

NICKEL RATE ROAD *Modeler's Notebook*TM

Volume 37, July 2020

**The Clover Leaf District's Fourth Subdivision
Scratchbuilding a large Industry in N Scale
Kitbashing a Clover Leaf LCL Caboose**



MODELER'S NOTEBOOK STAFF

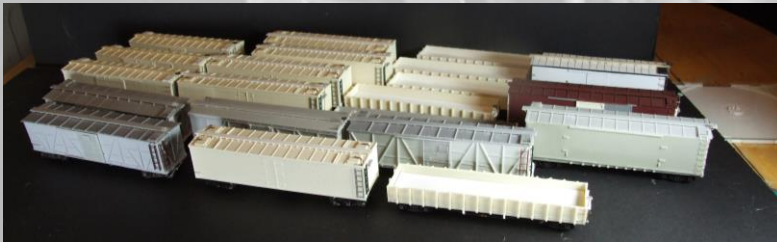
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With more down time than any of us have expected to have this year, many of us are finding more time available to model our favorite railroad. Several news agencies have run "fluff piece" articles on an increased interest in modeling related hobbies, including model railroading. Of course, all of us already knew that model railroading was a great way to pass the time!

This volume of the Modeler's Notebook highlight's several great ways to spend your time. Australian NKP modeler Art Shale shows us his new two-decked home layout for the first time, Dan Merkel explains how to kitbash a hobby-standard Roundhouse caboose into a NKP prototype, and John Colombo takes us through a step-by-step process on how to build a very large factory complex in N scale.

As for me, I've been working steadily, so haven't had all that much down time. Of course, not being able to travel much has kept me closer to home, and closer to my workbench. I've been busy building more than two dozen resin freight car kits, including 10 NKP cars. Now all I have to do is paint all of these things...



Happy Nickel Plate Modeling,

RAY

(ON THE COVER: NKP 541 switches the large National Carbon plant in Fostoria OH. Avid N scale modeler John Colombo explains how to build a large factory like this for your home layout.)

Nickel Plate Road Modeler's Notebook Volume 37, July 2020

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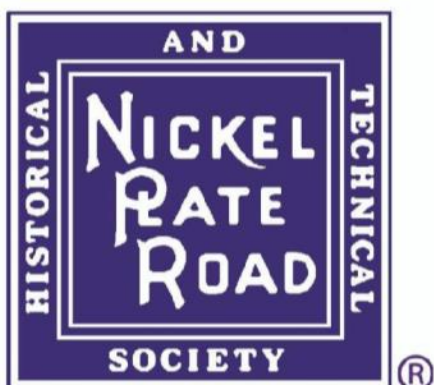
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New Products at the Nickel Plate Road Company Store

"The one stop Nickel Plate Shop"

Nickel Plate Tower

Just In and Now Available

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As traffic began to increase and car-building advanced, bigger cars made their way onto the rails of America's rail system. The Nickel Plate was no exception and these 50-foot plug-door boxcars were added to the "High Speed Service" fleet. They could be seen all over the greater NKP system as well as literally all over the nation as various commodities were transported all over the country. Accurail easy-to-assemble, featuring authentic NKP markings.

Nickel Plate SD-9

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Nickel Plate Road

ETA: March 2021



Era: Early 1960s+

Without Sound

ATHG30617	HO GP18, NKP #700
ATHG30618	HO GP18, NKP #702
ATHG30619	HO GP18, NKP #704
ATHG30620	HO GP18, NKP #707

With Sound

ATHG30717	HO GP18 w/DCC & Sound, NKP #700
ATHG30718	HO GP18 w/DCC & Sound, NKP #702
ATHG30719	HO GP18 w/DCC & Sound, NKP #704
ATHG30720	HO GP18 w/DCC & Sound, NKP #707

NKP FEATURES:

- Forward facing gyralight, flash effect on DCC+Sound
- Forward facing 2-chime horn and rear-facing single chime horn
- Cab sunshades
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- Nose-mounted bell
- Firecracker antenna

SOUND EQUIPPED MODELS ALSO FEATURE:

- Onboard DCC decoder with SoundTraxx Tsunami2 sound
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- Full DCC functions available when operated in DCC mode
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w/o Sound \$209.98^{SRP} With Tsunami2 Sound \$299.98^{SRP}

These items are subject to Horizon's MAP policy

See Athearn's [Website](#) for full details and ordering information.

RESIN 1000-SERIES CABOOSE IN HO SCALE



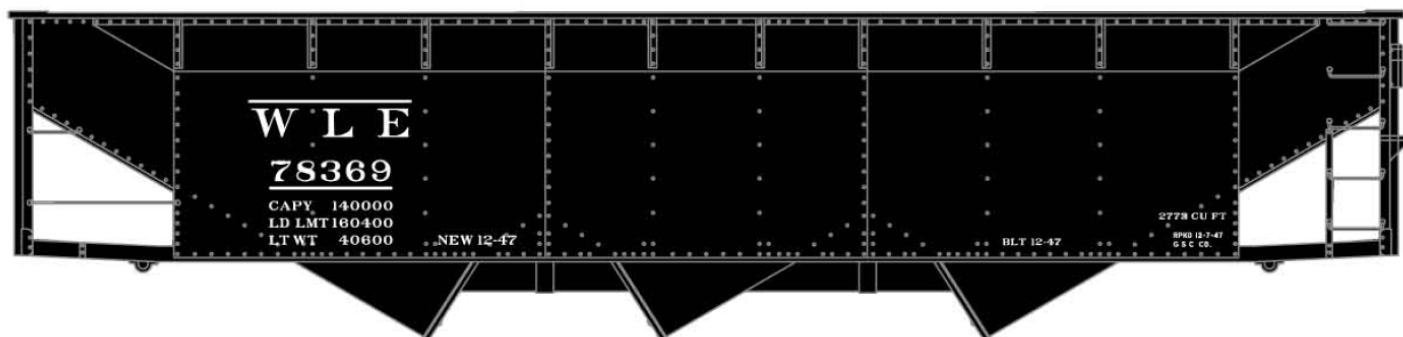
Preproduction model shown. Ray Breyer photo.

[Southbound Modelworks](#) is a new craftsman model manufacturing company, specializing in resin rolling stock. Their first car offerings include many of the old Wright Track castings, which were all extremely accurate models.

One of Southbound's first releases will be a 1000-series wood caboose. Expected delivery of the models will begin in September 2020, and have an MSRP of \$63.33.

MORE W&LE HOPPERS FROM ACCURAIL

#7566 Wheeling & Lake Erie 70-Ton Offset Triple Hopper \$18.98 Retail



Newly Announced from [Accurail](#) is a model of the W&LE's 1947-built offset side triple hoppers. These cars ran in W&LE paint well through the 1950s, and were also repainted with NKP reporting marks beginning in 1952.

Head to Accurail's [website](#) to order.

JOIN THE NICKEL PLATE ROAD HISTORICAL & TECHNICAL SOCIETY TODAY!

Founded in 1966, the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society is America's only rail-history organization dedicated solely to preserving the history and legacy of the Nickel Plate Road and its predecessors.

The Society publishes a quarterly magazine, maintains an award-winning website at NKPHTS.org, provides stewardship of a major archive of historical material at the [Western New York Railway Historical Society](#), and offers numerous member programs and projects, including an annual convention

As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, financial donations and contributions of historical photos, documents, and ephemera are tax-deductible and always appreciated.

The Purpose of the NKPHTS is to maintain an association of persons interested in the former New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad (Nickel Plate Road), and to obtain, preserve, and distribute information and material related to the former Nickel Plate Road, its predecessors, and lessees. It shall be the intent of the corporation to promote, support, and preserve the historic legacy of the Nickel Plate Road through the creation of programs designed to be of benefit and service to its members, as well as to assist qualified, non-profit museums, libraries, rail groups, and historical organizations, either financially or technically, in the preservation, conservation, and/or collection of material, equipment, and memorabilia relating to the railroad and its predecessors.

The original Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society was formed in Lafayette, Indiana in 1966. The NKPHTS was incorporated in the state of Ohio in 1972 as a non-profit, non-stock corporation organized for educational purposes. We are recognized as a 501(c)(3) organization by the Internal Revenue Service, so all contributions of material and money are tax deductible. Information on donating money and materials to the NKPHTS may be found on our website.

The NKPHTS publishes a quarterly [magazine](#) devoted to the history of the Nickel Plate Road, Lake Erie & western, Wheeling & Lake Erie, and the Toledo, St. Louis & Western (Clover Leaf) railroads. Included from time to time are articles on modeling the Nickel Plate, current status of Nickel Plate facilities and rolling



stock, and other railroads' joint operation with the Nickel Plate. The magazine is printed in color, on high-quality gloss paper and is generously illustrated with photos and maps. Occasional [newsletters](#) are provided to keep members informed of current Society events and news, along with timely updates and/or supplements to the

magazine.

For over twenty-five years the NKPHTS has published an annual [calendar](#) with fourteen high-quality photographs of the NKP, TStL&W, LE&W and W&LE railroads.

From time to time the Society has embarked on a limited run offering of a special project. These have included timetable reprints, lithographs, books and scale models.

The staff of the Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society is all-volunteer and its business is conducted largely by mail and email. The membership has an opportunity to meet each year at our annual [convention](#), which is held in a Nickel Plate city. These meetings include displays, model railroad tours, swap and sale tables, slide, movie and video sessions, and tours of rail facilities. A general business meeting and banquet are the highlights of these weekends, where the Society's officers are elected and important business is handled.

Our Society also offers numerous internet and online-based activities free of charge to all of its members. We have an extensive website at NKPHTS.org which displays information, photos, documents, and Society news. We have a "[Members Area](#)" which can only be accessed by current members of the Society and which contains many items of interest, including Howard W. Ameling's collection of 5,000-plus Nickel Plate Road photos. Members with an email address receive a monthly [E-List Newsletter](#) with the latest Society information and various articles of interest to NKP fans. A new initiative is the online publication of a quarterly magazine devoted to modeling the NKP, the Nickel Plate Road [Modeler's Notebook](#). The Society also hosts an online discussion forum on [Yahoo Groups](#). You will also find us on [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).



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Rate your interest in the following areas on a scale of one to ten: (one being the lowest level of interest and ten being the highest)

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NKP Modeling NKP Memorabilia Collecting/Preservation

If you are a modeler/collector, what scale?

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Do you have historic NKP or predecessor material? If yes, would you be willing to share with the society?

PRIVACY POLICY: The Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society maintains a general policy whereby it does not sell or offer membership information to any other group or individual for any purpose.

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The NKPHTS Membership Year is from October 17th thru October 16th. The membership fee payable with this application is for the standard membership year beginning October 17th and will not be pro-rated.

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The Clover Leaf District's Fourth Subdivision

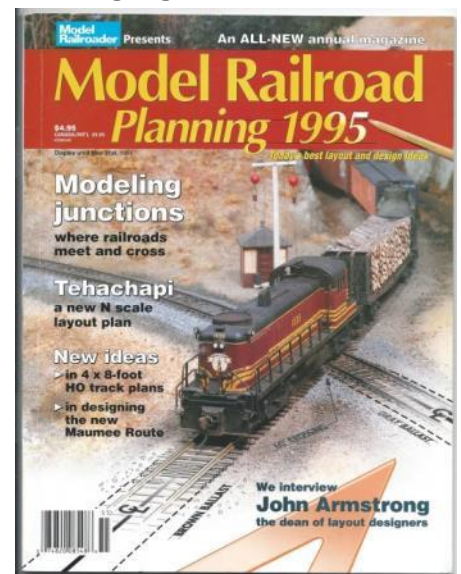
By Arthur Shale



NKP 732 hauls a string of empty reefers westward across the Ramsey Creek bridge. Big bridges and impressive scenery were trademarks of the Fourth Sub, and something that Art wanted to capture on his new home layout.

High fills, towering viaducts, deep cuts, and grades that could bring the very best of Lima's Super Power to its knees. That's the Nickel Plate's Fourth Sub; Southern Illinois' very own mountain railroad smack dab in the middle of the Midwest flatlands. Opened in 1883 as the final three-foot gauge link in the Toledo, St Louis & Western's main line between Lake Erie and the Mississippi, the Fourth Subdivision was standard gauged in 1887 and became a Nickel Plate property in 1922. But it was never far from its narrow gauge heritage, nor the TStL&W's popular moniker – The Clover Leaf.

Opening my copy of *Model Railroad Planning* in 1995 was the first time I'd ever heard of the Clover Leaf. There, on page 50, was the dramatic black and white image of NKP H-6d 624 leaving Edwardsville, and it got my attention. Tony Koester's and Dan Daily's article on the Clover Leaf District, its operations and small-town Wingate got my imagination whirring. Things weren't helped when I flipped to the next story – Bill Darnaby's design for his Maumee Road – a multi-deck layout with no helix, governed by Timetable and Train Order. I was hooked.



For the next decade I did a whole lot of armchair modeling – living in tropical North Queensland, Australia, where basements and attics are about as common as snow, finding space was a hiccup that thwarted many of my dream designs. Finally, in 2009, I built an around the walls 9ft by 11ft bedroom layout based on New Douglas – an old mill town on the NKP east of Edwardsville. Techniques and equipment honed with this first attempt set me up for “the big layout” goal, something that got a whole lot closer when my wife and I moved into a larger Queensland colonial with a 14ft by 29ft workshop in 2016. Annaley liked the house, I liked the new train room.



Art's previous NKP themed layout was modestly sized, but still dealt with the Fourth Sub in a realistic way. Here, Class G-9 Consolidation #916 rests on a siding on home rails in New Douglas.

While I'd always wanted to model the entire Fourth Subdivision between Charleston, Illinois, and Madison, just a few miles from St. Louis, I could see almost immediately that a double deck layout with two big yards in this room would leave little space for anything in between. And there was a lot in between. The Fourth Sub spent most of its time on bridges or climbing the grades to either side of them. And I wanted to model that mainline action. So, with a heavy heart, Madison had to go.



Modeling the rolling scenery and many bridges were a must for Art, along with as long a mainline run as could be squeezed into his layout space.

As such, trains on this layout roll out of the lower nine-track staging yard, rumble cross the Ramsey Creek viaduct and arrive at the Fourth Sub's midway point – **Ramsey** – once a busy servicing stop with a timber coal dock and a 100,000-gallon water station. It is 1949 every day on my version of the Clover Leaf, so the Berkshires and big tendered Mikados don't pause at Ramsey as often as the older Consolidations. The yard was once busy with coal hoppers from mines to the west of town, but these, like the yard switcher, have gone too. There is an interchange with the Illinois Central's Charter Line running between Clinton and Carbondale, with a few cars swapped during the week.

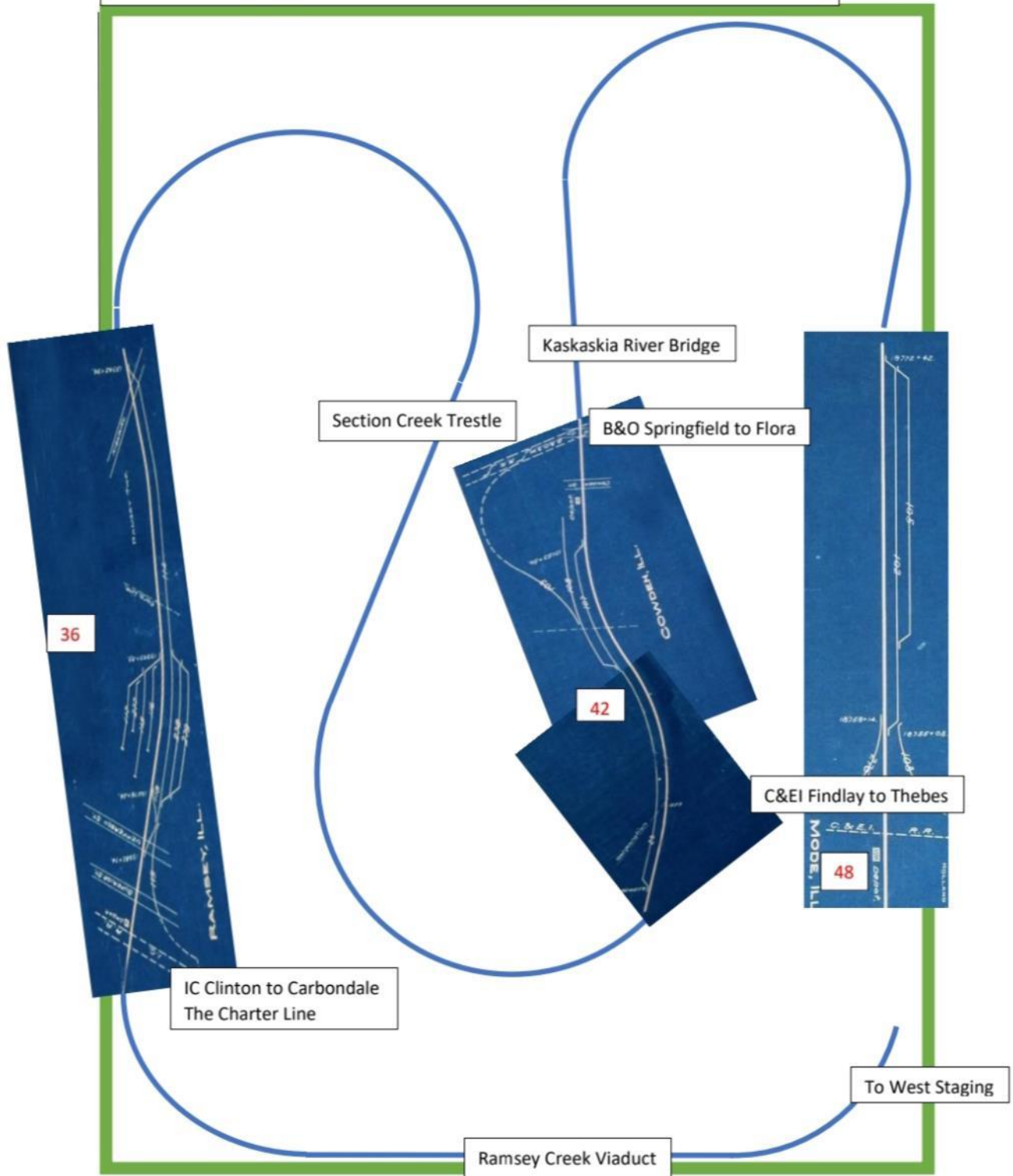


NKP 732 drifts past the Ramsey coal dock without stopping. Once an important refueling point for the Clover Leaf, by the end of WWII the dock served little more than locals. Art scratch built the coal dock in styrene based solely on photos.

What the real and modeled Ramsey did have in 1949 are lots of trains. On April 13, 1950, just a few months later, its joint IC/NKP interlocking tower saw eleven westbounds and seven eastbounds go by on the Clover Leaf, and I'll be modelling most of them.

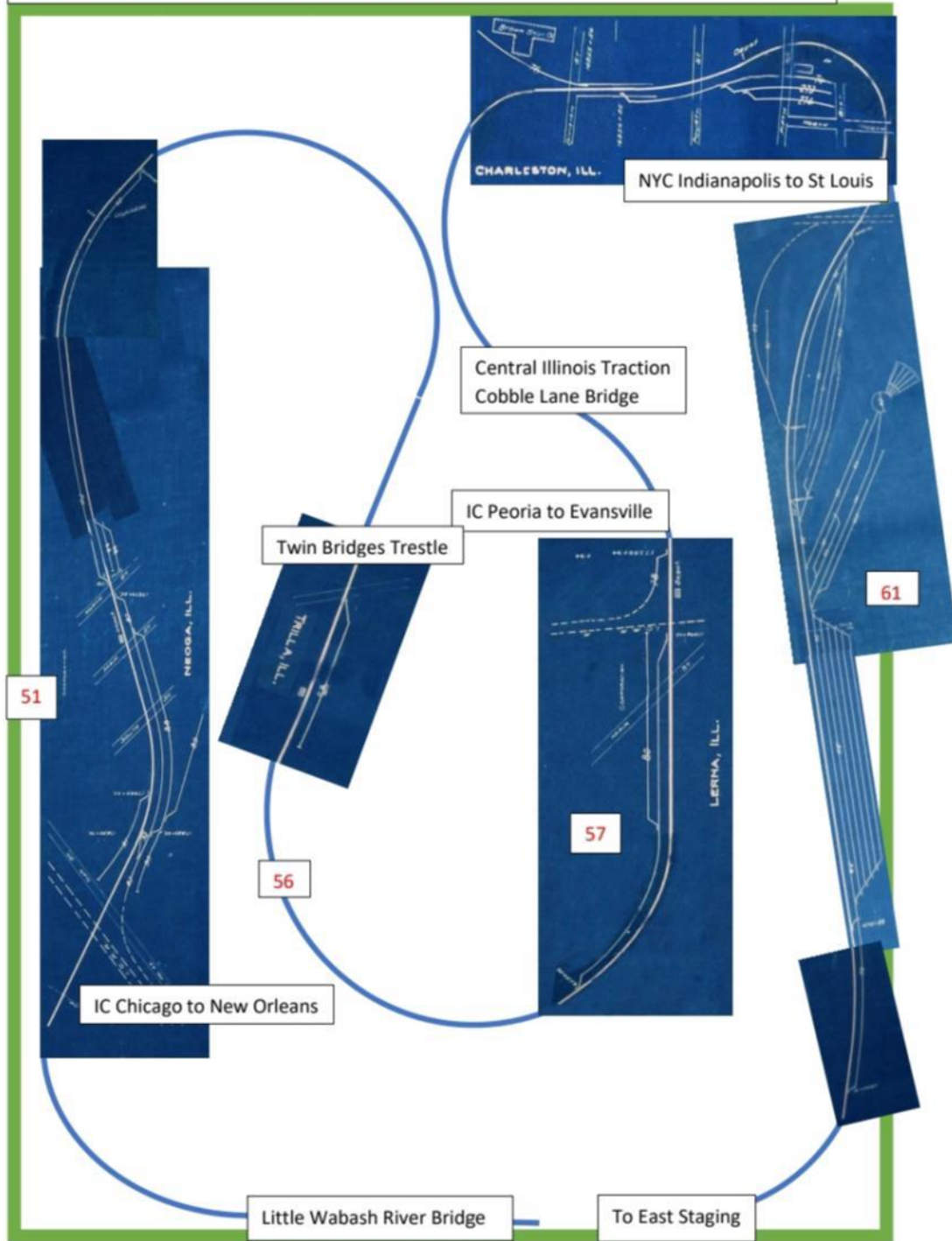
Adding to the spectacle, right from the lower staging yard and through Ramsey, trains are already clambering up the one percent grade needed to gradually spiral around the room – this follows the prototype, with eastbounds climbing nearly 600 feet between Madison and Charleston. With 250 actual feet of Micro Engineering Code 70 flextrack ahead of them, my struggling steamers leave the wall and begin to wrap around the room's central peninsular on a series of 36-inch radius curves. By the time they reach the 30-car passing siding at **Cowden**, they've climbed nine inches since crossing Ramsey Creek. Cowden has an automatic interlocking protecting a street crossing with the Baltimore & Ohio's branch line from Springfield to Flora and a rarely used house track.

The Clover Leaf Fourth Subdivision - First Level



Art's layout "plan" consisted of nothing more than shuffling a series of "LDEs" (Layout Design Elements; a modeling term coined by our own Tony Koester) around a scale drawing of his layout space, until he came up with something workable. The red numbers in boxes indicate the layout's height in inches above the floor, while the white boxes call out towns or scenic points of interest.

The Clover Leaf Fourth Subdivision - Second Level



If a train is lucky and the interlocking is green, the eastbounds continue down the side of Old Cowden Road, passing the recently retired 50,000-gallon wooden water station and out onto the 2,080-foot-long Kaskaskia River Bridge – the longest of the many bridges on the Clover Leaf. At 24 feet in HO scale, some sacrifices had to be made, and the combination timber trestle, truss girder, and steel viaduct was scaled back to six feet. After the big bridge, trains swing off the peninsula and enter the yard at **Mode**.

Mode has a 25-car passing siding and a two-track interchange yard to swap cars with the Chicago & Eastern Illinois from Thebes – a holdover from the days when the Clover Leaf had a friendly Chicago connection and the C&EI and NKP shared common ownership. In 1949 around 1,000 loaded cars are exchanged annually between the two roads, so some mainline trains will have to get busy switching here.



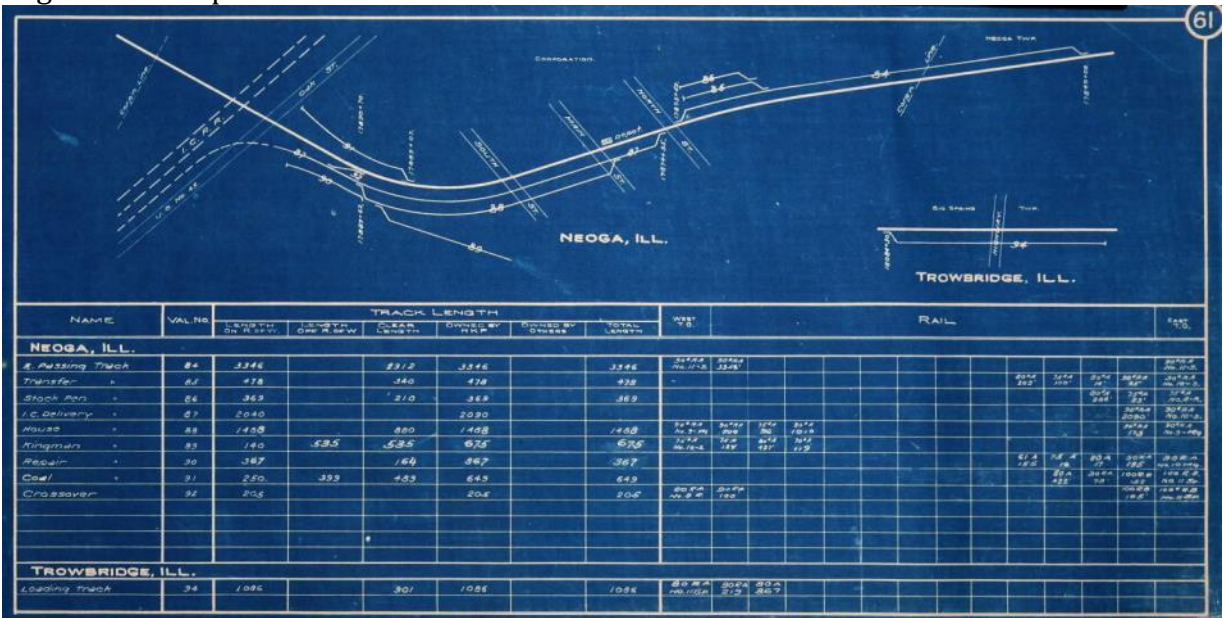
Before entering Neoga the NKP has to cross yet another river, this time the Little Wabash River, on a long and low trestle. Doubleheaded westbounds were a common sight on the Fourth Sub, not because of the grades but because of power balancing: there were more eastbound trains on the division, meaning that Frankfort would have to send extra engines west to Madison yard on an almost daily basis.

Having reached a layout height of 48 inches at Mode, my big steamers are now on the second deck, 15 inches above the lower staging yard and the Ramsey Creek Viaduct. Still climbing, they rattle by the 100,000-gallon water station at **Kingman** and across the Little Wabash River bridge. Ahead is **Neoga** and the Illinois Central's main line between Chicago and New Orleans.



NKP 612 pauses at the Neoga depot to talk to the local agent about any switching moves the area's industries might need.

As you can see from the layout plans, many of the Fourth Sub towns lend themselves to narrow, linear modeling, and most sidings and spurs can be squeezed in more or less the right places. This is where Tony Koester's Layout Design Element (LDE) concept has been particularly useful to me. Developing the track plan was as easy as slotting in each town I had room for and joining it to the next. The TStL&W and the NKP had already done all the hard work designing each yard for me. The complex track layout at Neoga is a good case in point.



Neoga is the second of three IC crossings on the Fourth Sub layout, and by far the busiest interchange. Nearly 8,000 loaded cars change hands here through the year – around 22 cars each day. The NKP's fastest eastbound, No. 90, often stops to attach carloads of bananas from Central America and frozen meat from Chicago and Dubuque. There's also grain elevators, a coal dealer, a hay wholesaler, stockyards and broom factories to serve. This little town of just over 1,000 is big business for the NKP and extras from Charleston are sometimes needed to keep up with the demand.



Art keeps the spirit of the old Clover Leaf with a sprinkling of older equipment. As with the prototype, old Clover Leaf engines and rolling stock tended to stay on the Clover Leaf District, so Art has several CL Consolidations and cabooses around. Oh - all of Art's cabooses are scratchbuilt, since it's somewhat difficult to get off the shelf NKP cabooses in Australian hobby shops!

For eastbounds with extra cars added at Neoga, the climb isn't getting any easier. If they don't have to wait in the town's 29-car passing siding, it's on up the hill to the little elevator town of **Trilla** and around the peninsular one more time to **Lerna** – and yet another Illinois Central crossing, this time the old Peoria, Decatur & Evansville road. Lerna is home to a couple of elevators, and its IC interchange can be lively with tonnage moving off the Louisville & Nashville at Evansville finding its way onto the NKP here. The 28-car passing siding is also the last before the main yard at Charleston, so even fast freights can find themselves waiting at Lerna for a tardy westbound. Adding to the fun, the IC is protected by a gate, which means a compulsory stop for all trains to observe the crossing is clear.



The IC and NKP had a friendly working relationship in central Illinois, which is why all of the Fourth Sub's IC crossings were busy places. With a dizzying array of branch lines serving every corner of the state, it was hard for an east-west road to NOT connect with the IC in more than one spot. Here, the Lerna agent has unlocked and swung the smash board gate out of 732's way so the train can continue on to St. Louis.



It's train time in Lerna, as through freights from each direction meet at the town's grain elevator.



Trilla may have been a small “whistle stop” kind of town, but you couldn’t tell if all you were looking at was the big elevator in town at train time.

Once on the move again, and with tenders low on coal and water, NKP’s finest have one more bridge to cross, passing over the defunct Central Illinois Traction line to Mattoon. To maintain the 36-inch radius, the main line curves through the peninsular wall for a short stretch, making room for the Peco turnouts and sidings around the **Charleston** depot and freight house. In 1949 Charleston still sees daily passenger trains running between Cleveland and St. Louis, and is the jumping off point for one of the very unique aspects of the Fourth Sub, the daily-except-Sundays mixed to East St Louis, locally known as “The Plug,” a thoroughly modelable throwback that managed to survive the Great Depression and the Second World War.

After one last sweeping 36-inch curve, trains cross the New York Central’s main line between Indianapolis and St. Louis and enter the compact seven track Charleston yard, the terminal for the Third and Fourth Subdivisions where locomotives and cabooses change. A 90-foot turntable and roundhouse serves the locals, while the Berkshires and Mikados make a quick visit to the 300-ton Ogle coal dock, the 100,000-gallon water station, and the ash pit. While only the longest yard track will hold a 25-car train,

modeling this swapping out of locos and cabooses won't be as hard as it sounds, with the main line frequently used by fast freights for their brief fifteen-minute stops. The switcher crew better be ready.



Charleston is still in the "roughed in" stage, but will soon be transformed into a busy NKP terminal.

Of course there's more to come. Trains continuing on from Charleston are now at a layout height of 61 inches and will have to climb another three inches to get to a nine-track staging yard above Neoga. It's just that the track laying crew hasn't reached that far yet. Then there's scenery, the signals, the timetables, the rolling stock...but we'll leave all of that for another day.



A Kitbashed Nickel Plate Baggage Caboose

By Dan Merkel



Okay boys & girls, it's time to get out the razor saws and hack up another perfectly good model. The goal this time is to create a Nickel Plate Road "combine caboose."

This caboose seems to have been unique on the Nickel Plate. Originally Clover Leaf caboose #63, built by the Lafayette Car Works in 1888, the car was inherited by the NKP when they bought the Clover Leaf in 1923. The car was renumbered to #263 in 1926, and stayed on the NKP roster until the mid-1940s. Of all the cabooses inherited from the Clover Leaf, this was the only one with a side baggage door, and nobody knows if the Clover Leaf or Nickel Plate added it. The only photo we have of the car shows it in St. Marys, Ohio, in 1932; the NKP ran a scheduled mixed freight and passenger train on the Minster branch until 1933, so this was probably the car that the few passengers and LCL freight rode in.



*The only photo of this unique NKP caboose shows it fresh out of the Conneaut car shops in early 1932.
Clyde Helms photo, NKPHTS collection.*

Our donor car for this kitbash will be one of the old MDC cabooses that has a similar side door and number of windows. As you can see in the photos, we'll need to move one window on each side towards the middle of the car, so some body chopping will be necessary. These caboose kits show up from time to time on eBay, and are usually available as RTR cars from Athearn. There's no additional raw material for my 'bash other than some scrap plastic used to reinforce the new body joints. The whole project consists of cutting out the middle section of the car, turning it 180°, and gluing everything back together again.

Before we get started, I want to mention a few items that I felt I had to compromise on. If you look at the photos, you will see that the side door is positioned more towards the center line of the car, and that the cupola isn't centered over the two windows as it is in the prototype. Some purists will scoff at this, but model railroading has almost always been about "givens & druthers." You might prefer one thing but circumstances will force you to compromise with an alternative. When you are planning your layout, "if you only had another foot of space..." is often a thought that will cross your mind. If you did, you could slip in a larger diameter curve or another siding... you get the idea.

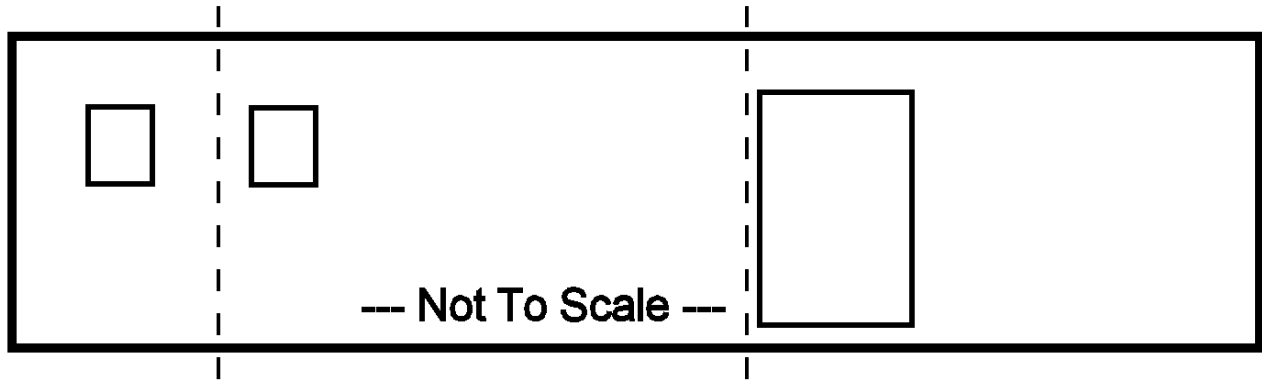
Model building is much the same way, especially when you are kitbashing. I could have cut the car into several more pieces to more properly space the windows and side door. But the downside of this is that every cut, no matter how careful you are, uses up a little material. If you make too many cuts the model magically shrinks down in length and the next thing you know, it won't fit onto the original frame, the roof won't fit, etc. You end up with LOTS of problems, so fewer cuts are better!

You could fabricate the entire side of the caboose with scribed styrene, but that would be more like scratch building instead of kit bashing. So as I mentioned, I had to make a decision about how far to take the kitbash, and I decided to keep the side door where it was, instead of where it should be if one adheres strictly to the prototype.

The kit's roof has ridges on it, and obviously a place for the cupola. If it weren't for those ridges I'd have considered moving the cupola to center it between the side windows. Those ridges tend to hide the cut marks and resulting seams. But given that the cuts would have to be made in between two of the seams, the cuts would be harder to hide. So compromise number two was to leave the cupola where it was.

On to the kitbash! The method I like to use to cut apart bodies when I want to save as much of it as I can is kind of like the scribe & snap technique, only you can't really flex the car body to snap parts apart. Pick one end of the car to be your reference end. From there, decide where you want to make your cuts, and then CAREFULLY measure where the cuts will be. Write these dimensions down somewhere so you won't forget them. Remember, once you start cutting, you do remove some of the car side material so it isn't accurate to re-measure after the cut.

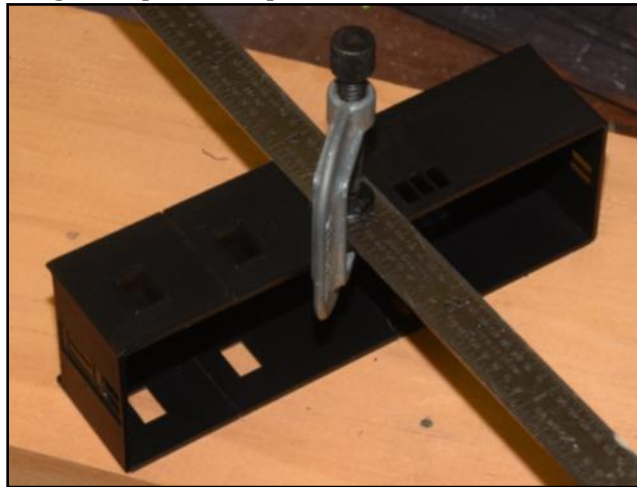
The drawing below will give you an idea of where we will be making the cuts. Remember, this model will be a "reasonable" representation of the original caboose. One consideration I made was to avoid cutting near the truck mounting posts on the underside of the car body.



With a scribed side car like the MDC model we are using here, I also like to count the boards from a fixed reference point... you know... six back from a window or something like that. Once you have your spot, align your metal straight-edge on that mark and make sure that it is parallel to the scribing and perpendicular to the car's side.

A long time ago, I added some medium grit sandpaper to the back of my straightedge. It makes the back of the ruler less slippery so it doesn't move around while you're working. No wiggling, etc., when you want to make a precise scribe or cut. If you have a spare ruler, I'd suggest that you consider modifying it along these lines and giving it a try. I think you'll find that it is a VERY handy tool to have at your workbench.

Once you get the metal ruler lined up, use a small clamp to hold it in place. Turn it down tight so it doesn't wiggle around while you make several gentle passes along your chosen cut line with the back side of a #11 knife blade. The aim here is to scribe a cut line into the model, and using the back side of the blade seems to be easier to control. Try very hard to just use the tip of your blade. Stop every once in a while and look at the inside of the car body. If the scribing has left a lighter color or dimple in the plastic, STOP! You have gone deep enough. Repeat this process for the other cut lines before moving on.

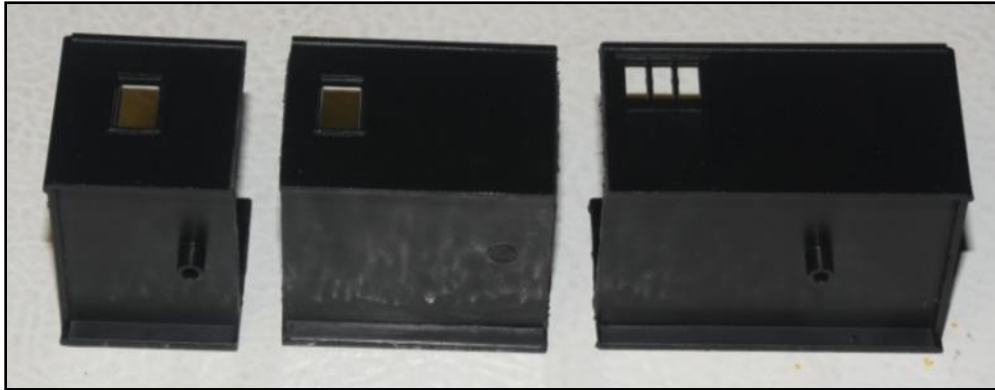


This next part gets tricky, so BE CAREFUL. For this part of the process, I like to use a single-edged razor blade. I hope I don't need to warn you that they are sharp...seemingly much sharper than a #11 blade, so handle with extreme care!

What I do is place the corner of the razor blade into the scribe I just made, so that the blade runs along the scribe itself. Carefully press down on the blade and it should go through the remaining plastic rather easily. Sometimes, the edges give me a bit of a problem but a little patience will get the job done. The

idea is to damage as little of the car side as is possible; that's why I don't use a razor saw. If I had two bodies, it might be a different story but these kits aren't the easiest to find these days.

Carefully cut across the floor so that you end up with three separate pieces like this.

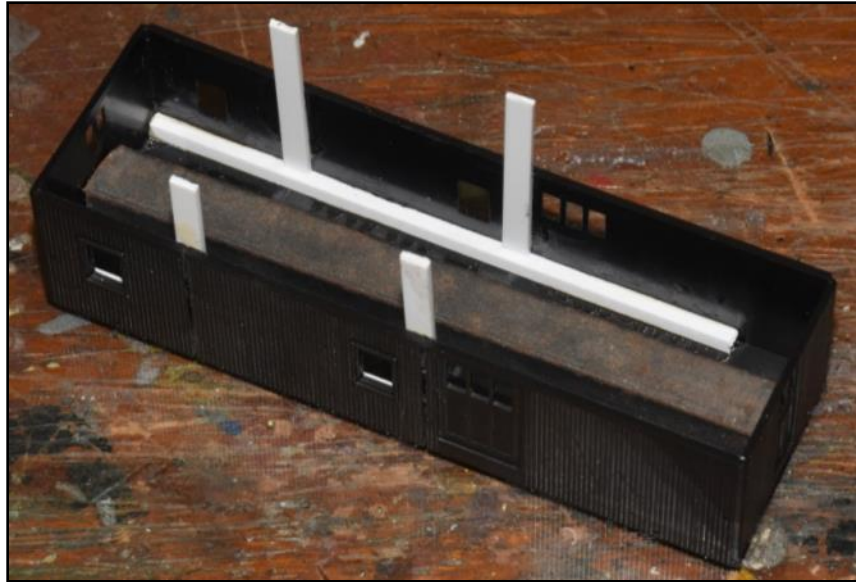


Next, carefully sand the edges of each part as flat as possible. Do this very slowly as you don't want to take the parts out of square, and you don't want to take away any more material than what is absolutely necessary. If you sand away too much, the car body will be shortened enough that the roof will no longer fit. We would rather not have to adjust the roof length along with everything else.

Make sure that the pieces fit together as well as you can, and make sure that they are straight along the edges. If you were sloppy with your measurements, the sides won't be the same length and the car will be crooked. Once you are satisfied with their fit, use a square to line up the parts, and glue everything together. If you have some clamps to help hold the pieces together, that will be beneficial as well. Add some scrap strip styrene to the body seams to help hold the car together. We'll notch the sides of the caboose roof later to allow it to fit onto the body.



The kit I had didn't have a weight with it, so I used a piece of quarter-inch key stock that I purchased a long time ago at a local steel supply house. I had to buy a twenty-foot strip of the stuff and probably used about 137 hacksaw blades to cut it down into model-sized pieces, but it was a cheap way to get weights for my cars. These days I just buy boxes of 3/8" hex nuts at the local lumber yard; they're easier to deal with and the weight increment is about right for freight cars too. Use rubber cement or wood glue to keep the weights in place.



Now comes a tricky part in this kitbash. No matter how carefully you have sanded, you will probably end up with some unsightly lines or grooves that will need to be filled. I've tried a variety of materials as gap fillers, and eventually wound up using very small amounts of Squadron Green body putty to fill them in. I have read about using different products including Elmer's Glue, but I still need to do some work to figure out what works best for me. A long time ago, I had a friend who made his own "goop" by putting shavings of plastic in a bottle of Testor's Liquid Cement until it turned into a thick, pasty, jelly-like substance that he would then carefully place in the cracks. While I've never tried it, he claimed that when it dried it was just like the plastic that surrounded it and could easily be sanded, painted, etc. Another of my modeling friends thins body putty with a little Testor's liquid cement. He likes his concoction as well. So there are all kinds of options for body filler, and while they are beyond the scope of this article, you may want to do a little experimenting to see what works best for you.

Anyway, fill the cracks, let the putty dry, and then sand the areas smooth without taking away too much of the surrounding detail. While you are at it, the caboose windows need small strips of plastic (scale 2x2 strips or so) to separate the window panes. You might note that I missed this detail originally and had to add them later. Do it now and save yourself some grief.

After everything dries (at least a full day), it's time to head to the paint shop and give this project a little color. I used an industrial-looking light green on the inside and some darker red on the outside. This caboose was retired before the NKP introduced its iconic "High Speed Service" scheme, and the red should be much darker than the bright scarlet used in that scheme. The cupola gets sprayed red as well, and the entire roof gets painted black. I used a brush for the black areas, since the roof was canvasses and tarred; streaks are prototypical! Finally, the end platforms and steps need to be a sort of rust brown color, which was common NKP practice on their cabooses. I brushed on this paint as well, which was whatever "boxcar red" I happened to grab for the job.



Once you get this far, the rest of the project is pretty much according to the kit's instructions, so I won't spend a lot of time going over that. There is still a lot of work to be done but it's all pretty much straightforward. Mostly, you need to add the underside and end platform details.

The underframe needs the brake cylinder, the queen posts, and the truss rods. I also added one tool box to the right side of the car, since it looks good. Do all of this before you glue the body to the underframe! Once it is glued on, add the couplers and the trucks. Make sure that the coupler heights are correct!

When I ordered my caboose models, they came in bulk and the vendor didn't have any of the railing or corner grab iron parts left. "No problem!" says I, "I have loads of wire!" But it was actually a real challenge. It is really hard to cut, bend and otherwise shape all of the wires to fit EXACTLY as you want them. You will notice that a few of mine aren't perfect, but that kind of adds to the character of the car. Paint them yellow and glue them to your caboose body as well.



With the grabs and end railings in place, glue the cupola to the roof, and then check the roof to make sure it fits onto the caboose body. You may need to add small notches to the side lip of the roof to clear those body reinforcements we added earlier. Glue the roof onto the body, making sure to add it in the right way! The cupola goes between the two windows and NOT over the side door. Add the roof walks, the end ladders, and the smoke jack, and the project is pretty much done.

The last step was adding lettering. I created my own decal set for the car with my trusty ALPS printer and applied them onto the glossy paint surface. If you don't make your own decals, use Microscale's NKP caboose set #[MC-4243](#). After the decals dried, I applied liberal coats of Solvaset to get them to conform as much as possible to the car's corrugated sides. Finally, I added an overspray of clear flat finish, and the car was ready for road action.

I hope you have enjoyed this little project and will be encouraged to pick up some basic tools and give it a try. You'll thank me!



MODELER'S REFERENCE

Marion Indiana Car Inspector's House

Between 1914 and 1917, and occasionally through the 1950s, the Interstate Commerce Commission conducted property surveys of every "steam railroad" in the United States. Now housed at the National Archives and only semi-accessible, the "ICC Val Reports" are a treasure trove of great railroad history and information that's available nowhere else. For example, it's highly unlikely that this humble lineside shed is recorded anywhere else.

D. V. FORM NO. 68
INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION
DIVISION OF VALUATION
PAGE 261 ✓
DATE 10-13-15
CARRIER T. St. L. & W.
VALUATION SECTION 1-C-1nd
12-717
H. H. Baker
J. F. Seifried
FOR CARRIER
FOR I. C. C.
Acct # 16
17

Marion
Car Inspectors House 8 x 10 x 9 + 2 with Lean-to 9 x 10 x 7 1/2



- On 4-Posts
- 3 1/2 ft of 1x6 Drop Siding
- B+B Above
- 2- Windows 20" x 6' - 2 L
- 1- Window 32 x 32 4-L
- Prepared Roofing
- 6" Dickason C.I. Smoke Jack
- Lean-to built of 1" Bds
- 1- Door 24 x 6 1/2
- Ptd Grey 1913
- 1- Door 3' x 7' M+B 10 x 12 L.
- 2' Skirt 1x12
- 2- 4' x 12" Steps 1" Mat 1
- Condition: 85%

The NKPHTS has worked with the National Archives to digitize all of the Valuation Reports for the NKP and its predecessor lines. As volunteer time permits, these documents will be made available to NKPHTS members and NKP researchers. Part One of a report on Christopher Manthey's extensive research into the NKP and predecessor railroad files at the National Archives begins in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Nickel Plate Road Magazine*, due out in early July 2020.

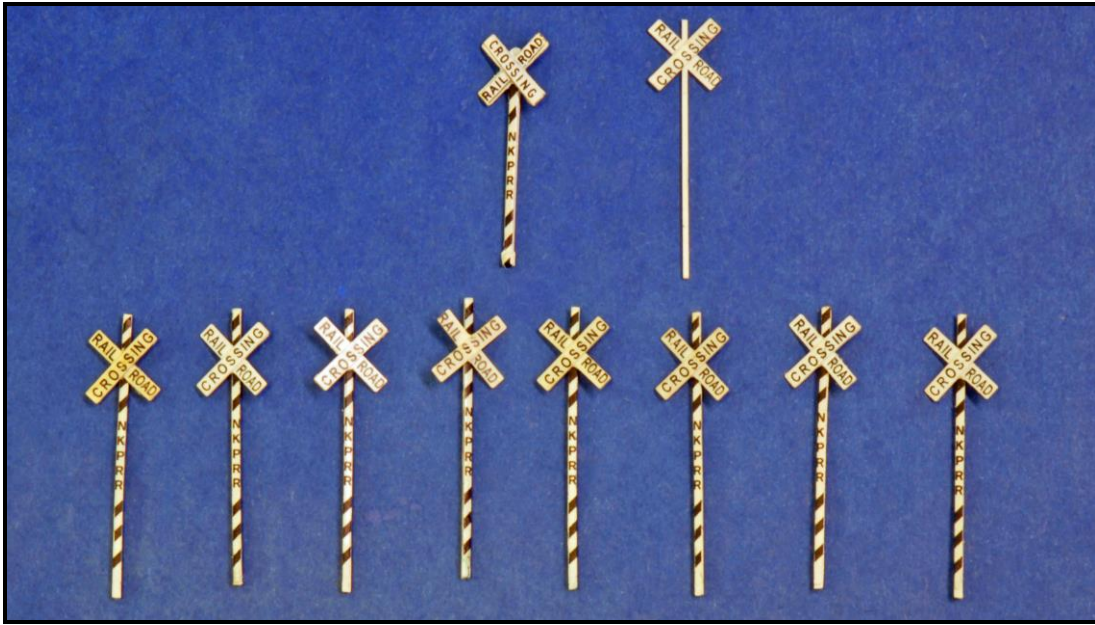
ALONG THE LINE



Better than real life!

David Vaughn sent in this stunning photo of two O Scale Key NKP PAs which were re-detailed by Lee Turner to correct errors and then weathered by him, working from prototype photos.

As David recounts, "I have had several people look at the photos and call me a liar when I tell them they are models."



Tony Koester has been busy sprucing up his Third Sub layout by adding small but important details, like these NKP-specific crossbucks. The photo shows (from top left) an NJ International HO crossbuck with custom-created NKPHTS striping decals added to its square post; a standard thin-post Tichy crossbuck; and eight NKP crossbucks made by salvaging the Tichy crossbucks and gluing them to code 55 rail using Canopy Cement that had been spray-painted white, and then applying the NKPHTS striping. The decals will be available through the Company Store later in 2020. Tony Koester photo



NKP modeler Chris Ellis shows us that modeling the ubiquitous but seldom modeled EMD switcher “monkey bar” safety cages is actually possible. And to further encourage those out there that they’re too hard to scratch, Chris adds a note: He built them when he was fifteen!

[Building a Prototype Factory: National Carbon in Fostoria OH](#)

By John Colombo



For the most part, my N scale NKP layout does not try to replicate prototype buildings or factories in the towns from Fostoria, OH to Rocky River, OH in the section of the NKP that I model. While I have a couple of “prototype replica” structures on my layout (the roundhouse at Bellevue and a compressed version of the Rocky River Viaduct), all of the rest of the industries in the towns of Fostoria, Maple Grove, Lorain, and Rocky River are freelanced, made from readily available industrial building kits.

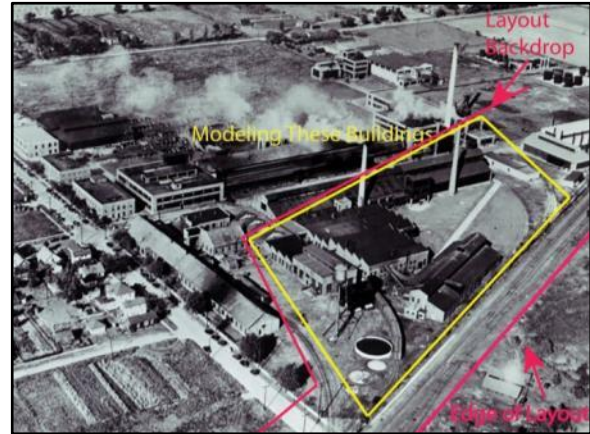
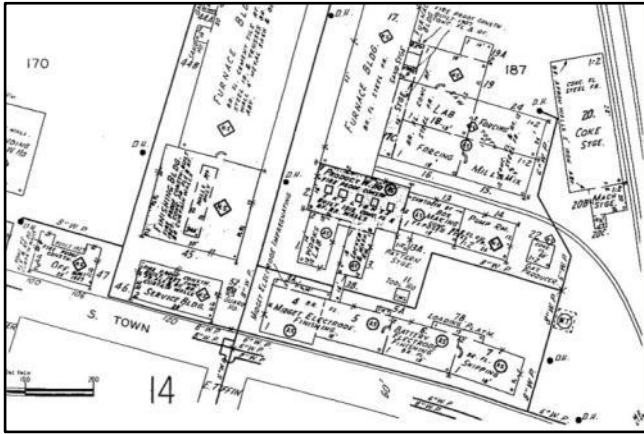
Except one.

In April 2016, Al Skinner, a former member of the Midwest Central RR club (MWC) who now lives in Bellingham, WA, visited central Illinois and came by to see my “new” NKP layout. I had a few buildings sitting on the plywood at an area I had labeled “National Carbon” in Fostoria – an industry that was served by the NKP alongside its main line on the east side of Fostoria. When he saw the buildings, he asked why I didn’t try to model the actual prototype factory. “Because that’s not the part of the hobby I most enjoy, and I just don’t have the skill to scratchbuild those structures,” was my reply. Al’s answer turned out to be fateful, “I could help.”

I knew that Al was very talented at scratchbuilding structures from the ones he had done for the MWC’s modular NTRAK layout some 30 years ago and a large furnace building for my steel mill scene in the 1990s. Intrigued, I asked how we would go about doing that, particularly since he now lived 2300 miles west of me. Al’s suggestion was that he could fashion “kits” that he would send me for assembly. “It won’t take that much time – we’ll be done in a couple of months,” Al said. Boy, was that wrong! We had completely miscalculated how complicated this would turn out to be: What we thought would be a couple of simple “box” buildings turned out to be a thousand times more complex.

We started this project in the late summer of 2016 with some research on the plant. National Carbon’s main business has always been making carbon brushes for DC motors, and in fact it still does so at its plant in Fostoria. The plant in 1957, however, looked much different from today. In particular, the original plant, known as the “south plant,” was where most of the action was, and after having been acquired in the early 1900s by Union Carbide, National Carbon not only made motor brushes but also dry-cell battery electrodes and other carbon-black products for Union Carbide.

Fortunately, I already had a Sanborn fire insurance map of the plant as it existed in the 1950s. This was provided by an NKPHTS member who lived in Ohio and was kind enough to send a digital copy from the Fostoria library.



Part of the Sanborn Map of the National Carbon plant, and an aerial photo of National Carbon in the 1950s. I have overlaid lines showing the layout area available for modeling.

After looking at the map and comparing the amount of space I had on my layout, I saw that I could model most of the South Plant with some selective compression of the buildings. But what did the buildings actually look like? They were (mostly) gone now.

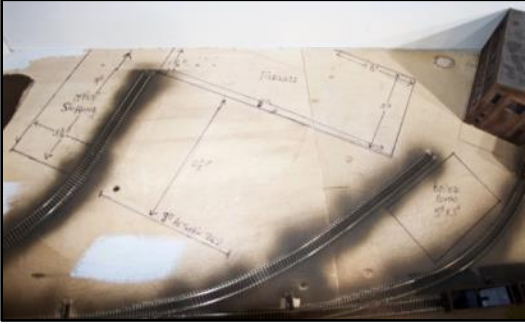
I began with some internet research and found an aerial photo of the plant taken in the 1950s that pretty clearly showed the layout and buildings of the south plant. Comparing this photo to the dimensions and notes on the Sanborn map gave us an idea of what buildings would fit in the area available. But more photos would help. More research revealed some postcards made from artist drawings from the early 1900s, and then Al suggested an obvious line of inquiry that hadn't occurred to me before: why not contact the company and see if they had any photos of the south plant they would be willing to copy for me? I must admit I was dubious – National Carbon was now owned by a company in England; Why would they bother with a model railroader? But I sent an e-mail message to them via their web site, and much to my surprise, about three weeks later a plant employee returned my message, which had been forwarded from England. Yes, they had more aerial photos of the plant and would be willing to send me copies. These new photos showed the plant in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, the plant employee graciously took photos of the still-standing buildings on his iPhone and sent those to me as well. These showed the sides of these buildings and helped determine the kind of construction materials originally used.



Postcard with artist's rendering of plant from early 1900s.

The construction plan

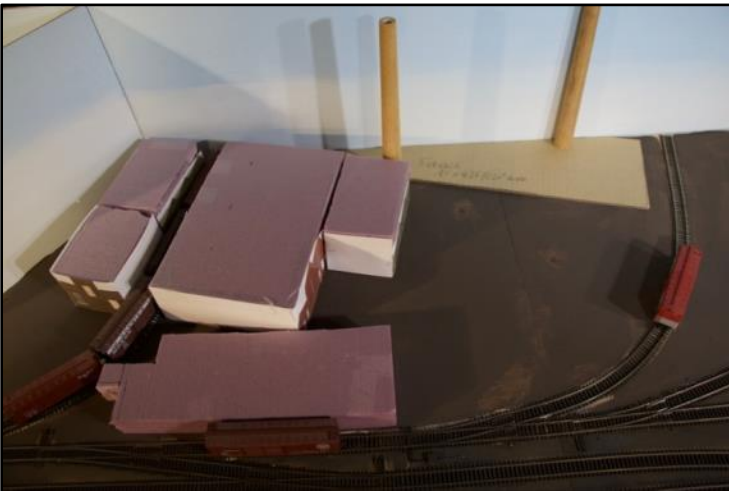
With this research in hand, we put together a plan for construction. Al would fabricate the buildings, either as kitbashes or scratchbuilt, send them to me as “kits” for me to assemble, and I’d do the painting, assembly, and put them on the layout. We started essentially with bare plywood, except for a couple of sidings I had put in during layout construction as “placeholders” for the plant. I drew out some dimensions on the plywood for various structures, and Al and I emailed back and forth over several weeks to finalize the structure dimensions and track layout. Eventually, I used cardboard mockups to show the potential building placement and then used foam insulation board mock-ups for a more 3D visualization.



Bare plywood with two “placeholder” sidings and dimensions drawn.



Cardboard mockups show our “final” building placement. Note that I have already moved the siding tracks to better accommodate the building layout and more accurately copy the original track layout.



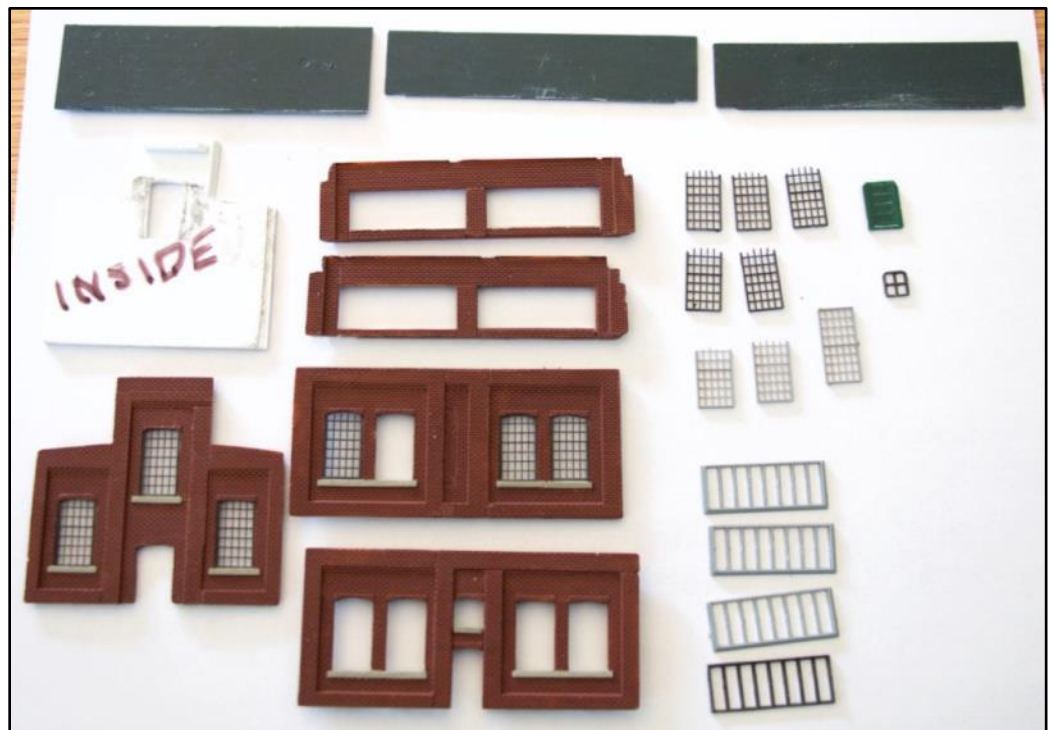
Foam mockups of all the principal factory buildings.

The first kits: Pump Room and Box-making Building

With this plan in hand, Al proceeded to work up the first two buildings – the Pump Room and the Box-making Building (BMB) with its distinctive saw-tooth roof line. The Pump Room was a highly modified Walthers Vulcan Manufacturing kit; the BMB used Walthers modular walls with scratchbuilt saw-tooth rooflines. Windows are from Tichy. I painted the brick walls with a Tuscan red shade, then applied a wash of highly thinned “concrete” paint to weather them. The window frames were painted grimy black, as were the roofs (made from styrene sheet).



An initial mockup of the BMB on Al's workbench.



The Pump Room kit after painting and with some windows installed in the walls.



The Pump Room walls before final assembly.



The completed Pump Room next to the BMB.

[The Water Tower](#)

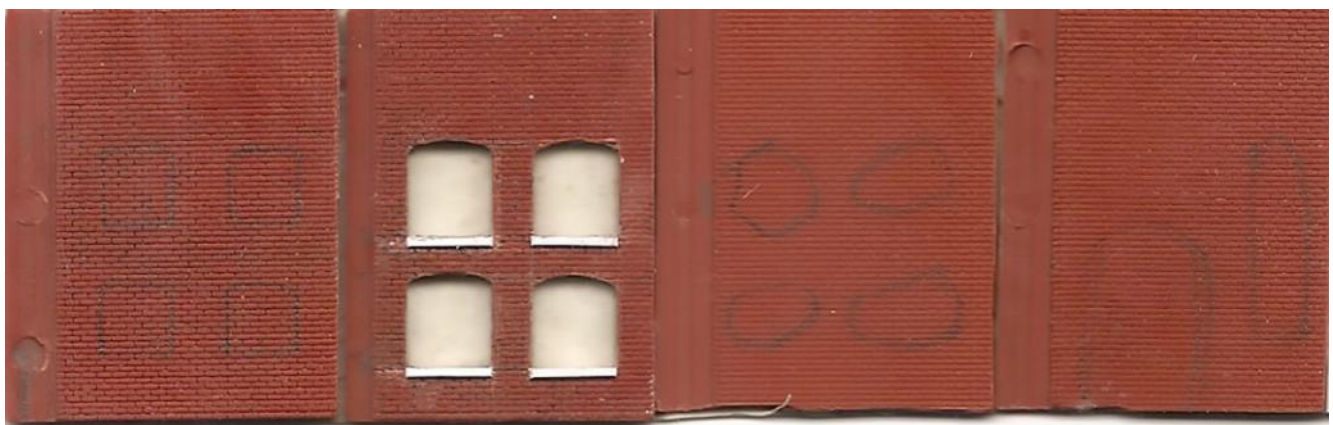
The next structure to tackle was the water tower. I bought a pre-built Walthers water tower kit that I thought would fit the scene, but Al pointed out that it was too big. In order to fit the rest of the buildings in the layout space and have them look proportionately correct, Al had “shrunk” the buildings to about 3/5 of their original size. So, he pointed out, the water tower needed to shrink as well – shorter and thinner than the original Walthers kit. Al fabricated a new water tower from parts of the Walthers kit and a scratchbuilt tank. We used the steel wire from the kit for the cross-supports.



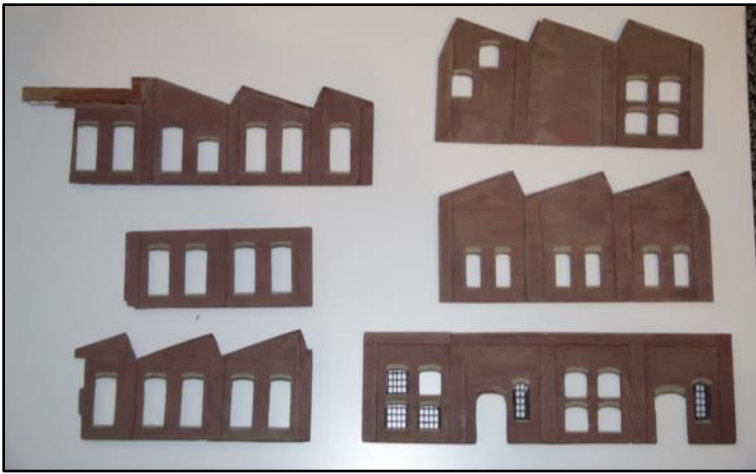
The slimmed-down water tower next to the original Walthers tower illustrates Al's point about relative proportion: The original Walthers tower was simply way too big to be part of the compressed National Carbon scene.

The Forcing Mill

Next on the list was a fairly large complex of saw-tooth-roof buildings called The Forcing Mill, located east of the Pump Room/BMB complex with a siding in-between (for boxcars that would be loaded from the warehouse building, which would have been located north of the BMB, but wasn't part of the modeled area). Al used walls from Walthers and cut holes as needed for the windows (also from Tichy), along with a scratchbuilt roofline.



The forcing mill walls with window cutouts drawn on walls. Al cut the window openings by hand.



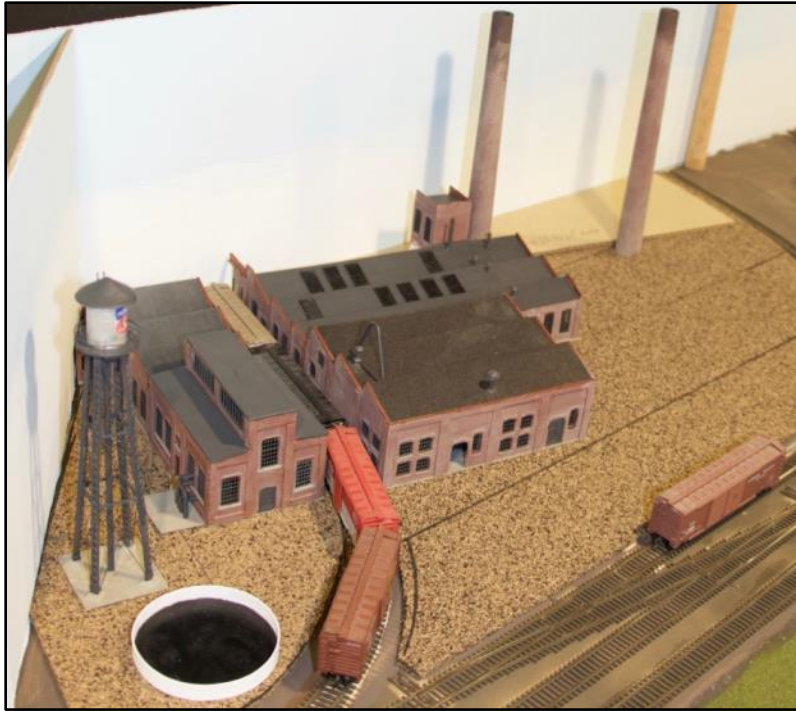
Walls of the Forcing Mill painted, with a few windows installed in the front wall.



Forcing Mill under construction on my workbench. You can see how I've weathered the brick with a wash of thinned "concrete" paint.



Completed Forcing Mill. The skylights are Tichy windows glued to the roof. The vents and pipes were details salvaged from other kits, or in case of the strange upside-down V-shaped pipe on the left front, a piece of 12-gauge solid copper wire bent, painted and glued into holes cut in the roof.



Overhead shot of completed Forcing Mill on layout with the Pump Room, BMB, and water tower. We have no idea what the circular holding “tank” was for, but it is part of the prototype scene. I have added a layer of cork to the plywood to raise the factory a bit above the track.

The Furnaces

National Carbon’s end products (carbon brushes, battery electrodes, etc.) were all made from “carbon black” – essentially, carbon powder. The process for making carbon black involves heating heavy petroleum (what we commonly call “tar”) until it crystalizes into carbon particles. That requires a furnace. In fact, National Carbon in the 1950s had several furnaces – two in the south plant, and a newer furnace facility in the newer north plant. The two furnaces in the south plant presented several modeling challenges. First, the furnaces would be set at an angle against the backdrop, so the far west end of the furnace buildings would need to be cut at an angle to fit against the backdrop. Second, the furnace complex was actually two buildings – the original furnace, built in the late 1800s, and a newer furnace addition built much later. The window construction, clerestory, and even exterior walls were different in each of these buildings, although the overall width dimension was the same. The furnace buildings were key to capturing not only the overall size and complexity of the plant, but also to capture the feel of how real industrial operations expand over time. Building techniques change; a building from the 1930s will not look the same as one from the 1890s. A big part of realistically modeling a plant like National Carbon is capturing this “add on” look.

To do this, Al adopted a number of different techniques. This time he went with complete scratchbuilding, using .040” styrene for the walls, covered with laser-cut brick sheet. The large window arrays in the “new” furnace (the right-hand portion of the furnace complex) are actually laser-printed lines on acetate sheet (overhead transparency sheet), then lightly over-sprayed with a clear matte finish. These sheets are glued to the styrene wall behind, which (at Al’s suggestion) I painted with grimy black paint using a “blotching” technique to give the appearance of built-up dirt and grime on the windows. Individual “panes” are painted white, to indicate areas where windows were damaged, and instead of being replaced by glass, they used aluminum or some other kind of sheathing in place of the glass.



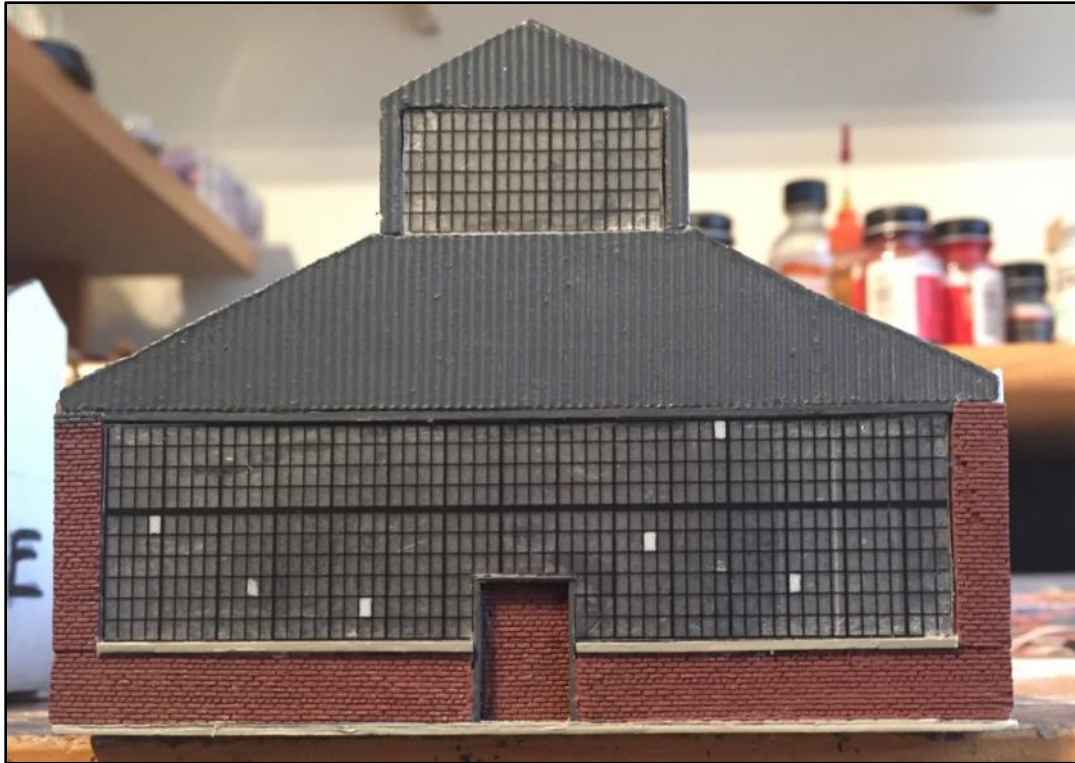
The "old" furnace parts being test-fit on Al's bench.



The "new" furnace being test-fit.



The front and side walls of the new furnace with the "blotched" grimy back background painted in.



The front wall of the “new” furnace showing the windows. These were simply laser-printed lines on a clear acetate sheet (used for overhead projectors) with individual panes painted white to simulate repairs with aluminum. You can see how the “blotched” background shows through the acetate windows to simulate built-up grime.

Al’s most interesting innovations, however, came in the windows for the clerestory. To give the impression of a working factory, he thought these windows needed to be open – which they ordinarily would be to help vent heat from the furnaces. For the old furnace (and some of the other buildings), the windows pivoted in the center. To mimic this, Al built the window openings in the old furnace clerestory with .020” brass wire along the center of the opening. This allowed me to then glue the actual window to the brass wire in an open position. For the new furnace, the windows pivoted at the top; those were easier: I simply glued the window at an angle at the top of the opening.



Side view of the “old” furnace, showing one of the clerestory windows open. The unfinished area butts up against the Forcing Mill buildings. Notice the “bricked in” window on ground level.



Side view of the “new” furnace, showing open clerestory windows and side window array.



The furnace complex. The original furnace is to the left; this building had to be cut at an angle to fit against the backdrop. To the right is the new furnace, which has completely different window construction, a taller clerestory and different open windows in the clerestory. The buildings ended up longer than we had originally planned, so the track siding obviously needs to be moved! The unfinished black area on the left of the new furnace is where the Coke Conditioning Building will go.

[The Coke Conditioning Building](#)

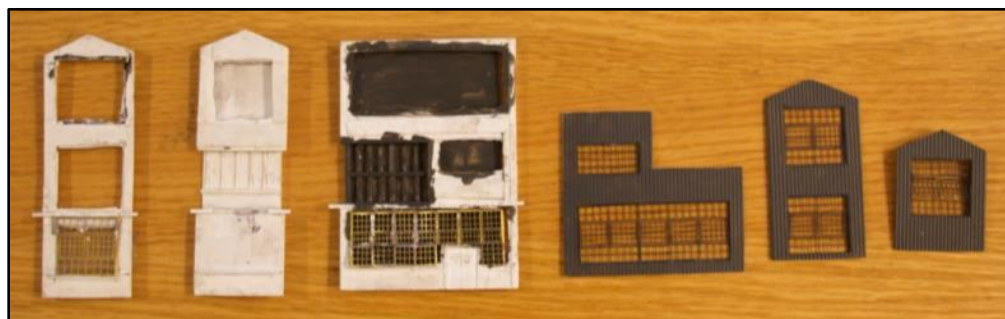
Attached to the south side of the new furnace is the Coke Conditioning Building (CCB). This small addition to the furnace complex turned out to be one of the most complex buildings to fabricate and build, and one of the most interesting (though we have no idea what it was used for!). The building is a combination of steel girders, brick, different styles of tilting windows, and corrugated steel siding. This structure still exists today (along with the furnaces), although with some attached machinery that was not part of the 1950s version.



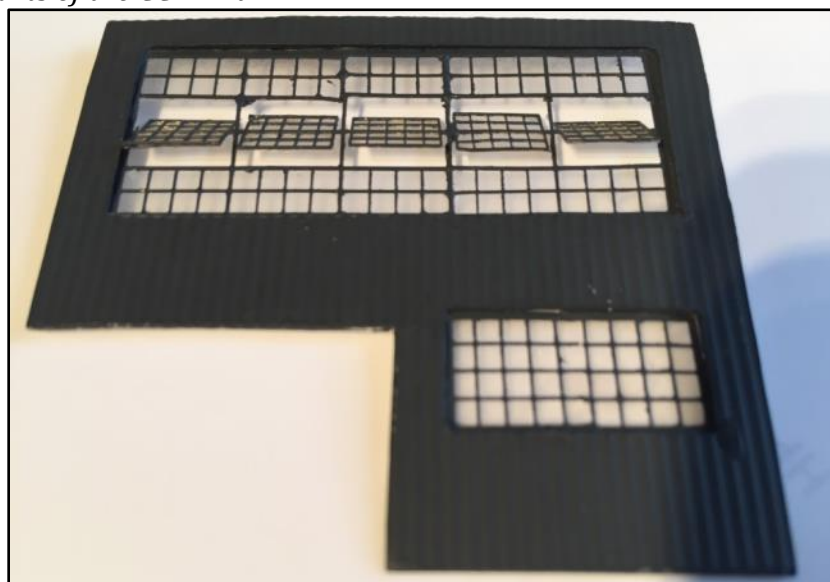
Photo of the Coke Conditioning Building as it exists today.

For this kit, Al soldered together some brass windows of varying sizes, and used “corrugated steel” styrene sheet, styrene girders and supports, brick sheet-on-styrene-backing for the brick areas of the walls, and a lot of grimy black paint!

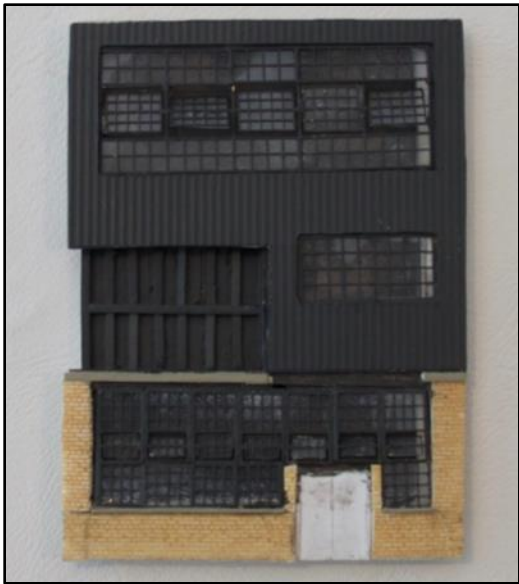
We lucked out on the tilting windows since the etched brass windows came with that function built in. Al built in a "shadow box" interior for each wall so the windows could swing inward; the shadowbox interior was painted black.



Parts of the CCB "kit."



The east CCB wall, with open windows.



The south CCB wall, showing the unpainted brick sheet, support girders, and window arrays. The window "glass" is clear acetate sheet, glued to the back side of the window arrays with tiny dabs of white glue.

The almost-completed CCB.



The completed CCB on the layout.

The Coke Storage Building

The last main building of the complex was called the Coke Storage Building (CSB), which was located right alongside the main spur track serving the plant. Once again, this building involved differing roof lines representing an addition on the east (right) side, and a mixture of brick and corrugated steel, along with a sort of “doghouse” on the roof, a crane blister on the west side, and some small storage sheds attached on the west end. Al once again employed his tilting-window technique, building the clerestory with .020” brass wire that I could glue windows to on a center-pivot arrangement in different open positions.



The CSB under construction. The side walls are laser cut brick sheet over .040” styrene sheet backing; the clerestory walls are corrugate styrene siding. You can see the .020” brass wire used to glue the open center-pivot windows.



The CSB nearing completion. The “doghouse” on the roof and crane blister are done, but windows and roof parts still need to be added.



A test fit of the nearly-complete CSB on the layout. This photo is also a good overview of the now nearly-complete south plant scene. I've put down a ground cover using Woodland Scenics "dirt" ground foam liberally sprinkled with brown and burnt umber chalk dust. I also used a mix of gray and burnt umber dust on the roofs to give a "built up dirt" look there.



Side view of completed CSB on the layout.

[And we're done for now](#)

The CSB, completed in December 2018, marked the last of the main buildings of National Carbon's south plant for this scene. Our "quick and easy" project had taken nearly three years to complete. You can go back to the original aerial photo we started with (see page 29) and decide for yourself how close we came to the actual National Carbon plant. There are still a lot of details to add (the road from the CSB to the furnaces, for example, and the strange walkway or conveyor or whatever it was from the Forcing Mill to the CSB that you can barely see in the original aerial photo), but even in its "not quite complete" state, I think National Carbon is an eye-catcher on my N scale NKP layout!



The "completed" National Carbon scene.

THE NKPHTS MODELER'S NOTEBOOK NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Are you a Nickel Plate modeler? Or a modeler of the Wheeling & Lake Erie, the Lake Erie & Western, the Clover Leaf, or any of the predecessor roads that went into creating the Greater Nickel Plate? Do you have a digital camera? Would you like to share what you're doing, or what you know, or your tips and techniques on modeling the NKP? Then have we got the forum for you!

These new issues of the *Modeler's Notebook* mark the rejuvenation of the online magazine, which can become the greatest resource available for modeling and showcasing the work of NKP modelers around the globe. Ultimately, the plan is to issue the virtual magazine quarterly, but that means that the editorial board of the NKPHTS needs YOUR help in adding to its pages!

We're looking for just about any and all submissions for the magazine. Full-length features, small one to three page "mini features" and stand-alone photos are all welcome and desired. So long as the subject matter is NKP-related, it's fair game! You say that you aren't a writer? No problem: the NKPHTS editorial staff is here to help. With good quality cameras coming standard in just about every smart phone these days, taking photos couldn't be simpler! (so long as they're relatively well-lit and in focus, that is) And we'd love to see your work in all scales and skill levels: S, TT, High-Rail and live steam are all as welcome as O, HO and N.

So share your love of Nickel Plate modeling today! To talk to the editorial staff about a submission, or to submit an article, please contact the following:

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NKP 908 climbs Cayuga Hill on the Third Sub, on its way to Charleston, IL. Tony Koester photo & modeling.