The Kingpin

Newsletter of the
Mid Central Region
National Model Railroad Association
February 2021

Normally, this issue would contain information about an upcoming Regional convention. Since that convention has been cancelled due to the pandemic, we have received several articles from Region members to share with you. All photos provided by article authors.

This issue is mailed to all Region members to meet our requirement for one mailed issue annually.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

David M. Williams, Kingpin Editor
7769 Oakhurst Cir
Brecksville OH 44141-1121

Table of Contents

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition. Thanks also to Division 12 for all their hard work in preparing what would have no doubt been a great convention (like Pittsburgh's would have been).

From the President

Bob Weinheimer MMR®

The past year added several new words to our vocabulary. Zoom, virtual, and cancel come to mind. Alas, cancel is the subject of this issue of the Kingpin. The Northern Express, the 2021 Mid Central Region to be hosted by the Alleghany Western Division in Erie, PA has become yet another victim of COVID-19. It became very uncertain that restrictions on activities would allow a normal convention. It was almost certain that few would take the chance of attending. Before the cost of cancellation would become excessive the organizers had the good sense to pull the plug.

The Tri-Region convention planned for May 2022 in Indianapolis is still on. Given the latest news, we should be past the virus and be able to meet. The 2022 National convention will be in St. Louis in early August. Consider going to both!

While Division gatherings have been cancelled for some time, and will be for even longer, the virtual way of meeting has almost become normal. Some Divisions are finding that members who never go to in person meetings have been attending Zoom meetings. This has those groups looking at how to make in person meetings available via Zoom to keep the interest of those unable to travel to the meetings. The biggest obstacle may be suitable bandwidth at the meeting location but I'm sure a way will be found to deal with that. I want to recognize all the Division Superintendents for the way they have adapted to this new way of doing things. Some were quicker than others, but I think we're all there now. We are learning how to do contests and just about everything except raffles.

One unfortunate thing is that membership is down. Across the NMRA, only the Australiasian Region showed an increase in 2020. Total MCR membership declined about 7.7% over the year, losses were minimal until September when things fell faster. The only good news is that Division 11 membership rose! I don't have good details on the demographics but nationally the losses were highest among RailPass, family, and student members. I strongly suggest you reach out to those who failed to renew to find out why and to urge them to return if at all possible.

I will close by noting that this is my last Kingpin letter as my term of office as MCR President will be over before the next issue. The last two years have had their challenges with COVID-19. I find it almost incredible that we had to cancel two consecutive conventions but I hope the end is in sight. In spite of the bumps in the road, it has been a pleasure and an honor to hold this position for the last four years. MCR Vice President Dave Neff takes over in May. Please give Dave your full support, I'm sure he'll do a good job with your cooperation and help.

Editor's note: Usually outgoing officers Bob Weinheimer MMR® and Treasurer Rev. Bob McKay would receive a well deserved round of applause at the convention banquet. Well, here's a virtual round of applause. It's not too impressive but it's what we have for now. Thank you gentlemen.

Building a T-Trak Logging Module Using CMR Products Components

By Linda Kacprzak

Over many years, I've created numerous dioramas and two micro-layouts. The idea of making a T-Trak scenic diorama to link with a large group that would run longer trains was intriguing, so I thought about buying a single module. At the September 2019 Mini-Meet in Erie, PA, I was introduced by Brad White, the Superintendent of Division 12, to the representatives from CMR Products. I was fortunate enough to be given a double T-Trak module, which had a tunnel that didn't meet clearance specs. The base module and separate tunnel section were already assembled, but the notched pieces appeared to be easy to glue together. I added leveling screws and sockets to provide the adjustment necessary to adjoin with other modules. After adding shims to increase the height of the tunnel, I decided to cut off six inches of length to allow for better visibility of the scenery. The track sections are Kato Unitrack and the electrical connectors are Kato Unijoiner. Finally, screws with large washers and wing nuts were added to secure the backdrop to the base.

At the October 2019 Berea Show I looked for a building kit suitable for mountainous terrain and found the Valley Sawmill (Fig. 1), which became the focal point of this logging module, and then sketched a layout plan. The sawmill kit base was too large, so it had to be cut and rearranged to fit in the space allocated. I later eliminated one maintenance shed and replaced it with two outhouses. I wanted to show evidence of logging in the wooded mountains and also included a log pond. I added a dirt road, log trucks and a freight station to indicate activity in and out of the area.

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Fig. 1 The Valley Sawmill kit

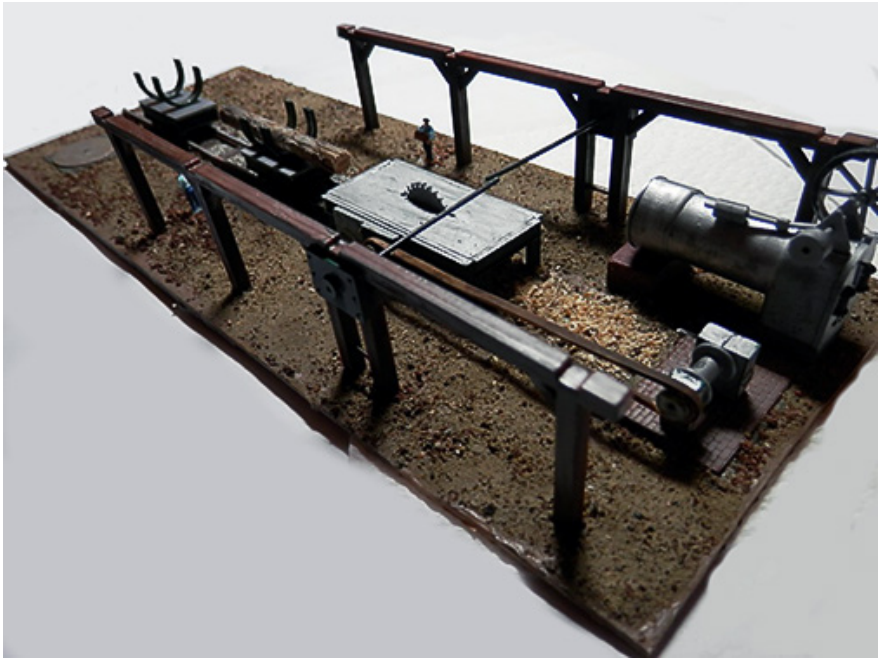

Fig. 2 Sawmill view from the left end

I first cut the structure components from the sprues and painted them with acrylic craft paints. I then constructed the sawmill, maintenance sheds, wagon, turbine, saw and crane. The two main base sections were glued together, the ties painted, and the rails glued on. The adhesives I used were Aleene's Tacky Quick Dry and Fast Grab Glues. Next I assembled the two log carts and added logs, which are twigs from trees in our woods. (They replaced the plastic logs included in the kit.) Coarse dirt, a little ballast, sawdust, and used tea bag leaves were used for ground cover. I assembled the turbine and saw and glued them in place, adding a rubber band to look like a drive belt. (See Figs. 2, 3, 4.) The crane needed cable and a hook, which were not in the kit, but gray thread and a piece of hook-shaped scrap plastic were added. Workers and carts were glued in place before the roof supports, wiring and the roof were added. Weathering of the roofs completed the model.

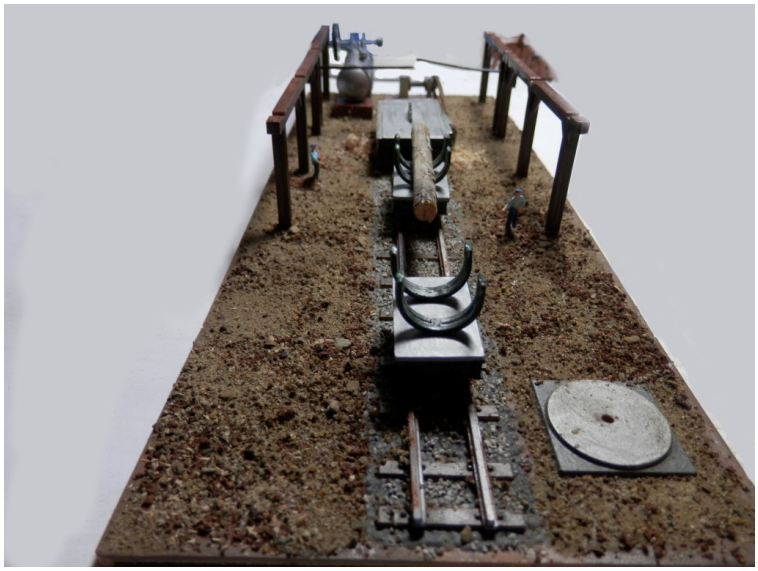

Fig. 3 Sawmill view from the right end

Next, the entire module (Fig. 5) was painted brown. Pink and blue foam was glued to the base and carved to form the mountain, which was then covered with neutral gray paint. Earth-tone paints were stippled on, ground foam and small bushes were glued on, and gloss medium was used for water run-off. The N-scale double track was nailed in place and ballasted, and wiring was added (Figs. 6, 7, 8). Most of the trees are made of pieces of green polyfiber sprayed with hairspray, dipped in super leaves and ground foam, and then glued to tree trunks cut from twigs. The tree trunks were first glued into the ground cover (Fig. 9). Along the edges of the wooded areas I used tree armatures for a more realistic appearance. The area with tree stumps and debris represent the logging operation.

Fig. 4 Sawmill from the front

The log pond (Fig. 10) was painted navy blue, which was then washed with mud tones and olive green. Then, three coats of Mod Podge gloss medium were applied. While the final coat of gloss medium was still wet, I placed twigs cut in half lengthwise flat side down to look like logs floating in the water. Some white paint was dry-brushed on ripples and along the edges of the logs.

Fig. 5 Unpainted module base

The freight station kit was assembled with moveable sliding doors and lots of detail parts and workers. Log loads on the trucks were glued on to resemble actual log trucks as shown in internet images. (See Figs. 11, 12). Scenery materials used all over the module included ground foam in several colors, static grass material, clump foliage, lichen, coarse dirt, tea bags, sawdust, pencil shavings, and talus. The tunnel is intended to be removable, if necessary, to accommodate trains pulling extra-high loads or to clear a derailment inside. The same techniques were used to complete the rock wall and the trees as were used for the mountain. The tunnel portals are paper glued to thin basswood coated with matte medium, as shown in Fig. 8. If you look closely you'll see a logger checking out a stand of trees. (See Figs. 13, 14.)

continued on next page

The backdrop is 1/8" masonite painted light blue and the scenery is a collage of photos taken on vacation in 2019 in West Virginia. When I'm satisfied with the final appearance, I will scan the pieces and print them in three sections to glue onto the backdrop board. Finally, I will continue to add more weeds, debris, barrels, and other details, because nothing is ever 100% finished. I would also like to add LED lighting to the sawmill, because the light included in the kit (shown on Fig. 1) is obsolete.

I hope life gets back to normal soon. I want to attend meetings, meets and conventions again, where I can add my module to T-Trak layouts and run trains!

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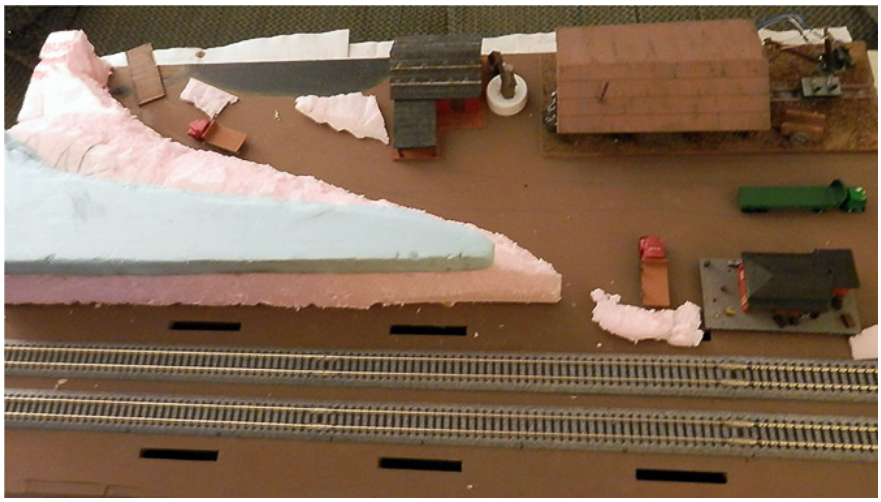

Fig. 6 Beginning construction on painted base

Fig. 7 Scenery in progress

Fig. 8 Track, tunnel portal

Fig. 9 Close-up of tree trunks before polyfiber tree tops were added

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Fig. 10 Log pond

Fig. 11 Shed, outhouses and log truck

Fig. 12 Overview of sawmill and freight station

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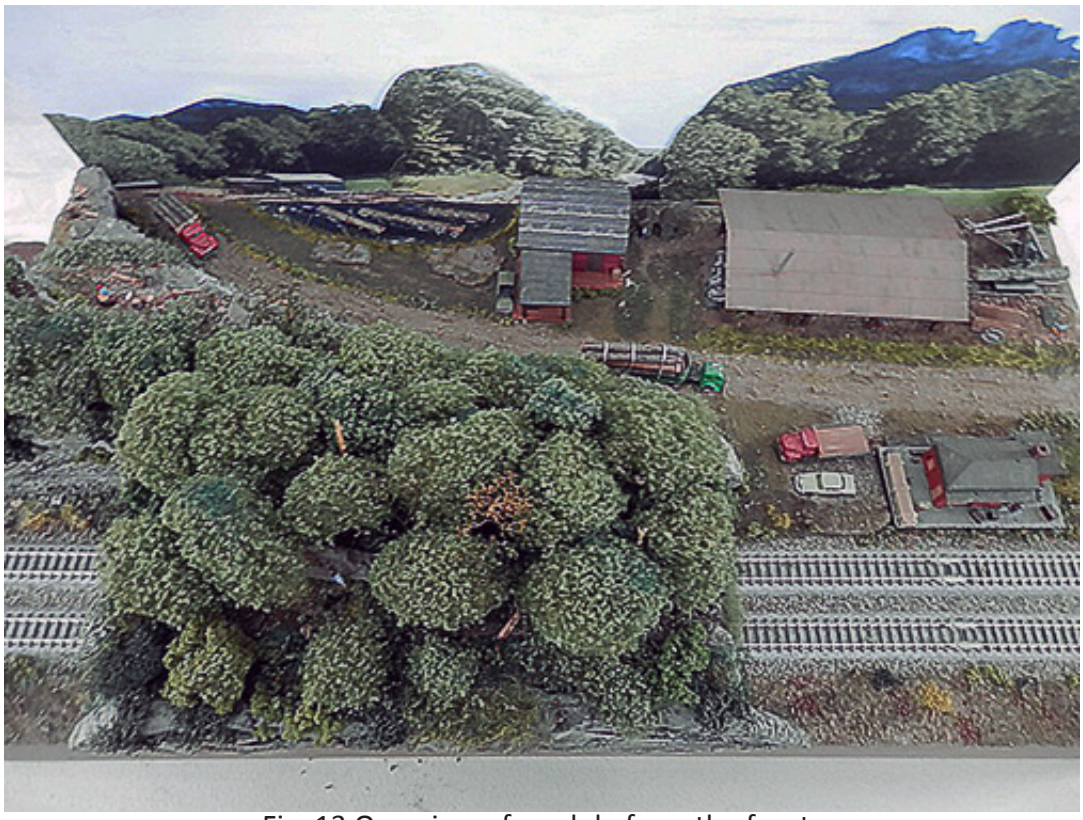

Fig. 13 Overview of module from the front

Fig. 14 Overview of module from the back, with backdrop removed

Gondola Weathering by Bob Frankrone

For some reason, the gondola is my favorite type of freight car. Perhaps it's because I have fond Christmastime memories of riding the nativity figures around our Christmas tree in a black, Lionel O-27 gondola. Or maybe it's because gondolas factor into so many of my open load models. Whatever the reason, gondolas hold a certain fascination for me. Gondolas perform a lot of rugged service for the railroads, and because they do, their appearance is rather battered. So for me, it is important that I weather the gondolas on my layout. During the COVID pandemic, I have been experimenting with some weathering techniques that I have seen in various "how-to" videos. I have had some very good results, so I thought I would share my gondola weathering technique via this article.

The first thing I do is spray the gondola, trucks and all, with Testor's Dullcote. This provides a flat finish that provides better adhesion for the weathering materials. Once dry, I then apply a thin wash of acrylic antique-white paint and water to the four sides of the gondola, and let that thoroughly dry. I repeat that process several times to achieve a "faded paint" look. The number of times you repeat that process will determine the degree of fading.

I next apply tiny spots and patches of rust to the car body. To do this, I use a small piece of foam insulation and burnt sienna oil based paint (you can probably use acrylic paint). I lightly dip the piece of foam into my palette of paint, dab it almost dry on a paper towel, then dab it onto the car sides. This will produce random spots of rust that vary in size and shape. For larger patches of rust, do not remove as much paint onto the paper towel. Once the paint has thoroughly dried, I tone it down by brushing on dark weathering chalk (black, brown, or rust colored).

The next step is to weather the interior of the gondola. I like to use a thick wash of acrylic black paint and water to first "paint" the interior of the gondola. Once the wash has dried, I use three different shades of rust colored chalk (dark, medium, and bright) to create a rusted interior. The chalks I use have an adhesion agent mixed in, so I simply apply them liberally with a dry brush. You can continue this process until you are satisfied with the result.

The last thing I do is paint the trucks and wheels. I mix together a small amount of orange and brown acrylic paint until I get the color that looks right to me (sort of a dark, slightly rusty color). I remove the wheels from the trucks and brush-paint them separately.

This technique works well for me, and should you try it, I wish you equal success. Please see my two photos of weathered gondolas that accompany this article on the next page. Happy weathering!

photos on next page

Bob weathered these two gondolas using the technique he describes in his article.

Weathering the inside of a gondola is equally important as weathering its exterior.

Rusty Loads

Now that the vaccine to end all vaccines has reached our shores and that this evil virus is or will be on its way out, maybe we can get back to a "normal" way of life. I don't know about you but I do need to get my train show fix taken care of, hopefully this fall. To supplement the lack of train related gatherings, both division meetings and shows, I dove into creating loads for my flat cars and gondolas.

Recently, I have completed my scrap loads for both on the way to the scrap yard and shredded material headed to the mills. What I needed to do next was to weather them. This, although not hard, did become bothersome because of the products readily available in the local stores. I tried the Vallejo Model Wash and found it tended to be too thin and didn't give me the coverage I was after. Next, I tried Mission Models Hobby Paint for air brushes thinking that the thinned paint would work well as a wash. However," Holy Crap Batman", this is paint and is ok for full coverage but does not work well as a wash. I did use it as a highlight. I tried to find other suggested weathering washes like Sophisticated Rusting Solutions but no matter where I looked, they were either out of stock or unavailable. So, there was only one place left to go – YouTube!

After watching several videos on how to make your own weathering washes, I found a couple of videos that rated different washes currently available. A wash (and weathering powder) that seemed to get the best overall ratings was Monroe Models Weathering Washes. Off to the internet we went. I purchased four different colors of rust, *Real Rust, New Fresh Rust, Rusty Brown and Dark Rust*. I will admit that the initial coating of Real Rust did take several applications but that was because I painted the loads flat black to get rid of any colors, especially white. I also found that the washes work better on painted surfaces. I must say that I do like these washes, as they each did give a very good and convincing color when dry. These washes go a long way and cover very well.

After I was satisfied with my initial color I used the other washes to "highlight" different parts and areas. My shredded loads are made from wood pencil shavings. The wood accepts the washes very well and needed little more than one coat. I was thinking of dry brushing an additional color like steel to represent freshly shredded steel but then I would also have to add some other colors because a lot of scrap steel is actually painted. I dropped the idea. I now have several great looking scrap loads for my gondolas.

When I was happy with the results, I top coated it with Dullcote. This was a big mistake, as the dull coat not only darkened the colors it also started to wash the rust color off parts that were attached. It also took the "flat" away. I should have known better as the Monroe products are isopropyl alcohol based. This by the way is a good thing but, lacquer and alcohol do not mix. I corrected this problem very quickly by reapplying the washes after the dull cote was dry.

These washes being isopropyl alcohol based is a good thing because you can buy your cleaning product for next to nothing. If you leave the cleaning alcohol bottle sit, you will get the pigment to settle out. Remove a little of the alcohol, shake and "WAM" you have more of the wash.

Although there are many different types of washes on the market today think that the weathering washes that Monroe Models manufactures would be a great addition to, (if you are like me), your arsenal of paints. They are easy to apply and the cleanup is both cheap and simple

There is one load I would like to try to make but have little or no use for it as I model the transition era of the 1950's. I would like to make a garbage load. In my driving around, I see a lot of high sided gondolas hauling trash coming from the east headed west. Maybe one of my division members will let me loan a gondola to work with. Also, does anyone know where these gondolas end up?

Michael Carovac
Asst. Super Division 5 MCR

MCR CONTACTS

MCR President

Bob Weinheimer MMR®
president@midcentral-region-nmra.org
304-343-1428

MCR Vice President:

David Neff
vp@midcentral-region-nmra.org

MCR Secretary:

Jerry Doyle
secretary@midcentral-region-nmra.org
304-638-2826

MCR Treasurer:

Bob McKay
treasurer@midcentral-region-nmra.org
914-591-5415

Achievement Program:

Frank Koch
achievement@midcentral-region-nmra.org
513-732-6208

Contest:

Steve Zapytowski MMR®
contest@midcentral-region-nmra.org

Education:

Tom Miller
education@midcentral-region-nmra.org
859-224-8563

Membership:

Paul Novak Jr.
membership@midcentral-region-nmra.org
440-235-2620

Special Projects:

Dick Briggs, MMR®
projects@midcentral-region-nmra.org
614-277-0314

Webmaster:

Donald Wilke
webmaster@midcentral-region-nmra.org
614-846-2558

Kingpin Editor:

Dave Williams
editor@midcentral-region-nmra.org
440-838-4996

Upcoming Events

Once again we point you in the direction of Division 11's listing:

www.div11-mcr-nmra.info/events.htm

Thanks to Division 11 Webmaster Bob Netzlof.