The DERAIL

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From the President

By Robert Barnett MMR

First let me start by thanking Bob Sandhaas for his excellent presentation on the Illinois Terminal (aka Illinois Traction) at our September meeting. The presentation and photos were outstanding. I have been a member of the TRRA (Terminal Rail Road Association or St. Louis) Historical Society for several years and they have featured the IT routes, towers and the McKinley Bridge in several issues. It is an interesting tale of a traction line turning itself into a major industrial terminal railroad. Well done Bob!!

Second, I am honored to have been elected the president of the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club again in September. I have been a member of the San Jac since 1981 and association with the members of the club as well as the NMRA and Lone Star Region have been a huge part of my model railroad experience and my life. I am truly honored to have been associated with the club for all these years.

And lastly: It's almost that time again. Time for one of our big annual happenings- the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Fall Layout Tours. Included as a separate article in this issue is an updated version of the history of the layout tours I wrote several years ago and have updated at least twice. SO: dust off the layout, send Craig an email confirming your dates, gas up the Chevy and get ready to see some fine railroads this November.

See you at the October Meeting!

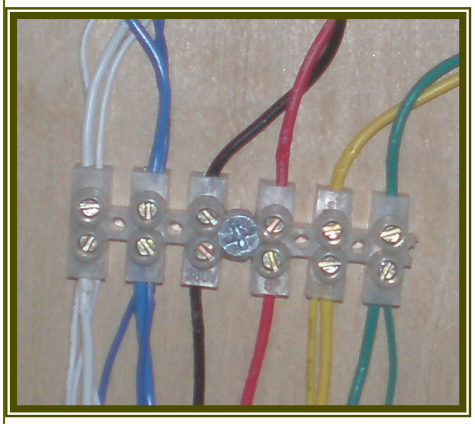
Bob Barnett

Mark's Minute

By Mark Couvillion

This is the first of a series of short articles offering simple techniques that address wiring issues and maintenance. I hope you find them helpful.

~ Mark



Your railroad runs on electricity. With sound decoders, you need a good steady supply to your road power. Start off your railroad, or upgrade your power, with a heavy power bus under the layout. For small to medium layouts, 12 AWG wire is adequate for your power needs. I prefer THHN stranded wire available on spools at stores like Home Depot or Lowes. There are many colors available to keep power districts separately identified. Pair off each district's wire with a light and a dark color and don't re-use those colors on other districts. Develop a plan for which wires go where and stick to it.

NMRA President's Award

Lone Star Region President Chuck Lind presents the NMRA President's Award to Don Bozman.

Generating Realistic Open Loads—Part One By Gene Mangum

My railroad, the Mystic Branch is loosely based on the actual branch line from San Antonio to Kerrville that was mostly abandoned in the early 1960's. San Antonio is represented by removable staging cassettes. The two intermediate towns on the branch, Val Verde and Mystic are fictitious. Kerrville is represented by a simple ladder yard…with "non-modeled" industries occupying two tracks. Most of the rail served industries on the Branch do not receive any open type cars such as flats, open hoppers, or gondolas. Seven industries do receive open type cars. For the industries that use open type cars, loads for flat cars, gondolas, and open hoppers are necessary for any kind of realistic operation. These seven industries are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Blount Energy in Kerrville is an energy company, specifically oil and gas exploration. Blount receives many different supplies via rail, including drilling mud (generally a bentonite slurry), cement, drilling supplies and machinery, and various pipes. The slurry, cement, and some supplies are delivered in closed cars…tanks, covered hoppers, and boxcars. However, drilling machinery, drill stem and well casing pipe is delivered in open cars: specifically heavy duty flat cars and gondolas.

Valley Lumber Company in Mystic also receives many different items via rail, including finished lumber, dry wall, interior trim, paint, etc. All Interior trim pieces, paint, glues, etc. are delivered in box cars or insulated boxcars. Finished lumber and dry wall is generally delivered in flat cars, both standard, heavy duty, and bulkhead flats.

The **Val Verde Team Track** receives many different shipments by rail…most in boxcars. However, many customers receive commodities in open cars including flats and gondolas. For example, the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) is a power company that provides electrical service to Kerrville and the surrounding communities. Most of the materials that are rail delivered for the LCRA are carried on flat cars or in gondolas. Machinery, generators, and other heavy and bulky loads are carried on flat cars…both 50 ton and heavy duty 100 ton flats. Power poles are generally carried in 70 ton gondolas. Another customer is one of the local contractors that does business with the area community's water departments. So steel water pipe is delivered for that contractor in 100 ton gondolas. The other "customer" of the Team Track that receives open loads is the SP Railroad. Rail is generally shipped on 100 ton heavy duty flat cars. Ties are shipped on flats or in gondolas…generally gondolas.

Valley Aggregates in Val Verde is a limestone quarry that ships loads of crushed limestone in 100 ton aggregate hoppers. During an operating session, Valley Aggregates ships six loads of crushed limestone to TxDOT in Kerrville and receives six empties for the next session.

The **Texas DOT (TxDOT)** in Kerrville receives the six loads of crushed limestone from Valley Aggregates per operating session and ships six empty 100 ton hoppers to Valley Aggregates.

Hill Country Salvage in Kerrville ships scrap metal in gondolas, usually one load per operating session. The empties usually come from Blount Energy or the Val Verde Team Track.

Mystic Brewing Company in Mystic ships glass cullet (broken bottles) in gondolas, usually one load every month or so. The empties usually come from Blount Energy or the Val Verde Team Track.

As can be seen here, open type cars both loaded and unloaded are essential to the realistic operation of the Branch.

Commercially Available Open Loads

Like most model railroaders, I am always looking for simple and reasonably priced solutions to problems. I was able to find reasonable loads for the open hoppers and most flat cars as discussed below.

Generating Realistic Open Loads—Part One

By Gene Mangum

Cast Resin Machinery and Finished Lumber Loads

I was able to purchase various types of resin casting machinery loads at reasonable prices (albeit years ago). Same story with finished wood resin castings. With a little detailing and weathering, the machinery and finished lumber loads work well. I added scale 4 x 4 lumber to the bottoms of both the machinery and finished lumber castings. Notice that I also added 1/32 "chart tape to the lumber casting to simulate the metal banding.

Figure 1 - Cast Resin Lumber and Machinery Loads

Just detailing the loads isn't the whole story. It is also important that the capacity of the flat car be taken into account. The lumber loads that I purchased were made up of 4" x 12" boards that were 16' long. Each "packet" contained about 170 individual boards; According to WOODWEB, an Internet source, pine 4 x 12's weigh about 9 ½ pounds per foot; so a 16' board weighs about 150 pounds. Hence, a bundle of 170 boards weighs about 26,000 pounds. So, most 50 Ton flats could reasonably carry 2 bundles; a 70 ton flat, 3 bundles and a 100 ton Flat, 4 bundles. I assumed that the Machinery loads also represented about 25,000 pounds, each. So, there is a similar capacity calculation for the Machinery loads. One additional point; I do not use "tie downs" or stakes on my flat cars. I know that this is not prototypical, but it makes loading and unloading the cars much simpler. See Figures 1, 2, and 3. Figure 1 shows the two load types with a scale rule for reference. Figure 2 shows the Lumber load on a 50 Ton flatcar. Figure 3 shows the machinery loads on 100 ton flat.

Figure 2 - Cast Resin Lumber Load on 50 ton Flat Car

Figure 3 - Cast Resin Machinery Load on 100 ton Flat Car

Cast Resin Aggregate Hopper Loads

Likewise, I was able to purchase resin aggregate loads for the open aggregate hoppers. I was able to get aggregate loads for both 34' and 36' hoppers. The one Ortner hopper that I have had an aggregate load included. And, again, with a little fitting they work well. One additional thing, I glued steel washers to the bottom of the loads so that they can be removed from the hoppers with a magnet. In some cases I added extra weight to the bottom of the casting to make the loaded car weight meet NMRA Standards. See Figures 4 and 5. These loads reasonably depict the appearance of a loaded 200 ton hopper car, so the capacity of the aggregate hoppers doesn't come into play.

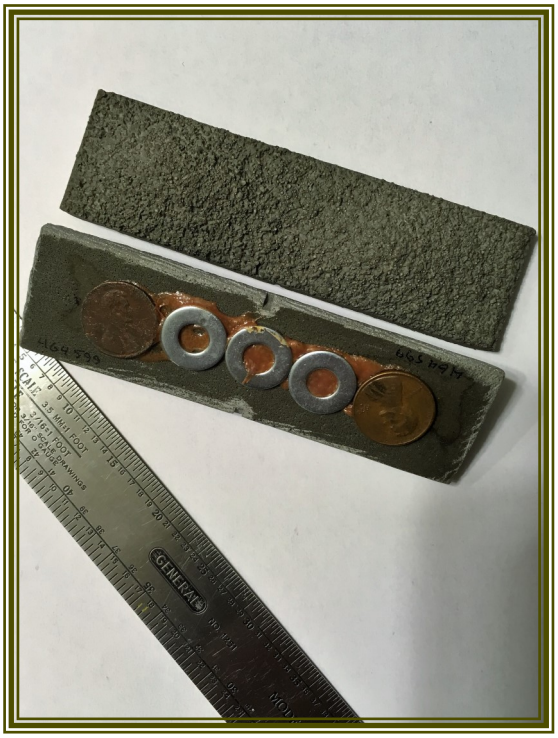


Figure 4 – Cast Resin Aggregate Hopper Loads

Figure 5 - Cast Resin Aggregate load in 100 ton Aggregate Hopper

Generating Realistic Open Loads—Part One

By Gene Mangum

Cast Resin Scrap Metal Loads

I was able to purchase scrap metal loads for Athearn, Roundhouse, and Walthers Gondolas. The only modifications that were required was a little fitting here and there. I didn't add any extra weight or steel washers to these loads since they are more or less press fits within the gondolas. Since these loads were generated specifically for the various gondolas, the capacity of the cars doesn't come into play. See Figures 6, 7 and 8.

Figure 7 - Cast Resin Scrap Load in 100 ton Gondola

Figure 6 – Cast Resin Scrap Loads

Figure 8 - Cast Resin Scrap Load in 70 ton Gondola

Generating Realistic Open Loads—Part One By Gene Mangum

Generators, Packaged lumber, and Cable Spool Loads

I was able to purchase really nice loads for Generators, Packaged lumber, and Cable Spools. The Jaeger Packaged Lumber Load is an excellent model designed specifically for the Roundhouse 60' Bulkhead Flat Car. See Figure 9

Figure 9 - Packaged Lumber Load on Bulkhead Flat Car

Likewise, the generator load from American Model Builders is excellent…an easy to build laser cut kit. It is designed for a standard 50 or 53 foot flat car. And, again the car capacity is not an issue. I would recommend this kit to anyone needing this type of load. See Figure 10.

Figure 10 - Generator Load on 50 ton Flat Car

Generating Realistic Open Loads—Part One

By Gene Mangum

The cable spool loads from Walthers is also a good value and simple to assemble. These cable spool loads can be used in gondolas as well as flat cars. The car capacity for Cable Spool Loads depends on the type of transmission wire on the spools. In my application, each large spool holds approximately 3000' of 1" diameter cable. The cable weighs approximately 2,300 lbs. per 1000'; so each loaded spool weighs approximately 7,000 lbs. The medium spools hold approximately 1000' of 1" diameter cable; so each loaded medium spool weighs approximately 2300 lbs. The small spools hold approximately 300' of 1" diameter cable; so each loaded small spool weighs approximately 700 lbs. This implies that most 50 Ton flats could reasonably carry 6 to 8 loaded large spools or a combination of large, medium and small spools. 70 ton gondolas could likely carry more. See Figure 11.

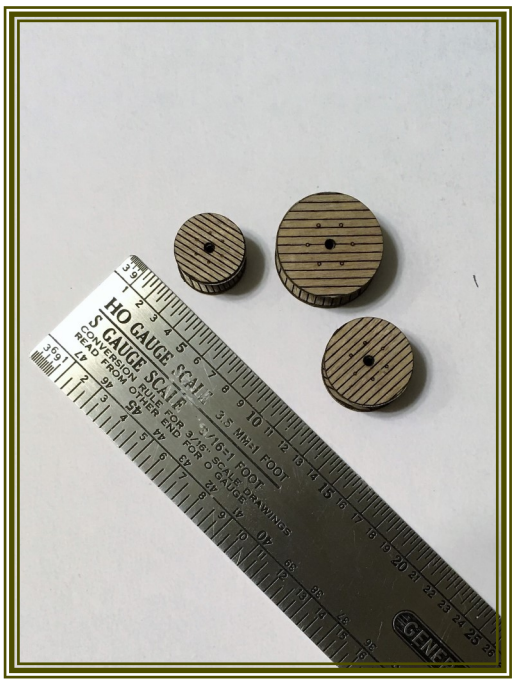


Figure 11 – Cable Spool Loads

Scratch Built Open Loads

However, some types of loads, especially for gondolas, are not available commercially; either entirely or at reasonable prices. So, it appeared that "scratch building" was the only, or at least the only economical, solution to this quandary. Creating these types of loads is the subject of Generating Realistic Open Loads - Part Two.

Houston's Layout Legacy

By Bob Barnett

One of the distinguishing features of model railroading in Houston has been the annual fall layout tours sponsored by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. To the best of my knowledge Houston is unique in providing home layout tours separate from a convention or train show. The typical fall tour now has 60 to 65 layouts open to visitors, but we started out small and a long time ago.

In the Beginning: Numerous Houston area layouts had been open for LSR Conventions and the 1957 NMRA National Convention held in Houston prior to the beginning of the fall tours. According to SJMRRC records (old copies of The Derail) the first November open house was hosted by Greg Johnson at his home over Thanksgiving weekend in 1971. Although, Angie Caulking has told me that Ken started the November open houses a year or two earlier. Knowing Ken's devotion to open houses some lasting through most of the night, I believe it. In 1972 and 1973 Ken Caulking held open houses in honor of Model Railroading Month. By 1974 several Houston area layouts were open in November including Ken, Gil Freitag, Joe (Sarge) Reese, and the Houston Society of Model Engineers. In 1976 the first printed "Time table for November Activities" was assembled by Henry Tolley and Diane Caulking. You will note that Diane was not yet Diane Tolley. Up until this time the notices of the open houses were given in the Derail and through hobby shops.

The November Tour Expands: In the early 1980's a typical November tour included 9 to 12 layouts. The tour guide sheets were typed by my wife Beverly on an old Smith-Corona typewriter. There was no spell check and correcting errors in the directions was a real chore. The directions to Gordon Bliss' layout were never quite right as the Highway Department was reconstructing I-10 and the traffic patterns were constantly changing. (Some things have not changed over the last 35 years.). In 1984 Houston hosted the LSR Convention and it was a real accomplishment to assemble 17 layouts for the tour.

Houston's Layout Legacy

By Bob Barnett

The Great Expansion: The number of layouts available began to increase dramatically in 1986 as **Bob Dannenbrink** and I began assembling the layout tour list for the 1989 NMRA National to be held in Houston. This increase was due largely to Bob's efforts to seek out new layouts that were in existence but had not been on previous tours. It worked, and in August 1989 the big week arrived and we proudly displayed 30 layouts on the AstroRail'89 Convention tours plus eight layouts on a Sunday driving tour. We expected this to be a peak, but not so. The number of available layouts continued to increase in the early 1990's.

The "Modern" Era: **Mike Cohn** brought the tours into the modern era. Mike took over the job in the fall of 1991 and kept the tours going for 10 years. Mike used a computer in his business and placed all of the tour data on disc so it could be updated yearly. This sounds obvious now, but 25 years ago very few people had home computers or access to Word or Word Perfect. The number of layouts continued to grow reaching 40 and a few years later 50. When Mike moved to San Antonio **Mike Brignac** assumed the tour duties and published to tour sheets for another 5 years. It was during this time the tour expanded from a "November" tour to the "Fall Tour" typically filling eight weekends from mid October through the first weekend in December.

By 2003 Mike had 93 names in the data base for layouts that had been open in the last few years. The tour peaked at around 75 layouts. In recent years several new layouts have been added but several lost due to relocation or deaths of the owners.

Byron Spampinato published the tour for six years. **Byron and Jim Lemmond** worked together to post the tour on the San Jac's website for several years. This not only allowed for wider circulation to area model railroaders, but allowed updates and last minute changes. The invitations are extended in August and the tour sheets printed in late September or early October. That is a long time until the last weekend of the tour, and conditions can change in that 3 to 4 months that could necessitate a cancelation.

The "Footprint" of the tour: Not only has the number of layouts grown but the geographic area has grown immensely. We have had railroads as far south as Lake Jackson, as far southeast as Galveston and Texas City, as far east as Beaumont and Port Arthur, as far North as Willis, as far northwest as Bryan-College Station, west to Katy, and extending to the southwest to Richmond-Rosenberg. We also have expanded in scales, from Z to Barry Bog's Gn3 all the way up to 1 1/2" scale at Zube Park.

The Craig Brantley Era: **Craig Brantley** has been publishing the tour for around ten years now, and is busy putting together the Fall 2018 Tour as this is written. Craig has incorporated a "fill in the blank" data input field for the basic layout data and description and has converted to "Google" maps driving directions for finding the layouts. Working with **Brian Jansky**, our San Jacinto Club webmaster, the tours are posted on our website and the website is updated weekly during the event for any closures, cancellations, and additions. Those taking the tour are encouraged to visit the site and check for any revisions before undertaking the weekend drives.

Posting online as also made the tours available to those living much farther out of Houston to visit the layouts closest to them. Modelers in central Texas can visit the College Station, Navasota and Conroe layouts without coming all the way into the central city. In recent years the number of hobby shops in the Houston area that carried and distributed the layout tour flyers has greatly diminished. So, many of the potential layout visitors now get the notice of and information for the tur directly from our website.

So, Once again: **GREAT JOB Craig Brantley and Brian Jansky** … **and to all of you who are hosting open houses**. See you on the Tour.

The Ties That Bind

While this might seem odd to us currently, in the mid 1800's the Allegheny Mountains were a natural barrier separating the Northeastern states from those in the emerging "Northwest Territory". Even as late as 1862, the Confederacy was pursuing trying to get the Northwest Territory states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Missouri to support the Southern cause. Why was this and why didn't any of these states eventually vote to not join the separatist states? The situation in each state certainly was unique to that state. For example, in Missouri months of bitter fighting between those loyal to the Union and Secessionists took place before the situation was settled. In other states the decisional process was more civilized, however individual state democratic voting often came down to just a couple of swing votes. In all these states common fundamental issues and situations existed.

First off, in the 1860's these states were still considered largely "wilderness", at least from the standpoint that the people that settled in these states were going to have to endure more hardships than Americans living closer to the East Coast. Land had to be cleared and everything built up from scratch. Most of these settlers, in fact, left the East Coast (largely North of the Mason-Dixon line) precisely because they wanted to get out from under what they considered to be the authoritarian control of the Federal Government and even the burgeoning Eastern state governments. They wanted more independence and less regulation. While there were slave owners in Southern Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri they were a small percentage of the over all population. Most historians agree that the majority of Northerners would say that the American Civil War was about slavery; conversely the majority of Southerners would argue that the issue was states rights vs. the rights of a centralized Federal Government. Fact was that most Southerners did not own slaves at all. So, to a large extent, the people settling in these new NW Territory states had a mindset that was more aligned with the thinking of the Southerners. In addition, throughout 1861 and into 1862 the Confederacy was racking up one military victory after another over President Lincoln's Union troops. Clearly this fact was not lost as the representatives of these states met to vote and determine their future.

Prior to the Civil War and the expansion of railroads into this "Northwest Territory" the markets for goods from this area were along the Mississippi River, and thus into the Southern states. Contracts were let, and alliances were made between individuals in both areas. Prior to steam powered river boats goods could only be floated downstream. Therefore, steam technology allowed commerce to flow and expand in both directions up and down the river. Three separate entities were evolving as the country matured and expanded and most felt that the country was simply getting too big to be under the control of one centralized government. Washington, D.C. was too far away from these Northwest Territory states to make for effective government. Railroads changed all of this, especially with the completion of the East/West trans-Allegheny rail lines.

As people moved West, rails were being laid at a breakneck pace (often with few safety considerations incorporated). Railroads were expanding North and West and anywhere that rail lines crossed or passed near a navigable waterway new cities and towns would spring up. New cities meant new opportunities to earn a living. The very presence of this new, amazing railroad technology meant that these settlers and pioneers could obtain many of the goods that they gave up when they left Eastern states. The new Northwest Territory rail lines linked directly with other NW cities and the heavily industrialized cities of the Northeastern states. Furthermore, expanding rail lines and railroad passenger service allowed these settlers much quicker and less harrowing journeys back East to visit friends and relatives. New railroads, which largely linked the Northwest Territory with Eastern states also meant expanding markets for goods and less reliance on having to rely on markets in the South. Also, Washington, D.C. no longer felt that far away and therefore the need for a separate government for the Northwest Territory evaporated. Therefore, railroads were a significant factor in keeping the Northern states together as individual state legislatures voted to determine their fates.

Conversely, Southern railroads were built largely to get goods to market. Short line railroad routes linked major plantation areas with port cities such that export crops such as cotton (top export of the USA in 1860) and tobacco could be shipped to Europe. In the South prior to the start of the Civil War few long route rail lines linked major cities but those that did linked Southern cities together.

Therefore, in both the North and the South railroads served to bind the respective states together.

Modeling the Not Modeled

By David N. Currey

Model railroading is such a vast hobby, that no single person can really know everything about it. You have your scenery, your locomotives, your structures, your rolling stock, your signaling, your operations, your you-name-it. They have a quite descriptive term for the people who come the closest to knowing (and having done) all of it: Master Model Railroaders.

Well, I've finally come up with a method for us muddling average modelers to strike back at these Masters real friendly like: Modeling the Not Modeled. Okay. It's not foolproof, and many of these Model Masters do this stuff more often than the Average Muddle Railroader, but if you can do enough of this, you might just garnish a compliment or two from some of these guys. (They're nice guys, really. Sometimes they even say a word or two to us commoners.)

When I say "Not Modeled", I'm referring to the things in the real world that your average Master Modeler (Is there such a thing? An "average Master"? Is that an oxymoron?) doesn't model very much. There's a number of these things you can do, and I will identify some of the ones that would be most easily modeled.

Before I get started on that, I'll mention that there are certain things that just can't be really modeled. For example, something like a selectively compressed model of the Atlantic Ocean is just not really modelable. The closest you could probably come would be some painted backdrops that would only show about a millionth of a millionth of a percent of the ocean. Or how about the Grand Canyon. Just not really modelable. You can maybe hint at it, but how the heck are you going to have anything really approaching the size of the Grand Canyon that you can look down into on your model railroad? You'd have to turn your basement into a canyon, with the scenery extending down into it. Holy hole, Batman! Maybe a greatly compressed version of some small side canyon to the Grand Canyon might be your best bet. Again, a backdrop painting is probably the better option. However, if your layout room is on the edge of the Grand Canyon, maybe you could camouflage a window looking down into the canyon to represent a view underneath tree limbs or something on your model railroad. It might take a Master Modeler to pull that off successfully, though.

Now let's get to the do-able stuff. The first thing I will mention is abandoned or unused trackage. This can be anything from a mainline to a branch line to a siding alongside a building that no longer ships or receives by rail. One thing I remember from my first train trip that I can really remember much about (riding the Twin Star Rocket from Houston to Corsicana with my Grandma Vernie Nelson about 1959), was all the abandoned warehouses and unused tracks alongside these structures as we exited Houston. Even way back then it seemed like there was more unused warehouse and industry trackage than there was actually in use.

I would imagine just about every layout in Houston could fit in such non-used trackage. To model an abandoned mainline or branchline, you could lay such a track coming out from behind some buildings near the backdrop, and run it at an angle, and have it cross your operating mainline, and then exit off the front of the layout. You could place inoperative signals at the junction, perhaps aimed away from your working track to indicate they are not in service. The tops of the rail should be well rusted. Plant a lot of grass between the rails. The ballast should hardly show through all this plant growth at all. You could even have young trees sprouting up here and there between the ties, or even out of a tie. At the junction you could have a boarded-up interlocking tower, perhaps with a caved in roof. Don't forget the "No Trespassing" signs. If you have room, you could have some rail from the legs of the wye and/or interchange tracks poking out of the dirt here and there, or maybe these tracks are still there, but used to house track maintenance equipment.

Here's another simple way to model abandoned track, and I've actually seen this up in New Jersey: Have rails in the street at an old grade crossing, but the ballast and track is completely gone and hardly hinted at on either side of the crossing. This actually takes up no layout space at all, just part of a street.

The next modelable item is abandoned industries. For these you just have to board up the windows and doors, and/or break the windows. The track alongside the loading docks should be weed overgrown, perhaps with some sections of rail missing, or better yet, it can be a siding you actually use. An awning or two could be draping down to the ground. Holes should be in the roof here and there, with perhaps a caved in portion showing part of a lower floor.

Modeling the Not Modeled

By David N. Currey

Another thing you can model is ditches. In the real world, people like to make sure their land drains. They prefer water to stand in huge puddles elsewhere, so ditches are dug to keep things clear of standing water. In the model world, ditches are a real hard thing to model, as they have to extend below the layout surface. If that surface is plywood or something equally hard, you can understand how difficult that can be. Cutting ditches in styrofoam is a good deal easier. But you don't really have to dig ditches everywhere. Pick a few spots on your layout, cut some small channels through the plywood, and really go gung ho at creating a realistic looking ditch. You can even create little scenes in these areas, such as two boys fishing, or a group of girls sailing little boats. If it's a dumpy part of town, have the radiator of some 1940ish car sticking up out of the weed overgrown water. Have a dead alligator floating on its back. (I saw that from an Amtrak train going into New Orleans one time. The buzzards had been picking at a hole in his belly.) Culverts can be modeled for the ditches to pass under your track and roadways. Culverts are much easier to model than bridges, and can be even more easily scenicked to look real.

One thing that is difficult to model, but which would be well appreciated, is period specific roads. The May 2017 *Model Railroader* cover was the impetus for this article, and it was so realistic looking, that I had to look at it twice to make sure I hadn't picked up *Trains* magazine by mistake. That perfectly modeled highway going by in the foreground (with a ditch, I might add), and the realistic backdrop truly looks like a real scene. Modeling highways realistically can be a real challenge, because you would have to find out what types of bridge railings on bridges were used in the area where your railroad runs. You wouldn't want 2010 bridge railings and signage from Texas on a railroad set in the 1950s in New Hampshire. But imagine a four-lane divided early 1960's Interstate bridge going over your mainline where you are running the Texas Chief into Houston. Great way to hide a track going into the backdrop. Okay, maybe that would take up too much room, but you could put in a smaller farm-to-market highway bridge that could be just as nicely modeled and hidey-holey. Fortunately, the internet is a good place to search for scenes featuring period roadways.

Your roads, especially rural highways, can be modeled to be just like real roads. They should have a hump in the middle (for two-lane roads). They should have a shoulder, maybe even a paved shoulder, depending on the type and importance of the road. The shoulders should slope away from the side of the road. Put a shallow ditch on each side, or at least one side if you have room. You can easily selectively compress a couple of feet out of the width of each lane. And a highway getting narrower and narrower as it goes away from the aisle can help with the illusion of distance. The little things make a big difference in roads. Put in speed limit, mileage to the next towns, and curve ahead signs. Little reflector signs near culverts and other potential hazards can really create the illusion of a real road. Stripe the roads with decals, so the lines will look straight and sharp. Bank the road if it's in a curve.

Another thing that could be “easily” modeled would be the aftermath of a derailment. Derailments *do* happen on the real railroads, you know. I've actually seen derailments modeled, but it is not a commonly modeled item. You yourself perhaps have a box car that for some reason just won't track very well and derails quite often. You've replaced the wheels, checked the coupler height and the trip pin (airhose), and it still derails. Stop the frustration and use it as a derailed car that careened down an embankment. Bury one end in some soft dirt or ballast. You don't actually have to damage it if you don't want to. On the other hand, warping some of the walls of a boxcar or hopper by applying heat can really make it look realistic. For many years around the late 1960s, a hopper car was visible from I-10 in the waters of Lake Pontchartrain near the Illinois Central mainline between the cities of Laplace and Kenner on the far western side of the New Orleans area. At first, there were a number of hopper cars, but the railroad cleaned them all up until there was just the one hopper. Evidently it was judged not worth salvaging, and so they left it. It was quite far from the track, so maybe their crane could not easily reach it, but you'd think they could have run the hook from the crane out to the hopper on a boat or something. I imagine it has sunk into the muck by now, and I could not find it on Google Maps street view.

So, if you are a muddle railroader, or even a model railroader, think about modeling the not modeled. Before you know it, you might be knocking on the door of the master model railroaders' break room (asking if you can use their water closet). Let's tie this one up.

Scratchbuilding Your First Freight Car, Part 2

Last month we built and detailed the superstructure of our Ortner 3-Bay Rapid Release Hopper, so at this point you should have something that looks like a railroad car, minus the trucks.

Before we begin, I'd like to point something out. You may have noticed I give measurements in both scale size as well as in thousandths of an inch. The main reason why I do this is so that you can choose which scale you'd like to build these models. Though I choose HO, you can use these measurements and build in any other scale, so long as you divide the given units by the ratio of your scale.

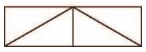
This time around, we're going to add details that make it more realistic. How many of these details you add are up to you, as some of them can be what a kind observer would describe as fiddly. Remember, this is for fun so if something is giving you fits stop, take a deep breath, and ask yourself if this is really necessary on this iteration of your car (don't forget I asked you to make more than one).

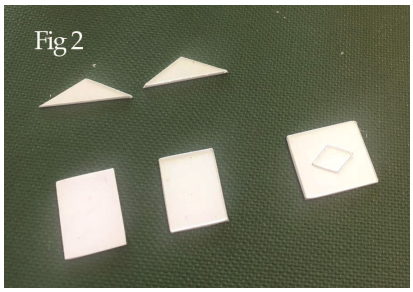
The first detail we need to add are the hopper chutes themselves. If you'll remember last time, the bottom of our car had what appeared to be ten little gaps between the cross members of our car. We're going to attach our chutes to the middle six of those. The good news here is that if you have trouble gluing the doors on these chutes and making them absolutely straight, relax: the prototype doors rarely stayed square on the original.

Step one will be cutting. You will need five precision cut parts: two doors measuring 50" (.574") by 39 1/4" (.451"), two chute sides measuring 68 1/2" (.786") by 19 1/2" (.225"), and a base mounting cleat measuring 45" (.517") by .625". You'll notice this last measurement isn't to a scale size on one dimension. Because it only serves to attach the chute to the bottom of the car, it's length is inconsequential, so long as it is significantly less than the width of the chute sides.

As for the chute sides, at this point they will be rectangular if you've followed my directions. Take each side, and make a mark half way down each long side (.393" in HO). Now draw a line connecting those marks, dividing your rectangle in half. Draw a line from the top of that line to the opposite corner, as seen in figure 1. Once you've drawn you lines, cut along the diagonal lines of both. If you cut both chute sides and they don't match, hold them together side by side and sand them until they do. You should now have five pieces like you see in figure 2.

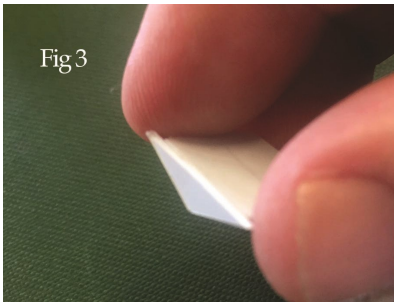
Fig. 1





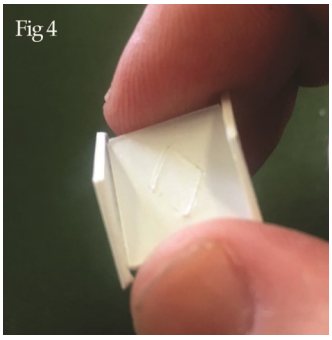
Notice I've scribed a diamond on the base mounting cleat. This serves two purposes. First, it gives a center point that you'll need later. Second, it shows me which is the long way and which is the short way. Trust me, in the heat of things this doesn't always seem so obvious. I choose to scribe rather than mark with pen or pencil because those marks have a nasty habit of disappearing at the most inopportune time.

To form the chute, begin with one side and the base cleat. Attach the base cleat long side to the side of the side as seen in figure 3.



Don't worry too much about making it square yet, but remember to center it on the cleat. There will be overhang on either side of the cleat, and that is as expected. If the cleat stretched the full length of the side, the doors wouldn't properly attach to the sides.

Once the seam has sufficiently cured, attach the other side. As you're doing this with your fingers, watch out for excess solvent. Otherwise you're liable to find a styrene record of your fingerprint on the side of the chute. The two sides attached should look like figure 4. You



will notice the sides can seem a little wobbly at this point. In order to make sure this isn't a problem, we can make a cross brace from scrap styrene. Its height isn't important, so long as it is shorter than the height of the side from the top of the cleat. It's width should be *slightly less* than the width of the cleat, since on the prototype the chute sides angle in slightly. In my case, I make my cross brace .188" by .5", and then glue it in over the top of the base cleat between the sides, using my scribed diamond to line up with the top of the sides as seen in figure 5. Once you have it placed, glue it in.

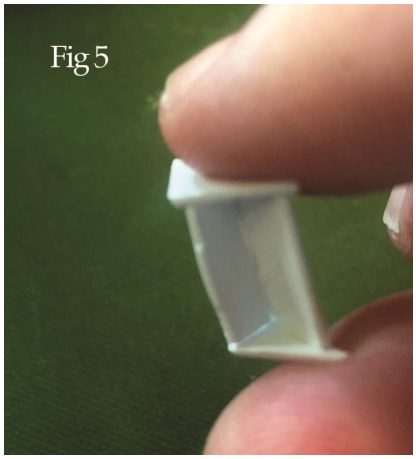


Fig 5

Now it is time to glue the doors onto the sides. Using your fingers, line one door up with the sides and the center line of the piece as seen in figure 6. Once this has cured, glue the second door. Don't worry about keeping them perfectly symmetrical, as on the prototype they aren't. On the prototype, one door closes over the other, and gluing this so it appears one is closer to center than the other is acceptable.

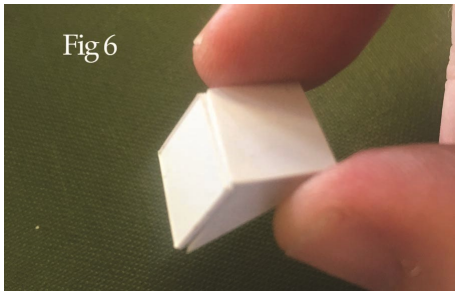


Fig 6

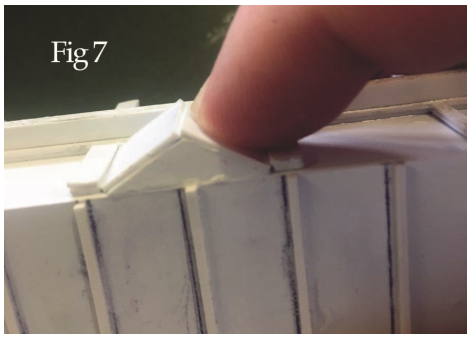


Fig 7

After the entire assembly is completely cured, it's time to attach it to the car as seen in figure 7. Should you find the piece is a little tight, feel free to file down the ends slightly to make them fit. They should be seated snugly between the cross members, and as far back against the spine as possible. The chute assembly should be ever so slightly away from the edge of the superstructure, leaving a slight gap.

Repeat the above steps five more times, resulting in six chute assemblies as seen in figure 8.

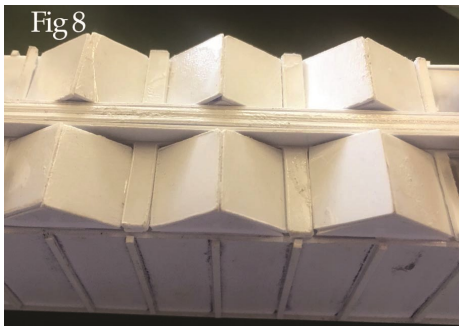


Fig 8

Now we get to the fun parts. By necessity, you need to procure a set of ASF 100 ton roller bearing trucks for your model as well as a pair of couplers. Since the trucks block the couplers we'll begin with them. In order to mount these, you will need to make some marks. First, along the end platform of your car, mark the center line (.6915"). Do so on both ends. Now assemble your coupler of choice, and measure its width as accurately as possible. Divide that by two, and measure that on either side of the center mark. Use these marks as a guide to attach your coupler. You can see a coupler properly attached in figure 9.

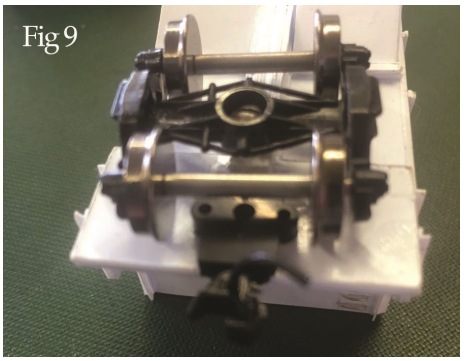


Fig 9

Personally, I glue them on because . . . it's easy. Some choose to screw their couplers on. The choice is yours.

To attach the trucks, mark a line 60" (.689") in from the end from each end of the car onto the support spine. Now mark the centerline across that mark. You will then need to drill a hole for your truck mounting screw. Of all our steps thus far, this is the most crucial, as it will either ensure your car tracks properly, or derails when you breathe on it. Once you've drilled out your hole, making sure it is vertical, attach your trucks. The basics of your car are finished. Get out a piece of track and roll it back and forth. You deserve it.

There are many little details we can add to this car. Because they're scratch built you can customize each one, making little differences that give each car a slightly different flavor. We'll learn these steps next time as we look at painting, decaling, and super detailing freight cars. But in the meantime, build yourself a couple of these cars. It just takes a first step.

HANG BY THE NECK UNTIL . . .

State District Judge Abe Blankenship sentenced ex-convict Chucky Eversole, to 60 years in state prison for robbing a Union Pacific train in early April. At the time of sentencing, Judge Blankenship informed the man that things could have been worse. "Your fate is obviously a lot better than the fates of the train robbers of the past," Blankenship told a downcast Chucky Duane Eversole, 25. Rather than being hanged from the Live Oak in front of the courthouse, as most likely in years past, Eversole was taken away by jailers to serve time in prison where he will remain until at least the year 2007 before he can be paroled. Harris County Prosecutor Fred Gilliam explained the case as starting when the Union Pacific train stopped in a holding area near the 7600 block of Tidwell on April 1st, with engineer Henry Fisher and conductor Hinds Ingram aboard awaiting clearance to proceed, Eversole and an accomplice boarded the train and robbed both employees. The loot taken was both employees' watches, rings and Ingram's wallet containing $27.00. They were caught before being able to escape the rail yard. Eversole's co-defendant, Jimmie Kerns, was allegedly holding the victims of the train robbery at bay with a .38 caliber revolver and faces train robbery charges in Judge Blankenship's court in the near future. Conductor Ingram has said he isn't enjoying the publicity about being a victim of what could be the only Houston area train robbery in this century, he also said that being robbed at gun point was no fun either.

(Original) Editor's Note: All the names have been changed from the original article 60 years????

September Minutes

By Richard Louvet

President Bob Barnett called the meeting to order at 6:58pm. There were four visitors.

Virginia Freitag and Margaret Slutz were responsible for punch and cookies at the meeting.

David Currey introduced Bob Sandhaas for a clinic on "The Illinois Terminal Railroad". It was interesting to hear how the railroad evolved over the years. A Q&A session followed.

Bob relayed the heartfelt thanks of the Linds for the generous contributions to the American Cancer Society in memory of their son.

The club was offered a Roundhouse circus train that could be interesting. See Barnett for questions.

Treasurer's Report
The August minutes were approved as published. The August 31 bank balance was $11,294.90. Expense for the month was a $158 donation to the American Cancer Society in honor of Chuck Lind's son.

Fall Layout Tour
See the website for details. Deadline to be included in the printed flyer is September 24.

Gordon Stockman's layout will be open again. Steve Sandifer is looking for volunteers to help run it during the open house. Contact Steve if you want to help. The layout will be sold off during the tour.

Dave Long announced that his father's Gnawbone and Western will be open during the tour. It will not be running, and the equipment will be available for sale. He could use a helper as well.

Lone Star Region/ Division 8
The Houston Museum of Natural History will be running a Tinplate Christmas layout starting mid-November with familiar Houston scenes. The club can have a San Jac car on the layout for $100.

The next Division 8 clinic will be on building and plaster mountain.

Visit http://www.texasgulfdivision.org/ for the latest LSR information.

The Division 8 annual picnic will be held at Zube park on September 29. The operating session begins at 8:00 a.m. The **Annual Meeting** will be at 11 a.m. Lunch will be at 12 p.m. **Ride the live steamers all day.** Please bring chips, dips, side dishes and desserts. The Division will furnish hamburgers and hot dogs.

Derail
We need to continue with Brian Jansky's layout articles. Please contact Brian about highlighting your layout. Bob Sabol mentioned we have two new regular contributors to the newsletter.

Old Business
The G&G hobby shop will have its model contest on November 3. The contest will occur in one day. Display space is limited. There will be a cash prize.

Davina Gato-Hogno reported on the efforts of the New Members Committee. New content has been put our Facebook page and traffic has increased. The homepage of the San Jac web site has been updated with a list of upcoming events. The committee is preparing and welcome packet for visitors and took a straw poll of the membership for a "buddy" call board for any new visitors. The response was good, and the packet/call board will be completed soon.

Rex Ritz presented the slate of officers for the next year and all were elected by a show of hands. Club officers and directors remain unchanged.

New Business
The June 2019 clinic will be on installing video on a locomotive. A DCC layout is needed to test and prepare video for the clinic.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53.

Respectively submitted,

Dick Louvet
Secretary/Treasurer

San Jac RR Club Meetings take place the first Tuesday of each month at 7pm

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet St. Houston, TX

Click here for directions

Visitors are always welcome!

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Next Meeting

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2

"Computer Games for Railroad"

by

Rick Jones

Refreshments:

Virginia Freitag (drinks)

Geoffrey Hagno (cookies)

Video Corner

"Norfolk and Western 611 Cab Tour"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bk8dvPyARMA