



Non-Clinic Report Winter, 2021

From the Editor: I must admit I have been a bit lax in getting out a winter newsletter. My excuses being just mesmerized and flabbergasted at the political issues unfolding around us since the November election, and confess to watching a lot of MSNBC and just shaking my head. But no politics!

And I've had a few computer issues too, both with the computer and with the broadband service to my house. Wave cable showed up today and smoothed out a bunch of issues with internet speed. And I have a new computer on order. So... Onward!

Clinic Chairperson Ted Becker:

We hope all of you are staying safe and healthy. Get vaccinated. In person clinic meetings will not resume until it is deemed to be completely safe which may include proof of vaccination. Tentative plans are to resume in person clinics in September hopefully in more spacious meeting space.

Except for a postponement due to an Internet outage our Zoom meetings on the third Mondays have been going well and clinic topics are lined up through April with a couple more waiting in the wings. Announcements of the clinics will be sent to the email list and posted in the Grab Iron a few days before the clinic.

Check out the GrabIron listings on 4DPNR.COM for information on other 4th Division clinics on Zoom.

Ted Becker, Clinic chairperson

About Virtual Clinics:

So, many of you might have seen the notices I have been forwarding out about Zoom clinics. These are simply notifications that have been published in the Grab Iron, the digital newsletter of the Fourth Division, PNR, NMRA. They announce upcoming virtual clinics and layout tours.

The Grab Iron is not a monthly publication, as it used to be, but rather an “as news breaks” format – when someone writes an article, it is posted on the 4D’s website, and subscribers are notified. You can subscribe. You do not have to be an NMRA member to subscribe. Check it out at 4dpnr.org and sign up!

On to the virtual clinics. These are being hosted on the Zoom platform. Anyone with a computer, tablet, or smart phone can view these Zoom meetings. You do not have to download the Zoom app, nor “join” anything, to view a Zoom virtual clinic. Just click on the link provided to join the session.

You might see a query popup asking about enabling your camera, and maybe another one about enabling sound. The camera is not required (unless you are the moderator or clinician, of course). Sound, though – you will want that enabled, so you can hear the presentation. The moderator and/or clinician has the option to “mute” attendees, and that is done to prevent interruptions during the presentation. Mic’s are taken off mute after the main presentation, so you can ask questions.

Of course, you can download the Zoom app, which allows you some more options, like posting a background to your on-camera face, etc.

The 4D has (had) monthly clinics all over Puget Sound – 9, I think. Right now, most are actively presenting monthly clinics and layout tours.

But where the clinic originates does not matter. You can view any and all of them, irrespective of location. There have been some neat layout tours in recent months, ranging from Issaquah to Port Angeles to Olympia and more. That is the neat thing about these Zoom layout tours – no driving! I know I am not much for driving long distances anymore and this is a great opportunity to view layouts that might otherwise be missed.

What if you cannot make the scheduled Zoom presentation? Don’t worry, you can view them on YouTube. On that site, go to [4d pnr youtube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpnr4d) and you will get a list of past presentations, so you don’t have to miss any! Also, check out NMRA ORG on YouTube for national level clinics and tours – great stuff!

Virtual clinics are going to be with us for a while, and though I personally miss the camaraderie of our local meetings, Zoom clinics and tours are the next best thing. Try it – you just might like it!

Working At Home Activities: Those that answered my plea for newsletter material include **Mike O'Brien, Ted Becker, Nick Muff, Dave Sherwood, Doug Palm, Tom Buckingham, Loren Clarke** (a newbie to our group!) and **Mark Malmkar**. Thanks so much, guys! Read below to see what they have been up to.

A Sign Of The Times: Covid testing on the HO Scale layout at the WSMRC...



Mike O'Brien:

The OB&F is a fictional railroad set in the Applegate Valley of Southern Oregon. The goal is to recreate some family history in this region. Tallowbox Mountain & Lookout are about 4 miles due south of the old O'Brien Ranch and homestead. You can see it from the ranch and was the lookout was built in 1923. There were no roads up the mountain, so all supplies had to be packed in by mule train. O'Brien Creek was named by (or after) my Great, Great Grandfather who did a lot of gold prospecting / mining in the area. He was very successful at mining, but also was a heavy drinker and gambler, winning and losing several small fortunes on the poker table. Unfortunately, he died (drowning) on a losing streak when his horse threw him while crossing the Applegate River. Haven't quite figured out how to model that?? ☺ This is N Scale, by the way!



My trusty scenery pallet, everything and more that I'll need for the project. I try to treat it like a diorama. When completed, for me ... there is a sense of accomplishment and then I move on to the next one.



Figure 1 Tallowbox Mountain Loop - ready for scenery; basic rockwork installed



Figure 2 Finished rock work with Bragdon rock molds, plaster of Paris and Woodland Scenics liquid pigment



Figure 3 Primed fascia



Figure 4 Flat Black painted fascia w/ trestle temporarily set in place.

My first attempt at making waterfalls for Woodland Scenics Water Effects. They dried clear and after attached to the rocks (with same product) I applied diluted white paint. Not perfect, but not too bad for my first attempt.



Figures 5 & 6 Waterfall effects on bench and installed on the rock work

By spring I hope to have this scene completely done & Annie is making the curtains (black) to hang around the layout. They'll be pleated and attached to the fascia on the back side. They should look nice (and will hide all my junk!!). Cheers to all from Idaho!!

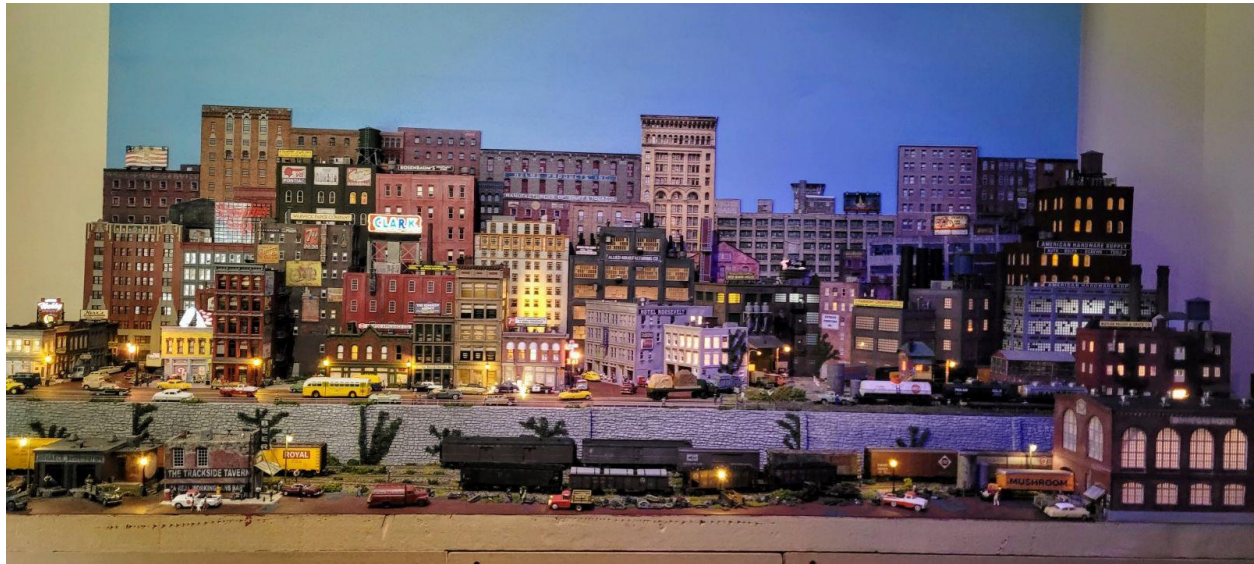


The beginnings of the lookout (which in real life is 12' x 12'). That's right at 1" square in N Scale!

Figure 7 Lookout tower under construction

Loren Clarke: Loren is a “newbie” to our group – he lives a bit south, along Highway 9 in Snohomish County. I “met” Loren on the Model Railroad Hobbyist forum, which both he and I frequent. Loren sent along a couple of photos of his city/industrial themed layout, which is “door sized” but built on a 2” slab of foam, 36x90”, with an additional 4” depth at the rear. Loren reports he built the layout on the **Woodland Scenics Mod-U-Rail** benchwork system, which I had never heard of and had to research. Pretty slick system!

He certainly has developed a very neat, detailed scene and likes lights and signs!



Loren likes to super detail scenes, as shown below. The railroad he models is the Pittsburgh & Shawmut, which is a not-too-often modeled railroad and one that is hard to find model subjects (if anyone has any P&W items for sale, contact Loren at lclarke@gmail.com)





Doug Palm:

Who says garden/outdoor railroading is only for summertime/good weather conditions?



Doug sent this really cool (cold?) photo of his backyard garden railroad. I thought it was very appropriate for the season and considering the snowfall we experienced. Doug calls it “*the Stainz working to restore operations at Gare d’Utsalady in icy conditions this afternoon.*”

Mark Malmkar:

Mark moved to Oak Harbor in 2016 from Kearney, Nebraska. He models a semi-freelanced railroad, the ***Rocky Mountain Central***, which connects with the Rock Island at Colorado Springs and the Southern Pacific at Ogden. Mark models the portion from Colorado Springs to Glenwood Springs in the Rockies, and part of the route is over former Colorado Midland tracks. The Rio Grande is a competitor.

He has modeled a connection of the Rock Island at Belleville, KS with a staging yard representing Chicago and Kansas City.

Mark says *This is my project for the fall (and it may go into winter). In the foreground is an uncompleted yard of Leadville, Colorado. (Also known as Cloud City) The module is eleven feet long and two feet wide. It is ten inches deep with a staging yard below.*



It goes on the second level of the photo between the upper left segment and the upper right segment. The blue sky background for it has been temporarily removed between the one on the upper left and the one on the upper right. It was built to this point in 2010. The lower staging yard is operational and has been used in operations. I just never finished the upper level.

You might notice some straight Truscale wood roadbed, without rails. I've had a love affair with Truscale roadbed since age ten. Now I have a love/hate relationship with it because of several feet that is operational elsewhere on the layout—makes a helluva racket when trains roll over it.

In 2010 I temporarily spiked the switches in place. There is no room below them for Tortise or Switchmasters (staging tracks), so I need to resort to other control methods. The top level is too high for ground throws. I'm still planning.

You can see scenery forms on the lower level. Before I finish that level I need to work on the upper yard. It's too easy to drop paint and plaster onto finished scenery of the lower level. (Don't ask me how I found that out.) So, Cloud City gets finished and operational, including wiring, before I continue with anything else on the railroad. It's about time.

Leadville Yard



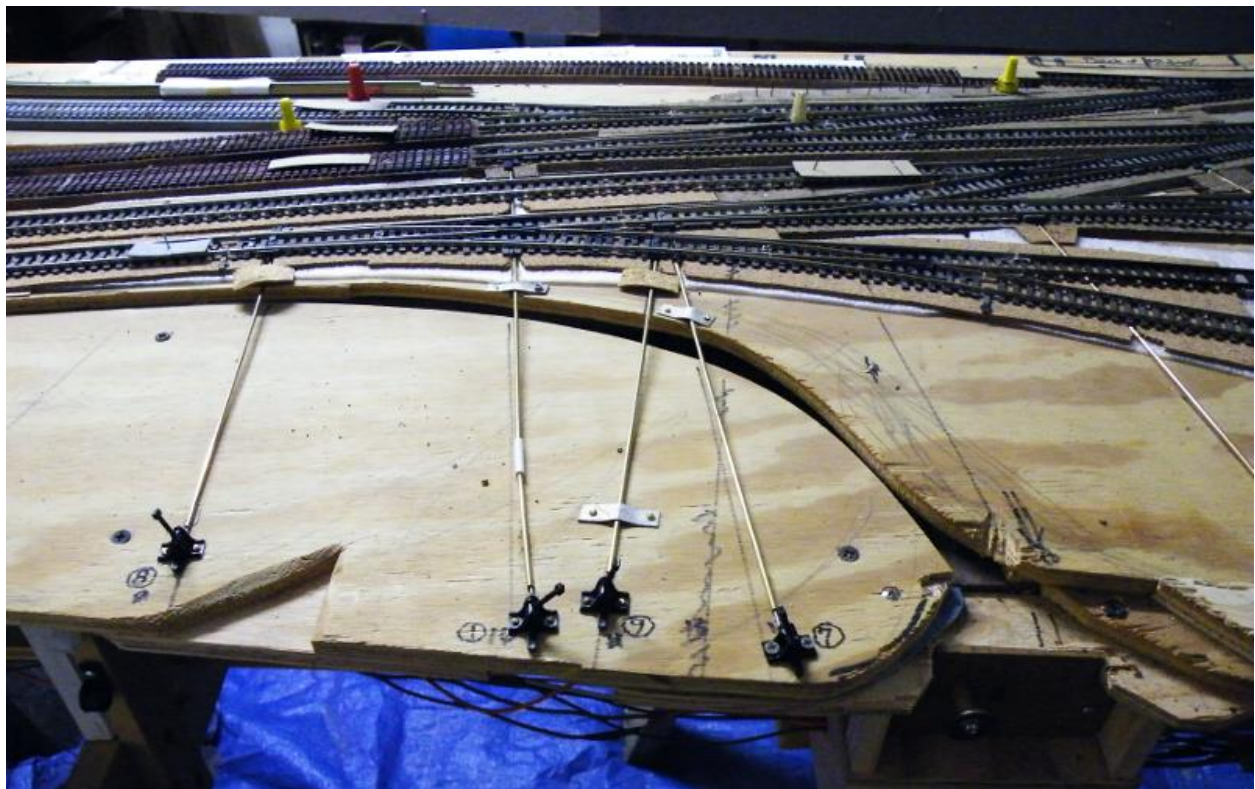
This is the progress as of October 15. Switches are installed and flex track is laid.

The Tru-scale wooden roadbed has been stained. The gray spur to the left is to be an “aged” track. In the historic Leadville yard tackage, this spur would have been in place since 1890. My layout is to be 1955, so it is “old”. I don’t know what the track was used for when the Colorado Midland owned it. My railroad will use it for MOW and snowplow storage.

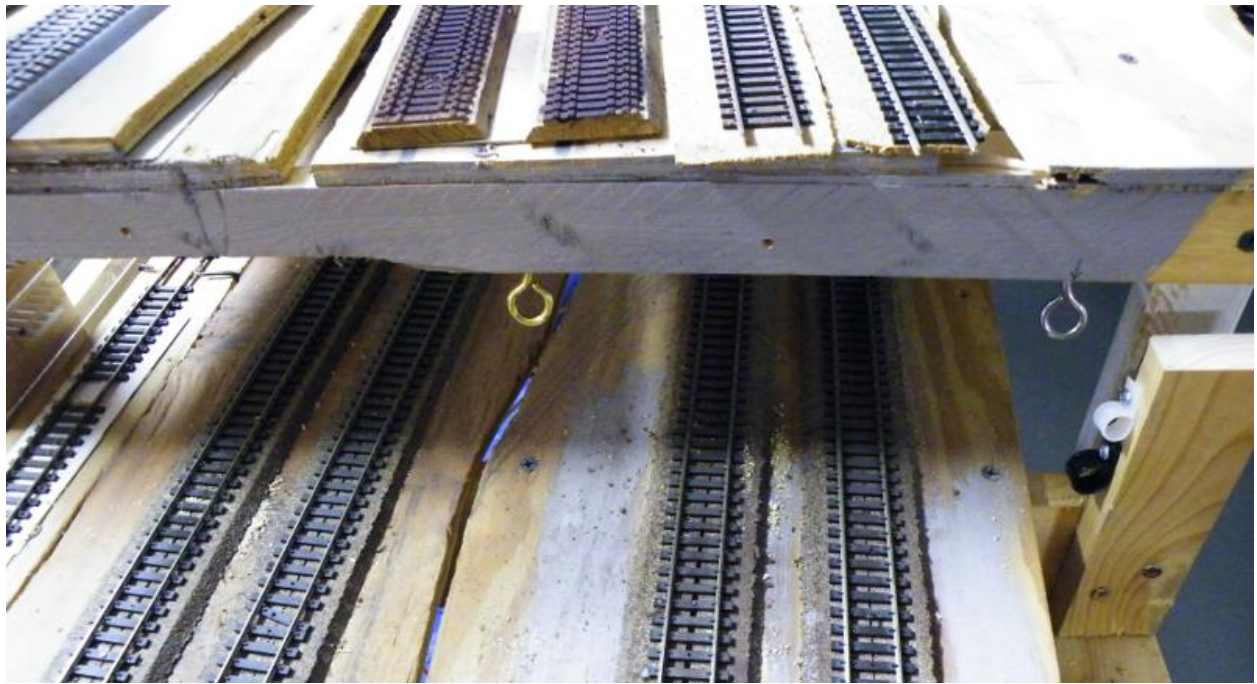
The various wire nuts around the yard are to indicate where feeder wires are to be soldered onto the rails. I’ve already drilled holes. To the left side of the photo is a bundle of nickel silver rail waiting to be spiked onto the Tru-scale roadbed. (As soon as I find my package of spikes—still hiding from the move.)

The far distant spurs are, L to R, coal tower track, two engine house tracks and the right track is to an industry and the city power company. (Lights) The city power tracks are also “old”, in a historical location, and ties will be stained gray.

Historically, the Colorado Midland roundhouse would be located about the middle of the maze of switches. My 1955 railroad is mostly diesel—no roundhouse.



Since the staging yard was below this (no room for tortoise controls) I had to create some method of moving switch points. The yard is also 63 inches above the floor. I saw an article in a magazine using rods, tubes and caboose throws. By gum, they worked, as you can see. Off to the lower right is a washer knob on a rod. It controls points with another mechanism I created years ago. After putting four of them in I decided to go with the caboose throws. The electrical wire nuts were placed where I needed feeder wires.



It might create a problem for wires hanging down into traffic on the staging yard. So I put a dozen screw eyes under the top level in which to string the wires. (No dangling wires into the dome cars or locomotive smoke stacks.

And a more recent (2/18/2021) photo, showing progress and some scenery!



Dave Sherwood: Train derailment on the huge, curved trestle!!! Time to call out the wreck train! Note the big screen track schematic in the corner.

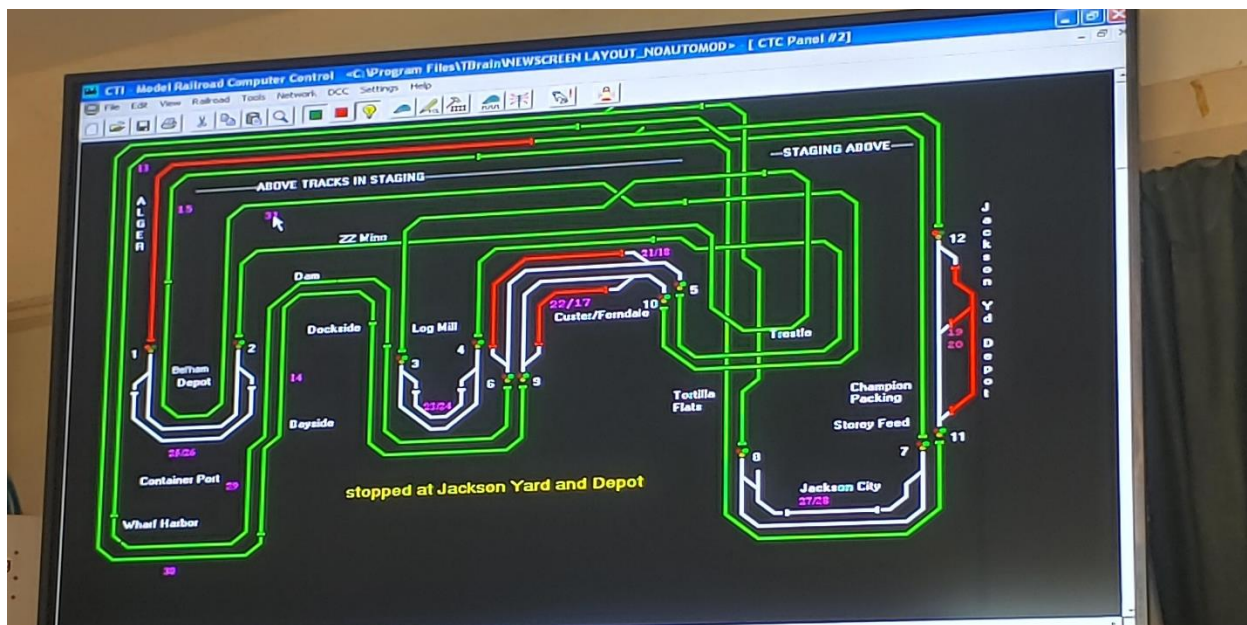
Dave says... *You Know When You've Had A very Bad Day with Great Luckhere is what happened yesterday on the large trestle on the HO scale layout at the Whatcom/Skagit Model Railroad Club.....*



Only the leading and trailing cars have regular couplers (usually 5 car sets, but some 7 car sets). The in between cars have male pin connectors sticking up with female ones that rest over the male pins. I don't know how these cars didn't fall apart.



Some of us were discussing this and wondering why the cars didn't tumble all the way down. The guardrails are on the inside of those tracks and the cars got caught "on the wire" handrails. I've had some real nasty derails in the past and was there by myself and NO camera or phone. Six modern passenger cars piled one on top of another completely blocking a tunnel portal!



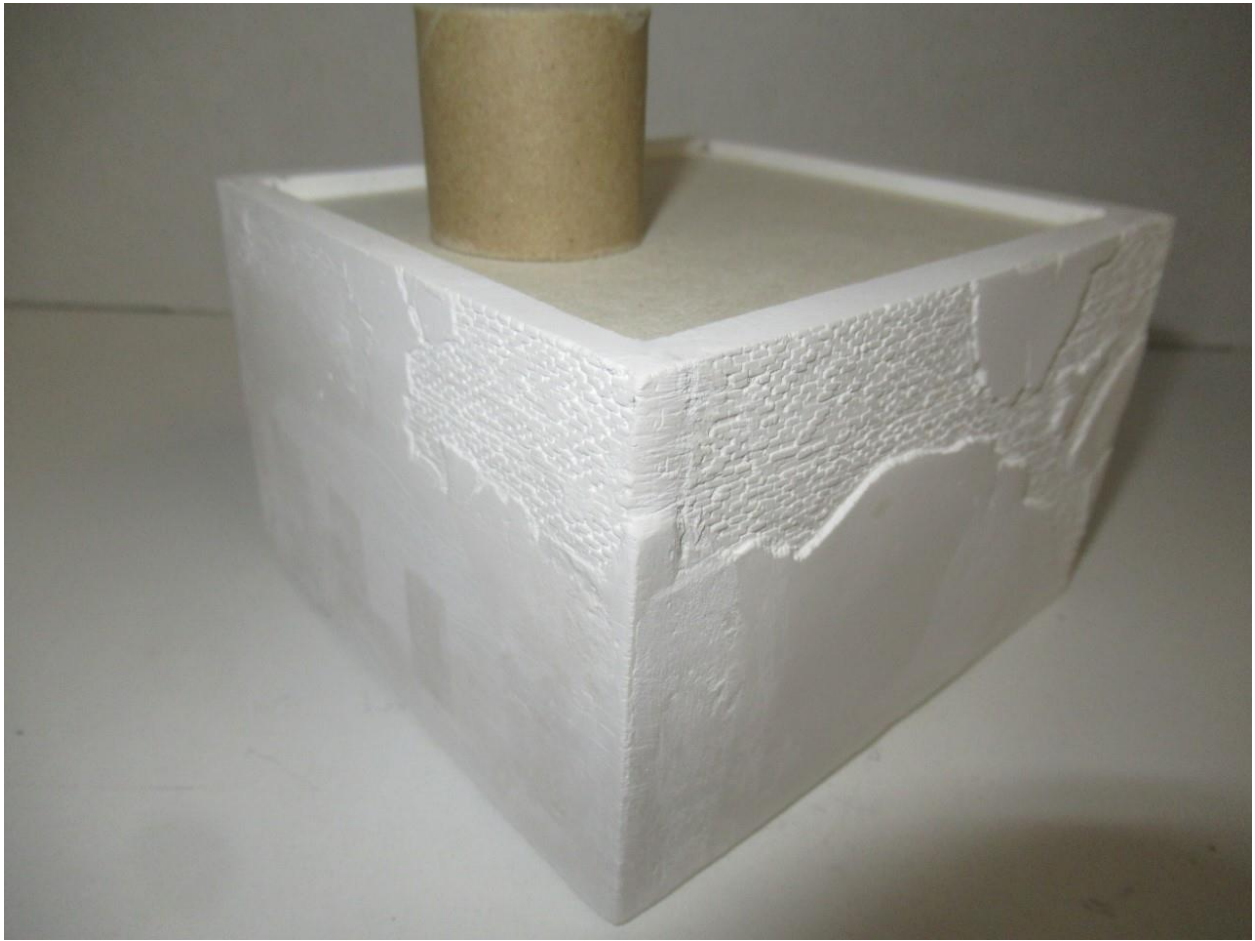
A close up of the HO layout schematic. Eventually RFID chips will be used to indicate train locations.

Ted Becker: Ted reports: *Here are some shots of the Downtown Deco Fat Lou's kit I am building. The walls on this kit are not straight or square and a couple of them are dished or cupped. The first photo is a shot of a wall from another kit on the left showing it is straight and square and a Fat Lou's wall on the right.*



The second photo (below) shows the front and one side after the tops and ends of the walls have been trued up and the walls glued together. Front doors and window openings have been filled in with Hydrocal to kitbash this building into an ice making and cold storage plant. The bow in the side wall can be seen. The joint has been scraped into a Vee groove to remove the glue to make room for Hydrocal filler.





Here is the same front corner with the filler in place and failed attempt at carving brick detail. The roof is Taskboard and is glued in place. The cardboard tube will be the core for a wooden water tank on the roof. A loading dock will be built across the front where the ghosts of the former windows and door can be seen. Plan is for two doors appropriate for a refrigerated building and a roof over the loading dock. Also planned for the roof is a cooling tower similar to, but smaller than the tower on the Alpine Models Union Ice Co.



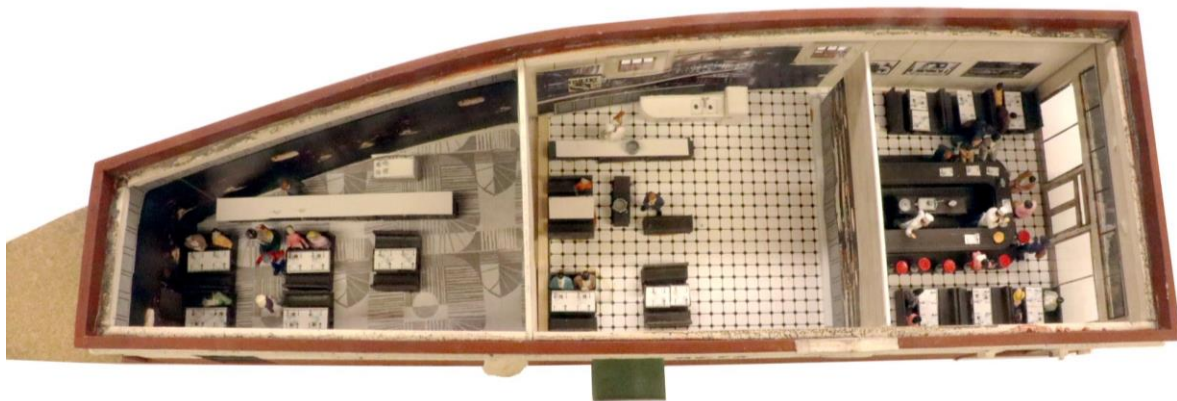
The shot is the rear corner of the building with a man door and electric meter detail cast in the plaster. Some of the curve in the wall is evident in this picture. I figure if I can make this kit look halfway decent the other plaster kits I have should be a piece of cake.



Here is a view of the building from another angle, with the roof in place and basic tar paper installed. And also the water tower set in place. Note the blanked out door and windows on this wall – a subtle detail. Hydrocal kits are definitely a different building medium, and you can use some non-traditional techniques for finishing the walls, etc.

Nick Muff:

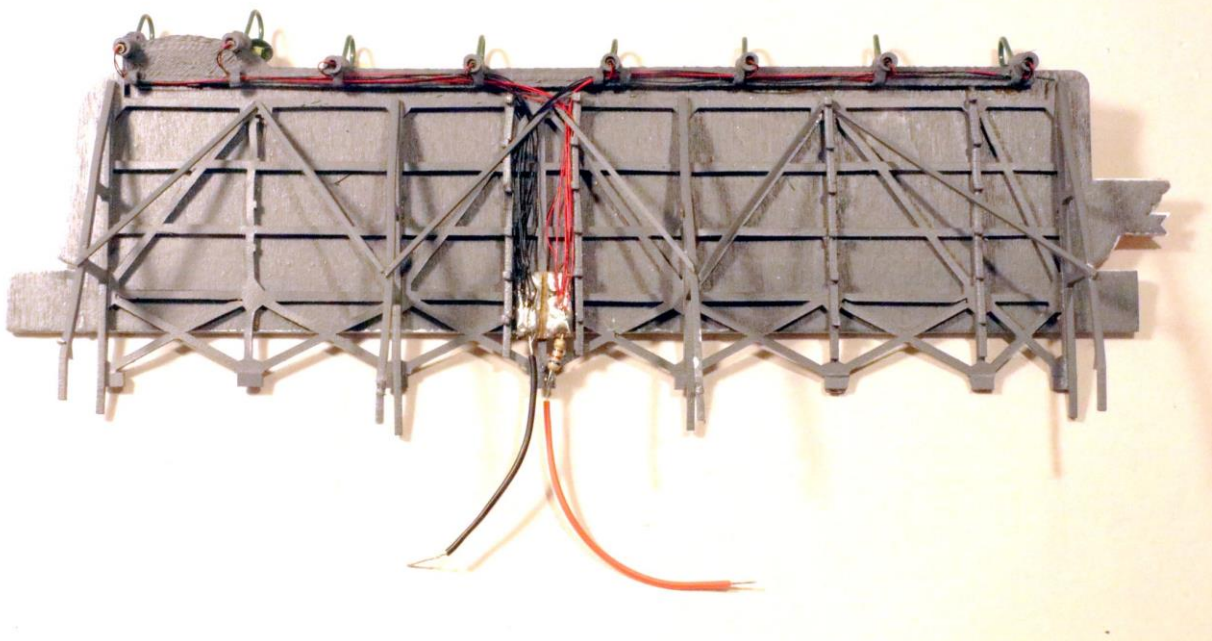
Nick has been busy as usual, scratchbuilding structures for Siloam Springs, Decatur, and Shreveport, along his Kansas City Southern line. First up is his model of the KCS Restaurant in Shreveport:



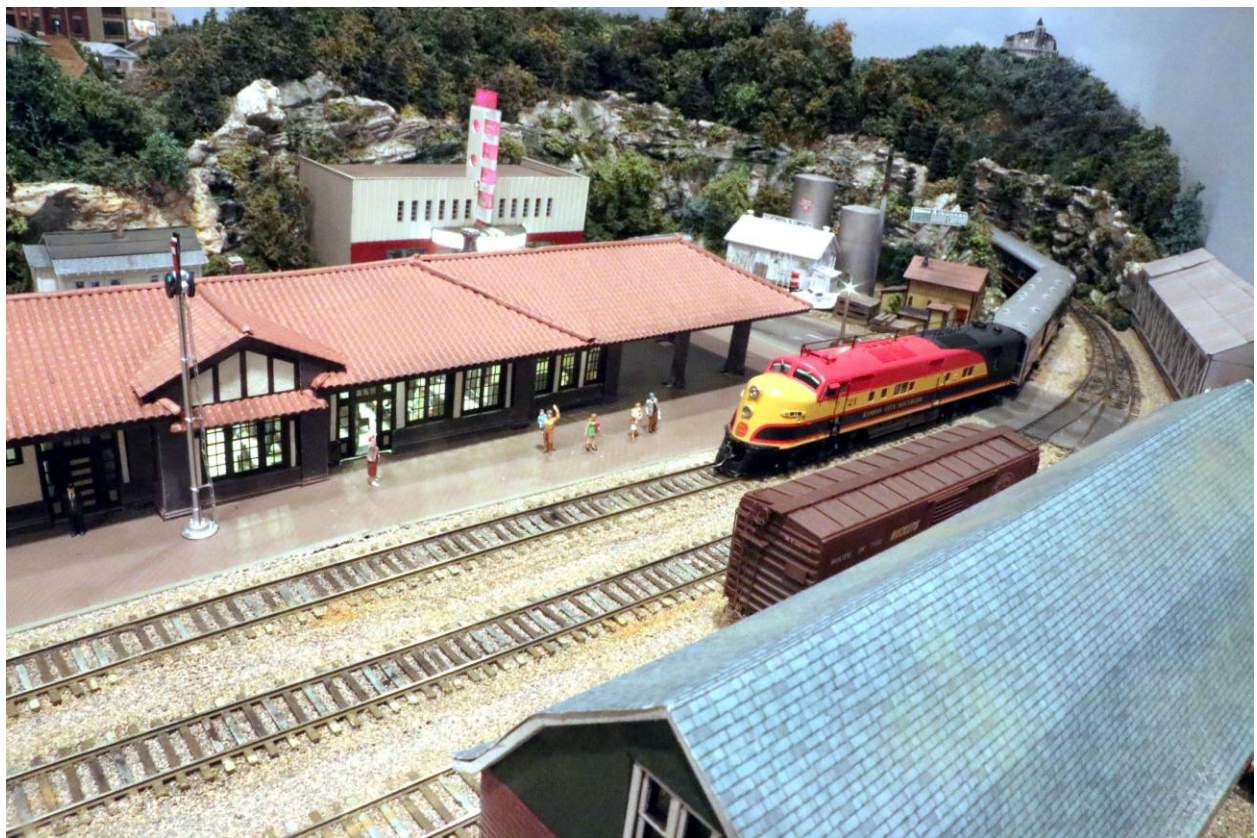


Nick's description of how he constructed the beautiful Southern Belle sign:

They used eight lights across the top of the Southern Belle sign. I got the light fixtures from WeHonest.com eBay. Now how to mount and wire them? I designed and 3D printed a light bar that goes across the top of the back of the sign. Above it I mounted eight tubes to hold the lamp fixtures. Behind the lamp fixtures I added "loops" to dress the wires through. I dressed all sixteen wires through the loops and down the middle of the back of the sign to a solder pad made from a piece of PC board. At that point I added the current limiting resistor and red/black wires down through the roof to connect to lighting power in the ceiling.



Nick has completed the town of Siloam Springs and here are some photos...





Note the huge F-7 on the horizon!



Most readers know that Nick designs exact models of structures in these town, then laser cuts the walls, roofs, etc., and 3D prints a lot of architectural detail. No structure kits for Nick!!! Except... Nick did build a Dari King drive in kit that his friend Dale Rush of Blair Line Structures.



However, Nick wanted a sign like the one on the Dari King in Gentry, AR , so of course he scratchbuilt one. But he didn't stop there – he added lights, too:



Tom Buckingham: Blackberries, anyone? Tom has developed a method to reproduce blackberries. He writes:

So, I have been doing a little experimenting with blackberry vines along the outer edge of the peninsula. I have been using sisal for the vine itself, furnace filter for the "mass" of the bushes and various types of ground cover. I am pretty pleased with them so far. I think they come close to looking like blackberry bushes but not completely. I also just recently got some Plumbers Hemp from Great Britain (the only place you can get it) after seeing a video on making vines with it. I am anxious to give it a try as I know the results will look decidedly different. It is a pretty straight forward process, but I have learned a couple of things along the way that have worked for me:

- 1. Make the "mass" and the vine separately. It is easy to then "tuck" the vine into the mass.*
- 2. When installing the mass on the layout just a little glue of your choosing and then just place the mass on it. Don't push it on as it will flatten the mass.*
- 3. Don't try to attach the vine to the mass and the wall in the same step. Glue the vine to the mass. Let it dry and then glue the vine to the wall.*



Editor's note: Looking good, Tom! We expect a report in the next newsletter on how the plumber's hemp worked out for making vines!



Al Carter: *Of course, I had to build some more vehicles (this time for Nick Muff's layout)*



Figure 1: '48-'54 Chevy COE with scratchbuilt flatbed (Sylvan model), and Jordan Model A Delivery Truck load



Figure 2: '37 Plymouth coupe (Sylvan model). Both posed on Nick's layout

And I have been busy building structures, as well as removing old incandescent lights from existing structures, and replacing them with LEDs. Not so easy when you did not leave an easy access to the structure when originally built!

The Rescue Mission is a Downtown Deco hydrocal kit, heavily weathered (of course!). It is in the older (seedier) part of town. The sign is a Miller Engineering animated sign. The Pussykat Club next door (another DD kit) still has the police “Do Not Cross” barricade tape across the entryway from the last raid.



You can see a meeting taking place. For interior population, I often use the inexpensive 1/87 or 1/100 figures sold by Chinese vendors. I mean, who is going to notice that the fellow's eyes are closed inside a building, right?



Not a model, but I had room to squeeze this photo in. I snapped this photo of a WP&Y car awaiting rehab, at the Hamilton Brothers shops in Sedro Woolley. They do a lot of maintenance on the WP&Y equipment. The cars are “shrink-wrapped” for transit from/to Alaska.



I also added a theater to the end of the commercial district, which was shown in the last newsletter. It is a Walther's "Rivoli" theater, with about half of its original 7-inch depth chopped off. No back, giving access to the electronics inside. It features two Miller Engineering signs, the marquee and the upright theater name sign. I'm becoming quite a fan of these M.E. signs and have about a dozen (so far) installed on the layout.



The jury is still out on what smaller commercial type buildings will go next to it, but there are some ideas percolating in my noggin...



Here is an example of an asphalt road that I made using 2mm craft foam available in several colors at Michael's, Hobby Lobby, or on line (Ebay seller "Wandyfoam"). I used black as the basis, then painted it with a mixture of warm white craft paint and Liquitex brand tube acrylic "Ivory Black". That sounds weird, but really works. I got the recipe from Rick Sutton, who posts regularly on the MRH forum.

I added the cracks and divots by using the back of a hobby knife to score the surface. I found that you can insert a piece between the rails at a road crossing and the weight of the car will push right through without derailing. Properly weighted cars, of course, and metal wheels. The centerlines were made from Woodland Scenics white dry transfer lines.

The track (Peco flextrack) was weathered using a base coat of light gray/light tan, followed by stains made from "water mixable oil paints" in umbers, siennas, and grays. Again, sounds weird, but I like how they work – sort of like oil paints, but they don't take days to cure. Easy to thin and blend. Rail was painted by hand with Tamiya Hull Red, Brown, and Nato Brown.

Nick's Sail Inn Café has a story about it. Nick Muff built this "kit" for his layout, drawing the plans and laser cutting the components. He showed it at the Mount Vernon clinic a couple of years ago. I "ooh'd and ahh'd" when I saw it. Next thing I know, when I was over visiting Nick, he handed me a zip lock bag with the felt tip inscription "Sail Inn Café #2 of 2". Yikes! Nick went and produced a "kit" for me! So, I had to of course name it in his honor!

By the way, I asked him where the instructions were – all good kits come with instructions, after all.... He just gave me the "look" – said I was experienced enough to figure it out. Which I guess I am, as it turned out pretty good (sorry for the lousy photos). Of course, this necessitated several trips over to Nick's house to see the original kit up close and personal.

Nick is extremely helpful, and very encouraging. For example, I hadn't been much on interiors or interior lighting. Now, the tide has turned and I'm trying to light most of my structures and put interiors in those that can be seen up close.





Tool Sale:

Clinic attendee Dave Towne contacted me with a request to list some tools for sale; details below:



Hobby hand tools available at “garage sale” prices of \$5 each! These are from an estate of a Mount Vernon lady, being sold by daughter & hubby. Some brand new, others barely used. Photo is a representative sample of about 35 items....pliers (needle, round & flat nose), cutters, wire bending, jeweler saw, etc.

Can meet locally or provide more photos. Contact Dave Towne – 360-708-1196

Classified Ads:

If you have something to sell or are looking for something, feel free to submit your listing. Contact info is below.

Loren Clarke (lclarke@gmail.com) is looking for Pittsburgh & Shawmut equipment.

I (tabooma@msn.com) am looking for an old Magnuson Models cast resin propane truck.

Until Next Issue: Keep working on your models and layouts, and remember to take some in-progress photos, so you'll have lots to send me in about 3 months when I "bug you" again!

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 virtual clinic, or to suggest a virtual clinic topic, contact **Ted Becker** at rail.bird@att.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.

Sponsorship: The Mount Vernon NMRA clinic is one of several clinics sponsored by the Fourth Division, Pacific Northwest Region, National Model Railroad Association. We normally meet on the 3rd Monday at 7:00 pm at the Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Street, but obviously that is "on pause" until the Covid-19 issue is over. 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.

