerned as to whether I had left something on—like a soldering iron. For years it worked perfectly.

But about three years ago, when I would go to turn on the master breaker it would flip on but not engage, so there would be no power to the panel. Over time the problem became more and more annoying. Sometimes I would have to flip the breaker four or five times for it to engage. Finally, about four months ago when I turned on the master breaker, I began to hear a hum coming from the panel. And I noticed that the master breaker was getting rather warm to the touch.

Two days ago, I had an electrician come in and replace the 2x100 breaker. He said, in his opinion, two things had conspired to create my problem. First the wiring coming to the main breaker was under some tension and constantly tugging on the breaker, and secondly when the

original breaker was installed it looked like one of the two components was somewhat compromised by corrosion or oil or something like that.

When he was done, he broke the old breaker apart to show me what had gone on. I have photos of both sides of a small (unnamed) internal part of the breaker and the clips themselves. (They became very deformed when he pulled them out) You can easily see which of the two sides had the problem.



His final piece of advice was that if left unattended this could have eventually led to an electrical fire.

And remember last month, Tom reported a couple of rolls of black wire went AWOL, so he ordered replacement wire. Now the original rolls have shown up. Of course. Isn't that the way it always works?

Ted Becker writes in to say... *I am making some progress on my layout. The mainline is complete. A few turnouts in the yard are in. I put in some first layers of support for scenery. A lot of the layout is open grid so there is a combination of foam and cardboard strips going in.*

And for you GN fans there is a cast resin body shell on it's way for a GN NW5. That is the beast with a long SW7 type hood with a double step slope down to the cab and a high short hood on the back of the cab. I have a Stewart FT power chassis that will supply trucks and motor. The real trick is going to be the GN switcher paint scheme.

Below are before and after pics of the same area, with scenery supports now being installed:



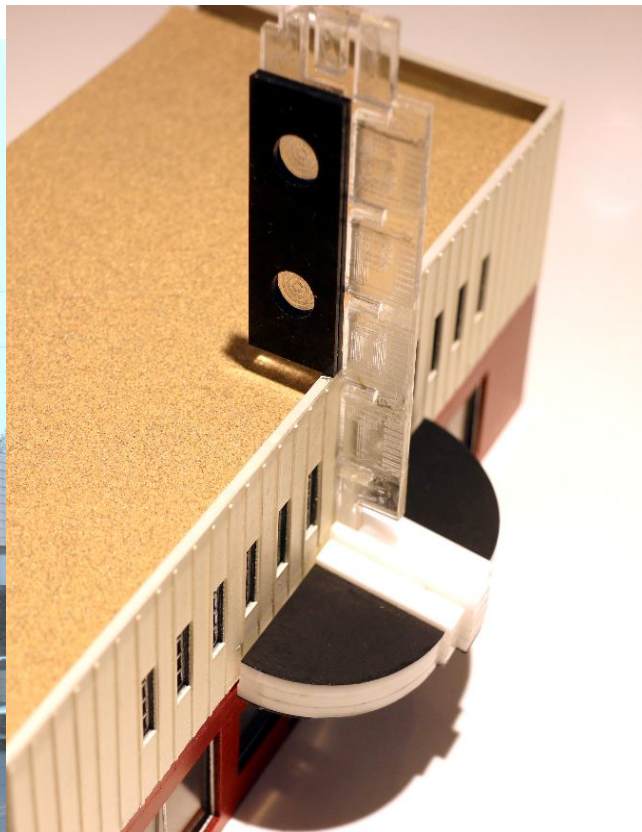
Nick Muff has been busy as ever. He writes:

I paused construction of the Noel, MO depot awhile back to create and build the Siloam Springs, AR depot so that I could simultaneously cut and create a kit for a second depot for a friend. That done, I am able to return and complete the Noel Depot. I am pleased with the lighted globes on the front of the operator's bay created by drilling out, detailing, and lighting two tiny craft pearls. With the Noel Depot installed and wired to the layout the town of Noel is completed.





Next, I am turning my attention to the final detailing of the various downtown structures for the town of Siloam Springs, AR. It is a challenge to create the lighted marquee for the previously constructed "Spot" theater. It will house about 40 surface mount LED's and is constructed of laser cut white, clear and black acrylic plastic.

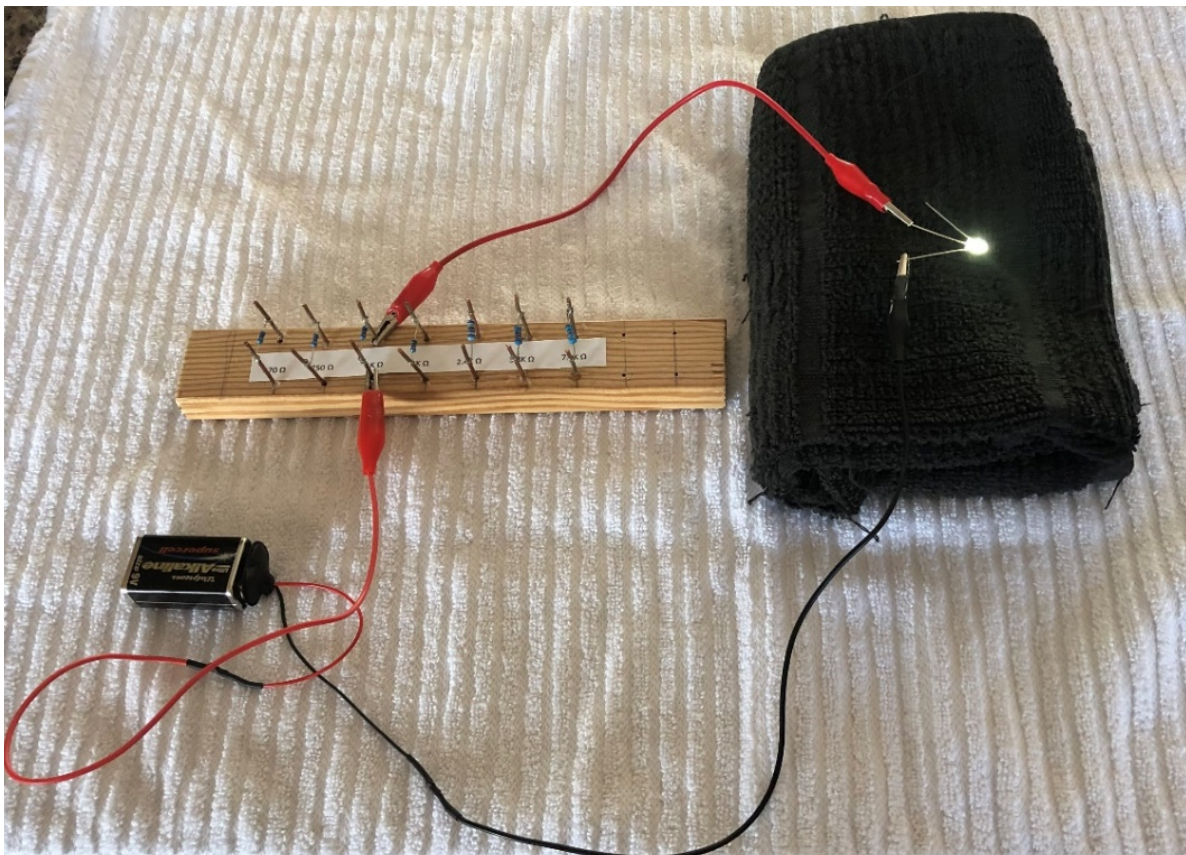


John O'Connell

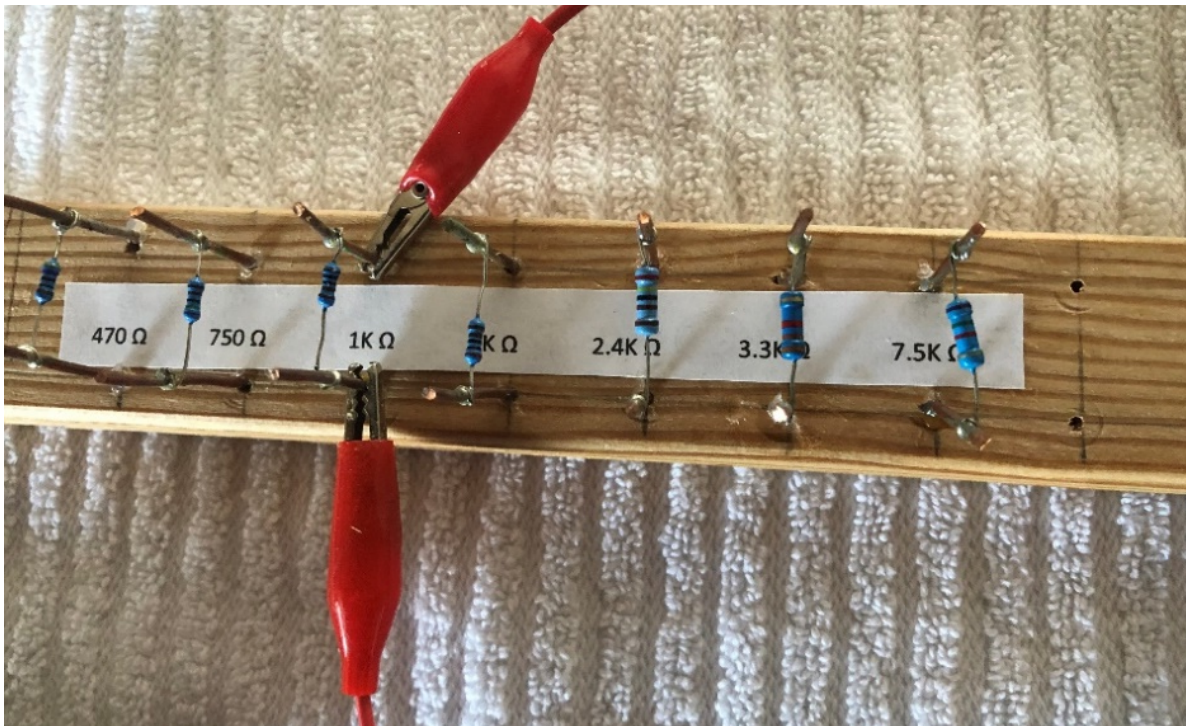
Last month, John had sent along a photo of Roger Johnson's Resistance Ladder. I thought this is a pretty cool device, so I asked John to write up a tutorial on how to make and use one.

Roger Johnson's Resistance Ladder

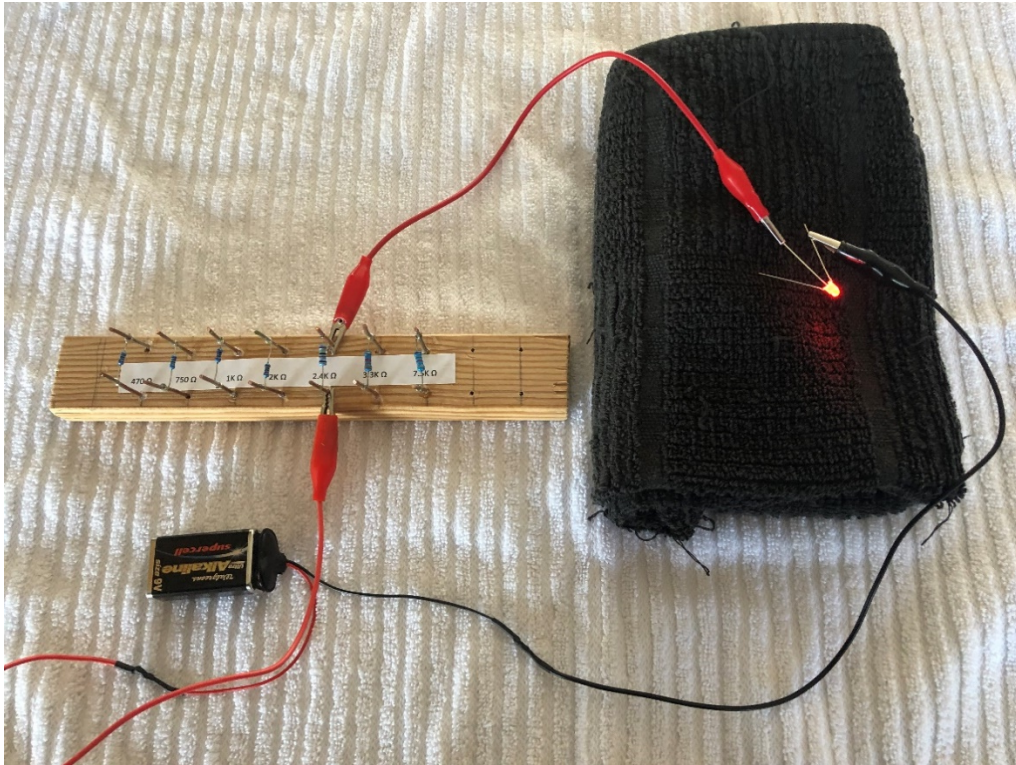
You are working with a new LED. It is a 3mm two color LED with RED and White displays. It has a center common (+) but it has two cathodes (-), one for the white and the other for the red. Which cathodes is for the white, which for the red and how much resistance looks best for each? You could fumble with a few loose resistors and use alligator clips to audition each possible resistor or daisy chain two resistors together. Or you could use a resistance ladder shared by our friend Roger Johnson.



The basic layout. As long as you have a single LED in the circuit, you can have the resistor in series with the anode or the cathode (if more than one LED is in the scheme, each controlled independently, then the convention is to wire a resistor in series with each anode) Here a $1\text{K}\Omega$ resistor is wired in series with the positive (+) pole on the 9-volt battery to the anode. The negative (–) pole of the battery is connected to one cathode of the LED and it turns out to be the white display. If the LED doesn't light, it is burned out or the poles are reversed.

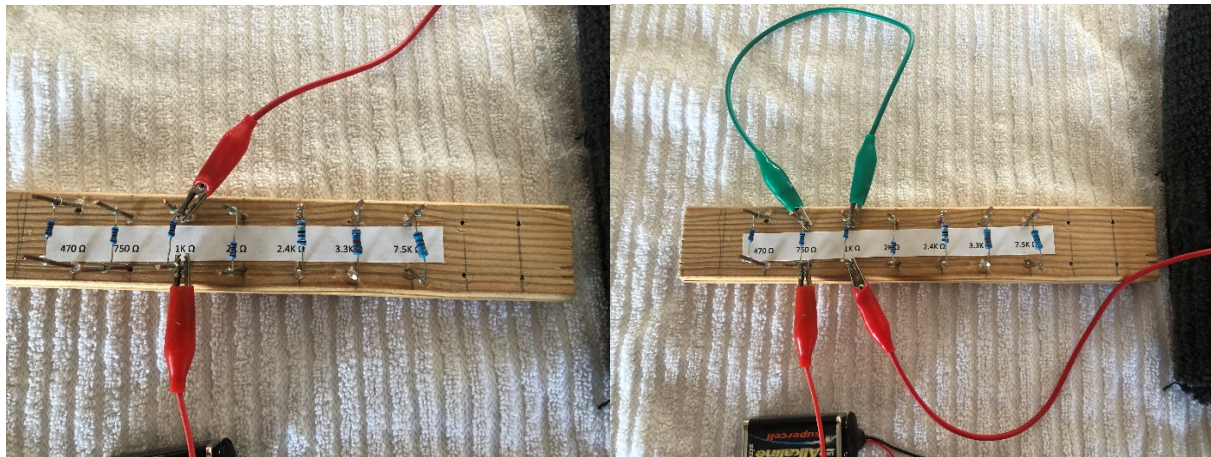


By walking the alligator clips along the ladder, you can audition different resistors quickly.

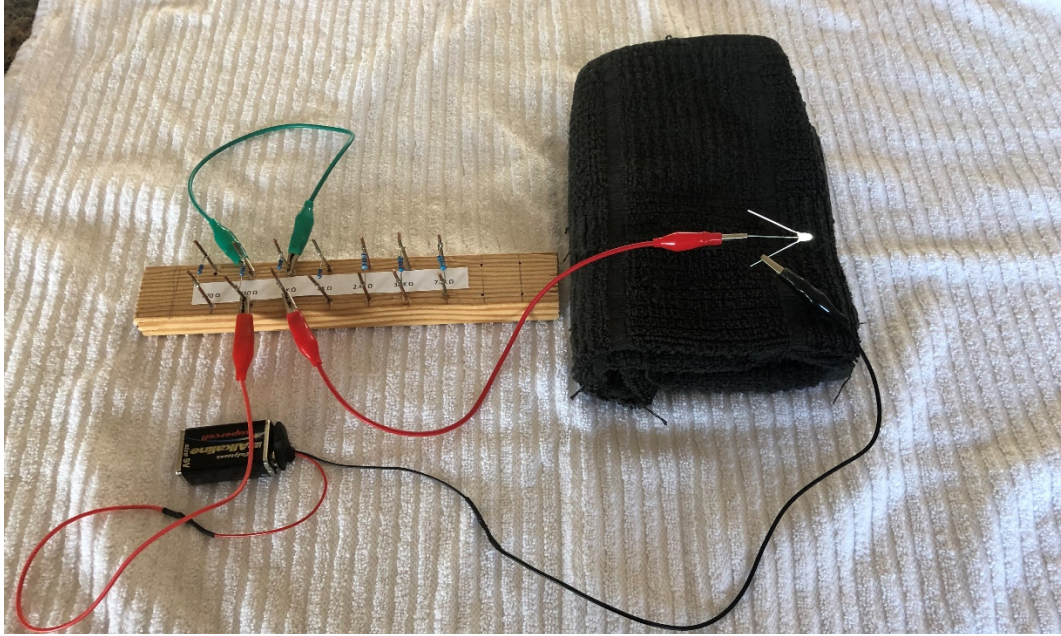


Moving the cathode (-) clip to the other cathode, you can audition resistors for the red. Here a 2.4K Ω gives the desired effect.

For the white, a 2K Ω appears too weak, a 1K Ω was too bright.



Possibly a 1K Ω and a 470 Ω , daisy chained, might look best. The green jumper connects the two resistors. The red clip on the left is connected to the battery; the red clip on the right connects to the red cathode.



The hardest part of making a ladder: keeping the rating of each resistor straight. Take them out one at a time, solder them, in order, to a pair of 14-gauge bare copper wires before moving on. Thank you, Roger!

Ray Mitchell

Just after press time last issue, Ray Mitchell sent along some photos of his huge G scale indoor layout. Ray's layout is in a pole barn type structure, and the layout is modular and is displayed at various railroad shows around the area. Here are a couple of photos; the first one shows just a corner of the layout and includes a working ski lift (gondola lift) and a "downhill" slope.

The second image gives you a hint of just how big this layout is!

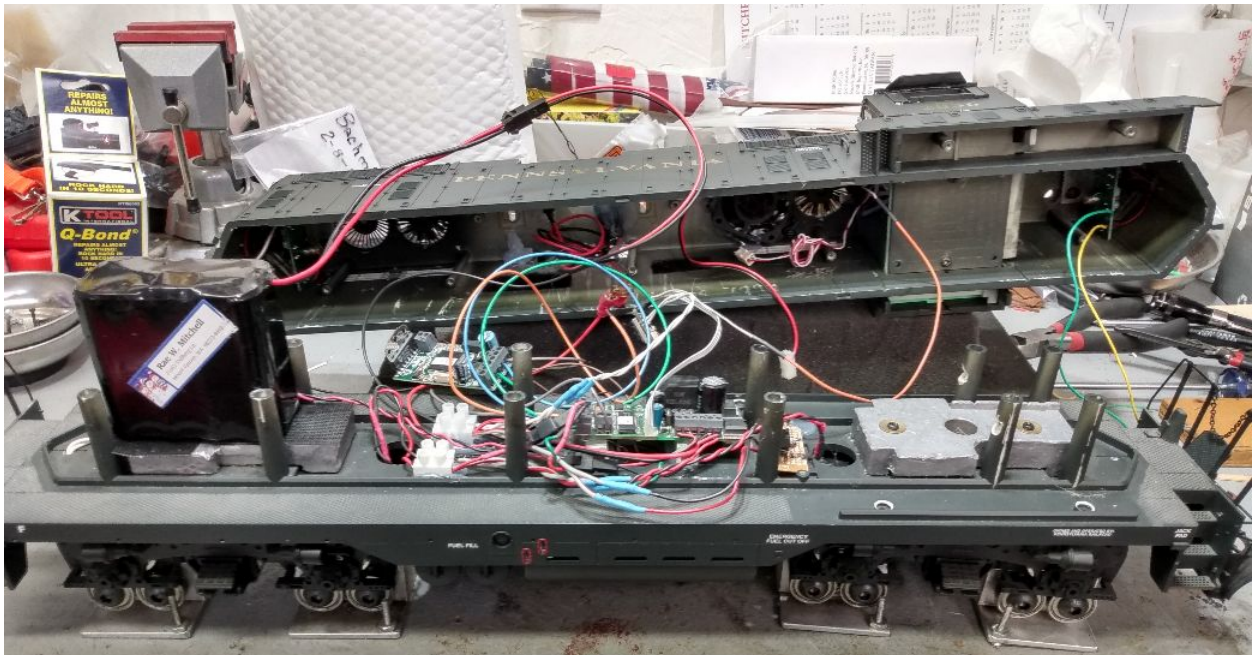
The third photo shows an old-west town scene on one of the layout's corners.

BTW, Mary Mitchell, Ray's wonderful wife, is just as much "into" this hobby and layout as Ray and she is responsible for a good part of the scenery and detailing found on the layout, with several vignettes that are really cool! Ray and Mary have been members of the PSGRS (Puget Sound Garden Railway Society) since it's inception way over 20 years ago.





Ray also reports he is installing radio control with sound, battery and decoder during our “down time”. Well, it certainly must be easier to install these components in a G scale loco, compared to HO, for example!



Jim Betz says: predictably what I have been doing is focusing on the layout. The attached picture is what I did today - build the base for the helix. I'll finish the base tomorrow and start on the homasote and then start laying track for staging and the helix. The lowest level (right on top of the plywood donut) will be staging, then above that will be the helix structure itself. The helix does not come all the way down to the staging section in the picture. I am building the helix using the threaded rod method.

BTW - it IS possible, just, for an old guy like myself to move a full sheet of 3/4 plywood from the layout room to the patio, get it up onto some saw horses, and get it cut up into useful sizes and shapes. It is not just the weight of a full sheet of 3/4, it is also the shape and the way that even a slight breeze wants to make it "fly".



Yes, the access to the inside of the helix will be a crawl thru - they tell me that if you build it right you do not have to do that very often. *G*. The grade in the helix will be about 1.703 percent.

Jim Mays has been working away on his 5x12 railroad, and sends the following:

Since you were here, I've changed my mind on what era I want to model. I've decided to keep the 1880's but limit it to one end of the layout. The other end will be 1950's. (There's a time warp somewhere around the hill in the center - it's Arizona red on the old west side and will be lush green trees, bushes, and grass on the 1950's side)). I'm still cutting and adjusting foam "hills" and have not populated the layout with people yet. The layout of the track is pretty firm, the rest of the scenery not so much so. Decided there will not be any tunnels - the portal in the old west hill is the entrance to the mine (gold, silver, copper, plutonium....?).

There is a rail yard and small staging area just on the '50's side of the divider hill. There will be a two-bay engine house and a round table (mostly because I want to be able to turn my locomotives around and run in either direction). There are two passenger stations and four industrial sites.

I have attached a couple of photos. Pretty easy to tell which end is "modern" and which is old west, I think. The strips of newspaper are place holders for the roads - until I figure out how wide and exactly where they should be. Below is a photo of the old west town, with Jim's mine in the background.

Wonder if there really is plutonium in "them thar hills"?





Above is a helicopter view of Jim's layout, with the 1950's town in the foreground, and the old west town on the other side of the hill.

Mike O'Brien

Update from Idaho ... installed an NCE PB5 this week. Learned that multiple throttles need their own addresses, like locos. Also learned, after a few screwdrivers got stuck in the wall, that #1 is an unacceptable address for a throttle?? 2 thru 64 work, but not (1). 🙄

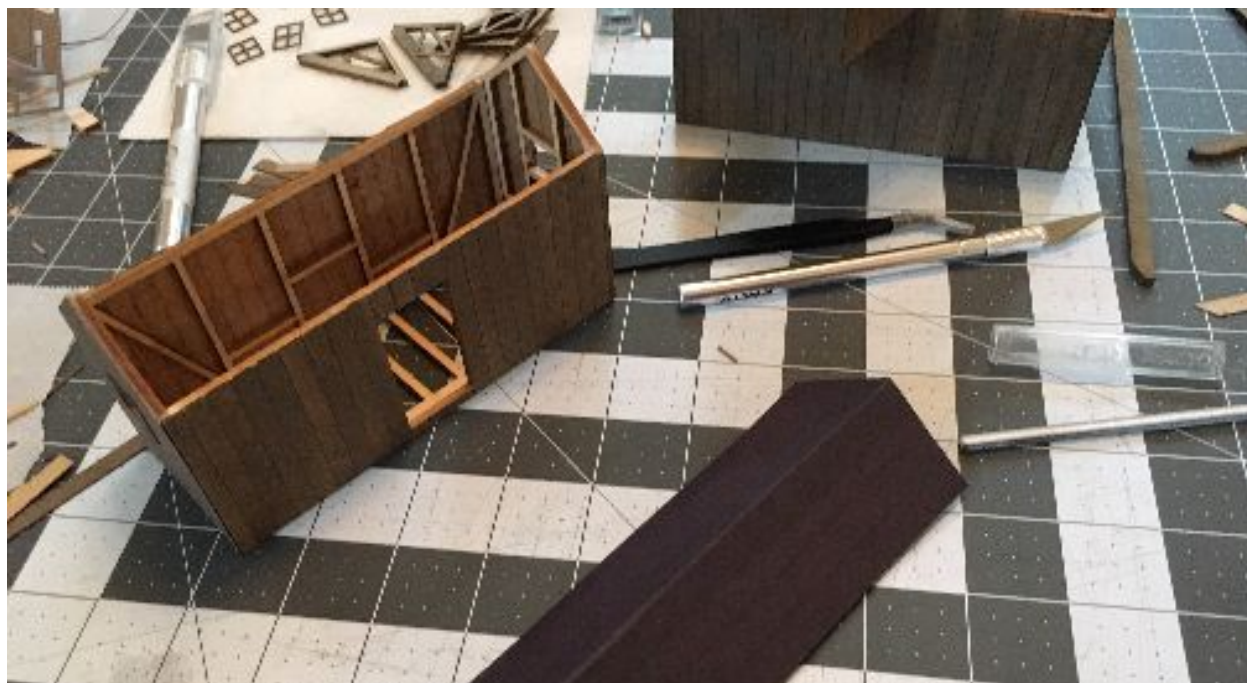
After that challenge, installed multiple UTP plugs around the layout. Got those daisy-chained and now can run multiple locos from multiple throttles from multiple locations. 🗺️

That is about it for the layout. Some minor links to iron out here and there, then I will start on the storage yard. You are all invited to help on that. LOL.

*Miss you guys. Hope everyone is safe. Cheers!
Mike*

Stephen Winter has been building some bunkhouses for his On30 corner modules. Stephen is part of the Pacific Northwest On30 Modular Group (<http://pnwon30.org/>) that is often displayed at area railroad shows. Cliff Aaker, Rich Blake, and Alan Murray of our "sister clinic" in Oak Harbor are also members of this group, along with several other fellows. Stephen writes:

Here is what I have been working on lately. These bunkhouses are from a BTS laser kit that included three logging bunkhouses in O Scale. Being one of my first Laser kits, I was a bit frustrated by the brief instructions at the start, but in the end, I got the hang of it and now I think the instructions were just fine. (It does say it is not a "beginners" kit.)





The exterior walls are all individual planks glued to the framing; the floor and roof panels are full sheets. I used Pan Pastels (Mainly Raw Umber and a few other lighter colors) to color all the exterior walls, door and floor, as well as the streaking on the roof. The only

place I used some stain (Builders in Scale Silverwood Stain) was on the roof panels (mainly to try to straighten them out). They were pretty straight after staining and being weighted down, but after gluing on the tar paper some of the curl came back.

The bunkhouse with the open door will also eventually get a basic interior, probably just a few bunk beds and a stove. Maybe some battery powered LEDs as well, but if I do that, I'll probably need to add interior walls, so the light doesn't leak through the boards...

The last set of pictures show them sitting on the free-mo module. I've got two 90 degree corners, I think about 30" radius. More scenic'ing is still needed, but it is coming along. I may just use two of the bunkhouses, the jury is still out, we will see when I get a little further down the road...





Below is a closeup photo of a really nifty bridge over a creek on one of the corner modules...



Don Jones has taken advantage of the “down time” up at the Whatcom Skagit Model Railroad Club by installing a new switchback/connector track at Tortilla Flats on the HO layout. This will enhance switching opportunities in the area. Don reports the NP switcher’s headlight is not really nuclear powered....



Karl Kleeman writes that he and **Dale Bearden** are building the *Monson Maine Slate Railway Company*, two-foot gauge, in O scale, sticking rigorously to the prototype. It is a modular traveling layout made up of four modules constructed in welded aluminum with foam core board to keep the weight down. There are two 6-foot modules, and two 8-foot modules that fit in a trailer we purchased for this purpose. We have been working on it for over a year and we figure another few months will be required.

The prototype railroad ran 6 miles from Monson Junction where it interchanged with a standard gauge railroad to the small town of Monson where the railroad was headquartered. It then ran from the town of Monson to several slate quarries. We are working from about 10 reference books; three are actually dedicated to the Monson and others have chapters on the Monson, and from about 400 pictures that we were able to get from the Monson Historical Society.

Everything is being scratch built to match the prototype. We traveled to Maine and collected soil from the actual Junction, Monson, and a quarry, and all the dirt is being used on the layout. We have found a fellow in California that makes really high-end trees and we have ordered 60 of them in fall colors. We will have a lot of trees making rather prototypically dense forests. The railroad is very much still under construction and is currently located in Karl's garage.



Quarry in the foreground, Monson in the middle back, and the junction at the top.



One of two Forneys run on the Monson at the water tank with a Backmann passenger car that Dale reconstructed to match the small one and only passenger car run on the Monson.



Coal shed at the Junction where coal was unloaded from gondolas on the standard gauge to the shed and then transferred to the 2 foot gauge locomotives



Two lifting derricks and the quarry. The quarry is made of real slate that we split into thin pieces to represent the walls of the quarry where it was actually split off in slabs.

Next page:

- 1. A sander and a saw in the quarry building where the rough slate is cut and sanded. It was then made into tabletops, sinks, shingles, etc*
- 2. More machinery and a jib crane, track in foreground where small carts with the rough mined slate was pushed by hand from the quarry.*



Al Carter: *My downtown buildings that I showed last month have been on hold for a couple of weeks, awaiting more signs from Miller Engineering. When they say not to bend the signs very much, they mean it... In the meantime, I got mad at my workbench, which was beyond ridiculously cluttered. Of course, getting mad didn't help. Swearing at it didn't help either.*

So, I decided to clean it up. Commensurate with that, I was unhappy with the right side of my workbench, as it was mostly under a section of the layout. So, I narrowed that section of the benchwork, from 2 feet, to 1 foot deep. Much better. I have more room to work and don't feel so cramped. Plus, I added a nifty task light that I found on Amazon. It has adjustable brightness and can get plenty bright, plus the color temperature is variable. And the two arms are flexible so it can be positioned near my



project.

The photo shows the “warm” color spectrum, but it can go as high as 6500K. Here is a link to the light on Amazon:

https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/B00VUTAFR8/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_asin_title_o07_s00?ie=UTF8&psc=1



Anyone want to guess how long my workbench stays nice and tidy?

Chairman's Challenge: Hello fellow COVID-19 exiles. Most of us are using this time of house arrest to work on model railroad stuff. If not, you should consider it. One of my thoughts when I became aware of potential isolation was: "Thank God I have a hobby."

Looks like we're headed for a long break in the clinic schedule. During past breaks I have issued a "Chairman's Challenge" to prod you folks into working on MRR stuff. This break is going to be a long one so there is more to the challenge. It is a multi-part challenge.

1. Work on your layout. Take some photos now. Take some photos later then share them with the group when clinics resume.
2. Finish an unfinished project. 'Before' photos would be nice. Bring the finished model to the next clinic.
3. Build a kit or scratch-build. Don't forget the theme for the coming season, no matter when it starts, is still flat cars and flat carloads.

Stay healthy, follow the guidelines and hopefully we will meet again sooner rather than later. – **Ted Becker**

Editor's Note: *This is probably the last time I'll be able to climb up on my soap box and beg, so here goes: In all this stay-at-home time, I'm sure that most, if not all, of us have been able to work on some sort of model or project. Please, please plan on answering Ted's Chairman's Challenge and help make our next clinic (hopefully, September) a really special get-together.*

This from an anonymous contributor:

Alligator clips with the colored grips that wonder and slip: open the jaws and stick a splint to keeps jaws open, then sneak a little Goo under the insulation. Let it dry overnight.

(Editor's note: Bet you can't guess who this anonymous contributor is...)

Virtual Tool Time: This is the part of the clinic where we encourage you to share with us a tool (or more than one) and/or maybe a new product. It can be a trusty old standby that you use all the time, or something new that you have discovered. There are a lot of sources for tools, some non-traditional and some obscure. Show us what you've got.

Only two contributors this month – see below:

Jim Betz

With respect to tools. I purchased a Bosch self-leveling laser - what a boon to layout construction! The model I got was the GLL 50. Using it, I was able to go thru and check the benchwork - and reset about 60% of the horizontals in just 3 to 4 hours work. The key to that was the Engineered Layout Systems extruded aluminum - using just a hex wrench and a large rubber mallet to 'coax' the aluminum to where it needed to be I reset both layers of the layout. Yes, doing it by 'eye' had introduced errors that would have to be corrected. Luckily, I got it all done now instead of a little later - once the homasote/Foamular is in place it would have been a LOT harder.

Al Carter

I had noticed several favorable reviews of products by Deluxe Materials, including their "Track Magic", "Ballast Bond", "Tacky Wax", and "Liquid Gravity", among other products. I ordered these, plus a few other items from them. Here is a link to the company's website:

<https://deluxematerials.co.uk/collections/all-products> although I ordered my stuff from both YankeeDabbler.com and from modeltrainstuff.com, at discounted prices. My order from Yankee Dabbler arrived 3 days after I placed the order. Not the same as going to the LHS, but not bad, nonetheless...



So far, I have tried out the Ballast Bond, which is a pre-mixed, thinned ballast cement that is applied right out of the bottle. I really liked the included super-fine tip (about 4" long), which allows for pinpoint placement of the cement. This is especially useful when bonding ballast around turnouts. I am pleased to say that I really like the way this product behaves – no diluting of white glue or matte medium, and no pre-wetting of the dry ballast or ground cover is needed. I ballasted 3 turnouts yesterday, and this morning the turnouts still functioned as they should, not glued to one side or another as I have done when applying ballast glue with more conventional means.

I have yet to try the Liquid Gravity, but geez, that small 2-ounce sized bottle weighs over 7 ounces. Seems like not much, until you pick it up! I am looking forward to trying it out between the center sills underneath a flat car.

By the way, I learned about this line of products while reading through the from on Model Railroad Hobbyist's website – something I do every morning with a cup of coffee. I have learned much, just reading through the topics that interest me on this forum. Joe Fugate, publisher of MRH, is quite a proponent of Deluxe Materials offerings, and I am quite pleased with what I have used so far.

Another "tool" I use in ballast application is a seeding tool, used to evenly distribute seeds in your garden, especially those really tiny carrot seeds and the like. I use it both for ballast application, as well as applying dirt and other ground cover, like fine ground foam. It has 6 different sized openings. I use the #1 size for pinpoint placement of ballast in turnouts. Here is a link from Amazon:

https://smile.amazon.com/LJSLYJ-Sower-Dispenser-Gardening-Seeder/dp/B07PZT4PSR/ref=sr_1_10?dchild=1&keywords=seed+tool&qid=1589993293&sr=8-10

Here is a photo of this "tool". And yes, I do use it when planting those tiny seeds in my vegetable garden!



Next Up: Well, obviously we are in a holding pattern. The scheduled May clinic, REA Operations in Seattle by **Thomas Keyes**, has been postponed but Mr. Keyes has let us know he still wants to come up and present his clinic, so we'll look forward to that whenever it is.

Also, for the upcoming clinic season (Sep 2020 – May 2021), we are planning on promoting a “flat car build” – not necessarily a contest. Details still to be worked out. Initial thoughts on this project:

- Making a plastic flat car deck look realistic
- Exploring different types of flat cars and flat car loads
- Examining methods for securing loads

Bob Nelson, of Bellingham, has agreed to give an overview of flat cars, hopefully at the September clinic.

Sponsorship: The Mount Vernon NMRA clinic is one of several clinics sponsored by the Fourth Division, Pacific Northwest Region, National Model Railroad Association. We meet on the 3rd Monday at 7:00 pm at the Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Street. Membership in the NMRA is **NOT** required to attend our clinic, but it is encouraged. For more info on joining the NMRA, see: www.nmra.org/membership. Or see **Al Carter** for a membership application. Remember, if you are unsure, there is a one-time 9 month Rail Pass trial membership for only \$19.95.

Contact Info: Clinic Chairperson is **Ted Becker** (rail.bird@att.net). Name badge maker/keeper and roster manager is **Tom Buckingham** (tom@401kplanninggroup.com). Refreshment provider is **Dave Falconer** (dsfalconer@aol.com). Newsletter writer/editor/publisher/photographer and general all around behind-the-scenes guy is **Al Carter** (tabooma@msn.com).

Help Out: To volunteer for a clinic, or to suggest a clinic topic, contact **Ted Becker** at rail.bird@at.net

Questions/Comments/Contributions to this newsletter should be sent to **Al Carter** at tabooma@msn.com. If you want to be removed from the mailing list, contact **Tom Buckingham** at tom@401kplanninggroup.com.

