

In the spirit of sharing, Master Model Railroader, Chuck Ricketts is creating a series of emails to describe how Jim Elder and he are constructing a sectional layout in the garage. This layout, while a pure fantasy model railroad, is operations oriented. The first email described Chuck's model railroad background with a brief look at some of his previous layouts and why, in his mid-eighties, he is starting a new layout. The second article told the history on Baja Siena (or at least Chuck's version of the history). In the third article, Chuck began to describe the construction of the Baja Siena Railroad and Navigation Company. Articles 4 and 5 covered benchwork and, sub roadbed, and some roadbed. In this edition, Chuck completes the roadbed and gets deep into trackwork.

Fantasy Island layout article 6

Making Tracks



Which gandy dancer is Chuck, and which one is Jim????

Track laying crews were called gandy dancers for their synchronized movements when repairing track under the direction of a lead workman known as the "caller" or "call man." The name "gandy" supposedly arose from a belief that their hand tools once came from the Gandy tool company in Chicago (though no researcher has ever turned up).

Even before all the roadbed was finished, we installed the wye turnouts as it was critical for the rest of the track alignment.



Then we were then able to finish laying down the rest of the 2 inch wide foam roadbed.



Ties and Rail

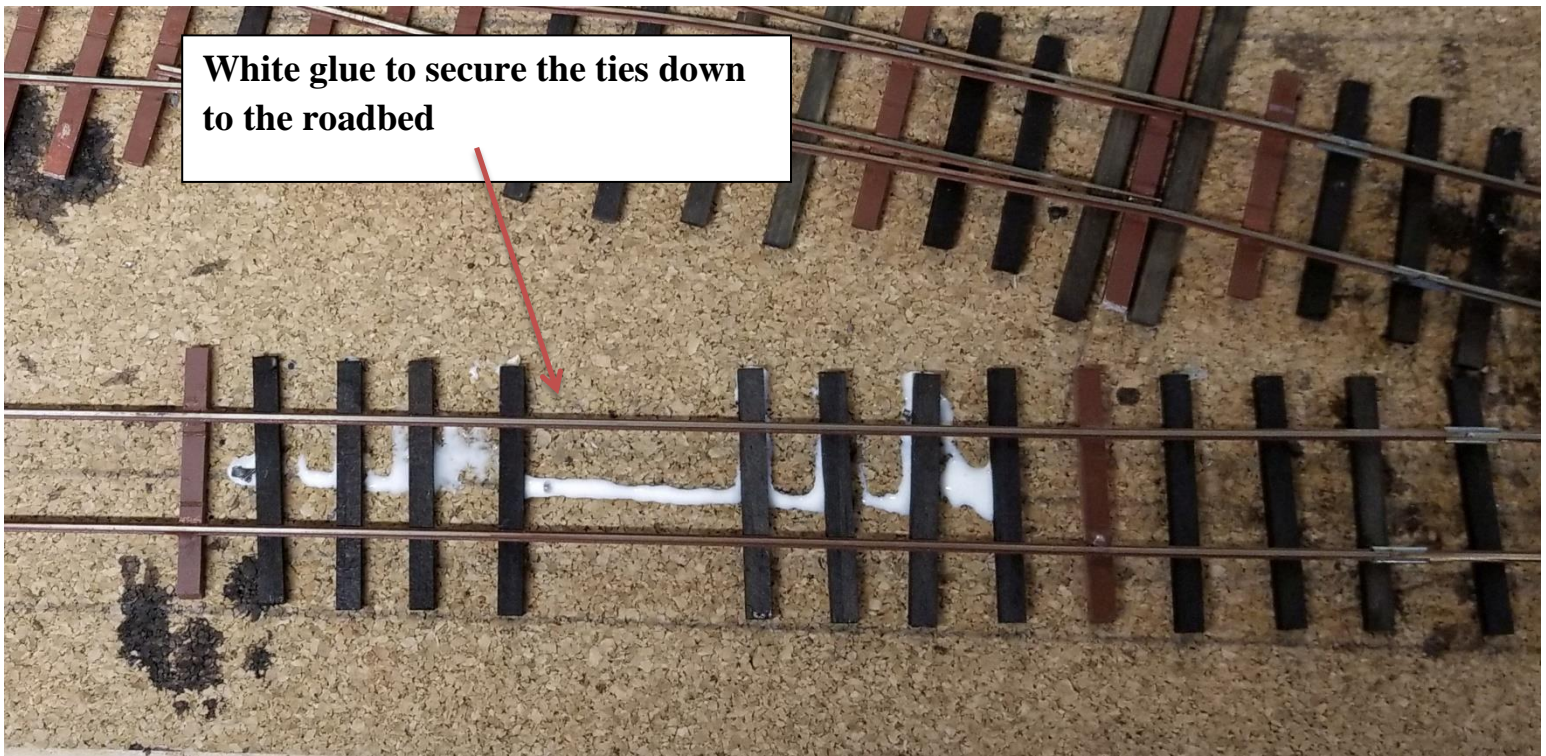
Once the roadbed was completed, we moved on to my next job: dying ties. I dyed all 1000 ties in the package from Fast Tracks and began installing them.

After a while it became apparent that I had not ordered nearly enough ties or rail. I had forgotten that CadRail has an optional worksheet that calculates the length of objects in each layer. Using that option, I determined that there is close to 200' of track including turnouts in this layout. I only ordered enough rail for 135 feet of track. I went online and after trying several websites, found there was no Micro Engineering code 83 rail to be had in North America. It finally occurred to me to try my good source of narrow gauge materials in Arizona: Coronado Scale Models.

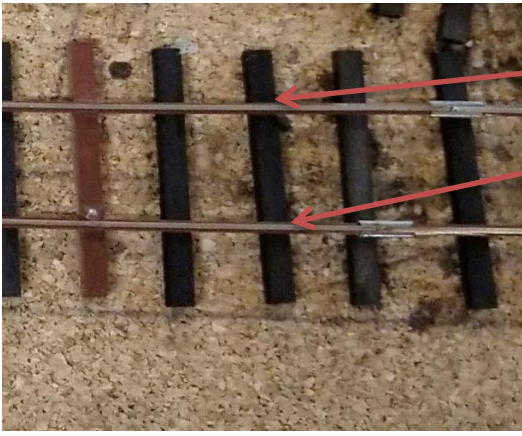
Stan and Shelton Schwelder, the brothers who have run this great little shop in Phoenix for a very long time, have often come through for me and they did so this time too. They had one package of code 83 weathered rail in stock. While we had been using un-weathered rail, I hastily put in an order for that package of rail.

I also realized we would need over 2000 ties. I ordered another package of 1000 ties from Fast Tracks. We had a great many turnout ties left over from the SS&S and this layout. I used my Dremel circular saw to make two ties out of each turnout tie. I made another 500 ties. I ended up dying most of them to get enough ties for the layout.

I then inserting over 2000 ties one by one under the rails.



Jim can along behind me, lifting the track sections and placed a drop of Pliobond on each tie under where each rail would rest.



Pliobond on the ties under each rail

Weights were used to hold the track down to the rail while the pliobond set.



Weights to hold down the track while everything sets up

Lots of Work, But Worth the Effort



Maybe I'm a bit of a track snob, but I have to say using Pliobond to hand lay track is so easy, and it looks so good, I'm glad we did it. My AZN layout was done with flex track, but this was more satisfying and looks better in my humble opinion.

While Jim was gluing down the track, I began to decide where to put track feeders, drilled holes and put pieces of colored wire in the holes so we would be able to find them and install wire drops.

What's Next?

In Fantasy Island - Article 7, Chuck will discuss how he and Jim wired the Baja Siena and control the turnouts. They are using a couple of new ideas to make that job easier, all of which will be discussed in more detail. Until then, happy railroading.